



Fresh Produce Guidance – Pesticide Residue Testing

The Red Tractor Fresh Produce standard requires that pesticide residue testing must be carried out on a sample of each crop grown. This point is commonly raised as a non-conformance during assessments, so we have produced this document to help growers comply with the requirements.

Pesticide residue testing is an important verification step to help demonstrate that plant protection products have been used responsibly and in accordance with label instructions. It can also help to demonstrate that non-approved products have not been used and that residues are within legal limits. As well as being a requirement of the Red Tractor Fresh Produce standards, this may also be requested by your customers.

Selecting a laboratory

There are several companies available when choosing a laboratory to carry out your pesticide residue testing, and it is worth taking the time to consider your options to ensure you are getting the best service and value for your business. Some things to consider are as follows:

- The laboratory must hold accreditation for pesticide residue testing issued either by UKAS or another ILAC signatory. This demonstrates that testing is carried out to a defined standard and results are reliable. You can check if a laboratory is UKAS accredited here: <https://www.ukas.com/find-an-organisation/>



- Does the laboratory offer the right testing suite for you? Most will offer a standard multi-residue screen which will capture most used actives, but consider if any additional testing is required to ensure coverage of all PPPs applied to the crop (for example, separate tests may be available for dithiocarbamates, maleic hydrazide, nitrates, etc.)
- Many laboratories offer a collection service, so consider if this covers your area, and if this incurs additional costs

- It may be useful to discuss with your peers to gather feedback on their experiences and recommendations. If you are part of a grower group, it may be possible to negotiate a group testing rate with your chosen laboratory
- Ensure that you are clear with the laboratory on contact details, procedures in case of exceedance detections, expected reporting timeframes and any specific requirements in terms of collection of samples and quantities required

Test Results

Once the laboratory has analysed the sample, you will be provided with a certificate detailing the results of the test. You will need this to demonstrate compliance during your assessment, and it may also be requested by your customers. It is important to understand what action will be taken in the event of an MRL exceedance, which may form part of a food safety incident management plan as referenced in point DP.2. It may also be useful to compare results to application records and if an unexpected chemical is detected, investigate to understand the source of contamination.

It is good practice to review analysis results to help identify trends over time and potential causes of residues close to the MRL to avoid potential issues in future. A good history of test results may help form the basis of a rationale for a reduced testing frequency, in line with IM.5.g

Applicable Standards

<p>IM.5 A sample of each crop must be tested for pesticide residues at least annually, unless an evidence-based justification for less frequent testing is present REVISED</p>	<p>IM.6 Where maximum nitrate concentrations apply to crop commodities, the risk must be considered and appropriate testing regimes implemented NEW</p>
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Please note that “each crop” means each individual crop as listed in the annexe of the Fresh Produce Standards manual, which refers to the HSE crop definitions for MRL purposes and is reflected on your certificate. So, for example, a grower who is producing several different varieties of tomato would only be required to submit one sample annually of “tomatoes”.

If you have any additional queries, please contact us at enquiries@redtractor.org.uk