



## **Update on the Quaternary Ammonium Compound (QAC) situation in the EU**

Following Cutting Edge numbers 140, 143 and 144 that highlight the risk of detection of QAC residues at levels above the Maximum Residue Level (0.01 mg/kg) on fruit and vegetables when used as a packhouse sanitizer, it is pleasing to report that some progress has been made by the European Commission to alleviate this problem.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2012 the EU Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health adopted a guidance document around DDAC (not other QACs) that will permit residues of DDAC on fruit and vegetables up to 0.5 mg/kg during a transition period. This temporary measure applies immediately and to all citrus kinds. It is not clear when the transition period will end but it has been confirmed that the 0.5 mg/kg tolerance will be in place until February 2013 at least. Note that this decision applies to DDAC only and that MRLs for other QACs remain at 0.01 mg/kg. Further notice will be given if the measure is widened to include other QACs.

This means that potentially implicated fruit in-transit to the EU or "on-hold" in the EU may now be placed immediately on the market provided that the DDAC residues are below 0.5 mg/kg. According to a leading DDAC supplier the use of DDAC at a rate of 100-150 ml per 100 L water for disinfecting hard surfaces will unlikely lead to the transfer of residues on citrus above the 0.5 mg/kg tolerance based on anecdotal evidence from South Africa, Israel, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. This suggests the use of DDAC as a hard surface sanitizer will unlikely result in the rejection of citrus fruit in the EU due to residue transfers from hard surfaces.

The intention behind this measure is to address the specific problem of residues arising from cross-contamination of fruit coming into contact with treated surfaces during the packing process. It does not address the issue of the chemical being used for the purpose of sanitizing the fruit itself. An application to have a positive MRL for DDAC set in the EU (proposed at 6.0 mg/kg) that would allow DDAC sanitizers to be used as a dip treatment (e.g. in packhouse dump tanks) was made at the end of 2011. It is expected that a final decision around this MRL will only be made in late 2012. Therefore it is appropriate to maintain the recommended usage restrictions for QACs (including DDAC) on fruit destined for the EU for uses other than hard surface disinfecting as they are (i.e. not permitted).

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