Crisis management and crisis communication within the QS scheme

Crisis management and crisis communication serve to ensure the safety of our food across all stages and to prevent harm to consumers and those uninvolved in the food chain.

QS is a quality assurance system for meat and meat products as well as fruit, vegetables and potatoes. Product and process related crises cannot be excluded. They require well-organized crisis mechanisms in production and marketing. The QS scheme is part of this crisis mechanism. The scheme helps to prevent crises with preventive measures and is involved in crisis management with crisis management and crisis communication measures.

Crisis management measures overcome crises

Crisis management system	In a scheme with more than 186,000 scheme participants, product- and process-related crises cannot be completely ruled out despite comprehensive preventive measures. To manage these crises, QS has set up a comprehensive crisis management system: • Stage-related **incidence forms and reporting sheets** for scheme participants, analogue and digital • Web-based **QS crisis portal** • Permanent **QS crisis management team** with crisis managers and crisis officers as well as (if necessary) representatives of the participating businesses • **Permanent on-call service** with 24-hour emergency number • Daily **evaluation of the press** and **NGO newsletter**
Operational crisis management	The QS crisis managers immediately follow up on any suspicions and specific information about an incident or crisis: • Research, investigation of the extent to which QS scheme participants are affected • Immediate implementation of audits of special purpose by neutral certification bodies, if necessary, immediate blocking of the company (exclusion from the ability to deliver) • If necessary: compilation and convening of a crisis management team (crisis management group) with representatives of the industries involved • Extensive cooperation with scientists/associations/service providers, cooperation with authorities on a case-by-case basis • On the decision of the QS Sanction Board: imposition of sanctions (reprimand, contractual penalties of up to €50,000, exclusion from the scheme)

Communicative crisis management	The operative measures of crisis management are accompanied by targeted crisis communication:
	
	• Information of the public/media
	
	    – via the website **www.q-s.de**
	    – via press releases (comprehensive QS press mailing list trade/daily press)
	    – via our own information media, the QS info letter and the QS newsletter
	
	• Information of the QS bodies
	• Information of the scheme participants
	• Exchange of information with authorities, scientists, associations, service providers

Preventive measures help to avoid crises

Multi-level inspection systeme	QS defines production and marketing requirements. QS scheme participants along the supply chain must comply with these requirements. Compliance with the requirements is continuously monitored in a multi-level system: • exact definition of all important requirements and specifications for documentation • permanent self-assessment/monitoring of internal processes by the company • regular neutral audits by independent certification bodies: in 2024, there were almost 29,600 audits in the meat and meat products supply chain and more than 12,100 audits in the fruit, vegetables, potatoes supply chain • ongoing "control of neutral control" through random sample audits, audit report control, traceability checks and audits of special purpose in suspicious cases
Communicative measures	Communicative measures accompany the scheme-internal prevention. The foresighted treatment of current issues, the appropriate presentation of results and incidents as well as the assumption of opinion leadership contribute to the public discussion with stakeholders and NGOs. With regard to certain topics, QS shows a constant willingness to engage in dialogue with "solution-oriented" NGOs in order to be able to include their concerns in the work of the quality assurance scheme.

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