



# NEWSLETTER FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND POTATOES



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## EDITORIAL

### Dear readers,

QS is growing, more and more scheme participants are joining us. In order to ensure the availability of goods on the German market all year round, the QS scheme is becoming more and more international. Producers and traders from other European countries are taking part. New developments in Spain and Belgium are introduced in this Infobrief. From Belgium alone, 1,800 producers already supply into the QS scheme. We are also introducing a new scheme participant from Spain.

The growing international requirements also affect the laboratory situation. More and more

laboratories from countries both inside and outside European borders want to participate in QS recognition.

Also in this issue: the new innovations in the scheme manual. The new guidelines and check lists apply as of January 1st, 2011. We include a short introduction to the most important changes. But we also wish to pass on praise from consumer organizations. In our short news section (Page 4), the Verbraucherzentrale (consumer central) praised the QS scheme for setting an example for other industries. These and other topics can be found on the following pages.

### Your QS team

## QS LABORATORY PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS, FALL 2010 INTERNATIONAL REQUIREMENTS LIKE NEVER BEFORE



**This fall, laboratories in twelve countries are taking part in the QS laboratory assessment test. This shows the high level of importance that QS recognition has not only nationally, but increasingly internationally. The reason: the number of scheme participants from abroad is increasing steadily. In the meantime, laboratories from outside Europe are also interested in the QS recognition.**

The last two tests in fall of 2009 and spring of 2010 have shown that more and more laboratories are passing the test. The effects of the constant QS quality checks can be clearly seen. This is

additional proof of the sustainable effects of the performance assessments. Laboratories that are already recognized by QS perform considerably better compared to those that are still in the recognition process.

Of all 80 laboratories in the test, 52 passed. Whereas this time, 90 percent of the foreign laboratories were recognized, German laboratories only achieved a 64 percent pass rate. Of the QS recognized laboratories, twelve did not pass and are thus obliged to take part in the test in Spring. Almost all of the 13 laboratories that lost their recognition status in the last test took part

again this time. This is added proof of the status that QS recognition has for national and foreign laboratories.

Red currants were sent to the laboratories for residue testing this time. They were treated with commonly used substances in realistic concentrations. Jens Schäfer, who is responsible for the laboratory performance assessments at QS, was pleased with the results: „Of the 80 laboratories, only two reported a false positive substance back to us, neither of these were laboratories already recognized by us. Five laboratories did not correctly identify all of the substances or reported them incorrectly. Of these, only one of them was a laboratory recognized by us.“

Managing director Dr. Hermann-Josef Nienhoff said of the Fall results: „This laboratory performance assessment shows that we are on the right path with a view to the internationalization of QS. We will continue to pursue this high level of constant quality checks internationally.“

## Quality Assurance. From farm to the shop.

### INTERNATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FOCUS ON BELGIUM



**Around 1,800 Belgian producers and 13 wholesalers from Belgium**

**are currently authorized to supply QS goods.**

These suppliers include “Veilingen”, or “auc-

tioneers” that have registered their producers with QS. The mutual audit recognition between IKKB and QS has increased the number of producers in the QS scheme. Generally speaking, the cooperation of QS with Belgium is intensifying. As of August 2008, the Belgian union of producer organizations (Verbond van Belgische Tuinbouwveilingen, VBT) is part of the

QS Fachgesellschaft Obst-Gemüse-Kartoffeln GmbH. In November 2007, QS and Vegaplan, the standard owner for the Belgian IKKB standard, announced the mutual recognition. And the advisory board for fruit, vegetables and potatoes in which the criteria and guidelines of the QS scheme are determined, also contains a representative from Belgium.

### INTERVIEW “GERMANY IS OUR MOST IMPORTANT EXPORT COUNTRY”

The “Mechelse Veilingen” with its headquarters in the Belgian Sint-Katelijne-Waver is the largest European cooperation vegetable auctioneers, measured by their annual turnover of 230 million euros. From here, a good third of the products are exported to Germany. In Germany, they are available under the Flandria brand. The ten most important export items are tomatoes, lettuce, bell peppers, cucumbers, various lettuce types, leeks, eggplant, cauliflower, asparagus and lamb’s lettuce. They also have a wide range of in excess of 150 vegetable types. **Chris De Pooter, managing director of Mechelse Veilingen, in interview on the subject of quality assurance and cooperation with QS.**



Chris de Pooter, managing director of Mechelse Veilingen

#### What strategy is Mechelse Veilingen pursuing in quality assurance?

Mechelse Veilingen has always followed ambitious quality policies. We and our producers have been participating in quality schemes for many years. The auctioneering is certified in accordance with ISO 9001:2008, IFS, BRC and the organic label. At the request of our customers who supply to German supermarkets, QS has been added. Our producers have, for example, mostly a GlobalG.A.P group certification. In order to be able to also supply into the QS scheme, they do the IKKB (individual certification), the Belgian

standard that corresponds to the QS at the producer level. Already since the 80s, the auctioneers participate in the residue monitoring process. We helped found the residue monitoring service (DRC) and introduced pre-harvest controls. This summer John Dalli, European Commissioner, presented here in a press conference news about food safety and named us as a good example.

#### What is important to you alongside the product quality?

Our quality policies do not just refer to the quality of the products. The elements innovation, work and price play an important role. With reference to innovations, we constantly try to find new developments and improvements. We are looking, among other things, for innovative and environ-

mentally friendly farming methods. We are also working on the sustainability of products, packaging and markets. Recent examples are the new quality systems for plant protection and durability. We try to achieve optimum team spirit and encourage our staff to develop a considerable sense of responsibility. And, last but not least, price is of great importance. On the one hand, the main aim of the auction process is to achieve the best price on the market. In order to achieve this, we want to achieve stability of supply and demand. On the other hand, it is important to control the costs for both the auction and for the producer. This must lead to a permanent future for the auction and for future-oriented producers.

#### How do you see the cooperation between Vegaplan (IKKB) and QS?

The mutual recognition between QS and Vegaplan, the standard owner of the Belgian quality standard IKKB, is very important to our producers. After all, Germany is the most important export country for Belgium. We have recently registered around 400 producers with QS at the beginning. As a result of the mutual audit recognition between the Belgian standard IKKB and QS, we are able to supply into companies in the QS scheme and we are thus able to meet the requirements of our customers.

### NEW SCHEME PARTICIPANT THE WHOLESALER UNIVEG TRADE SPAIN



**Since August 2010, Univeg Trade Spain is a scheme participant. The wholesaler is based**

**in Valencia. The region is not only the most important citrus fruit farming region in Spain it is also a strategically important location for the Spanish fruit and vegetable export industry.**

The core business is the export, transportation and distribution of the entire fruit and vegeta-

ble range from Spain to other countries, primarily to Germany and Europe as a whole. „Today it is essential to safeguard the trust of the end consumer in Spanish products. We are putting our trust in the cooperation with QS to ensure that all of our products meet the requirements of our customers and those of the end customers when it comes to food safety,“ says Pepe Pérez, General Manager of the company. And with this, the company is following the trend. In 2009 alone, in excess of three million tons of fruit and vegetables were exported from Spain to Germany. QS currently sees a constant

increase in the number of scheme participants from south Europe. For this reason, the QS infrastructure is being further extended internationally. The prerequisites for this are available in Spain: 15 of the certification bodies authorized for QS offer auditing in Spain and there are two QS recognized laboratories available for residue analysis on site. This has enabled QS to make considerable steps in the safeguarding of the availability of goods all year round over the last few years and plans to further extend this with partners like Univeg.

## SCHEME MANUAL THE CHANGES FOR JANUARY 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2011

**With the start of 2011, the new guidelines and check lists apply to the scheme manual. QS is, for the first time, posting the most important documents on the Internet ahead of time in order to enable comments. This opportunity was used primarily by those who actually use the documents on a daily basis. The comments have all been proofed carefully and have been incorporated or noted for the next revision, Here is an overview of the most important changes as of 2011:**

Generally speaking, the new additions include: Packaging materials not made of plastic and for which, therefore, no declaration of conformity is

required must have a declaration of no objection as of 2011. In all guidelines, a requirement has been included that proves the adherence to legal labeling requirements.

Wholesaler guideline: As of January 1st, the water quality must be proved by a risk-oriented sampling of the drinking water used which must be carried out by an accredited laboratory. In the most recently held advisory board meeting that took place on November 3rd, 2010 the decision was made to label the essential criteria for so-called trading agencies in the Wholesaler guidelines as of January 1st. The shortening of the guidelines to the practical relevant check points

pertaining to this form of marketing is designed to make certification auditing easier for these companies. A check list is to be made for the documentation of the cleanliness and hygiene of transport vehicles.

At the moment and until December 5th, commenting on the English guidelines and check lists is being carried out on the Internet. More information about the scheme manual can be found under [www.q-s.de/en/](http://www.q-s.de/en/)

## QS SHOPPING TOUR TESTED TRACEABILITY



**24 hours must be sufficient to trace a product of a scheme participant back to its origins. QS experts put the system to the test with a traceability test:**

They purchased three products – peas, carrots and potatoes – and tested via email and telephone to see how well the supply chain back to the producer is documented. All three products could be traced quicker than the specified 24 hour upper limit. The fastest required just ten

minutes. The other took 21 hours at the most. Generally speaking, the sampling carried out for the supply chain fruit, vegetables and potatoes showed that very few discrepancies can be seen in the QS scheme participants and quick identification of the producer of goods was easy to do in the test.

## ADVISORY BOARD MEETING IN BELGIUM FOR THE FIRST TIME

On November 3<sup>rd</sup> the advisory board for fruit, vegetables and potatoes met in Belgium for the first time. In this session, the monitoring plan valid for QS residue monitoring for 2011 was agreed upon, among other things. On the fringes of the session, the advisory board were able to inform themselves about the Belgian production and marketing conditions. This process included visits to Reo-Veilingen and Mechelse Veilingen as well as a visit to the Belgian Fytolab laboratory situated close to Ghent. The session was

concluded by a discussion with Belgian industry experts. Raf de Blaiser explained the procedure used in Belgian DRC residue monitoring. The managing director of the Vegaplan standard owner, Marc Rosiers, gave a report on the quality assurance on the production of agricultural and garden products in Belgium. An de Craene from Verbond van Belgische Tuinbouwveilingen (VBT) informed of the activities of the representatives of those with an interest in the Belgian auctions.



Ulrich Schopohl (right), head of the advisory board, in conjunction with REO head Paul Demyttenaere, labels the first Belgian lettuce boxes to carry to the QS test mark.

## AUDITOR TRAINING SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED 2010

**Between January and September 2010, over 600 auditors took part in around 30 all-day QS training sessions. The participation is obligatory for auditors. At the end of the day, a test is used to check whether the content has been internalized by the auditors.**

This time, twelve percent of the 600 participants did not pass this test. From the supply chain for fruit, vegetables and potatoes, 190 auditors participated. The content was provided by QS experts in conjunction with guest speakers.



These speakers trained the auditors on topics such as plant protection, field hygiene, good care and marketing norms. For the first time, 2010 saw a separate training session on the subject of coordinator audits for which 48 auditors are authorized. Planning of the training sessions for 2011 is already well underway. Specially designed training sessions will be held this year in English for the foreign-language auditors. **For more information about the dates:** [www.q-s.de/en/](http://www.q-s.de/en/)

TRAINING FOR SAMPLING DATES FOR 2010 NOW IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

**Taking fruit and vegetable samples for residue monitoring appears to be easy at first glance. But the devil is often in the details.**

This may be a glove that touches one variety of vegetable and then the next, thus resulting quickly in residue from the first sample being introduced to the investigation of the second fruit. In order to obtain representative samples, there is a wide range of things to observe. What these are exactly, is the subject of a new series of training sessions from QS. After the success of 2009, these will also be offered in the coming weeks. As a result of large demand, this year one of the four training sessions will be held in Dutch in the Benelux region.

The one-day training sessions are designed for QS scheme participants and for scheme parti-



The practical element of the training in the storage facility or at the greenhouse is met with enthusiasm.

cipants for persons assigned to the sampling process. In the events, QS presents their work in residue monitoring and the way in which sam-

ple results are handled. A laboratory experts reports on the evaluation of samples and what errors in sampling lead to consequences during analysis. In the practical session, the best procedures are demonstrated in the field, in the greenhouse or the storage facility. **Registration under:** [www.q-s.de/en/](http://www.q-s.de/en/)

**Training dates:**

- 22.11.2010 Kaiser's Tengelmann in Berlin
- 26.11.2010 Veilingen Hoogstraten in Hoogstraten, Belgium
- 29.11.2010 Pflanzmarkt in Mutterstadt
- 02.12.2010 Edeka Minden-Hannover in Minden

SCHEME PARTICIPANTS AND MARKETS THE CURRENT FIGURES

Over 150 producers became new scheme participants in the QS scheme in September and October 2010. Of the more than 20,900 participants from the product sectors fruit, vegetables and potatoes, an increasing number of scheme participants come from abroad. In total, almost 130,000 scheme participants now take part in QS. Compared to the previous year, this is an increase of 6,000 new participants in the scheme.

Stage	Total <b>20,904</b>	of which from abroad <b>2,822</b>
<b>Producer</b>	<b>10,897</b>	<b>2,724</b>
- Fruit, vegetables	8,215	2,719
- Potatoes	2,682	5
<b>Wholesale</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Food retail</b>	<b>9,457</b>	-

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**QS sets standards**

Gerd Billen, Head of the Bundesverband der Verbraucherzentralen (union of consumer centers) in conversation with the Tagesspiegel newspaper wishes for stricter controls on the production of toys: He specifically demands a control scheme for toys along the lines of the QS test mark. The three-stage concept of combined company self-controls, a neutral control body and monitoring of controls is, according to Billen, a good role model.

**Pesticide control program of the EU specified to 2013**

It has now been decided what the consumer protection authorities in the 27 EU member states are to proof in the coming years: The EU directive 915/2010 specifies which substances are to be tested for residues of plant protection products up to 2013. Alongside the prescribed catalog of substances, there is also, among other things, the number of the samples to be taken. The authorities are to send their information from the previous year to Brussels by August 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year.

**Authorization of the plant protection product Euparen M WG revoked**

As of December 1<sup>st</sup>, the plant protection product Euparen M WG is no longer permitted. The Bundesamt für Verbraucherschutz und Lebensmittelsicherheit (State authority for consumer protection and food safety) has revoked the authorization of the product (authorization number 033963-00). Users should use up their supplies by May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011. Euparen M WG is a fungicide which has, until now, been authorized for use in vegetable farming of tomatoes and cucumbers. The background to this change is the decision made by the European Commission to remove the substance Tolyfluanid from Appendix I of the 91/414/EEC directive. This Appendix forms the positive list of substances permitted in plant protection products. For more information, see the BVL homepage at:

[www.bvl.bund.de](http://www.bvl.bund.de)



**QS communication and marketing**

As a result of Dr. Torsten Staack leaving us, QS has reorganized communication and marketing. Stefan Martin, previously responsible within the team for marketing and sales, now takes on the leadership of this section. Heike Wegener also joins QS. The trained journalist and PR expert is now responsible for communication and public relations affairs at QS.

**IMPRINT**

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