

GUIDELINES FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF THE COMPETENCE OF TESTING LABORATORIES INVOLVED IN THE IMPORT AND EXPORT CONTROL OF FOOD

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SCOPE

1. These guidelines provide a framework for the implementation of quality assurance measures to ensure the competence of testing laboratories involved in the import and export control of foods.
2. These guidelines are intended to assist countries in the application of requirements for trade in foodstuffs in order to protect the consumers and to facilitate fair trade.

REQUIREMENTS

3. The following quality criteria should be adopted by laboratories involved in the import and export control of foods:
 - Compliance with the general criteria for testing laboratories laid down in ISO/IEC Guide 25:1990 “General requirements for the competence of calibration and testing laboratories”;
 - Participation in appropriate proficiency testing schemes for food analysis which conform to the requirements laid down in “The International Harmonized Protocol for the Proficiency Testing of (Chemical) Analytical Laboratories”, Pure & Appl. Chem. 65 (1993) 2132-2144;
 - Whenever available, use methods of analysis which have been validated according to the principles laid down by the Codex Alimentarius Commission; and
 - Use internal quality control procedures, such as those described in the “Harmonized Guidelines for Internal Quality Control in Analytical Chemistry Laboratories”, Pure & Appl. Chem. 67 (1995) 649-666.
4. The bodies assessing the laboratories referred to above should comply with the general criteria for laboratory accreditation, such as those laid down in the ISO/IEC Guide 58:1993: “Calibration and testing laboratory accreditation systems - General requirements for operation and recognition”.

¹ The Codex Guidelines for the Assessment of the Competence of Testing Laboratories Involved in the Import and Export Control of Food were adopted by the Codex Alimentarius at its 22nd Session, 1997. They have been sent to all Member Nations and Associate Members of FAO and WHO as an advisory text, and it is for individual governments to decide what use they wish to make of the Guidelines.