



QS-REPORT Fruit, Vegetables, Potatoes 01/2017

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Purchasing safe fruit and vegetables online

QS is conducting initial sample audits

Food retail via the internet has developed rapidly over the last number of years. Almost 10 percent of retail sales are generated through online trade (source: GfK). Nowadays, nearly all food retail companies offer online trade and/or delivery services. To date, binding standards for packaging, transport and labelling have been missing. QS will offer this standard for online traders.

at 12.9 percent, followed by shiitake mushrooms (9.3 percent) and black salsify (5 percent; see Fig.). Binding requirements are essential in order to be able to guarantee the freshness, safety and quality of fruit and vegetables via online trade. There is a particular focus on outgoing goods inspections, labelling regulations, and returns and complaints management. The

Editorial Dear readers,

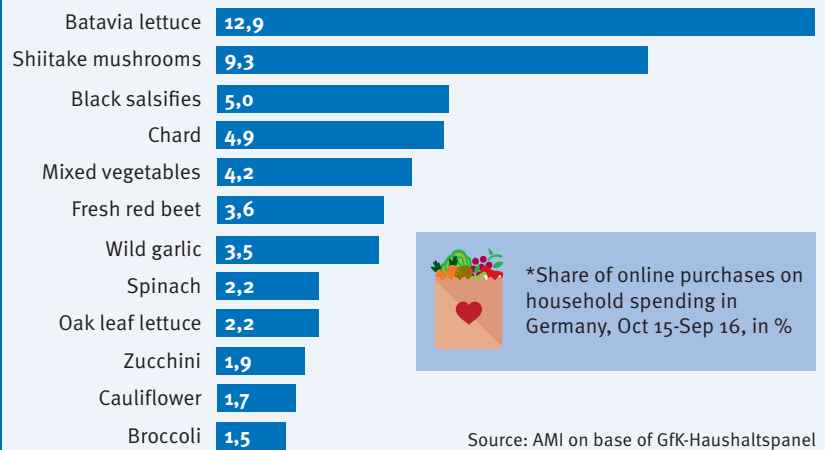
With the entry of Amazon into the online food trade, this new distribution channel gains momentum. At present, the turnover of foods in online trade is 1 billion euros, with a rising trend. But how can the freshness, safety and quality of the products be guaranteed? You can read about the latest developments in online trading in the QS scheme in our report. We also present in this issue one of the largest Dutch exporters for fruit and vegetables and QS scheme participant – Scherpenhuizen B.V.

The editorial team would be pleased to receive questions and suggestions on the QS-Report to presse@q-s.de.



Vegetables from the internet

Article with the highest online shares of its production group*



Source: AMI on base of GfK-Haushaltspanel

Although only 0.4 percent of the fresh fruit purchased by private households in Germany is bought online, while the figure for fresh vegetables is 0.5 percent, this new sales channel seems to be growing rapidly. Currently, the food making up the highest online proportion in the fresh fruit and vegetables sector is Batavian lettuce

greatest challenge is maintaining the cold chain when shipping foods that need to be refrigerated. Coordinated logistics is crucial to maintain the required cooling.

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Purchasing safe fruit and vegetables online

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Initial sample audits at REWE

With participation in the QS scheme, QS will offer online traders certification according to the latest standards. The requirements are tailored to the specific processes and critical points involved in online dispatch. For this purpose, sample audits were conducted in several places including REWE Fulfilment Centres (delivery warehouses). **Robert Schmalisch**, responsible for online trade within

strategic quality management for the REWE Group, explains: **“The requirements of the quality management system and the structure in our Fulfilment Centres are basically the same as those in our stores. However, when it comes to delivery, new and different aspects need to be considered. And, of course, inspection is also**

important here in order to guarantee the quality, freshness and safety of the products all the way to the customer. We want to keep our quality promise here too, so it goes without saying that we are not willing to dispense with objective inspection by QS and the QS certification mark when it comes to online shipment.”

New guideline preparation and processing

Initial audit at Düpmann GmbH & Co. KG

As of January this year, companies involved in preparation and processing can be certified in line with the new Preparation and Processing guideline. This is based on the previous Preparation guideline, and information on processing procedures such as freezing and heating has been added. With the standards of this guideline, QS helps companies to optimise and publicise their efforts relating to safe production processes and end products.



The guideline contains practice-oriented requirements for production processes which take the specific potential risks into consideration. Focus is placed on the implementation of a microbiological monitoring system to guarantee the microbiological safety of the products. Detailed hygiene concepts and comprehensive specifications on temperature control and shelf life are also among the requirements that need to be met for QS certification. The supporting document on microbiological sampling was revised according to the new specifications and is available as of now in the Download Centre on the QS website.

Scope of the guideline preparation and processing

- Preparation processes: chopping, peeling, grating, slicing and pureeing
- Heating processes: boiling and cooking
- Freezing processes
- Sprout production



Onions are the main processing product at Düpmann.

Guideline impresses due to broad scope

One special aspect is that in addition to companies involved purely in preparation and processing, wholesale locations that also prepare or process goods can be certified in line with the guideline too. Production companies can also have the preparation and processing requirements checked during the QS or QS-GAP audit for the production stage. For food retail stores, the relevant requirements are integrated in the stage-specific guideline and are thus mandatory. This means that if such processes take place in the store (e.g. prep kitchen), these are also checked during the audit.

Focus on hygiene requirements

The strict requirements regarding hygiene and temperature control represent one practical advantage of QS certification for companies. Hygiene shortcomings can be effectively prevented through the stringent quality criteria of the QS checklist. The vegetable processing company Düpmann Gemüseprodukte GmbH & Co. KG, based in East Westphalia, was one of the first companies to be audited according to the new guideline in February 2017. **“We are pleased about the positive audit result and being one of the first large processing companies with QS certification. We are hoping to obtain a clear competitive advantage by offering QS-certified products”**, states quality officer **Sylvia Düpmann**. At Düpmann, up to 12,000 tonnes of vegetables are processed and sold on to companies for further

processing each year. Onions, peppers, carrots, courgettes – diced, cubed, as rings, strips or slices – blanched or marinated: Düpmann offers more than 600 different items. Because the microbiological risk is relatively high with these products, special care must be taken. **“We can now provide additional evidence of this with our QS certification”**, explains a pleased Ms. Düpmann.

Selection of specific process requirements

- Hygiene concept
- Microbiological monitoring of products and facilities
- Temperature control
- Best before/use by date



Together with Ms. Koch from the quality assurance, the auditor checks the documentation.

Scherpenhuizen B.V.

Commitment to safe, sustainably produced fruit and vegetables

Scherpenhuizen B.V. is one of the first ports of call when it comes to fresh fruit and vegetables from the Netherlands. In its over 40-year history, the wholesale company has developed into one of the largest Dutch exporters of fruit and vegetables. It trades in almost all European countries, though Germany is by far the most significant sales market.

The core business of the family company from Eindhoven is the daily delivery of different fresh fruits and vegetables to food retail stores, wholesalers and processing companies. The most important products in the Dutch company's range are tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers. During the winter months, the focus lies on outdoor vegetables, dessert pears and overseas products. In addition to Dutch production companies, many companies from Europe and around the world market their products via Scherpenhuizen B.V.: **"We also market products from Dutch greenhouse projects. Our greenhouse**



production of mini cucumbers in Spain is one example. An extensive range of exotic fruits and berries rounds off our procurement activities", says CEO **Martin Scherpenhuizen**, explaining the global nature of the company.

QS scheme participant since 2006

Food safety and complying with residue specifications are top priorities in the company's quality policy. In addition to the quality inspections conducted by the KCB (Kwaliteits Controle Bureau voor Groente en fruit), the company employs an internally trained quality assurance team which is also supported by two quality inspectors from Van Nature. Martin Scherpenhuizen has this to say: **"To make sure that our customers only receive safe and high-quality products, we and our producers**

also work according to the guidelines of the QS, BRC, IFS, HAC-CP and GlobalG.A.P standards. Additional, regularly conducted residue inspections guarantee compliance with the required residue specifications." Scherpenhuizen B.V. has been offering its customers QS-certified products since 2006, making it one of the first Dutch fruit and vegetable marketing companies to do so. Over ten years later, Martin Scherpenhuizen is still convinced that this was the right step: **"Satisfying our customers' wishes is our top priority. For this reason, we have been QS-certified since 2006, and work closely together with our producer organisation Van Nature B.V. as well as other producer organisations that also participate in the QS scheme. The growing demand for QS products confirms that we are following the correct company policy"**.

Emphasis on sustainability

Scherpenhuizen B.V. is also setting standards when it comes to sustainability. A new sales centre and a CO₂-neutral office building are currently under construction on the company premises in the Acht-Noord industrial district in Eindhoven. With this new construction, Scherpenhuizen is aiming for a 5-star BREEAM Outstanding score – the highest possible certification for sustainability.

QS-GAP re-benchmarking

Practice-oriented design is paying off

Duplications were removed, requirements combined and the inspection system developed further. The result of the re-benchmarking is positive: the QS-GAP 4.0 guideline has been published with an even more practice-oriented design. Its acceptance in the industry has been increased further through the optimisation of the requirements, the handling and the practice-oriented implementation.

Overall, the number of criteria in the QS-GAP guideline was reduced from 127 to 108. Requirements such as participation in further training courses and obtaining specialist information as well as current plant protection information were com-

ined into the new requirement "qualification". The Post-harvest chapter was integrated in the "plant protection" chapter and the harvest and transport processes were included in the "risk assessment of hygiene" requirement. In terms of content, focus is placed on avoiding microbial contamination, e.g. by means of clearly defined hygiene requirements. New criteria, e.g. on the application of farm-produced fertiliser of animal origin and the handling of irrigation water, have been added. According to the new definition of the time intervals for audits effective immediately, the audits should be conducted during the growing season of the cultivated products. Where there are multiple crops, the audits should be planned in such a way that different processes such as plant protection or harvest and/or crops can be inspected.

Positive response in the industry

The QS-GAP guideline is continuously revised and optimised with the aim of making the requirements and the inspection system clearly understood and feasible for both producers and certification bodies. The continuous further development and adaptation to current industry situations is also welcomed by **Dr. Svea Pacyna-Schürheck**, Head of Quality Management and Sustainability at Landgard: **"For our producers certification is always associated with work, time and costs they have to cope with next to their normal working day. Therefore,**



we support all adjustments that reduce the effort for the manufacturing company and make it more efficient. With QS-GAP, we have a standard that actively addresses these requirements."

During a press meeting on 20 March 2017 at fruit producer **Matthias Sonntag** in Wachtberg, the most important additions and changes to the QS-GAP guideline valid as of 1 January 2017 were presented to the trade press and subjected to a practical test. There, the experienced QS auditor **Monika Dahme** explained the procedure of an audit and checked some criteria selected as examples. In addition to QS employees, **Lukas Zeitzem**, quality manager from Landgard, was also available to answer the journalists' questions.

The supporting document **"Microbiology and Sampling"** has been comprehensively revised by Dr. Marcus Langen, Department Manager at Dr. Berns Laboratorium GmbH & Co. KG, and is available now in the Download Centre on the QS website.

Prep kitchens

Guideline food retail expanded

With so-called prep kitchens, more and more traders are responding to the growing demand for fresh, pre-cut fruit and vegetables as well as fresh-cut salads. Special care must be taken when handling these products because they are susceptible to contamination with pathogenic microorganisms. For this reason, QS has revised the guideline food retail fruit, vegetables, potatoes and integrated all requirements for fruit and vegetables cut in the food retail store.

Focal points of an inspection for certification according to the QS guideline include the implementation of hygiene requirements as well as microbiological and sensory monitoring to guarantee the microbiological

safety of the products. This is based on the "BLL-Leitlinie für Gute Verfahrenspraxis zur Durchführung der mikrobiologischen Eigenkontrollen bei der Selbsterstellung von verzehrfertigen, vorzerkleinerten Obst- und Gemüseprodukten im Einzelhandel" (Guideline for good practice to the application of microbiological self-monitoring while producing ready-to-eat and pre-crushed fruit and vegetables to retail). Thus, detailed hygiene concepts as well as comprehensive



specifications on temperature control and shelf life are among the requirements that must be met for QS certification. Other requirements that are checked include staff hygiene and packaging in addition to product-specific requirements such as cross-contamination.

News in brief

Overview of new QS scheme participants

Every month, new companies decide to participate in the QS scheme and thus give a signal to their customers that all their operational processes are checked by independent certification bodies. Once a month we publish an overview of all new companies participating in the QS scheme on the QS website. The overview can optionally be accessed via the scheme participant search (see databases) or via the media catalog under Facts and Figures.

Video tutorials on the QS residue database

With new video tutorials, QS is offering a quick introduction to the many evaluation possibilities of the QS residue database. How can a reset request be recorded in the residue database? How is sample related data collected there? How can the analysis results be filtered by the number of active substances or the percentage of maximum residue levels reached? The video tutorials, which can be accessed now under www.q-s.de/video-tutorials-en or on YouTube, provide step-by-step explanations of the most important functions of the QS database.



25 years of Fruit Logistica

Many visitors to our fair booth from Germany and abroad, intensive discussions with existing and potential scheme participants, a get-together with food bloggers and, last but not least, the Blaue Stunde from QS and the BVEO (Federal association of producer organizations fruit and vegetables) contributed to our successful appearance at the 25th Fruit Logistica trade fair.

We were particularly pleased by the visit of important representatives of the sector and politicians during a tour of the fair. In the photo above from left to right: G. Lamusse (Global Brand Manager FRUIT LOGISTICA); C. Ufen (Chairman of expert group vegetable production, BOG); Dr. C. Weseloh (Managing Director BVEO); Dr. H. Ehlers (Managing Director DRV); M. Nüssel (President DRV); J. Rukwied (President

DBV); Dr. T. Backhaus (Minister for Agriculture and Environment, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern); J. Stechmann (Chairman BOG); F.-J. Holzenkamp (MdB); Dr. H.-J. Nienhoff (Managing Director QS), K. Voges (Chairman BVEO); W. Böck (Deputy Chairman of expert group vegetable production, BOG).



During a meeting of the „A-Net“, a European platform for national standards in the area of fruit, vegetables and potatoes, standard owner from Austria (AMA Marketing: S. Pohl-Stadlhofer, S. Kunze), the Netherlands (Productschap Akkerbouw: Dr. J. Wielemaker), the UK (Red Tractor: P. Sherborne), Belgium (Vegaplan: B. Wolf, R. Cools), Switzerland (SwissGAP: P. Sieghart, M. Wermeinger) and Germany (QS: Dr. A. Förschler, W. Kamphausen) discussed new aspects of the standards and future issues.

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