



# NEWSLETTER FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND POTATOES



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial	1
Asparagus season 2011	1
Plant protection (current)	2
Berlin Agreement updated	2
Introduced: The Pfalzmarkt	2
New supporting document for irrigation water	3
Interview: New potatoes	3
Edeka Minden-Hannover newly involved	3
Annual report and food retail partnerships	4
Scheme participants and markets	4
Short and current	4

## EDITORIAL

### Dear readers,

Thanks to the early start to the season with summer temperatures and the associated severe drought, producers have already reported a number of crop losses. It remains to be seen how the rest of the season will pan out. Irrigation is in any case an important subject for all producers at present. We have provided our new "Supporting document: Sampling recommendations for irrigation water of fruit, vegetables and potatoes" for the sampling of irrigation water (page 3). The harvesting of asparagus also began very early this year.

The popular vegetable does not have any problems in terms of residues. We have interviewed an expert regarding the current plant protection strategy that is being developed (page 2).

In addition we also present to you a number of scheme participants on the following pages and report on the market, new media and partnerships.

### Your QS team

## ASPARAGUS SEASON 2011: EARLY, GOOD QUALITY AND NO RESIDUE PROBLEMS



**The asparagus season started early this year due to weather conditions and is currently running at full speed. Last year, consumers purchased an average of 1.8 kg of fresh asparagus per household. This was indicated by an AMI analysis based on the GfK Household Panel.**

The early start to the season and the good quality and quantity of the harvest could therefore mean that the previous year's figure is exceeded in 2011. There are 525 companies within the QS scheme that produce this popular seasonal vegetable. In addition to domestic production, approximately a third of producers within the QS scheme come from abroad. A sig-

nificant portion of this is asparagus from Greece. Poland and the Netherlands are also suppliers for asparagus with the QS certification mark. At wholesale level, two companies and six cooperatives are registered in the QS scheme. Asparagus is deemed to be a non-critical product with respect to residue issues. Of the 140 asparagus samples that were examined for plant protection product residues during the last season (2010) within the framework of residue monitoring required for QS, no active ingredients were detected in 98.5 percent of the tested samples. In addition the current analyses from this year also confirm this: 80 samples have already been analysed during this season in accordance with QS residue monitoring. Of those, only two samples had an active ingredient; all other samples did not have any identifiable residues. Traditionally asparagus is harvested until Midsummer's Day on 24th June. Harvesting then finishes after this date so that the asparagus can sprout and grow again. A sufficient regeneration time is important for plants that are permanent crops for eight to ten years. This is the only way to ensure that enough new shoots are able to form.

## VEGETABLE GROWING CURRENT PLANT PROTECTION STRATEGIES



**Interviewee: Dr. Ingeborg Koch. She coordinates vegetable plant protection within the Rhineland Palatinate Dienstleistungszentrum Ländlicher Raum (DLR).**

### How is the current infestation situation for you?

The vegetable crops have developed considerably as a result of the high temperatures in recent weeks. For certain crops, such as lettuce, lamb's lettuce, radishes, spring onions and cauliflowers, harvesting has already begun.

The mild temperatures have however led to the very early appearance of pests. In addition to greenflies, small cabbage root flies and the first white butterflies have already appeared. In addition, fungal diseases such as downy mildew are on the rise.

### What are the biggest problems and what strategies are you using to combat them?

As mentioned earlier, the greenfly populations have grown very strongly. But there is also a significantly earlier occurrence of useful creatures such as ladybirds at the same time. In this respect, we are in principle recommending control methods that are friendly to useful creatures. This means that plant protection products that are friendly to useful creatures must be given preference for the respective crop.

A light infestation, which is not particularly relevant in terms of marketing given that foliage as an example cannot be marketed to, can also be tolerated.

Feeding damage to radishes caused by small cabbage flies may mean that the goods can no longer be marketed. Until the end of April, the fleece coating provides adequate protection. We also recommend the use of protective nets as an additional safeguard until the first wave of cabbage flies subsides.

### The ragwort has been an element of concern in previous years. How does the situation look this year?

The most important priority here is surface hygiene. If the land remains untouched and is lying idle, weeds can start to germinate when watered and are removed following the first mechanical cultivation. If the weeds are already heavily developed, germinable seeds can in particular form for the problem weed „common ragwort“, even if only flower buds were laid out at the time.

They must then be weeded by hand prior to seeding and the ragwort must be disposed of away from the site. This additional cost factor is of course a painful measure, especially during times when prices are low.

## BERLIN AGREEMENT TERMS OF TRADE FOR POTATOES UPDATED

### The Commercial Classification Regulation for potatoes shall no longer apply from 1 July 2011 onwards, nor will the official controls of stipulated declarations such as class, variety and cooking type.

The Committee of National Associations for Potatoes (Ausschuss der Spitzenverbände der Kartoffelwirtschaft) has made use of the discontinuation of this Regulation to revise the terms of trade for potatoes. The aim was to design the contents in such a way so that they can continue to be used as a working and contractual basis for all market participants. The terms

of trade for potatoes – better known within professional circles as the „Berlin Agreement“ – have lasted for more than 80 years. The newly revised version remains an instrument available to the potato industry in which trade practices within the potato trade are documented and recommendations for the general terms and conditions are included. The Berlin Agreement therefore provides a basis for the drafting of contracts at all stages of production within the potato industry. Notwithstanding the above, the various parties nevertheless remain free to draw up individual agreements in future as well. The German Potato Trade Association

(Deutscher Kartoffelhandelsverband e. V.) announced that any content-based reforms to the Berlin Agreement are to be notified in detail via the various specialist media. The updated version of the „Berlin Agreement“ will be available shortly in brochure format from the German Potato Trade Association (Deutscher Kartoffelhandelsverband e. V.). Further information can be obtained from the German Potato Trade Association (Deutscher Kartoffelhandelsverband e. V., Schumannstr. 5, 10117 Berlin, Tel.: 030 66406851/52). [www.dkhv.org](http://www.dkhv.org)

## PFALZMARKT: SCHEME PARTICIPANTS IN THE MIDDLE OF GERMANY



**The Pfalzmarkt eG (head office in Mutterstadt) is a cooperative with more than 1,600 members. Since 1985, the various members have joined together to offer their combined services within this sales, marketing and quality association. They have been QS scheme participants since 2005.** The cooperative produces more than 150,000 tons of fruit and vegetables per year within a cultivation area of more than 12,000 hectares. More than 90 percent of vegetables grown in the Pfalz (Palatinate) are produced within the catchment area of the Pfalzmarkt. The Mediterranean-like climatic conditions within the region are ideal for growing

fruit and vegetables. The company places a great deal of emphasis on the quality assurance of its products and also carries out detailed sampling prior to harvesting. In order to perfectly synchronise growth and harvesting, the cooperative makes use of the know-how of an expert for harvesting forecasts. Hans-Jörg Friedrich, CEO of the cooperative, explains the corporate strategy: “We are continuously investing in our infrastructure and quality assurance.” In this context, the company is focusing on QS. Furthermore the Mutterstadt-based cooperative combines traditional proximity to the producer with the know-how of modern management, said the CEO.



## NEW SUPPORTING DOCUMENT **SAMPLING OF IRRIGATION WATER**

**Irrigation has a particularly important role to play during periods of drought, as has been the case this spring. Within the QS scheme, a number of quality requirements must be met for the analysis of irrigation water. A supporting document for producers of fruit, vegetables and potatoes has now been created for this purpose.**

The new supporting document is a practical decision-making tool. It facilitates the determination and implementation of business-specific measures for controlling the quality of irrigation water. Among other things, it relates to questi-

ons on the general assessment of water quality, and depends on whether the water comes from wells, standing or flowing water. The hygienic-microbiological classification and conditions of use of irrigation water are also illustrated, along with recommendations for sampling frequency and timing.

The proposed inspections include the measurement of pH level, determination of water hardness, nitrate content and bacteriological analysis, e.g. for E. coli. The various documents requested in the guidelines remain decisive for the audits.



The supporting document for the sampling of irrigation water is available from the Download Centre at [www.q-s.de](http://www.q-s.de) (fruit, vegetables and potatoes supply chain under the keyword „Production“).

## NEW POTATOES **INTERVIEW WITH THE PFÄLZISCHER ERZEUGERGEMEINSCHAFT**



**There is a long tradition of potato growing in the Pfalz region. The climatic conditions and the good soil quality make it possible for new potatoes to be specially grown. The Pfalz is Germany's premier „supplier region“. Peter Schmitt leads the Pfälzische Früh-, Speise- und Veredlungskartoffel Erzeugergemeinschaft w.V. in Neustadt an der Weinstraße and provides information on the current harvest.**

### **How is the current season shaping up for you?**

We began planting outside very early this year from the beginning to the middle of March thanks to the conditions which were good to very good. Our designated potato growing area is 4,100

hectares, of which 1,100 hectares are membrane areas. We had to water intensively as a result of the heavy drought. At the beginning of May we had problems with night frosts which damaged some of the stocks, meaning therefore that we expect a loss of revenue. The plant protection for potatoes is not however a problem. In our region, in which potatoes and vegetables are grown intensively, we try to deal with the drift problem in a constructive manner. As a result we support the idea that neighbouring farms agree with each other regarding cultivation and plant protection.

### **When does harvesting begin this year?**

The first goods are requested from the farms by wholesalers in the last week of May. Traders are expected to be supplied with firm-skinned goods by the middle of June.

### **Can anything be said already regarding the quality of the new potatoes? What measures should be observed during harvesting and distribution in order to maintain quality levels?**

We should in principle expect to see very high quality levels as a result of the selection available and the very good growing conditions. In order to optimise the harvesting conditions, we rely on measures such as pre-watering. Appropriately equipped harvesters also help to ensure that harvesting is done in a careful manner. It is also subsequently important to load the potatoes carefully as well. A number of measures must also be observed when dispatching and packing them; the overall logistics are adapted specifically to preserving quality. Decisive criteria for this include the temperature when loading and appropriate refrigerated transport.

## NEW SCHEME PARTICIPANTS **EDEKA MINDEN-HANNOVER**

**It has been tied up since December 2010: EDEKA Minden-Hannover is now a QS scheme participants for fruit, vegetables and potatoes.**

After the 1,124 branches of EDEKA Minden-Hannover were registered with QS at the end of last year, the certification of the company's wholesale warehouse is now being done. As a result, EDEKA Minden-Hannover will in future have fruit and vegetables that are universally QS-certified from the field to the shop. The decision to use QS is explained by the company with the concept of continuous quality assurance. This, along with residue monitoring convinced the company and also offers an excellent addition to their in-house activities.



The offering of regional products also fits into this concept as well. The involvement of regional and local suppliers and producers therefore plays an important role alongside the procurement of goods at wholesale level.

By participating in the QS scheme as well as extensive residue monitoring, they will be better integrated into the quality management within the fruit and vegetables sector.

The distribution area of the large EDEKA regional centre extends from the Dutch to the Polish border; there is particular focus within Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Berlin-Brandenburg. Last year the company increased its revenues compared to 2009 by 4.2 percent to EUR 6.7 billion.

OVER TEN YEARS **ANNUAL REPORT 2010 AND COOPERATION WITH RETAILERS**



The latest annual report appeared on time for the annual press conference in May. The QS annual report was published under the title “Ten years of quality assurance“. Alongside a review of the year 2010, a comprehensive amount of compact data and facts is provided relating in particular to the development of audit results in the last five years. A PDF download of the annual report can be obtained from the Media Centre on our website [www.q-s.de](http://www.q-s.de).

As already hinted in the title of the publication, 2011 is an anniversary year. Formed on 13 October 2001, QS will celebrate a round birthday in autumn 2011. QS will use a special anniversary logo around the time of the anniversary to mark the occasion.

This will also be used for the planned anniversary information. In conjunction with food retail, QS is working continuously to further develop the service offering for communication regarding the QS certification mark. QS provides a „ToolBox“ for this purpose. It comprises aids for employee training, tailor-made information brochures and flyers. There will be a number of communication approaches around the time of the



anniversary in which the common, long-term commitment to safe food will be the main topic.

SCHEME PARTICIPANTS AND MARKETS **THE CURRENT FIGURES**

The number of domestic scheme participants is constant or increasing slightly when compared to the level at the start of the year. The QS scheme has recorded growth for fruit, vegetables and potatoes particularly with respect to production. 200 scheme participants have currently been added, of which a large proportion of those were Greek asparagus producers.

Stage	Total <b>22,253</b>	of which from abroad <b>4,055</b>
<b>Producer</b>	<b>11,876</b>	<b>3,727</b>
- Fruit, vegetables	9,233	3,719
- Potatoes	2,643	8
<b>Wholesale</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Food retail</b>	<b>10,784</b>	<b>200</b>

++ **SHORT AND CURRENT** ++ **SHORT AND CURRENT** ++ **SHORT AND CURRENT** ++ **SHORT AND CURRENT** ++

**Cooperation with the German Rural Women's Association (LandFrauen)**



After the launch which took place during Green Week at the start of the year, the cooperation is now mainly carried out on the Internet; the German Rural Women's Association are cooperating with QS. They present their know-how and offer practical tips for consumers on the QS Consumer Portal which is available on the Internet. From tips regarding storage and preparation right through to product knowledge, experts from the German Rural Women's Association share their knowledge on the Internet portal. Plans are being made to further develop this and get more experts involved as well. For more information on the Consumer Portal: [www.qs-prüfsystem.de](http://www.qs-prüfsystem.de)

**Fruit Logistica 2011**

QS made use of the Fruit Logistica in February 2011 in order to present itself to the trade world via its own exhibition stand in conjunction with the Bundesvereinigung der Erzeugerorganisationen Obst und Gemüse e.V. (BVEO). Initiated by QS, a number of representatives of various European quality standards for fruit, vegetables and potatoes met at the trade fair in Berlin. Together they wanted to create a cross-border forum for quality assurance. On the last day of the trade fair, a meeting took place between a number of QS approved laboratories. More than 60 laboratory heads took part, of which more than half came from foreign laboratories.



**QS is tweeting**



The QS scheme has expanded its communications spectrum and has sent its first tweets (Twitter-short messages). By doing so, QS has entered the field of social media and has paved the way for the dissemination of information which is supervised by Dr. Christian H. Meyer. This ensures that an Internet-savvy target group is reached that is established via Twitter and receives up-to-date short messages. QS on Twitter: „QS\_System“ ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com))

**IMPRINT**

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