



Qualitätssicherung. **Vom Erzeuger bis zur Ladentheke.**



Laboratory Performance Assessments in the QS Scheme

Bonn, 5 July 2017

Execution quality of laboratories put to the test

“The QS Laboratory Competence Assessment enables laboratories to identify problems and error sources and thus continuously improve the quality of their analyses,” explains Dr. Gustav Offenbacher, assessor for residue analysis and quality control. The tests are specifically structured in such a way that weak points can be revealed and rectified. Evidence of this has been provided once again by the result of this year’s spring test in which, although 71% of the recognised laboratories passed, only a good third of them were completely error-free. QS-recognised laboratories did considerably better here than labs undergoing the recognition process (see Fig. 1).

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“In the laboratory performance assessment, laboratories must provide regular evidence that they can perform sustainably at a uniformly high level. Without the constant further development of their analytical processes, it is doubtful whether they will continue to pass the test,” explains Offenbacher. “On the other hand though, the test also supports the laboratories’ in-house quality management systems. Discrepancies are revealed and can be subsequently rectified”. When the test results are disclosed, the laboratories are requested to give their views on the detected discrepancies and to process them without delay. The analytical problem cases among the test materials are then discussed in a large group at the annual meeting of the laboratory managers.

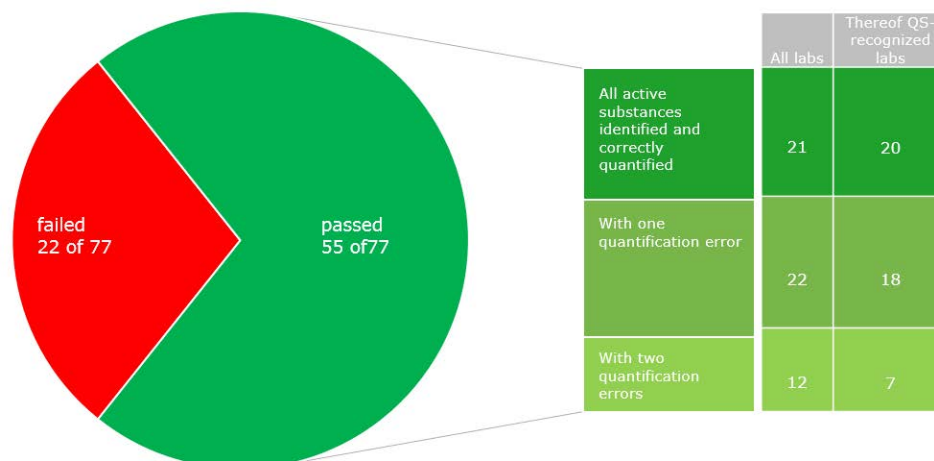


Fig. 1: Overview of test results 2017



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In the current test, the quantification of the active substances within a complex sample matrix such as savoy cabbage posed a special challenge to the participants. In the multi-method, above all the active substances fluazifop and omethoate caused difficulties. The very polar pesticides (chlorate, perchlorate), which have to be determined with special methods, produced a similar picture. "The analysis of these substances in general is demanding and requires experience from the labs under consideration of matrix influences on the separation and detection systems used," according to Offenbacher. "The demand has to be to detect and correctly quantify all of the active substances, even in difficult matrices. That this is possible was proven in the latest test by 21 laboratories which fully satisfied all requirements. Ultimately, the tests and their results can point out potential for improvement to all laboratories," sums up Offenbacher.

Original analyses reports still capable of improvement

When the results were conveyed, the laboratories were once again requested to provide an original test report. The information in the analyses report is important for the interpretation of results by the customer. Reporting has already improved in many areas, such as the provision of information on marketability and ARfD capacity, but optimisation potential still exists. 73 percent of the laboratories failed to provide at least one of the seven pieces of information requested.

QS Fachgesellschaft Obst-Gemüse-Kartoffeln GmbH is the scheme owner and sponsor of QS quality assurance of fruit, vegetables and potatoes. The standards defined by QS constitute strict, verifiable production criteria for all stages of the supply chain, from the producer to the retailer. The monitoring of these criteria across all stages, as well as the traceability of products and foods produced from them, are the distinguishing features of the scheme. To date, over 29,000 companies in the fresh fruit, vegetables and potatoes sector have chosen to participate in the QS test scheme for foods.

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