

Guides to Good Hygiene Practices

Collaborative expertise to assist producers

Since 1st January 2006, the Hygiene Package (of European regulations) increases the responsibility of industry players as regards the safety of food products. It promotes writing Guides to Good Hygiene Practices (GGHP) based on an analysis of the dangers and the definition of good practices.

The three principles for the guides to good hygiene practices

All the GGHPs have been written by taking account of the three following principles:

- to list the contaminants which may be found in the food product or animal feed and which may harm the health of the consumer,
- to determine good hygiene practices capable of reducing to an acceptable level the presence of the previously-defined contaminants,
- to list records and/or documents which prove the implementation of good practices.

European regulations for the hygienic quality of foods have been revised in recent years in order:

- to assure a high level of protection for consumers,
- to standardise requirements between Member States to guarantee the free movement of products.

The Hygiene Package: increased responsibility.

Applicable since 2006, the Hygiene Package is a European regulation which takes account « From Farm to Fork » of hygiene of food products and animal feeds in order to protect the health of the consumer.

It is implemented in all the EU Member States and must be observed when importing from other countries. The central idea of the hygiene package is to increase the responsibility of each actor in an industry as regards the food safety of the products which it puts on the market. This regulation promotes the writing, in a collaborative manner, of guides to good practice based on an analysis of the dangers, and the definition of good practices. These guides must be checked at the national and European level.



European regulation of the sanitary quality of foods aims to assure a high standard of protection for consumers and to standardise requirements between Member States to guarantee the free movement of products.

Since the implementation of the Hygiene Package, hygiene factors for plant products are also checked as part of the conditions for granting CAP subsidy in the « Health-Plant production » field (reference document : conditionality 2009). Very important is the use of pesticides: checking the observation of the conditions of use, keeping a pesticide register, the existence of premises or cupboards for storage of pesticides, observation of maximum pesticide residue levels in the plant products produced.



The GGHPs take account of three principles: to list the contaminants liable to be found in the product ; to determine the good practices which can reduce the presence of the contaminants ; to list the records proving the implementation of good practices.

Observation of the Hygiene Package is checked as a condition for receiving CAP grants.

How to observe the Hygiene Package ?

Observation of the hygiene package follows four points:

- 1 - To identify oneself with the authorities by means of a SIRET number in order to be recognised as a member of a food industry,
- 2 - To assure the traceability of what enters or leaves one's farm,
- 3 - To transmit, if necessary, sanitary information to actors in the industry in order to participate in actions of withdrawal or recall of products « unfit for consumption » together with, for livestock products, information about veterinary or abattoir services (notably as part of information about the Food Chain).
- 4 To apply good hygiene practices, possibly by relying on good practice guides (GGHP) and to be able to prove it by keeping records.

Checks are also made that every appearance of harmful organisms or diseases which might affect the safety of the plant products or affecting human health is recorded (e.g. fusarium, aspergillus, ergot of rye), and that the results are kept of every plant sample analysis of importance to human health.

If GM seeds are used for feeding animals, this must also be recorded. Furthermore, the Food general direction (DGAL) of the French ministry of agriculture, proposes to apply official checks called « Hygiene Package » to farmers from 2010 for plant products. The objective of these checks is to verify the healthiness and harmlessness of food products and animal feeds. To this end they must in particular keep available analyses about hygiene quality, understand the dangers associated with the crop and implement the good hygiene practices.

To help the French farming industries to observe the Hygiene Package, professional organisations have got together to write guides for good hygiene practices specific to each sector, in collaboration with joint-trade organisations and the government, and with the support of technical institutions.

Produced collectively, these GGHPs propose good practices which are realistic and applicable by most of the producers concerned. Voluntary applied by the producers, they allow them to avoid having to devise their own individual GGHPs. Checking them is a fairly complex process involving AFSSA (French food safety agency) and several ministries. Once checked by the government, they serve as a reference for both technical support and for the checks.

By determining the most relevant hygiene dangers and the good practices enabling them to be avoided, the guides to good hygiene practices are a helpful tool for the producers.

Farmers enrolled in the ARVALIS – IRTAC, ARVALIS – UNIP quality schemes, in an arrangement which includes these quality schemes or industry standards, are already observing the requirements of the Hygiene Package.

What is the connection with the ARVALIS – IRTAC quality scheme?

Farmers enrolled in quality schemes (ARVALIS – IRTAC, ARVALIS – UNIP) or in a process involving these quality schemes, or even in industry standards (e.g. potato standard NF V 25-111) already observe the requirements of the Hygiene Package. If in future the procedure for validation of the guides leads to the consideration of new dangers or to accept other practices, these documents will be updated.



French Ministry of agriculture intends to carry out official checks called « Hygiene Package » on farmers from 2010 in plant production.



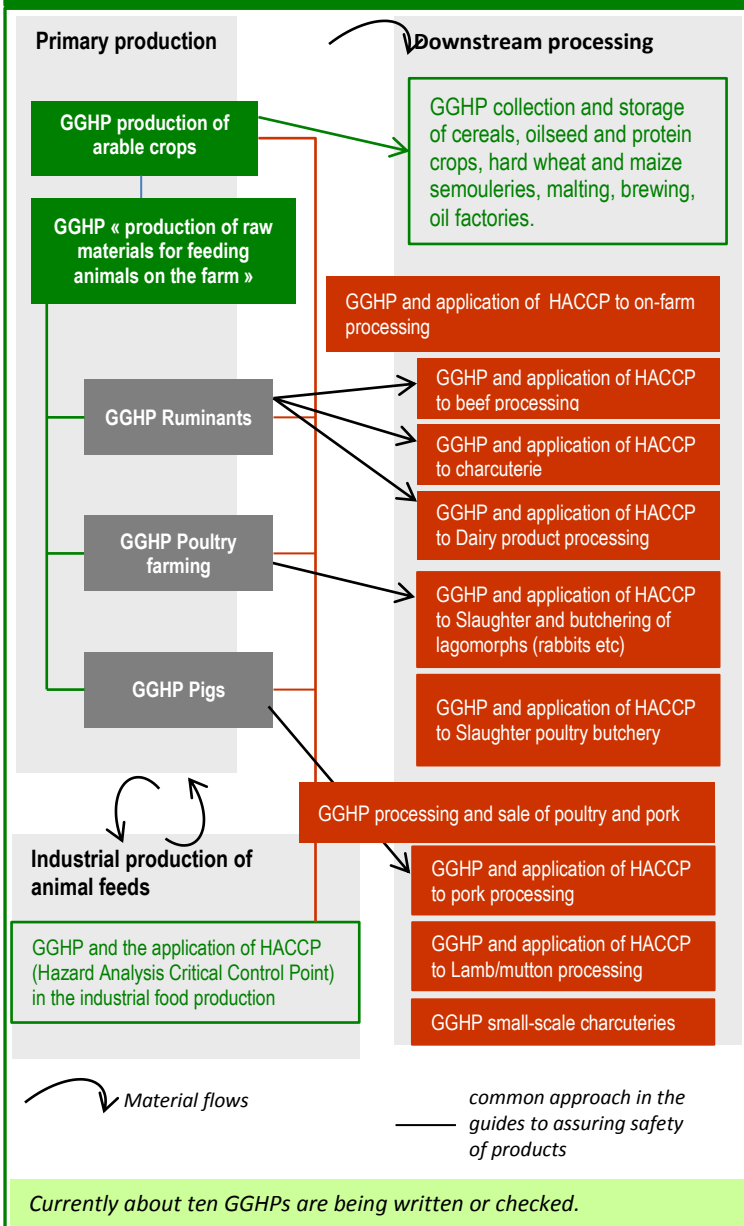
The « Hygiene package » affirms a joint responsibility of the participants in a sector as regards the observation of good hygiene practices and an obligation to reach results

Table 1 : List of dangers covered for arable crops (may be altered ; being validated)

	Cereals	Grain maize	Sweet maize	Sorgho	Grain legumes	Oilseed crops	Potatoes	Sugar beet
Foreign bodies and substances								
Metallic trace elements								
Pesticide residues								
Disinfectants and detergents								
Insects and mites								
Microorganisms								
Mycotoxins								
Glycoalkaloides								

Each crop should be subject to specific checks according to the risks associated with it.

The GGHPs, a hygiene link between the two ends of the chain (Figure 1)



Harmonisation of GGHPs

Each GGHP is specific to one type of crop or to a single link in the food chain. Currently about ten GGHPs for agricultural production are being written or checked (figure 1). A farmer may be concerned with several crops, and each crop is treated in one GGHP. The different GGHPs are written in a uniform way and according to the same principles to make them easy to read. A specific guide for growing arable crops is being finalised (table 1) before being submitted to the competent authorities for official validation.

To find out more

visit the website of the Ministry of Agriculture
www.agriculture.gouv.fr

Florence LEPRINCE
 ARVALIS – Institut du végétal
f.leprince@arvalisinstitutduvegetal.fr

Sylvie DAUGUET
 CETIOM
dauguet@cetiom.fr

Jean-Marc GAUTIER
 Institut de l'Élevage
jean-marc.gautier@inst-elevage.asso.fr

Emilie DAUNAT
 ACTA
emilie.donnat@acta.asso.fr

Alix d'ARMAILLÉ
 ORAMA
alix.darmaille@agpm.com