



## GUIDELINE FOR OFFICIAL SAMPLING

### Preface

The “European Working Community for Food Inspection and Consumer Protection” (EWFC) has been in existence since 1991 and was founded with the following objectives:

- **To bring together the professional and state federations of food inspection of the individual member states of Europe.**
- **To strengthen and accelerate the exchange of experiences and information.**
- **To harmonize inspection activities in Europe.**
- **To guarantee the protection of the consumers.**

The present members are federations of food inspectors, food chemists and meat inspectors from Belgium, Germany, England, France, the Netherlands and Austria. There are contacts to food inspectors from Spain, Sweden and Luxemburg.

There should be a transparency and traceability for special procedures for consumer protection and for all groups who are involved in the food production and the food market.

One of these procedures is a harmonized method of inspection. In the year 2000 the EWFC set out guidelines for good control practice of Food Premises

Another of these projects is a harmonized system for sampling.

An intensive exchange of information should be achieved on a National and European level. This information should form a basis for risk assessment and planning sampling regimes.

The purpose of this guideline is to harmonize the sampling in the EC and to improve its quality.

This paper describes a baseline standard and each member state has to complete it with its own working instructions.

## 1 DESCRIPTION

This guideline is for all those involved in the official control of foodstuffs, who carry out sampling for the purposes of analysis.

The basis is Directive 89/397/EC for official control of foodstuffs of the Council of 14 June 1989 and Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law.

This guideline describes the nature/character and the method, how individuals involved in the official control of foodstuffs have to take samples, and then transport them or carry them to accredited laboratories.

The result of the analysis should reflect the condition at the moment of sampling.

## 2 DEFINITION

### **Sample**

All products, taken for the purposes of analysis according EC Directive 89/397. Additional primary products (plants and animals) for the production of food and animal feed according EC Regulation 178/2002.

### **Planned / monitoring / project samples**

Are all samples, taken under a coordinated framework.

### **Samples for special purposes**

Are all samples, which are not planned samples (for example see annex 1)

### **Counter-samples**

Counter-samples are official and identical examples of the sample, which are left behind.

### **Sample-distinctives (Identification)**

Every sample has a unified code, which is used for identification and registration

### **Sealing**

Is using an official enclosure which is tamper-proof and can only be opened by breaking or destroying the integrity of the enclosure.

### **Sample-document**

Is an official document, which records the details of the sample

### **Sample-transport**

The sample-transportation includes the entire time elapsed from sampling to the place of research

## **Official Samplers**

Are competent persons, properly trained by member-state law who take the samples

## **3 PROCEDURE**

### **3.1 Planning**

The creation of the sample-plan takes place in consultation with the following organizations:

- competent ministries
- research-services
- food law enforcement authorities

The setting out of the sampling plan takes place according to following criteria:

- risk-analysis of the individual food-groups
- research-capacity of the laboratories
- critical areas like monitoring, coordinated programs from the EC ...
- current main-points corresponding to special matters (e.g. national or E.U.-rapid-alert system, consumer-complaints, major cases of disease-outbreaks
- regarding new feeding-habits, quality-standards and developments in food-and commodity-section
- paying regard to new ways of commerce (e-commerce)

#### **3.1.2 Preparations**

For any kind of sampling, the competent authorities should have the required sampling-materials in sufficient type and numbers at their disposal.

Previously these materials are to be checked for functionality and effectiveness.

The official-sampler is bound to use only these sample-materials and carry them in sufficient numbers.

#### **3.1.3 Carry-out the sampling**

In preparing for the planned investigation the sampling-official must ensure the product does not suffer any significant change between the time of sampling and the time of analysis.

Usually the sampling takes place unannounced. There is an obligation on companies to co-operate and permit the sampling.

If necessary, the company can be informed about the aim of the sampling.

The relevant food-law regulations of the member-states are to be followed.

The size of the sample-amount depends on the planned investigation and is to be fixed in special SOP's (standard operation procedures) (see point 5.)

The selection of samples follows after:

- results of the risk-analysis and risk-assessment
- monitoring programs
- sample plans
- special purposes

The official sampling is recorded in a sample-document.

After sampling the sample will be packed, locked and sealed in an identical way.

### **3.1.4. Sample-distinctives and registration**

Every sample must be given an unambiguous & unique sample-identification e.g. by series of letters and ciphers or other codes.

In the sample-taking-document all relevant data is recorded, so that trace-ability is possible (see example in annex 2)

### **3.1.5. Sealing**

After the sampling, all samples are sealed on the spot.

The sealing is carried out in such a way, that opening of the package without damaging it or the seal is impossible.

### **3.1.6. Transportation**

Samples must be transported and stored in a way, that no significant changes in relation to the researched/inquired/examined parameters will take place.

When highly perishable food-stuffs are to be handled, appropriate boxes and storage temperatures must be used.

#### **transport-boxes:**

The transport-boxes have to guarantee, that damage to the samples is impossible and that the samples integrity is preserved

#### **Temperature-surveillance/monitoring:**

It must be guaranteed, that the required temperatures can be maintained and documented for legal purposes, throughout the entire time period of sample transportation.







