



Proficiency Guidelines for the Sampling of Bulk Fertilizer Shipments

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This proficiency guidelines were researched and prepared by the IFA Working Group on the Harmonization of Fertilizer Sampling and Methods of Analysis, which consists of representatives of the global fertilizer industry. This document is available to the general public and is a reference document for the international trade of fertilizer products. It should not be considered to be an international standard; nor does this document take precedence over existing national and regional regulations or standards.

This recommendation and its background documents are available to the general public on the IFA web site or through written request to the IFA Secretariat.

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Introduction

Accurate and representative sampling is a crucial and challenging operation requiring knowledge of the product being sampled as well as of the correct sampling process. Trading parties within the global fertilizer industry often apply different methods and procedures for sampling operations, which can subsequently lead to varying degrees of representativeness of the samples being taken.

Quality Assurance Scheme

In order to facilitate more effective sampling plans, the IFA Working Group on the Harmonization of Fertilizer Sampling and Quality Analysis Methods has developed a set of proficiency guidelines for the sampling of bulk fertilizer:

Recommended guidelines:
It is recommended that all stakeholders engaged in the sampling of fertilizers should develop, implement and follow a documented Quality Assurance Programme (QAP). The QAP should outline the basic requirements for the application of valid sampling methodologies, such as the use of the appropriate equipment, the development of competent field technicians, the verification of results, and the control of documentation.
It is recommended that sampling methods should be validated by a recognized body, and should be deemed suitable for the product to be sampled. The method's scope and field of application should be stated clearly.
The method should also contain sections on principle and definitions, and should be prescriptive at critical control points.
The field technicians' training and skill set should meet the minimum requirements established in the QAP and records should be kept accordingly.
The field technician should possess the proper and suitable equipment necessary for conducting the sampling operation. All equipment should be periodically checked, calibrated (if required) and all maintenance should be documented.
The sampling plan should establish regular compliance monitoring in order to verify and demonstrate proficiency.
A detailed record keeping system should be established.
Written records should be kept of the accurate and factual reporting of the sampling process.
The sampling entity should be able to demonstrate that their systems comply with local and/or international health and safety standards.
Appropriate measures should be established to ensure that the field technician conducts the sampling operations in a safe manner.