

SAFEGUARDS

SGS CONSUMER TESTING SERVICES

FOOD

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NEW EU REGULATION OF SPROUTS AND SEEDS INTENDED FOR THE PRODUCTION OF SPROUTS

On 11 March 2013, the European Commission issued 3 regulations. The first is Regulation [\(EU\) No 208/2013](#) on traceability requirements for sprouts and seeds intended for the production of sprouts, to ensure the traceability pursuant to Article 18 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002. The second is Regulation [\(EU\) No 209/2013](#), amending Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 as regards microbiological criteria for sprouts and the sampling rules for poultry carcasses and fresh poultry meat. The last is Regulation [\(EU\) No 211/2013](#) relates to certification requirements for imports into the Union of sprouts and seeds intended for the production of sprouts. They will enter into force on 1 July 2013.

'Sprouts' are obtained from the germination of seeds, developed in water or another medium, harvested before the development of true leaves and are intended to be eaten whole, including the seed.

Following the outbreak of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) in May 2011 in the European Union¹, consumption of sprouts was identified as the most likely origin of the outbreak. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) concludes that contamination of dry seeds with bacterial pathogens is the most likely initial source of the sprout-associated outbreaks and bacterial pathogens present on dry seeds can multiply during sprouting. The related legislation is defined in Regulation [\(EC\) No 2073/2005](#) and is amended by Commission Regulation (EU) 209/2013 which considers the existing microbiological criteria, sampling plan, analytical reference and limits for micro-organisms for sprouted seeds including *Salmonella* and other pathogenic bacteria such as the six STEC serogroups (namely O157, O26, O103, O111, O145 and O104:H4). Sampling and testing rules for poultry carcasses, fresh poultry meat and sprouts have also been added.



¹ [SGS-SafeguardS 104/11: ENTEROHEMORRHAGIC ESCHERICHIA COLI \(EHEC\) OUTBREAK IN GERMANY](#)

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Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 208/2013 lays down rules on the traceability of batches of sprouts and seeds intended for the production of sprouts at all stages of processing, production and distribution. The regulation requires that an accurate description of the seeds or sprouts, the volume or quantity and the name and address of the food business operator are kept on record to ensure the protection of public health in the European Union. The records shall be updated on a daily basis and kept available to transmit to the food business operator to whom the seeds or sprouts are supplied to and the competent authority upon request without undue delay.

In addition, the consignments of sprouts or seeds intended for the production of sprouts imported into the European Union and originating in/or dispatched from third countries shall be accompanied by a certificate in accordance with the model set out in the Annex in Regulation (EU) No 211/2013, to demonstrate the sprouts or seeds were produced under conditions which comply with the general hygiene provisions in Part A of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and the traceability requirements laid down in Implementing Regulation (EU) No 208/2013.

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