

RESIDUE TESTING IN FOOD OF PLANT AND ANIMAL ORIGIN

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The Technical Regulations Division within the Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority (MCCAA) is the Authority responsible for both the regulatory aspects as well as for the actual monitoring of pesticide residues in produce of plant and animal origin in Malta. This is in line with the legal requirements of the country with regards to Regulation (EC) 396/2005 on maximum residue levels of pesticides in or on food and feed of plant and animal origin.

From 2008 till the end of 2011, over 600 samples of different commodities varying from strawberries to bovine liver to cereals and baby food were tested. The commodities analyzed were according to the monitoring program of the current year agreed at European level and were taken randomly from different locations including markets, retailers and importers. Commodities included both local produce and imported products, whereby the former accounted for around two out of three products sampled.

Out of the 170 samples analyzed during 2011, 62% of the samples had no detectable residue levels, 33% had residues below the maximum residue level established by the European Commission whereas 5.3% exceeded the maximum residue levels. In cases where the maximum residue level was exceeded and/or a residue of a banned plant protection product was found, criminal charges as prescribed in the Pesticides Control Act were instituted. These varied from the destruction of a whole lot of produce to arraignment in court of the producer.

From a regulatory point-of-view, on the basis of these results, a significant effort was made by the Division in the setting up and organisation of courses aimed at farmers and dealers of plant protection products, as well as continuing in the registration of plant protection products and biocides. To this effect, 36 different Plant Protection Product authorizations and 29 biocidal product registrations were finalized and issued in 2011 by the Division.

As for 2012, another 170 samples of fruit, vegetables and products of animal origin are currently being tested for pesticide residues; the results of such testing are being compiled, analyzed and will be published at the beginning of 2013 on the MCCAA website www.mccaa.org.mt.

For any further clarifications, one can always contact the Technical Regulations Division of the MCCAA on 2395 2000. Furthermore, consumers who wish to report any unsafe product may do so directly on the Authority's website <http://mccaa.org.mt/loadfile/edec0589-219c-40d7-bb1c-f1d697799d8a>