

EFFCA Statement on the Qualified Presumption of Safety (QPS) Approach by EFSA for the Assessment of Selected Microorganisms

Following the conclusion from EFSA in November 2007, the QPS system can be used:

- to replace the case-by-case safety assessment of micro-organisms introduced in the food chain by a generic/fast-track approach for strains/species falling within a QPS group
- to harmonise the risk assessments of micro-organisms across EFSA panels

QPS and Food cultures

The objective of QPS is not to develop a positive list of "safe" microorganisms entering the food chain that would cover all food cultures. It is currently used by EFSA panels when evaluating micro-organisms that require a market authorisation (e.g. feed cultures, cell factories producing enzymes, plant protection...), some of which may be used in food as well. However, food cultures with a long history of safe use are considered as traditional food ingredients and are legally permitted for use in human food in the EU without pre-market authorisation. Therefore, QPS will not be used by any EFSA panel to specifically and systematically evaluate the use in food of cultures with a long history of safe use.

Today, the scientific work of EFSA on the development of the QPS risk assessment tool does not question the use of traditional cultures currently on the food market, which safety lies within suppliers area of responsibilities under the provisions of Regulation 178/2002.

Available lists

No exhaustive list exists today.

EFSA publishes an annual QPS list of the micro-organism species they evaluate. The last update has been published on 14 December 2010².

In order to document traditionally used microorganisms as safe food ingredients, the International Dairy Federation (IDF) in collaboration with EFFCA³ has compiled a non exhaustive inventory of microorganisms with a documented history of use in food.

¹ This statement updates and supersedes EFFCA/2010/06

² <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/doc/1944.pdf>

³ IDF/EFFCA, Bulletin of IDF 377, page 4-19, September 2002

This statement represents EFFCA's understanding of the existing European regulations and EFSA scientific work. The present information is given without any liability on the part of EFFCA.

Please contact EFFCA Secretariat for further information (see contact details below).