European Spice Association
Quality Minima Document

Rev. 5

Adopted at the meeting of the Technical Commission
on 27th October 2015

Reviewed at the meeting of the Technical Commission
on 26th March 2018
(no amendment needed)

Next amendment planned for 2020
Please submit comments until February 2020

March 2018
European Spice Association Quality Minima Document

Content

1. An introduction to the European Spice Association
2. Purpose of the ESA Quality Requirements Minima
3. Definitions
4. Specifications for sampling, contaminants/residues, purity, sensory properties

   Appendix I  Chemical / physical parameters
   Appendix II Recommended analytical methods
   Appendix III Other documents for information
   Appendix IV Legal requirements for herbs and spices in the EU
1. **An Introduction to the European Spice Association**

The European Spice Association, ESA, is the umbrella organisation of the European spice industry. Members of ESA are the national federations of the spice industry in the member countries of the European Union, Switzerland and Turkey. Associated membership of ESA is also available to national or international associations or organizations representing exporters/traders at origin and processors, packers/traders or associations from European countries (other than the European Union) that are able to satisfy the membership requirement.

Companies within the European Union (EU), European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and Turkey with a major involvement in the processing, packing and/or marketing of herbs and spice products may apply for direct membership of ESA.

Objectives of the Association:

- Represent the interests of its members with the representative bodies and departments of the European Union, as well as international institutions and organizations;
- Promote the interests of members in respect of the products concerned and to protect the image of the products and the sector;
- Promote the consumers’ and customers' interest;
- Investigate subjects of common interest to the members in the scientific, legislative, technological and economic fields.

ESA is member of the International Organisation of Spice Trade Associations (IOSTA) and supports its objectives.

For further information on the European Spice Association Quality Minima Document, please contact the ESA office:

European Spice Association  
Reuterstraße 151  
D-53113 Bonn  
Germany  
Tel: 00 49 228 210 180  
Fax: 00 49 228 229 460  
E-Mail: esa@verbaendebuero.de  
http://esa-spices.org
2. **Scope of the Quality Minima Document**

This document describes the quality minima for dried herbs and spices, which should be demanded by buyers when these products are purchased for further processing within the EU.

This document applies to “business to business” transactions; it does not extend to products for direct sale to the final consumer.

All products that have already been further processed (for example grinding, microbial reduction) are not in the scope of this document, unless otherwise stated.

3. **Purpose of the ESA Quality Minima Document**

The purpose of this document is to ensure that herbs and spices, as agricultural commodities, have been grown, harvested and further treated to ensure that the products meet the requirements of this quality minima document.

To achieve this objective ESA supports the principles of Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP). These principles serve all parties involved in the supply chain as they focus on prevention and control rather than re-conditioning which is not always technologically possible.

The harvest, cultivation, transport and post-harvest conditions should ensure the material is stored and handled in such a way as to prevent adulteration, contamination and the growth of micro-organisms.

4. **Definitions**

4.1. **Extraneous matter:**

All matter from the specific plant other than the desired part. Investigations by visual checks, not microscopic.

4.2. **Foreign matter:**

All matter that is foreign to the plant. Foreign matter can be hazardous or non-hazardous. Hazardous material includes other foreign vegetable matter with allergenic or toxic properties, sharp objects in addition to glass, metal, stones, wood etc. Critical limit: objects greater than 2 mm.

4.3. **Traces:**

Low levels of volatiles (in general < 0.5 %) for which analytical quantification by using ISO 6571 is not accurate and reliable. The sensorial flavouring properties should be agreed between buyer and seller.

4.4. **Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) in the Use of Pesticides (Codex Alimentarius Definition):**

"GAP" includes the nationally authorised safe uses of pesticides under actual conditions necessary for effective and reliable pest control. It encompasses a range of levels of pesticide applications up to the highest authorised use, ap-
plied in a manner, which leaves a residue, which is the smallest amount practicable.

Authorised safe uses are determined at the national level and include nationally registered or recommended uses, which take into account public and occupational health and environmental safety considerations. Actual conditions include any stage in the production, storage, transport, distribution and processing of food commodities and animal feed.

The term 'pesticides' is used to summarize a group of active ingredients, which are used for the control of crop pests, crop diseases and weeds, stock protection, animal ectoparasites and pests in public health. Residues should be the smallest amount practicable, legal limits must not be exceeded.

4.5. **Traceability:**

The traceability of food and any other substance intended to be, or expected to be, incorporated into a food shall be established at all stages of production, processing and distribution.

Food business operators shall be able to identify any person from whom they have been supplied with a food or any substance intended to be, or expected to be, incorporated into a food.

Food business operators shall have in place systems and procedures to identify the other businesses to which their products have been supplied. (see Article 18 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, page 4 of this document).

This means

- each processor should be able to ensure that foodstuffs entering the premises are traceable to the supplier;
- each processor should be able to ensure that foodstuffs leaving the control of the business are traceable to the immediate consumer.

4.6. **Codex Classification of Foods and Animal Feeds (CAC/MISC)**


5. **Relevant ESA documents:**

Available at: [www.esa-spices.org](http://www.esa-spices.org) are:

- ESA definition of culinary herbs and spices
- ESA list of culinary herbs and spices
- ESA Adulteration Awareness Paper
6. European Spice Association Specifications of Quality Minima for Herbs and Spices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>ISO 948 For mycotoxins: See the relevant Commission Regulation at: <a href="http://www.esa-spices.org">www.esa-spices.org</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHEMICAL/PHYSICAL ANALYSIS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ash</td>
<td>For values see appendix I; for analysis see appendix II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acid Insoluble Ash</td>
<td>For values see appendix I; for analysis see appendix II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moisture</td>
<td>For values see appendix I; for analysis see appendix II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volatile Oil</td>
<td>For values see appendix I; for analysis see appendix II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Activity</td>
<td>Water activity is a key parameter that affects microbiological growth. Therefore ESA recommends a target value of max. 0.65.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulk Density</td>
<td>Due to methodology variability both method and value should be agreed between buyer and seller.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microbiology</td>
<td>The product shall be free from microorganisms at such levels which may represent a hazard to health. If the product is treated to reduce microbial loads before being imported into destination country the treatment will be such as to render/ensure the microbiological safety of consumers. Specific requirements to be agreed between buyer and seller.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTAMINANTS/RESIDUES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesticides</td>
<td>Shall be utilised in accordance with good agricultural practice. Application and residue limits must comply with existing EU and/or national legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Metals</td>
<td>Must comply with national / EU legislation (e.g. cadmium, lead).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mycotoxins</td>
<td>Herbs and spices must be grown, harvested, handled and stored in such a manner as to prevent the occurrence of mycotoxins. If found, levels must comply with existing national and / or EU legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allergens</td>
<td>Refer to ESA Position Statement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Only legally permitted processing procedures may be applied in any treatment used for product quality or safety.

EC approved fumigants may be used in accordance with manufacturers’ instructions but this must be indicated on the accompanying documents. Ethylene oxide (ETO) treatment has been banned under European legislation. This ban covers both materials with treated within and outside of the EU (i.e. the use of material that has been ETO treated before importation is also illegal).

Irradiation, at present, does not have full consumer acceptability, so the treatment has to be agreed between buyer and seller. If it is agreed irradiation is only permitted in EU approved irradiation plants. However EU legislation requires that the irradiated product is declared at all levels within the food chain.

Members of ESA support the use of environmentally friendly fumigants (Montreal protocol) and non-toxic processes (e.g. microbial reduction under pressure, steam treatment).

All products subject to processing (for example grinding, microbial reduction) are not in the scope of this document, unless otherwise stated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatments</th>
<th>Only legally permitted processing procedures may be applied in any treatment used for product quality or safety.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EC approved fumigants may be used in accordance with manufacturers’ instructions but this must be indicated on the accompanying documents. Ethylene oxide (ETO) treatment has been banned under European legislation. This ban covers both materials with treated within and outside of the EU (i.e. the use of material that has been ETO treated before importation is also illegal).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irradiation, at present, does not have full consumer acceptability, so the treatment has to be agreed between buyer and seller. If it is agreed irradiation is only permitted in EU approved irradiation plants. However EU legislation requires that the irradiated product is declared at all levels within the food chain.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All products subject to processing (for example grinding, microbial reduction) are not in the scope of this document, unless otherwise stated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURITY</th>
<th>Botanical Species</th>
<th>In compliance with Food Law Regulations. If not regulated: ESA list of Culinary Herbs and Spices, or to be agreed between buyer and seller.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adulteration</td>
<td>Must be free from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infestation</td>
<td>Should be free in practical terms from live and/or dead insects, insect fragments and rodent contamination visible to the naked eye (corrected if necessary for abnormal vision).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extraneous matter</td>
<td>Herbs max. 2%, Spices max. 1% by weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign Matter</td>
<td>The European food operator has to evaluate if products fully comply with safety requirements before selling them to the final consumer. If not, additional processing will be necessary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SENSORY PROPERTIES</th>
<th>Must be free from off odour or off flavor.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PACKAGING</td>
<td>The packaging must not be a source of contamination or migration, should be food grade and must protect the product quality during transportation and storage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix I  Chemical / physical parameters; dry base for ASH, AIA, V/O

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT†</th>
<th>ASH % W/W MAX *</th>
<th>AIA % W/W MAX *</th>
<th>H₂O % W/W MAX *</th>
<th>V/O ml/100g MIN *</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANISE</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASIL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARAWAY</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARDAMOM</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELERY SEED</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELERY LEAVES</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>Traces**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHERVIL</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>Traces**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILLI</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIVES</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>Traces**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CINNAMON (CEYLO) (CASSIA)</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.7 – 1.0 (ISO 6539 ISO 6538) Depending on botanical species</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLOVES</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORIANDER SEED Microcarpum Macrocarpum</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.6 Traces**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORIANDER LEAVES</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>Traces**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUMIN</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DILL SEED</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DILL TOPS</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>Traces**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FENNEL</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FENUGREEK</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Traces**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALANGAL (ground)</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Traces**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GARLIC PRODUCTS</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Due to the hygroscopic nature of these products lower moisture content may be required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* see Appendix II;
** see page 4
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
<th>ASH % W/W MAX *</th>
<th>AIA % W/W MAX *</th>
<th>H₂O % W/W MAX *</th>
<th>V/O ml/100g MIN *</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GINGER</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUNIPER BERRIES</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAUREL LEAVES</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEMON GRASS</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Traces**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACE</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARJORAM</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSTARD</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUTMEG</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5 - 6.5 Depending on grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONION PRODUCTS</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>6.0 - 8.0 (depending on origin)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Due to the hygroscopic nature of these products lower moisture content may be required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allium cepa</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>6.0 - 8.0 (depending on origin)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OREGANO</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAPRIKA POWDER</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARSLEY</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Traces**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEPPER BLACK</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEPPER WHITE</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEPPER GREEN (dried)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>13*</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>* If freeze dried: 8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other origins</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIMENTO</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>14*</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>* If freeze dried: 8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica Schinus</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>14*</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POPPY SEEDS</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* see Appendix II;  
** see page 4
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRODUCT</th>
<th>ASH % W/W MAX</th>
<th>AIA % W/W MAX</th>
<th>H2O % W/W MAX</th>
<th>V/O ml/100g MIN</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROSEMARY</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFFRON WHOLE</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFFRON GROUND</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAGE</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAVOURY - Mountain Type (wild grown)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAVOURY – Garden Type (cultivated)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPEARMINT</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAR ANISE</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TARRAGON</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THYME</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TURMERIC WHOLE GROUND</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) The parameters listed shall apply to the whole product unless otherwise specified.

* see Appendix II
** see page 4
Appendix II  
**Recommended analytical methods**

Unless otherwise agreed between buyer and seller, ESA recommends the following methods:

2. Spices and condiments – Preparation of a ground sample for analysis ISO 2825 - 1981
3. Spices and condiments – Determination of extraneous matter and foreign matter content ISO 927 – 2009 *(see definition chapter 5)*
7. Spices and condiments – Determination of volatile oil EN ISO 6571 2009
8. Analysis of spices and condiments – Determination of loss in mass of capsicum and allium species and of dried vegetables by vacuum oven drying – DIN 10236 (German standard)

These methods are available at the national standardisation bodies or at [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org) (click on ISO store)

Appendix III  
**Other documents for information**

To help suppliers meet the requirements of the ESA quality minima the following documents may be beneficial:

3. With respect to cleaning and reconditioning, ESA supports the principles of Section 8 “Cleaning and Reconditioning” of the Clean Spices Booklet issued by ASTA, October 2000
4. Guidelines for the application of the Hazard Analysis Critical Control point (HACCP) system Alinorm 93/13 A App. II Codex Alimentarius
Appendix IV  Legal requirements for herbs and spices in the EU

Legal requirements for herbs and spices in the EU

In Europe there is European or national legislation applicable to herbs and spices. For example, the following legal requirements set by the EU-Commission apply to herbs and spices (Documents are available at http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/).

General legislation:


  This regulation addresses amongst others, risk analysis (Art. 6), precautionary principle (Art. 7), food safety requirements (Art. 14), traceability (Art. 18).

Labelling:


  This Regulation allows the consumer to make an informed choice that suits both their dietary and food intolerance needs. ESA recommends that particular attention is paid to potential for cross contamination within the food chain. This includes items such as cereals containing gluten, peanuts (ground nuts), nuts, celery, mustard, sesame seeds and products thereof. These are within the legislation (see Annex II of the Regulation) identified amongst others as potential allergens within our industry. Also due to allergic reactions of some consumers the addition of sulphur dioxide also has to be declared if the level is above 10 ppm.

  Foodstuffs that have been treated with ionising must be labelled "irradiated" or "treated with ionising radiation".


• COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) No 1321/2013 of 10 December 2013 establishing the Union list of authorised smoke flavouring primary products for use as such in or on foods and/or for the production of derived smoke flavourings (O.J. L 333 12.12.2013)


• Commission Regulation (EU) No 471/2010 of 31 May 2010 amending Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008, as regards the list of third countries from which certain agricultural products obtained by organic production must originate to be marketed within the Union

Contaminants:


This regulation covers amongst others, mycotoxins and heavy metals such as cadmium, lead, and mercury.

For aflatoxins EU legislation covers only the spices Capsicum spp (dried fruits including chilies, chili powder, cayenne and paprika), Piper spp. (fruits thereof including white and black pepper), Myristica fragrans (nutmeg and mace), Zingiber officinale (ginger), Curcuma longa (turmeric). For other spices national (aflatoxin) legislation is applicable.


The Regulation extends the scope to mixtures of spices containing one or more of the abovementioned spices. Moreover it sets maximum limits for oilseeds such as mustard seeds, sesame seeds and poppy seeds.
• COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 594/2012 of 5 July 2012 amending Regulation (EC) 1881/2006 as regards the maximum levels of the contaminants ochratoxin A, non-dioxin-like PCBs and melamine in foodstuffs (O.J. L 176, 6.7.2012)

The Regulation sets maximum limits for ochratoxin A in spices, including dried spices, as follows:

_Piper_ spp (fruits thereof, including white and black pepper), _Myristica fragrans_ (nutmeg and mace), _Zingiber officinale_ (ginger), _Curcuma longa_ (turmeric) _Capsicum_ spp. (dried fruits thereof, whole or ground, including chillies, chilli powder, cayenne and paprika) and mixtures of spices containing one of the abovementioned spices.


• Regulation (EC) No. 401/2006 of 23 February 2006 laying down the methods of sampling and analysis for the official control of levels of mycotoxins in foodstuffs (O.J. L 70, 9. March 2006)

In this Regulation methods of sampling as well as precision criteria for methods of analysis for official control by enforcement authorities are defined.


This Regulation establishes the official sampling plan for OTA.

• Guidance document for competent Authorities for the Control of Compliance with EU Legislation on Aflatoxins

The document focuses mainly on the official control of aflatoxin contamination in food products. At: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/food/chemicalsafety/contaminants/legisl_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/food/chemicalsafety/contaminants/legisl_en.htm)

• COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION of 3 December 2013 on the **reduction of the presence of dioxins**, furans and PCBs in feed and food (O.J. L 323, 4.12.2013)

The recommendation sets action levels for dioxins in fresh and dried herbs.
Additives:


This Regulation replaces the 3 EC Directives on food additives (colours, sweeteners and other food additives). The annexes of the Directives have been merged into one annex.


Spices and spice blends are included in the Annex as foodstuffs which may not contain added colours.

Specific limits for SO$_2$ are provided for dried ginger (150 ppm) and onion, garlic and shallot pulp (300 ppm).

SO$_2$ in cinnamon (Cinnamomum zeylanicum) is permitted as additive (150 mg/kg).


This regulation requires that food enzymes are officially registered and permitted for use in foodstuffs. They are regarded as food ingredients and must be declared on the label.


This regulation fixes limits for active principles in composite food. Active principles may be incorporated into food by herbs and spices or flavourings or other food ingredients with flavouring properties.


This Regulation lays down rules concerning the increased level of official controls to be carried out pursuant to Article 15(5) of Regulation (EC) No
882/2004 at the points of entry into EU on imports of the feed and food of non-animal origin listed in Annex I to this Regulation.

Irradiation:

EU overview at: http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biosafety/irradiation/comm_legisl_en.htm


Condition for authorising food radiation:

1. Food irradiation may be authorised only if:
   - there is a reasonable technological need,
   - it present no health hazard and is carried out under the conditions proposed,
   - it is of benefit to the consumer,
   - it is not used as a substitute for hygiene and health practices or for good manufacturing or agricultural practice.

2. Food irradiation may be used only for the following purposes:
   - to reduce the incidence of food-borne disease by destroying pathogenic organisms,
   - to reduce spoilage of foodstuffs by retarding or arresting decay processes and destroying spoilage organisms,
   - to reduce loss of foodstuffs by premature ripening, germination or sprouting,
   - to rid foodstuffs of organisms harmful to plant or plant products.


- Communication from the Commission on foods and food ingredients authorized for treatment with ionizing radiation in the Community (O.J. C 241, 29.8.2001)


- List of Member States’ authorizations of food and food ingredients which may be treated with ionizing radiation (O.J. C 56, 11.3.2003)

- List of approved facilities for the treatment of foods and food ingredients with ionising radiation in the Member States (According to Article 7(4) of Directive 1999/2/EC of the European Parliament and the Council on the approximation of the laws of the Member States concerning foods and food in-

- Commission Decision of 7 October 2004 amending Decision of 23 October 2002 adopting the list of approved facilities in third countries for the irradiation of foods (O.J. L 314, 13.10.2004) and amendments

- Commission Decision of 22 March 2010 amending Decision 2002/840/EC as regards the list of approved facilities in third countries for the irradiation of foods (O.J. L 75 of 23 March 2010)

Pesticides:


This Regulation harmonizes legislation on pesticide residues within the EU.

- Regulation (EC) No 299/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2008 amending Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 on maximum residue levels of pesticides in or on food and feed of plant and animal origin, as regards the implementing powers conferred on the Commission


Spices and the aromatic herbs can be found in the categories VEGETABLES FRESH OR FROZEN – Fruiting vegetables – Solanacea (paprika) and Leaf vegetables and fresh herbs and SPICES.


Dehydration factors may be applied to dried peppers and dried herbs and all active substances listed in the Annexes of Regulation 396/2005 or not.


Based on these provisions ESA has proposed dehydration factors to be applied when assessing pesticide residues in dried peppers and dried herbs. These dehydration factors have been presented to the EU Commission for consideration and inclusion into Annex VI of Regulation 396/2005. They have been published on the ESA website and in the Journal of Consumer Protection.
and Food Safety, German Federal Office for Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL), Heft 4, November 2008).


The pesticide database of the EU Commission can be found at:


Hygiene:


This regulation stipulates that Food business operators producing or harvesting plant products are to take adequate measures, to ensure hygienic production, transport and storage conditions for, and the cleanliness of, plant products. Food business operators are to keep and retain records relating to measures put in place to control hazards in an appropriate manner, commensurate with the nature and size of the food business. Food business operators are to make relevant information contained in these records available to the competent authority and receiving food business operators on request.

As regards the **hygiene of imported food**, the following hygiene requirements are applicable:
The operators:

- Are to ensure that the products are protected against contamination and to use potable water, or clean water, whenever necessary to prevent contamination;
- Are to comply with appropriate Community and national legislative provisions relating to the control hazards in primary production and associated operation;
- Are to keep clean and, where necessary after cleaning, to disinfect, all the equipment, containers and places the spices are in contact with;
- Are to take account of the results of any relevant analyses carried out on samples taken from plants or other samples that have importance to human health.
- Are to take appropriate remedial action when informed of problems identified during official controls;


Import controls:


Rapid Alerts:

Rapid Alerts at: http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/rapidalert/archive_en.htm

Relevant ESA documents are available at: www.esa-spices.org