



# INFO LETTER FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND POTATOES



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

New Advisory Board Resolutions	1
Potatoes: Estimation of the 2011 Harvest	2
Potatoes: Berlin Agreements	2
Workshop: Microbiological Monitoring	2
Austria: Quality Assurance and the Market in Styria	3
McDonald's Advertising with QS Scheme Participants	3
Comments on the Scheme Manual	4
Scheme Participants and Markets	4
News in Brief	4

## EDITORIAL

### Dear Readers,

The latest advisory board meeting following the EHEC outbreak quickly succeeded in drawing the correct conclusions from recent events by achieving consensus among everyone involved in the industry. The supplementary guideline "Processing" was adopted (see below) and details of microbiological monitoring are being prepared with experts (see Page 2).

You will find reports on the 2011 potato harvest and new developments in the "Berlin Agree-

ments" on Page 2.

QS is currently considering mutual recognition with Austrian scheme owner AMA (Page 3) and you can also read about how McDonald's is advertising with QS scheme participants among other topics.

We wish you informative reading,

**Your QS Team**

## ADVISORY BOARD DRAWS CONCLUSIONS FROM EHEC SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDELINE ADOPTED



(Front l. to r.): W. Kamphausen (QS), N. Lehmann (Kartoffel Böhmer), B. Nottorf (Lünekartoffel), J. Richter, Dr. A. Förschler (QS), G. Schulz (BOG), Row 2: Dr. C. Weseloh (UNIKA), A. de Craene (VBT), Dr. A. Brügger (DFHV), U. Schopohl (REWE), W. Leiste (EDEKA Südwest), J. Hasberg (Nieders. Frühkartoffel EG), O. Kleinlein (Kartoffel Böhmer), Row 3: J. Vooijs (DPA), J. Stechmann (ZVG), Dr. H.-D. Stallknecht (BOG), K. Voges (GBZ), W. Wenzel (EDEKA Südwest), N. Schäfer (ZVG), O. Dobusch (Kaiser's Tengelmann)

**In their meeting of 20 September 2011, the Fruit, Vegetables and Potatoes advisory board decided among other things that the supplementary guideline "Processing" was to take effect from 1 January 2012. What it involves in essence is hygiene criteria**

**through which microbiological contamination is to be better avoided in future.**

The new guideline contains requirements regarding HACCP, good manufacturing and hygiene practice, personnel hygiene, process sequences and packaging requirements. Special

emphasis is being placed on the microbiological and sensory quality of products. In this way, microbiological monitoring becomes mandatory for all QS businesses covered by the scope of applicability of this supplementary guideline which applies in all stages, from Production to Food Retail because it relates to all activities in which a product is chopped, peeled and packed, grated, sliced or pureed after harvesting. "Processing" also covers the treatment of products with an increased risk potential, which means that the guideline also applies to sprouts and seeds.

### Other Resolutions:

The following requirements have been newly added to the guideline for the production of fruit, vegetables and potatoes: the demand for a conformity declaration and/or clearance certificate for packaging materials and packaging auxiliaries, as well as the obligation to adopt a comprehensive HACCP concept.

## POTATOES MAIN HARVEST SITUATION AND OUTLOOK

**With an expected harvest of 11 to 11.5 million tonnes in Germany and 43 to 45 million tonnes in the EU 15, the gross potato harvest is likely to be considerably larger than last year's.**



*"With the expected yields and traditionally high contractual coverage, potato production remains a very important supporting pillar of agriculture".*

*Ferdi Buffen, Managing Director of Wilhelm Weuthen GmbH & Co KG, a potato trading company based in Schwalmthal on the lower Rhine.*

The 2011 season is linked with the expectation of good yields and quality. Sorting is often very imprecise and oversized products are posing a challenge to everyone involved in the market. The expectations of a better-than-average harvest are not evenly spread, because while Belgium is assuming a very good yield, the southern Netherlands and Rhineland are expecting the harvest to be only slightly above last year's levels. It remains to be seen whether the precipitation levels, which have been quite considerable at times, will have an effect on storageability. Warehousing has almost been completed in the south of Germany and tissue repair is taking place at 14° C (+/- 2° C). The tuber skin changes into a cork cambium here, thus providing better protection against rot and fungus. The temperature should be lowered quickly during



the cooling phase in order to prevent the occurrence of silver scurf. As the goods are more restless than usual this year, an evenly cool storage temperature is of particular importance.

Because the marketing of this year's harvest began comparatively early, the total marketing period could become very long this time if the qualities are as expected.

## BERLIN AGREEMENTS CONTENTS OF THE NEW EDITION

**The terms and conditions for German potatoes have been available in a revised new edition since July 2011. Known in trade circles as the "Berlin Agreements", they contain the most important rules and regulations concerning potato trading.**

The following adjustments were made necessary by the abolition of the trading class regulation on 1 July 2011:

In future, the Berlin Agreements will remain voluntary rules customary within the sector in the form of trade practices and general terms and conditions for trading with potatoes in Germany.



If they are part of a contract, only the quantity, variety and dates have to be agreed additionally.

In order to make differences in the traded quantities, regulations are planned for two different qualities: Quality 1 and Quality extra without prejudice to the right of the trading partners to regulate all quality parameters individually per contract.

Other new provisions include the introduction of the new category "Field Produce", which offers an option which did not previously exist, thus making it easier for producers in particular to quickly conclude clear contracts on the supply of goods of this kind.

## MICROBIOLOGY WORKSHOP WITH EXPERTS FROM THE SECTOR



**Microbiological monitoring will become mandatory with the introduction of the supplementary guideline "Processing" at the beginning of 2012. Experts gave advice on the essential criteria of monitoring at a workshop at the end of September.**

At the invitation of QS, microbiology experts and representatives of leading companies in the Fresh Cut sector attended a workshop in Bonn. Together with them, the parameters that have to be taken into account in the microbiological monitoring process that starts in January 2012 were discussed along with the frequency of the checks.

The basis of the new monitoring process is formed by legal provisions on the one hand and the stipulations of the German Society for Hygiene and Microbiology (DGHM) on the other.

The main aim of QS at the workshop was to guarantee the practical feasibility of the monitoring process in all stages, from the producer, through wholesale to food retailers.

The following topics were discussed among others: processed fresh products must undergo a microbiological and sensory examination at the end of the manufacturing process. The frequency of the product examination has been determined and tests are to be made mainly for pathogenic bacteria, such as salmonella and listeria. A test for the EHEC pathogen is also prescribed and in addition, evidence must be on hand to prove that tests were conducted for yeasts, mould fungus, coagulase-positive staphylococcus and the aerobic mesophilic colony count.

A minimum number of contact tests to be conducted at different points, such as walls, knives, crates and tables, was determined for the sampling frequency in the operations plant.

## AUSTRIA A LOOK AT AMA AND THE STYRIA REGION

The Austrian AMA quality seal is awarded by Agrarmarkt Austria Marketing GesmbH. The extent to which the requirements for this test mark match up with those of QS is currently being discussed by both scheme owners in exploratory talks.



Graduate engineer Stefan Kunze of AMA Marketing had the following to say about this: "We are hoping for mutual recognition with QS because that would save our producers from double auditing in future if they want to supply to Germany".

The producers also favour this approach: "Recognition of the standard AMA-G.A.P. by QS is a great relief for us because QS plays such a prominent role in exporting to Germany," confirmed Friedrich Kröpfl of the company Obst Kröpfl.

While the negotiations on mutual recognition are still running, it is perhaps appropriate to take a look at one of the largest producer regions in

Austria: Styria, where fruit is currently grown on an area of approx. 8,200 hectares. Roughly 1,000 hectares of this area have been added in the last 15 years, with the growth affecting primarily apple and elderberry cultivation.

The entire fruit production region is divided into the following main cultivation areas: with 5,700 hectares, roughly three quarters of the area is dedicated to apple growing while the rest is shared by elderberries (960 hectares), pears (291 hectares), plums (221 hectares), blackcurrants (194 hectares), peaches (155 hectares) and sweet cherries (103 hectares).

The Styrian apple-growing area alone makes up

80 percent of total Austrian apple cultivation and the main apple variety continues to be the Golden Delicious with a share of approx. 28 percent, followed by the Gala with 20 percent.

With around 90 percent of the area covered by hail nets, Styrian apple production has a high level of harvest and supply reliability, which is a basic prerequisite for competitiveness in modern apple marketing.

All Styrian apples are grown in accordance with the guidelines of Austrian Integrated Production.



## INTERVIEW FRUIT PARTNERS STYRIA (OPST)



Graduate engineer **Thomas Reiter is the Managing Director of OPST GmbH, which has its head office in Gleisdorf, Styria. In this interview, he talks about the role of his company in the**

**region and the significance of quality assurance.**

**What role does OPST play for producers in Styria?**

In Styria, we have a total of 800 contracted producers and ten marketing companies on our books. They produce 140,000 tonnes of apples every year, which equates to 70 percent of Styri-

an and 60 percent of total Austrian production. OPST employs a total workforce of 400. Our tasks include the control and further development of production and the entire production area. We give advice on this, guarantee product safety and look after marketing, quality management and certification for the entire group. In addition to this, we provide IT support to producers and marketers and take on the invoicing and handling of promotion projects.

**How is OPST's quality management structured?**

We pursue a universal approach here in our Integrated Quality Management System at the heart of which lie HACCP and product safety. All members of the group are completely integrated, although we rely on central coordination and

control by OPST. In addition to QS, we currently have six other certifications.

**What role does QS play in exports to Germany?**

Within the OPST we strive for an innovative product policy, which is geared to market requirements and which sets its priority clearly on quality assurance. QS plays an important part, because our trading partners in Germany hold QS in high regard. We secure long-term and stable business relations for ourselves by participating in the QS Scheme. The way we see it, QS creates mutual trust between OPST and our trading partners.

## MCDONALD'S ADVERTISING WITH QS SCHEME PARTICIPANTS



**On the internet and in TV spots, fast food chain McDonald's is currently advertising**

**the fact that it relies specifically on direct cooperation with partners in the agriculture sector when selecting its products. Quality assurance plays a very prominent role in this for McDonald's.**

The producers and farmers introduced in McDonald's latest quality campaign are all QS scheme partners and not only the farmers who grow the potatoes for their French fries. Those who feature prominently in the spots and on the

internet include Thomas E. Gödelmann, lettuce grower in the QS Scheme, and cattle farmer Josef Müller from the Allgäu region.

You can find out more about the QS farmers and producers and the quality assurance campaign in the internet under: [www.mcdonalds.de/ernaehrung/qualitaet.html](http://www.mcdonalds.de/ernaehrung/qualitaet.html).

OPEN FOR COMMENT **UPDATING OF THE SCHEME MANUAL 2012**

**For the second time now QS will be offering all interested parties the opportunity from mid-October of taking a look at the adjusted guidelines and commenting on their content before they come into effect at the beginning of 2012.**

The German language documents can be pre-viewed and commented upon from 17 October to 15 November 2011. The English language versions will then be available for public comment from 15 to 30 November under [www.q-s.de](http://www.q-s.de). The entire scheme manual with all guidelines,

checklists and other supporting documents can be accessed in the internet all year round and the PDFs published there can be read, printed out and downloaded onto your own desktop. This tangible transparency has now been supplemented by a permanent comment option, which allows internet users to provide QS with direct feedback with one click. In doing so, the QS homepage fully complies with an EU directive for certification systems. Throughout the year or during the public comment period in autumn, all comments are close-



ly examined and implemented by QS in a timely manner wherever possible and practicable.

SCHEME PARTICIPANTS AND MARKETS **LATEST FIGURES**

23,559 scheme participants are currently included in the Fruit, Vegetables and Potatoes supply chain. Since summer 2011 the QS scheme has a particularly high increase of scheme participants in the stage of the producer fruit, vegetables, potatoes: Round about 50 producers of fruit and vegetables and over 30 producers of potatoes joined the QS scheme. QS also takes pleasure in welcoming the first scheme participant from the USA, a Californian spring onion producer.

Stage	Total	Of which abroad
<b>Production<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>23.559</b>	<b>4.140</b>
- Fruit, vegetables	9.452	3.804
- Potatoes	2.725	8
<b>Wholesale</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Food Retail</b>	<b>10.784</b>	<b>200</b>

1. Of which producers with certification QS-GAP: 6,223  
Producers with recognized GlobalG.A.P. certification: 2,676  
Producers with recognized IKKB certification: 2,087

++ **SHORT AND CURRENT** ++ **SHORT AND CURRENT** ++ **SHORT AND CURRENT** ++ **SHORT AND CURRENT** ++



**New Flyer: Quality assurance begins with the farmer**

In this recently published medium, QS underlines achievements of the producers in the QS Scheme who make up the majority of the approx. 23,000 participants currently in the Fruit, Vegetables and Potatoes supply chain with a flyer with the title "Quality assurance begins with the farmer". It is intended to underscore the scheme participants' commitment to safe food and is suitable for distribution at farmyard festivities, for example. In addition to this, the cattle flyer actively advocates participation in the QS Scheme in an insert. Interested parties can request the flyer from QS.

**A-NET Meeting in Berne**

The second meeting of the European Platform for Fruit, Vegetables and Potatoes (A-NET) was held at the beginning of September. The members from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and the UK laid down their principles in a basic paper. In addition to this, representatives of the standard owners reported on their experiences during the EHEC crisis and explained the

consequences.

**A visit to the goods exchange of a scheme participant**

Kaiser's Tengelmann AG invited QS to their Goods Exchange 2011 to explain the QS Scheme to the executives of all of their branches. QS was pleased



to accept the invitation and was represented at scheduled events in three different regions. The QS staff were delighted with the great

interest shown in QS and answered the questions of branch managers from all over Germany about the QS certification mark.

**Scientific advisory board met at the Greenery**

On 9 September 2011, the scientific advisory board for residue monitoring met at the Greenery in Barendrecht/Netherlands where it dealt in detail with the residue situation of relevant plant protection products and their analysis. In addition to this, the amendments to be made in the 2012 revision of the Residue Monitoring guideline were discussed. Thereafter, a visit was made to the Greenery location in Bleiswijk.

**627 participants were trained**

Training courses for auditors for 2011 have been completed. 627 participants were brought up to speed with the latest QS requirements at a total of 30 training courses. Four of the courses were held in English for foreign auditors. The well-attended events all culminated in an examination. From the 1,247 tests nine percent did not pass in their first attempt.

**SUBSCRIBE NOW:**

Regularly updated info letters and newsletters from QS.

<http://www.q-s.de/abo.html>

**IMPRINT**

**QS Qualität und Sicherheit GmbH**  
Dr. Hermann-Josef Nienhoff (responsible)  
Schedestraße 1-3, 53113 Bonn, Germany  
Tel.: +49 (0) 228 35068-0  
Fax: +49 (0) 228 35068-10  
Email: [info@q-s.de](mailto:info@q-s.de)  
Internet: [www.q-s.de/en](http://www.q-s.de/en)  
Photo credits: QS, Fotolia, McDonald's