

09/12/2009

European Union Comments

Regarding CL 2009/15 – FL: (Part B. – Point 2)

Draft Amendment to the Guidelines for the Production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods: Annex 1 (Inclusion of ethylene for other products)

The European Union (EU) would like to reiterate the following comments as regards Appendix IV of ALINORM 09/32/22, regarding the inclusion of ethylene for other purposes than the ones stated in paragraph 82 of 'Codex Guidelines' (CAC/GL 32):

The EU considers that the use of ethylene should be limited to those uses where adequate justification against the criteria in section 5.1 of the Guidelines has been presented. In the EU the following three uses are allowed:

1. Use of ethylene for degreening of citrus:

The EU considers that ethylene can be allowed for degreening of citrus fruit. However, it should be limited to situations where degreening is part of a strategy for the prevention of fruit fly damage in citrus.

By harvesting citrus when they are green, fruit fly infestation can be avoided. This practice necessitates the induction of colour change of the peel in the post-harvest stage. This can be achieved by post-harvest exposure to ethylene in closed chambers for 2 days.

The maintenance of plant health by preventive measures is one of the principles of organic farming.

No adverse effect on intrinsic food quality (internal ripening of citrus is completed before harvest). Effect on peel colour only, which facilitates marketing.

2. Use of ethylene as sprouting inhibitor for onions and potatoes:

Constant exposure of stored potatoes and onions to ethylene in low concentration inhibits sprouting.

Cold storage, use of varieties with high dormancy and/or caraway seed oil (for potatoes, where registered) may provide solutions in certain situations.

A longer marketing period is important for the economic sustainability of farms. Under conditions of prolonged storage, a higher external and internal quality can be maintained (absence of sprouts and wrinkles, composition of tubers). It allows storage of potatoes at higher temperatures; therefore it contributes to reducing the risk of formation of acryl amide during processing, frying or baking of the potatoes. This use can allow storing potatoes and onions for a longer period and, as a consequence, to supply the market with locally produced potatoes and onions for a longer period.

3. Use of ethylene for induction of flowering in pineapple:

The use of ethylene gas is necessary for the uniform flowering of a pineapple field. This approach enables the growers to produce marketable size and good quality fruit in sufficient quantity from the same field at the same time with limited use of (natural) pesticides.

Without ethylene only a limited number of ripe fruits can be collected at any given time from the same field and only during certain times of the year, which results in great difficulties to organize the harvest and transport to the markets (except some air-freighted volumes). The use of ethylene for flower induction of organically grown pineapple will result in an increase of economic activity in those third world countries which grow pineapple but want to grow this crop organically. A long 'tail' in the harvest cycle increases damage to the plants and to fruit left in the field for the next rounds. Soil compaction significantly increases due to the significantly more harvesting rounds.

At this moment there are, except for calcium carbide, no known substitutes for ethylene for pineapple flower induction in (sub) tropical regions.

Ethylene for flowering induction of pineapple can not be included in paragraph 82 of CL 32, which is about post-harvest, while the flower induction takes place months before the harvest; therefore it should be in Table 2, section IV. "Other".