



# INFO LETTER FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND POTATOES



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## EDITORIAL

### Dear Readers,

QS scheme participants are a byword for controlled product quality and safety. This is underlined by the evaluations of the 2012 audit reports, and we will be reporting on the findings in this Info Letter.

The advisory board helps us to ensure that all the requirements of the QS guidelines are practicable and correspond to the requirements of the market and the industry. Chairman of this body Ulrich Schopohl was re-elected in March.

Because it is not only the producers and traders who ensure safe food products but also the companies who transport fruit, vegetables and potatoes, QS has drawn up a separate standard for logistics service providers. You can find answers to key questions on page 2.

In addition, this Info Letter also reports on further news from the QS scheme. Happy reading,

Your QS Team

Bonn, 9 April 2013

## REGULAR AUDITS IN 2012 QS SCHEME PARTICIPANTS A BYWORD FOR QUALITY AND SAFETY

**The scheme participants in the supply chain fruit, vegetables and potatoes meet the QS criteria very well, and this is confirmed by the evaluation of the almost 12,200 audit reports entered into the QS database by the auditors during the course of 2012. What is pleasing is that the auditors gave fewer K.O. assessments overall than in 2011.**

Last year, auditors from independent certification bodies performed 12,175 regular audits in all stages of the fruit, vegetables and potatoes sector, almost 700 more inspections than in 2011 (plus 6.0 percent).

### QS-GAP widespread

QS-GAP audits (6,497) account for the lion's share of regular audits in the production stage, with 597 audits being performed in line with the "QS Production" standard. 468 regular QS audits were conducted in the wholesale stage and around 4,600 in the food retail sector.

### Fewer K.O. assessments

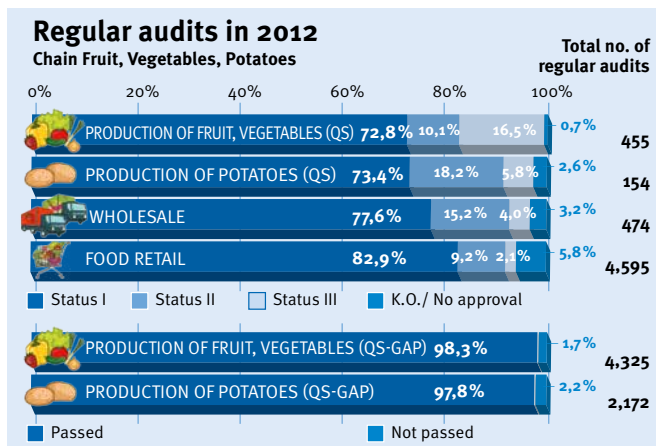
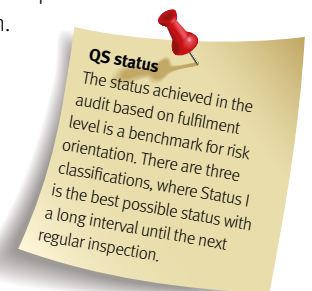
The scheme participants ensure safe food products. Last year, the auditors gave a K.O. assessment in only three percent of all company

audits – around 20 percent down on 2011. Taken alone, the food retail stage showed an even bigger improvement, with auditors giving around 40 percent fewer K.O. assessments than in 2011 (260 out of 4,595).

### Auditors take a close look

Auditors objected to incoming inspections in the food retail sector in 77 cases, and corrective action was agreed with the shop managers. This shows that quality assurance also involves a constant improvement process, and QS sup-

ports its scheme participants in this endeavour. The guidelines and checklists provide a well-structured and hands-on overview of the provisions for their implementation in the businesses in question.



## INFORMATION FLYER CONDITIONS FOR PARALLEL IMPORTS OF PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS

**Approved plant protection products are often cheaper in other EU countries than they are in Germany, which means it is often an attractive option to buy them abroad and then use or re-sell them in Germany. This kind of “parallel trading” is generally permitted; a new flyer outlines the details.**

Traders and producers who import plant protection products for their own use need a permit from the Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL) for the product in question. This ensures that the quality of the imported plant protection product corresponds to that of the reference product approved in Germany. Sanctions may be im-

posed if this is not the case. Quite apart from this, the use of unsuitable plant protection products can also result in harvesting losses, inadmissible residues in the harvested product, recall measures and delivery bans. Generic plant protection products that are not approved in an EU member state are not considered parallel imports and may not be marketed or used without approval.

The flyer “Würden Sie das Ihren Pflanzen geben?” (Would you give it to your plants?), jointly published by the BVL, the German Raiffeisen Association (DRV), the Federal Association of the Agricultural Sector (BVA) and the North Rhine-Westphalia Chamber of Agriculture (LWK NRW) provides detailed information on illegal plant protection products and the

risks and side-effects. You can find the flyer at [www.q-s.de](http://www.q-s.de) in the media center.



## LOGISTICS STANDARD IMPORTANT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



**As of 1 January 2013, a QS standard is in place for logistics in connection with fresh fruit and vegetables, and transport companies can apply for certification based on this standard. The first agreements with freight forwarders have already been signed, and logistics coordinators are also already registered. The following FAQs provide more detailed information.**

### What are the advantages of the QS standard?

It is a lean and practicable standard outlining tailored requirements that cover all relevant activities during transport and in the transshipment warehouse. Auditors from independent certification bodies review and document compliance with all the criteria of the guideline. This sends an important signal to all customers.

### Who is the standard designed for?

For transport companies who logistically handle – in other words transport, ship, load and unload and temporarily store – fresh fruit, vegetables and potatoes including processed goods (e.g. fresh-cut produce). Companies who also package and/or process goods are wholesalers under the QS definition.

### What are the focal points of the standard?

In the Logistics Standard, QS focuses on product

traceability and hygiene. One of the things that is required, for example, is regular hygiene training for all those who come into contact with products.

### Does this mean that only certified transport companies are allowed to deliver fruit & vegetables in the QS-System?

This should be the case from 2015. Until then, there is a transition period during which participation is optional. Agricultural transports are excepted from this provision.

### How does registration work?

Registration is in the database at [www.qs-plattform.de](http://www.qs-plattform.de), where the freight forwarder selects the “Wholesale/Logistics Fruit, Vegetables, Potatoes” stage under the menu item “New registration”. During the further course of the registration process, freight forwarders can decide whether they want to be certified according to the QS Logistics Standard or – where it is available – they want to participate on the basis of their IFS Logistics Certificate.

### Are there any particular factors that companies who want to register need to pay attention to?

Freight forwarders can decide whether they want system participation to be arranged by a certification body or a logistics coordinator. This entails the commissioning/performance of an independent audit as well as a contractual agreement on participation in the QS scheme.

### Do transport companies with IFS Logistics Certificate also need QS certification?

No. Dual certification is avoided: freight forwarders holding an IFS Logistics Certificate can participate in the QS scheme without any additional

certification. All they need to do is register via the database and sign a contractual agreement with a logistics coordinator on scheme participation.

### What is a logistics coordinator?

A logistics coordinator performs certain tasks in the area of scheme participation, such as organisation of the QS logistics audit at the freight forwarder. If participation is based on an IFS Logistics Certificate, the coordinator enters the certificate duration in the database. The coordinator is also the point of contact for freight forwarders in matters relating to QS and can, for example, be a consulting firm, association or producers’ organisation. We have published an updated list of QS-approved logistics coordinators for fruit, vegetables and potatoes in the download section of our website.

### Four steps to scheme participation:

- 1 Registration in the QS database** at [www.qs-plattform.de](http://www.qs-plattform.de)
- 2 Choice of a certification body** which organises participation in the QS scheme
- 3 Signing of a declaration of participation and authorisation**
- 4 a.** For logistics companies **with** IFS certificate: entry of the certificate duration and the registration number of the IFS Logistics Certificate  
**b.** For logistics companies **without** IFS certificate: performance of an independent audit. The certification body makes the arrangements for the audit



The Rutta family manages the Schönborn fruit orchard in the region of north Germany known as the “Switzerland of Holstein”, and their orchard has a long tradition, initially serving as a pomological institute way back in 1883. Today, it is the most northerly apple farm in the German state of Schleswig-Holstein. The Rutta family agreed to take part in the QS-live information campaign as a QS ambassador. In this interview, Stefanie and Werner Rutta explain the measures they take in the area of quality assurance.

### Why did you decide to participate in the QS scheme?

**Werner Rutta:** We have been participating in the QS scheme since 2004. For us, the QS certificate is our admission ticket to the food retail sector. The certificate proves that our processes comply with the requirements of the QS system – and this is checked by independent auditors. There is a system to the documentation and self-assessment requirements. They don't pose an obstacle as we ourselves set high standards for quality assurance in the interests of our own business and out of an awareness of our responsibility.

### What does quality assurance mean to you?

**Stefanie Rutta:** Quality assurance plays a central role for us – particularly during harvesting. It is fundamental to the success of our business. The apples are individually placed in large transport crates to avoid pressure points. In the processing hall, the crates of apples are then immersed in a water bath. The apples float along with the water flow to the sorting and packing



system. They are inspected by hand before being automatically dried and sorted by size. Following a final check, the machines place the apples in large crates for storage or transport. Produce that is not delivered to customers right away is stored in the temperature-controlled warehouse, where the apples can remain for several months without any adverse effect on quality.

### What caused you to become involved in QS-live?

**Stefanie Rutta:** Here on our apple farm we produce safe, high-quality food, and this is something we are totally committed to. As QS-live ambassadors, we are totally open about what we do – not only on the Internet but also here in our orchard, and we're always happy to open our doors. Many visitors are amazed that the

water in which the apples float from station to station in the processing hall has the same quality as drinking water, which means the apples can be eaten as they are.

### What is special about your enterprise?

**Werner Rutta:** The fruit orchard was mentioned for the first time in the 18th century. It used to be home to a so-called pomological institute, in other words an institute specialising in apples, and was a venue for research and the training of skilled personnel. Today, we are going our own way: larger spacing between rows and more space for the individual trees ensures more light and a better yield.



QS-live  
INITIATIVE  
QUALITÄTSSICHERUNG



Finanziert mit  
Fördermitteln  
der Europäischen  
Union

## ADVISORY BOARD FOR FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND POTATOES ULRICH SCHOPHOHL RE-ELECTED



**re-elected Ulrich Schopohl (see photo) as Chairman for a further two years. Schopohl, Head of Strategic Quality Assurance at the REWE Group, has chaired the advisory board since 2009.**

One of the topics on the agenda of the March meeting was the avoidance of microbiological risks for food safety in the segment of fruit & vegetables. The attendees at the meeting also talked about the issue of sustainability, an issue for which QS is designed to serve as a platform for discussion. The goal is to shape the demands of industry on scheme participants in all areas in such a way the relevant criteria can continue to be implemented in future in a practicable way.

Another issue of ongoing high priority on the advisory board is that of microbiology in connection with fresh fruit and vegetables. A project is being launched in this area to obtain more information on the contamination risk and to reduce this risk.

### New members of the advisory board

The long-serving members of the board have been joined this year by several new faces: Dr. Markus Nöthen (Pfalzmarkt für Obst und Gemüse eG), Dr. Alexander Grabolle (Union der Deutschen Kartoffelwirtschaft e.V.), Raf de Blaiser (LAVA), Albert Wielink (The Greenery B.V.) and Reiner Ley (EDEKA Fruit Handling Centre West).

## SCHEME PARTICIPANT **OGZ OBST- UND GEMÜSEZENTRALE RHEIN-MAIN EG**



**The OGZ fruit- und Gemüsezentrale Rhein-Main eG cooperative is one of the biggest suppliers of German asparagus, strawberries, onions and bush beans. The activities of OGZ cover the southern Hessen and Rhine-Hessen regions. The cooperative delivers its produce to customers from two locations, and quality assurance plays a key role in the operations of the enterprise.**

The producers' cooperative was founded in Griesheim near Darmstadt in 1967 and celebrated its 45th anniversary last year. "OGZ has always been a dependable partner for top quality from the Rhine-Main metropolitan region", says Eduard Schendel (see photo), who is responsible for sales. The main job of OGZ is to market the products of its members, and new tasks have been added over the years. OGZ systematically tackles and implements all the duties it is tasked with: as a service provider, it supports and advises its members, most of whom are certified in line with QS-GAP. As a QS-approved coordinator, OGZ provides support services to its producers, and this area has been the responsibility of Sabine Bickel as quality management officer since August 2012.

### Marketing at two locations

Onions and potatoes are processed at the central location in Griesheim. The service centre of OGZ in Lampertheim is responsible for the processing and packaging of onions, bush

beans, strawberries and asparagus, and the Agrarprodukte Hartmann GmbH & Co. KG (APH) company, also in Lampertheim, handles the marketing of selected products. APH is now a wholly owned subsidiary of OGZ and, like OGZ itself, also QS certified. The product range of OGZ also includes gherkins, pumpkins, sweet-corn and rhubarb.

### Focus on quality

This is what OGZ Quality Manager Sabine Bickel says about the quality policy of the cooperative with its 102 members: "We are all responsible for ensuring that our products are of the very best quality when they reach the shelves of our customers. The QS inspection system is the ideal way to ensure this is the case. All the relevant factors are taken into account, above all with regard to the quality, traceability, hygiene and safety of the products."

## SCHEME PARTICIPANTS AND MARKETS **THE LATEST FIGURES**

The number of scheme participants is increasing, as a comparison with last year's figures shows. 24,680 companies are currently registered with QS, a rise of 3.1 percent since 03/2012).

What is particularly encouraging is the ongoing increase in the number of foreign scheme participants (plus 18.7 percent). This ensures ever higher availability of products that consumers can rely on – from farm to shop.

Scheme participants in the chain	Total	Of which outside Germany
Fruit, Vegetables, Potatoes	<b>24,680</b>	<b>5,378</b>
<b>Production<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>13,164</b>	<b>4,948</b>
- Fruit, vegetables	10,536	4,919
- Potatoes	2,628	29
<b>Wholesale</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Food retail</b>	<b>10,784</b>	<b>200</b>

<sup>1</sup> Of which:  
Producers with QS-GAP certification: 6,542, producers with recognised GlobalG.A.P certification: 3,115  
Producers with recognised IKKB certification: 2,268, producers with recognised AMAG.A.P. certification: 124

As of: 1 March 2013

## +++ NEWS IN BRIEF +++ NEWS IN BRIEF +++ NEWS IN BRIEF +++ NEWS IN BRIEF +++ NEWS IN BRIEF ++

### Three times "10 years at QS"

Our colleagues Katrin Spemann, responsible for the agriculture and feed sectors, Claudia Rotter, an expert above all for residue monitoring in fruit, vegetable and potatoes, and Angelika Baden (personnel, secretarial office, central services) have been dependable contacts at QS head office for ten years now. We would like to thank them for their efforts and commitment.



Katrin Spemann Claudia Rotter Angelika Baden



### QS-live on site

In Hilden, "LandFrau" and QS-live ambassador Lore Mauler answered numerous questions on the proper way to store fruit, vegetables and meat, fielding the questions of visitors at the opening of a new Kaiser's Tengelmann supermarket. This is one of the ways in which QS promotes communication with consumers on the ground, informing them about the commitment of the scheme participants to the production and marketing of safe food products at the sales counter.

### Conference on piglet castration in June

A conference on renouncing piglet castration will take place in Berlin on 25 June 2013. The event will be staged by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (BMELV) and QS.

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