



# QS-REPORT Fruit, Vegetables, Potatoes 01/2018



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## Spargelhöfe Winkelmann High quality and hygiene standards are a must

**Editorial** Dear readers,  
The entire industry has made great progress in dealing with pesticide residues in recent years. What can we improve on the pathogens? They pose a potential health hazard. What are the sources of contamination for human pathogenic bacteria and viruses in fresh fruit and vegetables? Which prevention measures can be derived from this? How can practical solutions be taught? This is currently the subject of research funded by the QS Science Fund (page 3). The expert for food safety, Udo Lampe, also deals with the topic in this issue of the QS-Report. On page 3 he gives practical tips for producers to reduce the microbiological risk.



and a large motor pool which ensures fresh delivery to the sales points every day. Two farmyard shops and affiliated gastronomy businesses are also supplied with the company's produce. In addition to the cultivation businesses, there is also a producers' organisation which looks after sales and marketing to wholesalers and food retailers. **"We can offer the entire range of asparagus",** reports Winkelmann with pride. **"In addition to white asparagus, which is the most popular variety in Germany, we also grow green asparagus with colour tones ranging to deep violet. We also offer all asparagus products peeled, and the package sizes and types can also be adapted to suit customers' wishes."**

**The busiest time of the year at asparagus farm "Spargelhöfe Winkelmann" begins with the start of the season in April. Then quality assurance is a mandatory daily task within the company. The family business Winkelmann GmbH & Co. KG has been successfully QS-certified since 2006 and everyone involved with the company knows precisely what is required when harvesting and processing the king of vegetables.**

**Hygiene is what it's all about**  
To ensure that products do not get contaminated with disease-causing germs, cleanliness and hygiene when harvesting and peeling asparagus play an important role. The company decided to participate in the QS scheme in 2006. This only applied to production to begin with, but the Winkelmanns also use certification on the wholesale level in the meantime – especially where asparagus peeling is concerned – for the preparation and processing stage. **"QS offers us a recognised system which is also adapted to and recognised by international standards through benchmarking, which means that our customers can rely on consistently high quality",** says Winkelmann. As peeled asparagus is particularly susceptible to contamination with germs, process hygiene and the observance of microbiological specifications are a basic prerequisite here in particular for guaranteeing safe produce. **"Asparagus peeling is**

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**"Our family started to specialise in the cultivation of asparagus and soft fruits in 1954",** relates Ernst-August Winkelmann. The company consists of two farms; he manages the fortunes of the farming business in Beelitz in Brandenburg with 800 ha asparagus and, together with his brother Friedrich Winkelmann, the Spargelhof Winkelmann in the East Westphalian town of Tonnenheide, where 600 ha of asparagus are grown in North Rhine Westphalia and Lower Saxony. This requires not only good specialised knowledge and practical skills, because logistics in particular – all the way through to perfect presentation in retail outlets – presents the company with new challenges again and again. The farms have their own sorting sheds, packing stations

a very sensitive area”, according to Dr. Nadine Winkelmann, Quality Assurance Representative in Tonnenheide. **“When the peel is removed, asparagus becomes more susceptible to microbial germs and contamination. Thanks to the strict rules imposed by QS, as well as self-regulation and regular hygiene training for all staff, we can be sure that we supply our customers with perfect asparagus.”**

#### Start of QS hygiene audits in 2018

To validate hygiene requirements, regular random sample audits are conducted by QS at production businesses with main emphasis on hygiene. From May this year, randomly selected businesses will again be audited without prior notification.

**“The results of the last few years prove that production businesses have become sensitised to the topic of hygiene and award it a high status. They also show, however, that some details can get lost from sight during the hectic harvest phase,”** explains Dr. Georg Berns of Dr. Berns Laboratorium. **“To ensure that hygiene requirements are upheld at all times, even during harvest time, I recommend that the businesses initiate all of the necessary steps before the harvest begins”**, Dr. Berns continues.

**i** Tips for producers for hygiene management: <https://qs-blog.de/2016/07/hygienemanagement> (only in German)

# New maximum residue levels for radish and small radish leaves only from 1 January 2022

## SCoPAFF concludes transitional period

On 23 March 2018, the The Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (SCoPAFF) set a short-term transitional period for maximum residue levels in radish and radish leaves. This came into effect on 1 April 2018 and is to apply until 1 January 2022.

The SCoPAFF responded to Member States' feedback on Regulation (EU) 2018/62, which entered into force in February 2018 and retroactively sets revised residue analysis requirements for radish and radish leaves as of 1 January 2018. Because of this update of EU Regulation VO (EU) 396/2005 (Annex I, Part B), radishes and radishes leaves have been assigned to the cultural group of kale (code 0243020) since the beginning of the year and are subject to their maximum residue levels (MRLs).

As this would make marketing considerably more difficult, SCoPAFF took up the issue at the end of February 2018 and drafted a new regulation to regulate a transitional period. Accordingly, the assignment of radish / radish leaves to kale is extended by a footnote stating that the MRLs for radish and radish leaves will only come into effect as of

1 January 2022. The transitional period was unanimously adopted by the member states on 23 March 2018.

#### Support from QS

In order to establish whether the MRLs can be also complied with for the leaves when applying the plant protection products authorised for radish and small radish, the applicable analysis data on this was made available to QS by its scheme participants. The evaluation of the results shows that the application of the maximum residue level for kale can result in an exceedance of the MRL with small radish leaves. The MRL was exceeded in 24 of the total of 31 samples examined, with 23 exceedances alone attributed to the active substance iprodione. The laboratory results

for the related root vegetables were also available for 17 samples. These did not show any exceedance of the maximum residue limit. To draw the attention of the EU Commission to the problems that can arise in actual practice through the coming into effect of the regulation, QS has placed the evaluation results at the disposal of the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL).



# Recognition of GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2-certificates

## Implementation has been started



Once the QS Advisory Board decided in autumn 2017 that producers with a GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2-certificate (group certification) can also supply fruit and vegetables into the QS scheme under certain circumstances, concrete steps for scheme participation were defined. Now it's all about implementation.

**“The organization of participation is based on the proven participation of Option 1 pro-**

**ducers”**, said Dr. Annette Förschler, responsible at QS for this project. **“As a result, we have succeeded in making participation in the QS scheme for GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2-producers clearly structured and practice-oriented”**, Dr. Förschler continues. QS participation via a GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2-certificate is possible for all members of a producer group who have their seat of business and cultivation area inside the European Union and have been participating for at least two years in GLOBALG.A.P. In addition to this, these businesses must participate in QS residue monitoring. The producers are registered with QS and use the GLOBALG.A.P. auditing system. The QS coordinator is responsible for the correct implementation of these conditions. The related tasks that this brings with it for the coordinator are drawn

up in an appendix to the Guideline Coordinators Agriculture/Production, which comes into effect on 1 May 2018 (see Document Centre at [www.q-s.de/en/](http://www.q-s.de/en/)). **“In order to produce high-quality goods, reliable and safe, the QS Advisory Board has defined the requirements for the participation of producers with a GLOBALG.A.P. Option 2-certificate so that a practically equivalent quality assurance of the processes can be guaranteed”**, emphasizes Dr. Förschler. **„The availability of QS goods is secured and unnecessary costs through double audits are avoided. This is an important step towards achieving a comparably high level in the production of safe fruits and vegetables across borders.”**

**i** All important information has been compiled in an infosheet : [www.q-s.de/en/infosheet\\_opt2](http://www.q-s.de/en/infosheet_opt2)



# QS Science Fund Fruit, Vegetables, Potatoes

## Additional research project on microbial risks is being sponsored

The QS Science Fund Fruit, Vegetables, Potatoes is currently supporting a research project at the University of Osnabrück on the risk categorisation of microbial contamination pathways in fruit and vegetable production. The newly sponsored research work builds on a meta-study also sponsored by the QS Science Fund in which it is examined which contamination sources for human-pathogenic bacteria and viruses in fresh fruit and vegetables can be taken into consideration and which preventive and

decontamination measures can be derived from them. In this current project, a production and culture-specific risk categorisation of the possible contaminations sources is now to be prepared.

The already extensive scientific literature is processed using a matrix before initial tests on the behaviour of pathogenic germs are performed on lettuce as the model culture.

**“Within the project we can prepare a data basis for the quantitative risk assessment**

**of production practices, thereby improving process hygiene in fruit and vegetable cultivation to the benefit of the entire sector”**, explains Prof. Dr. Andreas Ulbrich of the University of Osnabrück.

### Berlin and Göttingen to receive funding too

In addition to the project in Osnabrück, the QS Science Fund Fruit, Vegetables, Potatoes is currently sponsoring projects conducted by Humboldt University Berlin on the suitability of willow extract as a plant strengthening and protection agent, and by Georg-August University Göttingen on nitrate determination in potatoes and potato products.

# Minimize microbiological risks in fruit and vegetable production systematically

## Hints from practice (Guest commentary by Udo Lampe, Analytica Alimentaria GmbH)

**Fruit and vegetable diseases are a potential source of danger for consumers and therefore can not be taken seriously enough. Proper assessment of the situation of local producers can help to systematically reduce microbiological risks. The QS supporting document Processing / Processing of Fruits, Vegetables, Potatoes: Microbiology and Sampling gives valuable information and practical tips. In the following we give additionally useful hints for the daily practice.**

For a long time, the right approaches were lacking to effectively combat microbial risks. The EHEC crisis of 2011 is an example of this. Thousands of analyses and investigations were carried out, but the germ was not even discovered on the sprout farm, which was eventually identified as the point of departure for the outbreak. The example shows that it is difficult to identify germs in the supply chain. At present, controls are often performed so that the number of microbiological tests is unspecifically based on the amount of fruit and vegetables being traded. If disease germs are found, the

affected batch can be stopped. Nevertheless, one scratches with this system only on the surface. Where do the germs of fruits and vegetables come from? How can stress be prevented and how do you quickly find all affected batches under load?

### Assessing the local situation is critical to finding and eliminating risks

According to a study by the European Food Safety Authority<sup>1</sup> (EFSA) eight out of nine of the most important risk factors are in the field of cultivation (see fig. below). This also corresponds to the practical experience. When you are on site with the producers, the risk factors can be specifically identified during field inspections: Are there any animals on the field? Was manure used? Was there heavy rain or even flooding? Based on these and other questions, experts can determine if a sample needs to be taken for the microbiological examination on the inspected field. So the samples can be taken exactly where it is necessary and useful. To preclude transfer of germs by the sampler, samples should only be taken by trained personnel. Also in warehouses, regular

inspections have a major impact: they ensure that hygiene plans are adhered to, and the presence of inspectors increases and corrects employees' awareness of risks and possible problems. Finally, quick and error-free laboratory analysis and assurance of results are further prerequisites for market participants to be able to continue to trade and prevent contaminated goods from entering the market.

### Action plans allow you to act in an emergency

If pathogens are found, further action - in the form of an action plan - must be predetermined. It is not enough to lock the goods and the affected fields. The point is to find out if it is a punctual pollution - for example by bird droppings - or a general pollution, e.g. by flooding or dirty irrigation water acts. Only if the source of the contamination is identified, it can be eliminated in the future by additional measures and controls in the right places. In the case of pathogens, analyses are always ineffective if the sampling takes place in the wrong places and at the wrong time and the corresponding risk orientation is missing. On the other hand, a correct analysis can help avoid endangering consumers and avoid expensive product recalls.

<sup>1</sup>Scientific Opinion on the risk posed by pathogens in food of non-animal origin. Part 1 (outbreak data analysis and risk ranking of food/pathogen combinations) EFSA Panel on Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ)

## EFSA identifies key factors for microbiological risk in fruit and vegetable production . . . . .



# Reinforcement for QS in Spain

## New contact person for Spanish scheme participants



**Maribel Chiva Silvestre (picture) knows the Spanish fruit and vegetable sector like the back of her hand. As a trained agronomist, she worked as a quality and scheme manager and as an auditor for a Spanish certification body for 15 years. Since 2008, she has been conducting more than 250 QS audits within the fruit and vegetables sector. Two years ago, she decided to pursue a path of self-employment. For some time since then, she has been working as a freelance auditor for QS and will now continue working with QS as a contact person for scheme participants in Spain. We talked to Maribel about the extended cooperation.**

**You have been closely working with QS since 2017. What exactly are your tasks within the QS scheme?**

**Chiva:** “During the past year, I was mainly working as an auditor of special purpose. In the frame of the expansion of the QS presence in Spain and the fact, that the amount of scheme participants is rising

steadily, I’m now supporting coordinators and laboratories as well as existing and potential new scheme participants. The representation of QS at fairs and the organisation of information events is going to be within my scope of activities as well.”

**What do you expect from the cooperation with QS?**

**Chiva:** “With our work, we contribute to harmonise the international flows of goods and to bring our food’s quality level down to a common denominator across national borders. For this, QSs’ intensified international orientation is an important step and I am glad to be able to contribute to this.”

**What do you think are the benefits for Spanish companies of being QS certified?**

**Chiva:** “For Spanish companies, a QS certification opens doors to the German market. The export-oriented fruit and vegetable companies in Spain are also increasingly realising this. Germany is very important for our producers as a sales market and German customers trust in the QS scheme. Many German retailers expect their suppliers to be QS certified. Another benefit: As one of few schemes, the QS scheme includes all stages of the supply chain. Thus, a gapless, overall quality assurance from production to food retail is guaranteed. This builds consumer trust on the one hand and trust within the supply chain on the other hand. Each customer can fully rely on their supplier’s work.”

## News in brief

### QS inspections FIAS equivalent to GRASP social module

GLOBALG.A.P. published a new version of the interpretation guideline for the additional module GLOBALG.A.P. Risk Assessment on Social Practice (GRASP) for Germany at the beginning of 2018. The Voluntary QS Inspection of Working and Social Conditions (FIAS) takes this into account. **“The criteria of the QS-FIAS checklist and the interpretation guideline of the GRASP add-on module are further developed by a joint working group so that they are identical in content and both social modules are considered equivalent”**, Thorsten Strissel, member of the QS Advisory Board and the GLOBALG.A.P. Technical Committee GRASP.

The contents of FIAS and GRASP were adapted to each other as far back as 2015. Through the harmonisation, a practicable and legally reliable basis accepted by traders was created for production businesses and

scheme participants in the wholesale and food retail sectors which allows them to have their social management reviewed in accordance with uniform measures in the form of independent inspections.

### QS auf der Fruit Logistica 2018



The Fruit Logistica 2018 was strongly influenced once again this year by international partnership. **“We welcomed numerous scheme participants from Germany and abroad to our stand and were able to expand our trans-European relations in meetings with national and international associations and companies from the fruit and vegetables sector”**, sums up **Wilfried Kamphausen**, who has responsibility for the fruit, vegetables and potatoes supply chain at QS. **“For many laboratories too – particularly those from southern Europe who are seeking QS recognition – our trade fair presentation offered a good opportunity to start**

**up a discussion”**, Kamphausen continued. At the Blue Hour on the Thursday evening, which QS and BVEO organised for the 5th time, the roughly 250 invited guests allowed their day at the fair to draw to a close and took advantage of the get-together for some stimulating discussions.



Visiting the QS booth (left to right): Dr. H. D. Stalknecht (Managing Director BÖG), W. Kamphausen (QS), Dr. C. Weseloh (Managing Director BVEO), Dr. H. Ehlers (General Manager DRV), Dr. H.-J. Nienhoff (Managing Director QS), F.-J. Holzenkamp (President DRV), Dr. H.-C. Eiden (President BLE), O. Feuerborn (President Bauernverband Sachsen-Anhalt), J. Bliestle (Headquarters DRV).



We have compiled the best impressions for you in a short video:  
<https://youtu.be/aDgTpe28Bxc>

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QS Qualität und Sicherheit GmbH  
Responsible for the content:  
Dr. Hermann-Josef Nienhoff  
Schedestraße 1 - 3, 53113 Bonn

Phone: +49 (0) 228 35068-0  
Fax: +49 (0) 228 35068-10  
E-Mail: [info@q-s.de](mailto:info@q-s.de)  
Online: [www.q-s.de/home-gb](http://www.q-s.de/home-gb)

