



INFO LETTER FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND POTATOES



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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

It has been a turbulent year so far within the sector. It started off too warm, then it was too dry and before it got too wet, there was EHEC. It goes without saying that the EHEC outbreak had the QS System holding its breath for several weeks too. You can read more about this below and on our special EHEC page, where you will find an interview dealing with the effects of the crisis. It also contains a summary of events and a report on the latest resolutions of the advisory board for fruit, vegetables and potatoes, which has already drawn conclusions from the EHEC crisis.

In the hope that the second half of the year will be more positive overall for our scheme participants and the entire industry after all of the events surrounding EHEC, we are looking forward to the following dates in autumn: QS will be celebrating the tenth anniversary of its establishment in October 2011 (see Page 4) while the start of the QS information campaign, which is supported by the EU Commission, is also scheduled for the autumn (see Page 4).

We wish you interesting and informative reading and a good summer.

Your QS Team

THE EHEC EVENTS OF RECENT MONTHS **CRISIS MANAGEMENT AT QS**



Shortly after the first reports of the EHEC outbreak in northern Germany started to come in in May 2011, the authorities began to warn against the consumption of raw tomatoes, cucumbers and leaf lettuce. This resulted in a considerable slump in sales in the German and European market for fresh vegetables.

Even though the source of the EHEC pathogen has been identified in the meantime and the warning has been limited to the consumption of fenugreek sprouts from Egypt, the market as a whole has not yet made a complete recovery. Immediately after the first cases of EHEC infection in the Hamburg region were reported, the scheme participants responded in the best in-

terests of precautionary consumer protection by examining their products for possible contamination with EHEC bacteria. QS actively supported this initiative by publishing a list of suitable laboratories and providing practical tips for the sampling and analysis process. The scheme participants were requested to send their analysis reports to QS. In this way, roughly 3,500 analysis reports were evaluated – all of them negative. By conducting special audits in Germany and Spain, QS ensured that no EHEC risk emanated from the scheme participants. In addition to this, QS immediately examined the extent to which hygiene regulations could be sensibly and practically augmented. The advisory board for fruit, vegetables and potatoes reacted quickly here and has already drawn some conclusions (see box on Page 2). Overall, QS was able to make a significant contribution towards coordination along the entire value added chain, as well as rapid clarification during the recent crisis. By practicing active crisis management, QS succeeded in notifying the affected scheme participants and the entire sector via short communication channels and gradually weakening the general suspicion to which the entire industry had succumbed (see special page 2).

FOCUS ON EHEC ++ FOCUS ON EHEC ++ FOCUS ON EHEC ++

INTERVIEW KEEP A COOL HEAD IN THE „CRISIS“



Paul Daum, Head of National Quality Management at Kaiser's Tengelmann GmbH in Munich, on the recent EHEC outbreak.

What effects have the EHEC outbreaks had on your company?

Our company-internal response management started working as soon as the first EHEC cases were publicly announced. At the same time, expanded sampling plans were discussed to help identify the points of introduction. In close cooperation with QS Qualität und Sicherheit, the Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety, the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment and other institutions, we regularly exchanged information and discussed measures. Although none of our fruit and vegetable products was conspicuous or affected in any way, there was a considerable decline in the sale of tomatoes, cucumbers and lettuce thanks to the published information, which was sometimes confusing.

How did you perceive the activities surrounding QS crisis management?

QS, which also means the QS crisis management, worked with great commitment and focus

right from the start. By developing test intervals, test parameters and a QS monitoring database over the past few years, it was possible to compile and evaluate some very useful data at short notice within the scope of the EHEC outbreaks and place it at the disposal of the authorities. This just goes to show that private economy-based control concepts are most definitely necessary and useful if they are not only constantly updated but also enjoy a wide level of acceptance over all value-added stages, as is the case with QS.

If you had to draw a conclusion as to what could have been done better during the EHEC crisis, what would it be?

The best thing to do in any crisis situation is keep a cool head and cooperate with the industry, the food monitoring authorities and political consumer protection institutions to find a quick way out of the crisis. This can only succeed if an "acceptable leadership through the crisis" can be found. As we saw again and again during the EHEC outbreak, differing and sometimes contradictory reports from the various authorities serve more towards increasing uncertainty among consumers and the industry and less towards ending the crisis. Politicians would be well advised in future to consider setting up some kind of "national crisis management team" for such severe circumstances as these to manage the crisis and above all, protect the consumer.

Consistent and fast action in the QS Scheme after the EHEC outbreak

The advisory board for fruit, vegetables and potatoes convened for a special meeting in the middle of the crisis and adopted concrete measures in the following areas in the subsequent meeting of 14 July 2011:

In order to avoid microbiological risks, the advisory board adopted new requirements for sprouts and seeds, which included the strict monitoring of the microbiological safety of the seeds.

The guidelines have been expanded to include a new "Processing" module for all stages. This supplementary module relates in particular to production processes and products with increased risk potential. It applies to producers who process their own products after harvest, as well as food wholesalers and retailers who process products of this kind. In addition to this, the advisory board decided to integrate logistical service providers into the system, with concrete implementation planned for 2013. In this way, the chain from the producer to the retailer will be closed, also including transport.

EHEC – A Chronology of Events

23 May 2011

An alarmingly large wave of EHEC cases takes hold of northern Germany. Due to the unusual frequency and severity of the cases, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) is called in. QS head office notifies scheme participants and consumers.

24 May 2011

QS scheme participants begin to test for the EHEC pathogen. QS head office collects the analysis results and evaluates them.

25 May 2011

The RKI and Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) warn against the consumption of raw tomatoes, cucumber and leaf lettuce in northern Germany. QS publishes a list of laboratories which can test for EHEC.

26 May 2011

Traces of the EHEC bacteria detected on cucumbers at the wholesale market in Hamburg point to Spanish producers. QS has hygiene audits conducted there along with product, water and contact samples. QS also provides continuous information on the latest situation on their website and in the consumer portal.

27 May 2011

After only 3 days, QS has received over 100 EHEC test results from scheme participants. The number of samples grows to almost 3,500 by early July. All of them are negative.

30 May 2011

Spanish cucumbers turn out not to be the cause of the outbreak.

5 June 2011

Sprouts from an organic horticultural business in the district of Uelzen are suspected of having triggered the EHEC infections.

9 June 2011

The BfR, RKI and Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety lift the general consumption warning for vegetables. The suspicion that bean sprouts are the source of the problem is corroborated. Only in mid-July is it confirmed that Egyptian fenugreek sprouts have caused the EHEC outbreak.

Quality Assurance. From farm to shop.

QS GAINS CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE SCHEME PARTICIPANT COMMUNICATION

The QS scheme participants in food retail play a major role in consumer communication by presenting the work of the entire supply chain to their customers. This means that, as ambassadors of the QS Scheme, employees in the retail trade have to answer questions concerning the QS certification mark. It also means that the people in the retail business are the “display window” for QS products, because in addition to having the certification mark displayed on the products, consumers also receive explanatory texts and background information on what QS is all about.

In addition to this intensive advertising of the QS certification mark in the flyers of the retail trade, quality assurance is becoming an ever more important topic in the websites and customer magazines of the retail trade. This is not only a plus for QS and all of the scheme participants involved in the production process, it is also a big advantage for consumers, because ultimately, this is how they find out just how much quality assurance is required in the making of the products.



Examples for flyers of the retail trade by Penny, REWE and Kaiser's Tengelmann.

SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS LABORATORIES CONFIRM THEIR EFFICIENCY



This spring, 71 laboratories from 13 countries underwent the latest test for laboratories already recognized and those seeking recognition. Thanks to new outline conditions in the test design, more onus is placed on everyday lab routine. In addition to this, a new points system ensures the sustained evaluation of performance. Due to the complex ingredients (including chlorophyll and sulphur compounds), the leek matrix examined in the latest test was particularly

demanding. A total of six active ingredients had to be detected.

Part of the new test design is that the test matrix is no longer announced in advance, which means that the specific preparation of a particular matrix is no longer possible. Another new aspect for the labs was that the samples were allowed to arrive within a longer time period of three months (March to May). In addition to this, the maximum permissible analysis period was reduced from four to three days.

34 of the 54 currently recognized labs took part in the spring test, 20 of them from Germany and 14 from abroad. Overall, 29 of the 34 labs were successful. A further 37 labs are currently undergoing the recognition process, 13 of which were successful – six in Germany and seven abroad.

It was proven yet again that the recognized labs do better than those applying for first-time recognition, even though one lab had to have its recognition withdrawn. Jens Schäfer, who looks after the laboratory performance assessments at QS explains this as follows: “During analysis, the active ingredient Fluazifop P, a herbicide, caused the most problems. 20 labs were unable to identify it and 16 got the wrong quantities”.

QS introduced a new points system to assess the laboratories and Wilfried Kamphausen, Head of Fruit, Vegetables and Potatoes, sees great advantages in it: “Thanks to the points system, we can differentiate the performance of the laboratories more closely. This means that good performances are permanently rewarded and errors are recognized immediately because the labs then have to take the test more often. Accordingly, ten labs will have to take the test again in the autumn because of the new appraisal system.

QS ANNIVERSARY: TENTH BIRTHDAY ACTIVITIES



QS. Ihr Prüfsystem für Lebensmittel.

Ten years after its establishment, the QS Scheme will be celebrating its birthday at its place of foundation: the Anuga trade fair. Dead on time for the anniversary of the founding of the company on 13 October 2001, QS will be represented there in 2011 with its own fair stand. A warm welcome is extended to all readers to visit the QS stand at the Anuga fair in Cologne from 8 to 12 October.

The anniversary is also being celebrated beyond the trade fair, with scheme participants from the food retail sector congratulating QS in

advertisements and flyers. The food magazine has adopted quality assurance as the “mega trend 2011”. And it goes without saying that the anniversary will be a topic in our media too this autumn, be it in the internet, on the consumer website or in the Info Letter.

It's not all about celebrating our own achievements, however, as Managing Director Dr. Hermann-Josef Nienhoff points out: “We see the developments of the first ten years of QS quite clearly as the achievement of our scheme participants, who give their full backing to economy-supported, cross-stage quality assurance”.

SCHEME PARTICIPANTS AND MARKETS THE CURRENT FIGURES

Compared with the previous month, the QS Scheme has experienced the most growth on the producer level: 71 new scheme participants joined in July 2011, 31 of whom deliver into the QS Scheme from abroad. Within the three-month period from May, the total number of scheme participants in the fruit, vegetables and potatoes chain has risen by more than 1,200.

Stage	Total 23,483	of which from abroad 4,140
Producer¹	12,098	3,727
- Fruit, vegetables	9,406	3,719
- Potatoes	2,692	20
Wholesale	601	132
Food retail	10,784	200

¹ Of which: producers with QS-GAP certification: 6,182
Producers with recognized Global G.A.P. certification: 2,652
Producers with recognized IKKB certification: 2,067

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EU campaign approved

In June, the EU Commission approved an information campaign for consumers in which QS is to provide information on all aspects of food safety. The most important medium here will be the internet, where social media channels are to be used intensively to make cross-stage quality assurance even more understandable to young consumers, as well as families and other interested parties. Preparations for the campaign are to run from autumn 2011 and the actual start of the campaign is scheduled for spring 2012.

New developments in the sale and period of permitted use of plant protection products

Regulation (EC) No. 1107/2009 has been in force since 14 June 2011. With this regulation, the periods of permitted use of plant protection products after their termination of authorization are changed. As of now, if authorization terminates after 14 June 2011 there is a regular deadline for the sale and marketing of existing stocks of six months and a period of permitted use of maximum twelve months, which equates to a total of 18 months. Authorizations which terminated before 14 June 2011 are not affected by this new regulation. They continue to be covered by the old regulation, which stipulates a period of permitted use of two full calendar years and no sale deadline.

Random sample audits for 2011 to start in August

Random sample audits are to be conducted from August to October 2011. Companies are to be selected at random and notified no sooner than 24 hours before the audit. The time required for the audit is less than that required for a regular



audit because selected criteria are specifically examined. The focus is often on crisis management, for example, or the requirements for marking and traceability and compliance with cooling chain provisions. Fertilization measures, especially where organic fertilizers and plant protection products are concerned, play a special role in random sampling on the producer level. Special emphasis is to be placed on operational hygiene on all stages this year.

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