



## Quality assurance promotes consumer confidence The QS scheme in food retailing

**T**he economic actors of the food chain have joined forces in the QS scheme and encounter consumers' desire for safe fruit and vegetables with transparent and consistent quality assurance. To that end, the entire value chain, from cultivation and harvest, through wholesale, preparation, processing and transport, to food retailing is represented. The QS certification mark, which identifies the QS-certified products, is well-known to around 40 per cent of German consumers.

The German food retailers increasingly rely on QS for the supply of safe fruits and vegetables all year round. Therefore, a QS scheme participation is a prerequisite for exporting to Germany for many international suppliers and their producers. QS has reached an almost comprehensive market

penetration, particularly on the important procurement markets in the Netherlands and Belgium. In southern Europe – mainly in Spain and Italy – this penetration is also increasing. Nowadays, 36 per cent of the producers and 34 per cent of the wholesale companies registered with QS are located abroad.

With a QS certification, suppliers signal to retailers that they are subject to independent third-party inspection, and that they are well positioned in terms of residue surveillance, storage, hygiene, transport and product traceability. This strengthens the trust of the commercial partners along the supply chain.

### SAFE FRUIT AND VEGETABLES 'TO GO'

The product portfolio of QS-certified fruit and vegetables available in the German food retail

sector includes both fresh and prepared products, such as ready-to-eat salads. These are currently distributed in over 16,000 grocery stores and produced and marketed in accordance with the requirements of the QS scheme.

Especially in the manufacture of fresh-cut salads, the QS requirements for process hygiene, as well as the consideration of microbiological specifications to produce safe food, are particularly important. A global hygiene plan and strict requirements for temperature control and shelf-life must be maintained to obtain a QS certification for the processing and preparation processes. For the consumers, the QS certification mark is a visible indication of quality, especially in the sensitive area of fresh-cut products.

### QS REQUIREMENTS IN FOOD RETAILING

QS scheme participants in the German food retail industry do not only expect their suppliers to be QS certified, but they also ensure that the QS requirements are fulfilled in their own stores. The verification of specific requirements, such as incoming goods inspection, traceability of the produce, temperature control and hygiene, is carried out by independent auditors from the certification bodies.

### THE PATH TO QS SCHEME PARTICIPATION

The participation in the QS scheme is open to all companies - regardless of the place where their production or company is located.

Instead of a certification granted by the QS Qualität und Sicherheit GmbH (according to the QS or QS-GAP standards), producers can also obtain the QS eligibility of delivery by means of a GlobalG.A.P.



certification (Option 1 or 2), an AMAG.A.P. or a Vegaplan certification. Are you already certified according to one of these standards and would like to deliver your products into the QS scheme? Producers with a valid audit of one of the mentioned standards can deliver into the QS scheme without the need of an additional audit. For this purpose, they must be registered in the QS database by a so-called coordinator. The coordinator supports and advises the producers. At [www.q-s.de/fruit-vegetables-potatoes/coordinators-fvp.html](http://www.q-s.de/fruit-vegetables-potatoes/coordinators-fvp.html) you can find a list of all approved coordinators.

### TO PARTICIPATE IN THE QS SCHEME AS A WHOLESALER, THE FOLLOWING STEPS ARE NECESSARY:

1. Register in the QS database at [www.qs-plattform.de](http://www.qs-plattform.de)
2. Select the certification body that organises the participation in the QS scheme
3. The certification body performs an independent audit
4. Sign the contract

The full recognition of the IFS Logistics Audit means no additional expense for the logistics companies

that already hold such a certificate. Logistics service providers with an IFS Logistics certificate can thus participate in the QS scheme without any further certification. From 1 January 2019, the IFS Food and IFS Cash&Carry/Wholesale standards will also be recognised for the logistics of fruit, vegetables and potatoes.

QS also regularly informs and offers training courses on the QS scheme outside Germany. This year, for example, a course on the correct sampling for residue analyses is being offered in neighbouring countries. To this aim, QS works together with local partners. More information about QS and the participation in the QS scheme with recognised certificates can be found at [www.q-s.de](http://www.q-s.de) (in German, English and Spanish). 

