



INFO LETTER FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND POTATOES



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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

Seamless control – from farm to shop – not only covers production and trading, it also includes transport. For this reason, QS will be offering a new standard for Logistics from 2013. You can find out more about this below in our article “A Focus on Traceability and Hygiene”.

We report on Page 2 about the latest Advisory Board meeting and their visit to the Horticultural Centre in Straelen. You will also find out

there about the revisions the Advisory Board is planning to adopt in 2013.

What has to be observed with cleaning and disinfection is explained to you by Regina Zschaler on Page 3. The expert in Microbiology says: “Hygiene is one of the most important pillars of food safety”.

We wish you lots of fun with your reading,

Your QS Team Bonn, 26 Sep. 2012

NEW QS STANDARD FOR LOGISTICS A FOCUS ON TRACEABILITY AND HYGIENE

QS is to offer a standard for the logistics of fresh fruit and vegetables from 1 January 2013. Accordingly, after a transition period of two years, all transports within the supply chain Fruit, Vegetables and Potatoes may only be performed by certified service providers from 2015.

The requirements are summarised in Part B of the Wholesale/Logistics guideline. They were discussed in advance with experts and specially customised to meet the needs of freight forwarders. The guideline was tested within the scope of sample audits in order to check its practical implementation. Main emphasis is placed on the topics Traceability and Hygiene, whereby the trans-shipment warehouse is also taken into account.

As far as this guideline is concerned, logistical service providers are companies which are involved with the handling of fresh fruit, vegetables and potatoes including processed products (e.g. fresh cut) from a logistical point of view through transport, shipment, loading and unloading. This covers all activities connected with delivery by truck (road transport) and



short-term storage for the purpose of transshipping the goods during delivery. Agricultural transports are exempted from this.

As has been the case up to now, logistical service providers who also package, handle and/or process products will be classified as wholesalers (first-line merchants or marketers).

QS recognises IFS Logistics audits

To allow freight forwarders to experience participation in the QS scheme in a realistic manner and to avoid double certification, QS is recognising IFS Logistics audits without any

specific additional checklist. This means that companies with a valid IFS Logistics certificate only have to register in the QS database to acquire QS approval and sign a contractual agreement with a logistics coordinator who enters the details of the IFS Logistics certificate into the database.

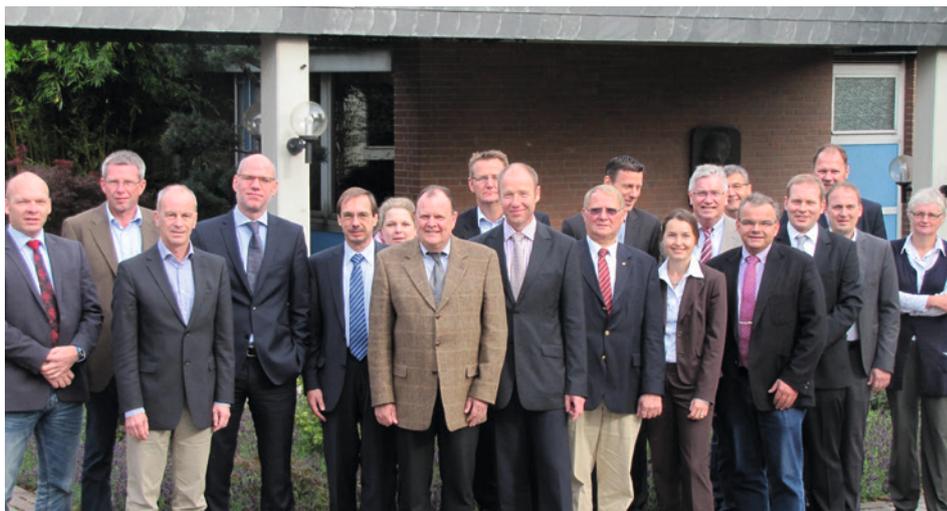
The background for the inclusion of logistics services is a decision reached by the Advisory Board Fruit, Vegetables and Potatoes on 14 July 2011 as a reaction to the EHEC crisis, which emphasised the great significance of seamless control all along the entire supply chain.

FROM THE ADVISORY BOARD **CHANGES FOR 2013**

On 20 September, the Advisory Board Fruit, Vegetables and Potatoes convened at the Horticultural Centre in Straelen. The agenda included revisions of the guidelines for 2013. The main focus of the current amendments is an improvement of hygiene standards on the one hand – in particular the avoidance of microbiological contamination – and practical simplifications on the other. One of the most important changes is the new Logistics standard (see the article on Page 1).

A shortened checklist for random sample audits with QS-GAP was adopted which focuses on the checking of operative processes. In this way, the auditor can concentrate on the requirements relevant to food safety during the audit. This means a shorter duration of the audit without having to dispense with any important content.

Since this year, specific demands are already being placed on sprout producers. These criteria have now been complemented to include an additional requirement which stipulates that cultivation water must have drinking water quality.



Caption to photograph: The photo shows members and guests at the advisory board meeting at the Horticultural Centre in Straelen

The requirement for the use of fermentation substrates was also revised. The criterion now differentiates between potato and vegetable cultivation.

A new requirement for foreign matter management has been included in the Food Retail guideline, thus ensuring at each branch

that crates contaminated with broken glass and other matter cannot find their way to the consumer in the fruit and vegetable sector either.

All of the amendments to the guidelines are to be published on the QS homepage in October and can be accessed directly for comment.

ON-SITE **ADVISORY BOARD VISITS THE HORTICULTURAL CENTRE IN STRAELEN AND LANDGARD**

The last meeting of the advisory board was held at the Horticultural Centre in Straelen, a research institute of the Chamber of Agriculture of North Rhine-Westphalia. On a guided tour the day before the meeting, the advisory board had the opportunity to find out all about the latest cultivation topics and concepts for the reduction of plant protection product residues.



The members and guests of the advisory board then paid a visit to Landgard Obst & Gemüse eG, a scheme participant and coordinator right from the start. At the company's new location in Herongen, the advisory board members were able to obtain information on logistical processes and the traceability system. A look behind the scenes of flower and decorative plant marketing at Landgard Blumen & Pflanzen eG also aroused great interest.

WHOLESALE **PILOT PROJECT FOR FEED POTATOES STARTS**



Since 1 September 2012, potato wholesalers can have the QS requirements for feed potatoes checked by means of an abridged additional checklist in the wholesale audit for fruit, vegetables and potatoes. This means that within the scope of a pilot project, the wholesalers do not have to register themselves with QS as feed companies

and do not have to have a separate feed audit conducted either. In this way, QS is testing a practical approach which will save double auditing and extra costs.

Within the scope of the wholesale audit, the majority of the QS requirements which also apply to feed traders are already being tested with approved food potato wholesalers. The auditors will, however, use an additional checklist in future to verify special criteria, such as official registration as a feed company, legal declaration, the collection of retained samples and participation in feed monitoring.

By selling potatoes to farmers to feed to their animals, a wholesaler becomes a feed company and requires official registration. If feed potatoes are to be sold to QS farmers, eligibility of delivery as a feed trader in the QS scheme is required and this can be acquired in a few steps via the pilot project.

Wholesalers interested in the pilot project should contact QS head office. The checklist and supplementary guideline can be downloaded at the download centre under Wholesale, Fruit, Vegetables, Potatoes.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION **WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR**



Hygiene is one of the most important pillars of food safety. Within the guideline preparation QS has been defining the relevant requirements for the avoidance of microbiological

risks during the processing of fruit and vegetables since the beginning of the year. A vital part of this process is the ensuring of operational hygiene. Regina Zschaler (see photo) – an expert in the field of Microbiology – gives important tips on hygiene.

Proper cleaning and disinfection of rooms, plant and equipment is a fundamental prerequisite for compliance with microbiological requirements. The objective is to avoid microbiological contamination. The agents used here must be effective on the one hand and easy to remove from surfaces on the other so that cleaning agent and disinfectant residues do not contaminate foods during the production process. Attention should also be paid to the quality of the cleaning water and for this reason, a well-conceived cleaning and disinfection plan is of great importance to the food industry.

The difference between cleaning and disinfection is described as follows in DIN 10516:

Cleaning: The removal of dirt (= all undesired substances including product residues and

microorganisms, as well as cleaning agent and disinfectant residues)

Disinfection: Chemical and physical process to kill off microorganisms on a level which does not damage health or impair the quality of the food.



to prevent cross-contamination between the cleaning agent and the product.

When the processing of fruit and vegetables is observed, it can be assumed that the majority of microorganisms are already removed mechanically from the plant and equipment if cleaned properly. With sensitive foods, such as fresh-cut products, subsequent disinfection of the plant and equipment is necessary to comply with the microbiological standards and guarantee the shelf life of the products.

In our blog (see QR code - www.qs-blog.de), Regina Zschaler discusses among other things the advantages and disadvantages of various disinfectants and cleaning agents, makes reference to the list of approved cleaning agents and disinfectants and talks about the problems of cross-contamination.



Service offer to be expanded: A **new supporting document for microbiology** for the manufacturers of processed products is to be published soon. Among other things, it provides an overview of the microorganisms relevant to the fruit and vegetables sector and information on their occurrence and environmental behaviour. The supporting document will be available for downloading from November 2012 at the download centre on the QS homepage.

LEARNING WITH QS **GRIPS&CO WITH A NEW SALES TRAINER**



Personnel in the food retail sector are of vital importance in the QS scheme. They not only implement quality assurance measures by themselves, they also advise their customers on how to handle foods properly. QS is making all efforts to support them as well as possible in the build-up and expansion of their specialized skills.

brochure, which was published as part of the Grips&Co brand trainer series, deals with the latest market trends and gives tips and tricks for the successful sale of fruit, vegetables and potatoes. It also explains how cross-stage quality assurance is organised from the producer to the shop counter in the QS scheme and what the consumer should look out for at home when preparing fruit and vegetables. The goal is to turn trainees in the food retail sector into competent points of contact for quality assurance.

The **Quality Assurance Sales Trainer**, which QS prepared in cooperation with the RUND-SCHAU for the food retail sector is aimed specifically at trainees in the food retail sector. The

QS is also committed as a sponsor of the Grips&Co trainee competition. The final round of the competition on 24 September was won by Patrick Müller (24) of the Wasgau trading chain. He will now become a QS-live quality ambassador for one year in order to gain first-hand



experience of how safe foods are produced nowadays. In doing so, he will be allowed to take a look behind the scenes of food production and publish reports on www.qs-live.de.

A SCHEME PARTICIPANT **ZON FRUIT & VEGETABLES**



In the course of its more than 90-year history, the Dutch company ZON fruit & vegetables has developed into one of the largest horticultural cooperatives for fruit and vegetables in Europe. The company relies on QS for its quality assurance.

The cooperative has its headquarters in Venlo – right at the heart of the second biggest horticultural region in the Netherlands. In

addition to the company head office, one of the two large logistics centres from where fruit and vegetables are shipped to Germany is also to be found there. The other logistics centre is in Wieringermeer (North Holland).

A growing corporate area is the business with blueberries which is carried in the main by the subsidiary companies Blue Berry World and Sun Berry International. The company expanded in the German blueberry market in May 2012. With the takeover of Heidefrucht GmbH in Langwedel near Bremen, ZON further expanded its berry fruit department and intensified procurement. The top-selling products, however, are peppers, tomatoes and asparagus, although the company also achieves good sales with cucumbers and strawberries.

The company achieved particular success in 2010 when the marketed snack vegetable concept “Snoepmaatjes” (snack sizes) was voted the most attractive brand of the year.

The responsible quality manager at ZON is Marcel Beunen (see photo) who says: “In order to guarantee our customers top quality, we work exclusively with certified gardeners and producers, roughly 115 of whom have a QS certificate. Because quality and food safety play a major role in the corporate strategy, the advising of the producers who supply us is a component of our quality assurance”.

It’s not just the supplying producers who have to subject themselves to independent controls, however. ZON fruit & vegetables itself is also a scheme participant on the Wholesale stage. Marcel Beunen has the following to say about this: “One hundred percent traceability and assurance of origin are just as much a part of our quality policy as compliance with residue specifications. They are an essential component of our business model. We ensure that all goods arrive fresh and safe on our customers’ shelves. With the QS certificate, we prove to our customers that we meet all requirements in the ideal manner”.

SCHEME PARTICIPANTS AND MARKETS **THE LATEST FIGURES**

The supply chain fruit, vegetables and potatoes covered 24,277 businesses in September. Of the 12,792 registered producer businesses, 5,276 deliver their products on the basis of mutual recognitions in the QS scheme. QS and the Austrian standard owner AMAG.A.P signed an agreement of this kind in February 2012 from which 102 businesses are already benefitting.

Stage	Total	Of which abroad
	24,277	4,935
Production¹	12,792	4,529
- Fruit, vegetables	10,168	4,492
- Potatoes	2,750	26
Wholesale	701	206
Food Retail	10,784	200

¹Of which:
 Producers with QS-GAP certification: 6,275
 Producers with recognised GlobalG.A.P. certification: 2,908
 Producers with recognised IKKB certification: 2,266
 Producers with recognised AMAG.A.P certification: 102

As of 01 Sep. 2012

+++ NEWS IN BRIEF +++

Revision 2013: scheme participants lending a hand

From 16 November, your opinion on the revision of the QS guidelines is requested. As in past years, QS will be publishing the guidelines, which take effect on 01 January 2013, in advance in the internet. Scheme participants and certification bodies have the opportunity to send suggestions and change requests directly to QS until 30 November 2012 using a contact form.

Suggestions are also welcome outside the commenting phase. You can make contact per e-mail, fax or in the internet at:
http://www.q-s.de/revision_en.html



New Colleague: Carina Gotto

Carina Gotto has been a valuable addition to the fruit, vegetables and potatoes sector since August. In Frau Gotto you will find the right contact person for the database. She is a competent partner in all matters concerning first-time registration, master data maintenance and the entry of data for residue monitoring.



QS on Facebook

You can visit QS on Facebook and find out lots of interesting facts about the QS scheme that everyone should know about. Food safety – that’s what I like!

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IMPRESSUM

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