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FINAL REPORT OF AN AUDIT

CARRIED OUT IN

MOROCCO

FROM 29 JANUARY TO 05 FEBRUARY 2013

IN ORDER TO EVALUATE CONTROLS OF PESTICIDES IN FOOD OF PLANT ORIGIN
INTENDED FOR EXPORT TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Executive Summary

This report describes the outcome of a Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) audit in Morocco, carried out from 29 January to 5 February 2013. The objective of the audit was to assess controls on pesticide residues in foodstuffs of plant origin intended for export to the European Union. In particular, the audit team followed up on action taken by the Competent Authorities (CAs) in response to the recommendations made by the FVO in report SANCO/2011-6027.

Since the last audit SANCO/2011-6027, the CAs have strengthened the system for authorisation of plant protection products (PPPs). Growers and pack-houses have received targeted training. Their awareness and auto-controls are improving, in particular in the production of mint for export to the EU, where weaknesses had been identified in the last audit. This process is still ongoing. Minor weaknesses were identified regarding the authorisation of PPPs and their communication to the public. A substantial export control programme is in place and there has been progress in the extension of the analytical scope, but there remains a weakness in the use of the laboratory resources, and a lack of GC-MS/MS equipment. Comprehensive follow-up was undertaken by the CAs in response to notifications in the EU Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). Work is ongoing to address the recommendations of the previous audit.

The report makes a number of recommendations to the CAs, aimed at rectifying the shortcomings identified and enhancing the implementation of control measures.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS REPORT

Abbreviation	Explanation
CA(s)	Competent authority(ies)
CAC/GL	Codex Alimentarius Commission/Guideline
CCA(s)	Central Competent Authority(ies)
CODEX	Codex Alimentarius Commission of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and World Health Organization
DG(SANCO)	Health and Consumers Directorate-General
EACCE	Autonomous Organisation for the Control and Co-ordination of Food Exports (<i>Établissement Autonome de Contrôle et de Coordination des Exportations</i>)
EU	European Union
EUROSTAT	Statistical Office of the European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office
GAP	Good agricultural practice
GC-ECD	Gas chromatograph coupled to electron capture detector
GC-MS	Gas chromatograph coupled to mass spectrometer
GC-MS/MS	Gas chromatograph coupled to tandem mass spectrometers
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
LC-MS/MS	Liquid Chromatograph coupled to tandem mass spectrometers
MAMF	Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime Fisheries (<i>Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche Maritime</i>)

MRL	Maximum residue level
MS(s)	Member State(s)
ONSSA	National Food Safety Office (<i>Office National de Sécurité Sanitaire des Aliments</i>)
PHI	Pre-harvest interval
PPP(s)	Plant protection product(s)
RASFF	Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed
TC(s)	Third Country(ies)

1 INTRODUCTION

The audit took place in Morocco from 29 January to 5 February 2013 in order to assess controls on pesticide residues in foodstuffs of plant origin, intended for export to the European Union (EU). The audit team comprised one auditor from the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) and one Member State (MS) expert.

The audit was undertaken as part of the FVO's annual audit programme in the context of a wider series of audits in third countries (TCs) to evaluate control systems and operational standards in this sector.

The FVO team was accompanied during the audit by representatives of the central competent authority (CCA), the Autonomous Organisation for the Control and Co-ordination of Food Exports (EACCE).

An opening meeting was held on 29 January 2013 with the Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime Fisheries (MAMF), the EACCE and the National Food Safety Office (ONSSA). At this meeting, the objectives of and itinerary for the audit were confirmed, and additional information required for the satisfactory completion of the audit was requested.

2 OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The **objectives** of the audit were to:

- Verify whether there are control systems in place for the control of pesticide residues in foodstuffs of plant origin intended for export to the EU, and assess whether these systems offer adequate assurance that the produce concerned is within the specified residue limits laid down in EU legislation.
- follow-up recommendations of report Health and Consumers Directorate-General DG(SANCO)/2011-6027.

In terms of **scope**, the audit reviewed the controls in place on the production and export, including a review of national legislation, competent authority (CA) organisation, their controls and enforcement capability, facilities (laboratory capability) and measures in place for the determination of pesticide residues. As the residue controls are directly related to the national rules governing the authorisation, placing on the market and use of Plant Protection Products (PPPs), the control systems in this area were also part of the audit. As regards products concerned, the audit covered beans with pods and mint.

In pursuit of these objectives, the following sites were visited:

Competent Authority/ies			Comments
Competent Authority	Central	2	ONSSA: CA for authorisation, controls of the marketing and use of PPPs and controls of pesticide residues on the domestic market. EACCE: CA for controls of pesticide residues in food intended for export.

	Regional/local	2	EACCE Delegations in Agadir and Casablanca region. Regional offices of ONSSA in Agadir and Casablanca.
Laboratory			
Public Laboratories		1	EACCE Laboratory Agadir: Official pesticide residue analysis for exports
Producers			
		3	Two growers of beans, one grower of mint.
Exporters/Pack-Houses			
		7	Three pack-houses for vegetables in Agadir region, and two pack-houses each for mint and beans in the greater Casablanca region. Four of the processors were involved in EU RASFF notifications.
Others			
Professional organisations: professional associations for vegetable and citrus producers, one association of the PPP industry.			

3 LEGAL BASIS AND STANDARDS

3.1 LEGAL BASIS

The audit was carried out under the general provisions of EU legislation, in particular Article 46 of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council which stipulates that EU controls in third countries may verify compliance or equivalence of TC legislation and systems with EU feed and food law and EU animal health legislation. These controls shall have particular regard to the assurances which the TC can give regarding compliance with, or equivalence to, EU requirements.

EU legal acts quoted in this report refer, where applicable, to the last amended version. Full references to the EU acts quoted in this report are given in Annex 1.

3.2 STANDARDS

Additionally Guidelines and Codes of Practice of the Codex Alimentarius Commission of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and World Health Organisation (CODEX) were taken into account in the frame of the audit.

A full list of applicable standards referred to in this report is provided in Annex 2. Reference to specific provisions of these texts is provided at the beginning of each section.

4 BACKGROUND

4.1 AUDIT SERIES

This mission formed part of an audit series in TCs on pesticide residues in food of plant origin. Since 2004, FVO audits for pesticides were carried out in all main countries exporting fruit and vegetables to the EU. Two of these audits were carried out in Morocco, in 2006 (SANCO/2006-8131) and in 2011 (SANCO/2011-6027). The latter audit concluded that the official export control programmes and the auto-controls of food business operators generally provide assurance that food of plant origin exported to the EU complies with EU legal limits for pesticide residues. Exporters and growers were not sufficiently aware that some of the authorised uses of plant protection products could lead to residues above EU maximum residue levels (MRLs). The controls for pesticides in mint did not always ensure that mint exported to the EU complies with EU MRLs.

The reports on these audits are available on DG(SANCO)'s internet site at http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/ir_search_en.cfm. An overview report summarising findings and conclusions of these missions has also been published at this site:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/specialreports/2010_6140_tc_pesticides_fn_en.pdf.

4.2 BACKGROUND TO THE AUDIT

Morocco continues being a very important exporter of fruit and vegetables for the EU. Based on EUROSTAT data for the period 2009 – 2011, Morocco was the biggest exporter of fresh vegetables to the EU, and the biggest exporter for both tomatoes and leguminous vegetables. The volumes of imports varied between 502 700 and 614 400 tonnes. In the same period, total import volumes for fruit varied between 310 100 and 332 500 tonnes (mainly citrus fruit, melons/watermelons and strawberries). According to data from the Moroccan CAs, Morocco annually exports 100 000 tonnes of fresh beans with pods. The EU annually imports some 8 000 tonnes of herbs and spices from Morocco, including 5 500 to 5 900 tonnes of mint.

In 2012, there were nine notifications in the EU RASFF system for pesticide residues in produce from Morocco, covering in particular beans, tomatoes and mint. In 2010, the EU Member States took a total of 559 samples of consignments from Morocco for pesticide residue analysis, with 6.6 % of samples exceeding EU MRLs. The exceedance rate for beans with pods was, however, significantly higher and accounted to 15 %. Due to notifications in the EU RASFF system, and to further non-compliances notified by EU Member States, mint from Morocco was included in Regulation (EC) No 669/2009 for increased rates of import checks. Since 1 January 2013, 10 % of mint consignments from Morocco for import into the EU are sampled and analysed for pesticide residues.

For these reasons, beans with pods and mint were included in the scope of this audit.

5 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 RELEVANT NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Legal requirements

Art. 46 (1) (a) of Reg. (EC) No 882/2004 stipulates that EU controls shall have, inter alia particular regard to the legislation of the TC.

Findings

Since the last audit SANCO/2011-6027, further legislation has been drafted by ONSSA and submitted to the MAMF for adoption:

- The Draft Administrative Order of the MAMF laying down maximum residue limits for pesticides in or on food and feed. This draft Order provides for MRL in food, which is imported or placed on the domestic market. As no supervised field trials are available in Morocco, the draft Order includes MRLs set by CODEX or, if these are not available, set by the EU. For food intended for export, the MRLs of the countries of destination continue to apply, as before.
- The Draft Administrative Order of the MAMF on the format and content of the register for agricultural inputs in the production of food of plant origin. This draft order provides for compulsory keeping of records of all uses of PPPs by growers. This practice is currently voluntary in Morocco.

Conclusions

Since the last audit further legislation has been drafted by the CAs. If adopted, it will provide for further strengthening of controls.

5.2 COMPETENT AUTHORITIES

Legal Requirements

Art. 46 (1) (b) and (c) of Reg. (EC) No 882/2004 stipulate that EU controls shall have, inter alia, particular regard to the organisation of the TC's CAs, their powers and independence, the authority they have to enforce the applicable legislation effectively, and the training of staff in the performance of official controls.

Findings

The CAs within the scope of the audit are the EACCE and ONSSA, as described in the report of audit SANCO/2011-6027. Since 2008, the EACCE has been certified to ISO 9001-2010, and at the time of the audit, the EACCE was preparing for ISO 17020 certification. Standardised procedures for authorisation of PPPs and controls were also available at the ONSSA.

The ONSSA have implemented several projects to strengthen their knowledge regarding the authorisation of PPPs. A co-operation project with Germany was financed by European Commission Funds, the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX). There was a further related co-operation project with France, and a project on the regulation and management of pesticides, financed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). A twinning project between Morocco and the EU to strengthen the capability for the authorisation of PPPs and fertilisers and to support cultivation has been drafted by the CA.

The audit team observed good co-operation between the two authorities, in particular in the follow-up of EU RASFF notifications, where the notifications are communicated immediately by the contact point in ONSSA to EACCE, who have started their investigations within three days after the RASFF was notified by the EU.

Conclusions

The CAs are clearly designated. There was good co-operation and quality control systems provide for a high standard of controls. Training on authorisation of PPPs has strengthened the capability of the CA.

5.3 OFFICIAL CONTROLS OF THE MARKETING AND USE OF PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS

Legal requirements

Article 46 (1) (e) and (b) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 stipulate that EU controls shall have, inter alia, particular regard to the existence and operation of documented control procedures and control systems based on priorities, and the CA's capability to enforce applicable legislation;

Article 3(1) and 4(1)(a) of Directive 91/414/EEC stipulate that MSs shall prescribe that PPPs may not be placed on the market and used in their territory unless they have authorized the product in accordance with this Directive and its active substances are listed in Annex I to the Directive.

Article 17 of Directive 91/414/EEC requires MSs to make the necessary arrangements for PPPs which have been placed on the market and for their use to be officially checked.

Article 10 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, in conjunction with Article 4.1 and Annex I, Part A.III of the same Regulation, requires that FBOs producing or harvesting plant products are, in particular, to keep records on any use of PPPs.

Findings

5.3.1 Authorisation of Plant Protection Products

The ONSSA informed the FVO team that 972 PPPs containing 383 active substances are authorised in Morocco. The number of active substance contained in PPPs has increased by 10 % since the last audit SANCO/2011-6027.

The PPPs authorised for use in beans contain some active substances, which are not approved in the EU: dicofol, dimethyl disulfide (DMDS), flufenoxuron and procymidone. The current EU MRLs for flufenoxuron and procymidone in beans are 0.5 and 1 mg/kg, respectively, and the authorised conditions for use of these two pesticides may not lead to MRL infringements. For dicofol and DMDS, the EU MRLs are set at the Limits of Determination, but no uses of these pesticides were documented in the auto-control system of the growers and pack-houses visited.

At the time of the last audit SANCO/2011-6027, there had been no PPPs authorised for use in mint. Since 2011, two PPPs have been authorised for use in mint against caterpillars. The ONSSA stated that mint is not considered as a commodity for minor use in Morocco and a full data set must be submitted for authorisation. ONSSA stated that PPP manufacturers are not sufficiently interested in the generation and submission of the requested data for PPP use in mint.

Since the last audit, the ONSSA has started publishing a list of the PPPs authorised for use on their internet site: www.onssa.gov.ma. This list was last updated in December 2012, and included details of the authorised use, such as pre-harvest interval (PHI) and dosage. A list of authorised use of PPPs in beans was also distributed by ONSSA to the exporters visited by the audit team. The audit team noted some discrepancies between the lists concerning some of the authorised PPPs. In particular, the PHI for products containing mancozeb were not, or not correctly, specified. The audit team noted that one of the growers visited had not respected the authorised PHI due to this mistake. ONSSA informed the audit team that the mistake was corrected during the audit, and a revised list

was published.

ONSSA stated that the financing of a project on obsolete pesticides has been approved, and expected that the work will start in 2013. An inventory of 800 tonnes of obsolete pesticides has already been created.

5.3.2 Control of Growers

In the report from the previous FVO audit DG(SANCO)/2011-6027, a recommendation was made to the CAs to ensure that growers of mint producing for export to the EU keep records of pesticide applications, in line with Article 10 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, in conjunction with Article 4.1 and Annex I, Part A.III.

The CAs have drafted legislation to make the keeping of records for use of PPPs compulsory (see section 5.1). In addition, ONSSA stated that they held five training courses regarding good plant protection practices in mint. These courses (“field schools”) have involved groups of growers with weekly meetings over a period of six months. During the course, growers were encouraged to implement the advised measures and to share their experience.

ONSSA stated that the keeping of records has not yet been implemented by all growers, as many growers lack education including literacy. One of the exporters visited by the audit team has implemented a simplified and clear format for the keeping of records by operators who are not fully literate.

In the report from the previous FVO audit DG(SANCO)/2011-6027, a recommendation was made to the CAs to continue improving the control system for pesticide residues in mint in order to guarantee that the produce complies with, or is equivalent to, European Union standards in accordance with Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002.

The ONSSA has authorised two PPPs containing *Bacillus thuringiensis* and spinosad for use in mint (see section 5.3.1). ONSSA expect that the provision and use of legal PPP will reduce breaches of EU MRLs. However, the CA and exporters agreed that these two PPPs are not sufficient to control pests and diseases. A large grower stated that ONSSA had recommended the use of a non-authorised PPP containing flubendiamide to him.

EACCE has increased the number of samples taken of mint intended for export to the EU. In the season 2011/2012, a total of 152 samples were taken and analysed for pesticide residues.

The CAs have also recommended the exporters/pack-houses to integrate the production, i.e. to fully control the growing process. At the time of the last audit SANCO/2011-6027, exporter/pack-houses had sourced their produce from unknown suppliers. The two exporters of mint met during this audit in 2013 export their own production and the production of controlled growers to whom they supply the PPPs. One of the two exporters met had switched to integrated production in 2013. Until 2012, he had sourced the produce from a large number of growers and had taken samples for private pesticide residue analysis. The results confirmed the use of a large number of pesticides, including endosulfan, by these growers.

Conclusions

The CAs have undertaken significant and well targeted measures to address the two related recommendations of the previous audit report regarding production of mint. The process of

implementation by the CAs and the growers is still in progress. The publication of authorised uses of PPPs on the internet has greatly improved transparency of authorisations for all stakeholders. There were minor discrepancies of this information, which can lead to MRL infringements. In addition, the number of legal plant protection measures in mint is not sufficient. The keeping of records by growers, and their awareness of pesticide issues has substantially improved.

5.4 OFFICIAL CONTROLS OF PESTICIDES RESIDUES IN FOOD OF PLANT ORIGIN

Legal requirements

Article 46 (1)(b), (c), (d), (e) and (h) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 stipulate that EU controls shall have, inter alia, particular regard to: the existence and operation of documented control procedures and control systems based on priorities, the CA's capability to enforce applicable legislation, the resources including diagnostic facilities available to competent authorities, the training of staff in the performance of official controls and the assurances which the third country can give regarding compliance with, or equivalence to, EU requirements.

Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 stipulates that food and feed imported into the EU for placing on the market within the EU shall comply with the relevant requirements of food law or conditions recognised by the EU to be at least equivalent thereto.

Article 18 of Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 requires that products covered by Annex I of the same Regulation shall not contain, from the time they are placed on the EU market as food or feed, any pesticide residue exceeding EU MRLs, or 0.01 mg/kg for those products for which no specific MRL is set.

The CODEX has also established MRLs for pesticides, which are considered for the establishment of EU MRLs (CAC/MRL 1-2009).

Commission Directive 2002/63/EC establishing EU methods of sampling for the official control of pesticides residues in and on products of plant and animal origin or equivalent international standards (e.g. CODEX Guidelines CAC/GL 31-1999).

Article 10 of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 in connection with Article 6 of the same Regulation requires that every FBO shall notify the appropriate CA of each establishment under its control that carries out any of the stages of production, processing and distribution of food, with a view to the registration of each such establishment.

Point 41 of Guidelines of CODEX CAC/GL 26-1997 on the Design, Operation, Assessment and Accreditation of Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems lays down that inspection services should utilize laboratories that are evaluated and/or accredited under officially recognized programmes to ensure that adequate quality controls are in place to provide for the reliability of test results. In accordance with Guidelines of CODEX CAC/GL 27-1997, point 3, the laboratories should comply with ISO/IEC Guide 17025.

Point 6 of the CODEX Guidelines CAC/GL 25-1997 specifies that upon information about a rejection of a food consignment presented for import, the food control authorities in the exporting country should undertake the necessary investigation to determine the cause of any problem that has

led to the rejection of the consignment.

Findings

5.4.1 Sampling Programmes for Pesticide Residues

ONSSA are implementing a monitoring programme for pesticide residues on the domestic market. In 2011/2012, a total of 540 samples from 18 commodities were taken and analysed for pesticide residues.

5.4.2 Export Control Programmes

As described in the reports of the previous audits, the EACCE performs a substantial sampling programme for pesticide residues in produce intended for export. In the season 2010/2011, EACCE took a total of 2 106 samples, and in 2011/2012, 1 551 samples of fresh vegetables were taken, in addition to 240 samples of citrus and 152 samples of mint. The number of samples taken from mint has increased from 86 in 2010/2011 to 152 in 2011/2012. The non-compliance rate was 2.2 % for fresh vegetables, 4.6 % for citrus and 11.2 % for mint. The Agadir region is the main growing area for fruit and vegetables in Morocco. A total of 1 032 samples of fresh vegetables were taken in this region in 2011/2012. Some 18 % of these samples were taken from beans.

At the time of the audit, EACCE were introducing an IT system for the processing of samples from sampling to laboratory analysis.

5.4.3 Control at Pack-Houses, Processors, Exporters

As described in the report of the previous audits, all pack-houses operating for export must be approved by EACCE, based on technical inspections and standards of hygiene. During inspections, the EACCE inspectors also check whether the pack-houses have implemented systems for traceability, which is a legal requirement in Morocco. A total of 183 pack-houses for fresh vegetables were approved, in addition to 51 pack-houses for citrus. In the Agadir region visited, where 81 % of the exported fresh fruit and vegetables were produced in 2011/2012, 85 pack-houses for fresh vegetables and 22 of citrus were approved. Traceability systems were implemented in the pack-houses visited for mint and beans, which allow the tracing of exported trays.

5.4.4 Laboratories for Pesticide Residue Analysis

In the report from the previous FVO audit DG(SANCO)/2011-6027, a recommendation was made to the CAs to ensure that laboratories involved in official controls are evaluated and/or accredited under officially recognised quality management and assurance programmes to ensure these laboratories provide reliable analytical results. (Point 41 of CAC/GL 26-1997).

As described in the reports of the previous audits, a coordinated network of six EACCE laboratories carry out the analysis for official export control on pesticide residues in foodstuffs of plant origin. Two laboratories, in Casablanca and Agadir, have been accredited to ISO 17025 since 2006. The laboratory in Berkane achieved accreditation in April 2011. All three laboratories are accredited by the French accreditation body. The three remaining laboratories (Marrakech, Larache, Meknes) have not yet been accredited. They analyse 22 % of the export control samples. Accreditation of the laboratories in Meknes and Larache is planned for 2013. The Marrakech laboratory is not accredited, but EACCE stated that they work according to ISO 17025, and the laboratories are

audited annually through internal audits. In these internal audits, staff from the accredited laboratories in the network are included in the audit teams.

In the report from the previous FVO audit DG(SANCO)/2011-6027, a recommendation was made to the CAs to continue broadening the scope of analyses sought in the official control samples to further improve the effectiveness of controls.

The EACCE stated that the network of laboratories can analyse 159 pesticides, and aims to achieve 180 pesticides in 2013. The laboratory in Casablanca achieves the total of 159 pesticides, Agadir 150, Berkane 62, Marrakesh 60, Larache 52 and Meknes 40. Only the laboratories in Casablanca and Agadir have LC-MS/MS equipment. These laboratories analysed 71 % of the export control samples. None of the laboratories had GC-MS/MS equipment. LC-MS/MS and GC-MS/MS equipment is necessary to achieve a large analytical scope and low Limits of Quantification.

The audit team observed that the full analytical screen is not used for the analyses of mint and beans:

The majority of mint samples are analysed in Casablanca. A very large number of samples has only been analysed with a method for 24 organophosphorous pesticides using GC with classical detectors. The EACCE stated that since 7 January 2013, mint is also analysed with another method for 35 organochlorine and pyrethroid pesticides using GC with classical detectors. Several of the pesticides, which were used by the mint growers according to their records and reports of private analyses, are not covered by these two methods: flubendiamide, boscalid, kresoxim-methyl. The EACCE stated that the LC-MS/MS equipment is not used for mint samples due to difficulties with the clean-up of the extract.

The majority of bean samples are analysed in the Agadir laboratory, which was visited by the audit team. The analytical scope has continuously been extended in the last years, from 72 substances in 2009/2010 to currently 150 substances. In the ongoing season of 2012/2013, some 90 samples of beans have been analysed. The samples were analysed by only one of three methods covering only a part of the scope. EACCE stated that only one method is used due to shortage of staff in the Agadir laboratory. One half of the samples has been analysed with a method for 35 organochlorine and pyrethroid pesticides using GC with ECD detectors. For confirmation of MRL exceedances, the samples were sent to the Larache laboratory, as in Agadir the available GC-MS equipment was not operational. The other half of samples was analysed with method EN 15662 using LC-MS/MS. These samples were screened for 116 pesticides, followed by quantification for detected substances. One sample was analysed for dithiocarbamates using spectrophotometry. Some of the pesticides, which were used by the bean growers according to their records and reports of private analyses, are not covered by these three methods: abamectine, emamectine and spiromesifen. Other pesticides are only covered by one of the three methods.

5.4.5 Response to RASFF Notifications

The audit team evaluated the follow-up by ONSSA and EACCE of four RASFF notifications for beans, tomatoes and mint in the Agadir region. The EACCE started investigations to determine the reason for the MRL exceedances within three days of the EU RASFF alert. In three cases, the EU notifications contained attachments with laboratory reports and traceability data, but the EACCE had not been informed how to retrieve the attachments. In these cases the grower could not be identified, but EACCE performed substantial follow-up sampling of produce from the exporters involved. In one case, the traceability data were part of the original RASFF notification, and not a

separate attachment. In this case, the EACCE traced the produce back to the grower, and the recorded applications of PPPs were evaluated. In all four cases, a report of the investigation was drawn up, and sent to the EACCE headquarters in Casablanca.

Conclusions

The substantial official sampling programme for export controls generally allows effective controls, as the detected non-compliances can be traced back to the grower and the recorded uses of pesticides. There has been some progress regarding the extension of the analytical scope in the official laboratories, which was a recommendation of the previous audit report. However, there was a lack of GC-MS/MS equipment in the official laboratories, and the distribution of resources over six laboratories reduces the efficiency and effectiveness of the staff and equipment used. The recommendation regarding official evaluation and/or accreditation of laboratories has been addressed. Comprehensive follow-up was undertaken by EACCE in response to EU RASFF notifications.

5.5 PRIVATE CONTROLS ON BEANS AND MINT EXPORTED TO THE EU

Findings

Beans with pods:

The audit team visited five pack-houses for beans and other vegetables in the Casablanca and Agadir regions, and two growers in Agadir. Two of the pack-houses, and one of the growers, had been involved in a EU RASFF notification in 2012. Traceability was implemented by all pack-houses visited and records of PPP applications were kept by growers and exporters. Biological control is not a practice in beans, but the CA stated that trials with biological controls in beans have started. In the harvest period, harvesting takes place every one to three days, and for this period growers used PPPs with a short pre-harvest interval (PHI). Records of PPP applications were available for all growers producing for the pack-houses visited. Advice for growers was provided in-house or by external technicians. Results of private residue analysis were on file. Three of the five pack-houses, and one of the two growers were certified to private standards. A private consultant met during the audit estimated that between 30 – 50 % of the growers, and more than 50 % of the growing area, are certified to Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) standards. A large organisation of growers and exporters stated that two large exporters are processing 80 % of the bean exports from the Agadir region. These exporters source their products only from certified growers.

Mint:

The audit team visited two pack-houses/exporters of mint, including their production at one site, in the Casablanca region. One of the pack-houses had been involved in an EU RASFF in 2012. The audit team noted dynamic changes implemented by both operators in recent months. The first operator has increased exports by 500 % since 2010. He had production on his own farm of five hectares, and sourced mint from another nine growers. For his own production, he has received certification to a private GAP standard in May 2012. He had a traceability system in place, and a technician with third level training in agriculture was responsible for plant protection measures in

all farms supplying the pack-house. All PPPs were purchased centrally, and records of PPP applications were kept. The second pack-house processed over 20 % of Moroccan mint exports. Until the end of 2012, he had sourced from various growers, but from January 2013 he has started his own production. He was keeping records of PPP treatments. He has received training in the “field schools”, but was not fully aware of which PPPs to use for EU exports. Therefore, he has regularly consulted ONSSA advisers. Both pack-houses visited had regular results of private pesticide residue analysis on file.

Conclusions

Private auto-controls were implemented by all growers and pack-houses visited. There have been dynamic changes, in particular in the export sector for mint, where weaknesses had been identified in the report of the previous audit. This process is still ongoing, and is establishing a high level of auto-controls in the sector.

6 OVERALL CONCLUSION

Since the last audit SANCO/2011-6027, the CAs have strengthened the system for authorisation of PPPs. Growers and pack-houses have received targeted training. Their awareness and auto-controls are improving, in particular in the production of mint for export to the EU, where weaknesses had been identified in the last audit. This process is still ongoing. Minor weaknesses were identified regarding the authorisation of PPPs and their communication to the public. A substantial export control programme is in place and progress has been made to extend the analytical scope, but there remains a weakness in the use of the laboratory resources, and a lack of GC-MS/MS equipment. Comprehensive follow-up was undertaken by the competent authorities in response to EU RASFF notifications. Work is ongoing to address the recommendations of the previous audit.

7 CLOSING MEETING

A closing meeting was held on 5 February 2013 with representatives of the CAs. At this meeting, the audit team presented the main findings and preliminary conclusions of the audit. The EACCE and ONSSA representatives offered some initial comments and clarifications. They stated that they would further strengthen control in mint, and growers and pack-houses involved in RASFF notifications would be subject to systematic export control. In case of repeated infringements, the exports of the concerned growers or pack-houses would be suspended. EACCE stated their interest to participate in the EU proficiency tests organised by the EU reference laboratories, and asked for faster communication of RASFF notifications, which should also contain all available traceability information to allow better tracing of non-compliant produce to the grower. EACCE also informed of their plans to equip and re-organise the laboratory network in a structured process. ONSSA stated their intention to improve the availability of authorised PPPs for use in mint, and a meeting with PPP manufacturers has already been held.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

The competent authorities are invited to provide details of the actions taken and planned, including for deadlines for their completion ("action plan"), aimed at addressing the recommendations set out below, within 25 working days of receipt of this report.

The CA should:

N°.	Recommendation
1.	The competent authorities of Morocco should continue their actions to improve the control system for pesticide residues in mint in order to guarantee that the produce complies with, or is equivalent to, European Union standards in accordance with Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002. In particular, the competent authorities should consider the sufficient availability of authorised PPPs in mint, in order to prevent growers from using unauthorised PPPs.
2.	The competent authorities of Morocco should continue broadening the scope of analytes sought in the export control programme, in order to provide for effective controls and guarantee that the produce complies with, or is equivalent to, European Union standards in accordance with Article 11 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2001. The competent authorities should consider the provision of the required laboratory equipment, and the effective use of laboratory staff and equipment.

The competent authority's response to the recommendations can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/fvo/rep_details_en.cfm?rep_inspection_ref=2013-6687

ANNEX 1 - LEGAL REFERENCES

Legal Reference	Official Journal	Title
Reg. 178/2002	OJ L 31, 1.2.2002, p. 1-24	Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety
Reg. 882/2004	OJ L 165, 30.4.2004, p. 1, Corrected and re-published in OJ L 191, 28.5.2004, p. 1	Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on official controls performed to ensure the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules
Reg. 852/2004	OJ L 139, 30.4.2004, p. 1, Corrected and re-published in OJ L 226, 25.6.2004, p. 3	Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs
Reg. 396/2005	OJ L 70, 16.3.2005, p. 1-16	Regulation (EC) No 396/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 February 2005 on maximum residue levels of pesticides in or on food and feed of plant and animal origin and amending Council Directive 91/414/EEC
Reg. 669/2009	OJ L 194, 25.7.2009, p. 11-21	Commission Regulation (EC) No 669/2009 of 24 July 2009 implementing Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the increased level of official controls on imports of certain feed and food of non-animal origin and amending Decision 2006/504/EC
Dir. 2002/63/EC	OJ L 187, 16.7.2002, p. 30-43	Commission Directive 2002/63/EC of 11 July 2002 establishing Community methods of sampling for the official control of pesticide residues in and on products of plant and animal origin and repealing Directive 79/700/EEC

ANNEX 2 – STANDARDS QUOTED IN THE REPORT

Reference number	Full title	Publication details
CODEX Guidelines CAC/GL 25-1997	Guidelines for the exchange of information between countries on rejections of imported food (CAC/GL 25-1997).	http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/standard_list.jsp
CODEX Guidelines CAC/GL 26-1997	Guidelines on the design, operation, assessment and accreditation of food import and export inspection and certification systems (CAC/GL 26-1997).	http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/standard_list.jsp
CODEX Guidelines CAC/GL 27-1997	Guidelines for the Assessment of the competence of testing laboratories involved in the import and export control of food (CAC/GL 27-1997).	http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/standard_list.jsp
CODEX Guidelines CAC/GL 31-1999	Recommended methods of sampling for the determination of pesticide residues for compliance with MRLs (CAC/GL 33-1999).	http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/standard_list.jsp
CAC/MRL 1-2009	Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for Pesticides	http://www.codexalimentarius.net/mrls/pestdes/jsp/pest_q-e.jsp