

Guidelines for Sampling and Despatch of Proficiency Testing Material

1. Scope

This method prescribes the sampling and despatch procedure for black pepper and white pepper in different forms, such as whole and powder under the proficiency-testing programme.

2. Test item preparation

2.1 Preparation of test material may either be contracted out or undertaken by the coordinator.

2.2 The pepper/pepper products to be distributed in the programme should be generally similar in type to those routinely tested by the testing laboratories.

2.3 Prepare the whole of the bulk material in a form that is thought to be homogenous, by an appropriate method so that all the laboratories will receive test material that do not differ significantly.

2.4 Coordinator should consider any hazards that the test materials might pose and appropriate to advise any party that might be at risk of the potential hazard involved.

2.5 Where possible the coordinator should also provide evidence that the test items are sufficiently stable to ensure that they will not undergo any significant change throughout the conduct of the proficiency test.

3. Homogeneity testing of test material under PTP

3.1 Select 5 (or more) of the packaged test material units strictly at random by assigning a sequential number to all the units. A new random sequence should be generated for each experiment.

3.2 Homogenise each selected test material unit in an appropriate manner (e.g. blender) and from each weigh out two test portions and label as

Samples	Labels	
1	1a	1b
2	2a	2b
3	3a	3b
-	-	-
-	-	-
5	5a	5b

3.3 Sort the 10 test portions into a random order and carry out all analytical operations on them in that order.

3.4 The analysis should be carried out under repeatability conditions and report the 10 analytical results ascertain the homogeneity.

4. Packaging

The packaging has to be adequate and able to protect the stability and characteristics of the test material. The test material shall be placed in clean, dry and airtight suitable containers, which have no effect on the properties of the product. The sample containers shall be of such a size that they are almost completely filled by the sample and get sealed properly (Vacuum packaging preferred).

5. Storage and Dispatch of Samples

5.1 The test material shall be stored in such manner that the temperature of the product does not vary drastically from normal temperature. Samples, which are required to be kept for a long time, shall be stored in a cool and dark place and also free from contamination. Test material on which the analysis is carried out shall be dispatched to the testing laboratory immediately after sampling.

5.2 Some precautions have to be taken while transporting the test material such as dangerous goods, regulations or customs requirement including phytosanitary certificate. The laboratories themselves must also take responsibility for the transport of the test material.

5.3 Appropriate customs declaration forms including phytosanitary certificate wherever applicable should be completed by the coordinator to ensure those delays in customs clearance are minimised.

Note: *During the preparation of samples for microbiological analysis care should be taken to avoid microbial contamination during sampling, test material preparation, packaging, storage and despatch.*