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**Prevention and reduction of mycotoxin
contamination in cereals— Code of
practice**

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Contents	Page
Foreword	v
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms and definition	1
3.1 Planting.....	1
3.2 Pre-harvest	2
3.3 Harvesting.....	2
3.4 Drying	3
3.5 Storage.....	3
3.6 Transportation.....	4
4 Complementary management system	4
Annex A (normative) Prevention and reduction of contamination by zearalenone in cereal grains—Recommended practices based on good agricultural practice (GAP) and good manufacturing practice (GMP).....	6
A.1 General.....	6
A.2 Planting.....	6
A.3 Pre-harvest	6
A.4 Harvest.....	6
A.5 Storage.....	6
A.6 Transport from storage.....	6
A.7 Processing.....	6
A.8 Zearalenone management system based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point system (HACCP).....	7
Annex B (normative) Prevention and reduction of contamination by fumonisins in cereal grains —Recommended practices based on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP).....	8
B.1 General.....	8
B.2 Planting.....	8
B.2.1 Pre-harvest	8
B.3 Harvest.....	8
B.4 Storage.....	8
B.5 Transport from storage.....	8
B.6 Fumonisins management system based on hazard analysis critical control point system (HACCP).....	8
Annex C (normative) Prevention and reduction of contamination by fumonisins in cereal grains —Recommended practices based on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP).....	9
C.1 General.....	9
C.2 Planting.....	9
C.3 Pre-harvest	9
C.4 Harvest.....	9
C.5 Preservation	9
C.6 Storage.....	9
C.7 Transport	10
C.8 Ochratoxin a management system based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP).....	10

Annex D (normative) Prevention and reduction of contamination by fumonisins in cereal grains
—Recommended practices based on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)..... 11

D.1 General 11

D.2 Planting..... 11

D.3 Pre-harvest 11

D.4 Harvest 11

D.5 Storage 11

D.6 Transport from storage..... 12

D.7 Tricothecene management system based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point System (HACCP) 12

PUBLIC REVIEW

Foreword

Rwanda Standards are prepared by Technical Committees and approved by Rwanda Standards Board (RSB) Board of Directors in accordance with the procedures of RSB, in compliance with Annex 3 of the WTO/TBT agreement on the preparation, adoption and application of standards.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare national standards. Final Draft Rwanda Standards adopted by Technical committees are ratified by members of RSB Board of Directors for publication and gazettment as Rwanda Standards.

DRS 287 was prepared by Technical Committee RSB/TC 003, *Cereals, pulses, legumes and derived products*

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (RS 287:2015), which has been technically revised.

Committee membership

The following organizations were represented on the Technical Committee on *Cereals, pulses, legumes and derived products* (RSB/TC 003) in the preparation of this standard.

Paragraph of participants

Rwanda Standards Board (RSB) – Secretariat

PUBLIC REVIEW

Prevention and reduction of mycotoxin contamination in cereals—Code of practice

1 Scope

This Rwanda Standard provides general recommended practices based on Good Agriculture practices and Good manufacturing and complementary management system for the reduction of mycotoxin in cereals.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

RS 184, *Requirements for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP)*

3 Terms and definition

There are no normative references in this document. Recommended practices based on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)

3.1 Planting

3.1.1 Consider developing and maintaining a crop rotation schedule to avoid planting the same commodity in a field in two consecutive years. Wheat and maize have been found to be particularly susceptible to *Fusarium* species and they should not be used in rotation with each other. Crops such as potato, other vegetables, clover and alfalfa that are not hosts to *Fusarium* species should be used in rotation to reduce the inoculum in the field.

3.1.2 When possible and practical, prepare the seed bed for each new crop by plowing under or by destroying or removing old seed heads, stalks, and other debris that may have served, or may potentially serve as substrates for the growth of mycotoxin-producing fungi. In areas that are vulnerable to erosion, soil conservation practices shall be adopted.

3.1.3 Utilize the results of soil tests to determine if there is need to apply fertilizer and/or soil conditioners to assure adequate soil pH and plant nutrition to avoid plant stress, especially during seed development.

3.1.4 When available, grow seed varieties developed for resistance to seed-infecting fungi and insect pests. Only seed varieties recommended for use in a particular area of a country should be planted in that particular area.

3.1.5 As far as practical, crop planting should be timed to avoid high temperature and drought stress during the period of seed development and maturation.

3.1.6 Avoid overcrowding of plants by maintaining the recommended row and intra-plant spacing for the species/varieties grown. Information concerning plant-spacing shall be provided by competent authority.

3.2 Pre-harvest

3.2.1 Minimize insect damage and fungal infection in the vicinity of the crop by proper use of registered insecticides, fungicides and other appropriate practices within an integrated pest management program.

3.2.2 Control weeds in the crop by use of mechanical methods or by use of registered herbicides or other safe and suitable weed eradication practices.

3.2.3 Minimize mechanical damage to plants during cultivation.

3.2.4 If irrigation is used, ensure that it is applied evenly and that all plants in the field have an adequate supply of water. Irrigation is a valuable method of reducing plant stress in some growing situations. Excess precipitation during anthesis (flowering) makes conditions favorable for dissemination and infection by *Fusarium* spp.; thus irrigation during anthesis and during the ripening of the crops, specifically wheat, barley, and rye, should be avoided.

3.2.5 Plan to harvest grain at low moisture content and full maturity, unless allowing the crop to continue to full maturity would subject it to extreme heat, rainfall or drought conditions. Delayed harvest of grain already infected by *Fusarium* species may cause a significant increase in the mycotoxin content of the crop.

3.2.6 Before harvest time, make sure that all equipment, which is to be used for harvesting and storage of crops, is functional and clean. A breakdown during this critical period may cause grain quality losses and enhance mycotoxin formation. Keep important spare parts available on the farm to minimize time loss from repairs. Make sure that the equipment needed for moisture content measurements is available and calibrated.

3.3 Harvesting

3.3.1 Containers (e.g., wagons, trucks) to be used for collecting and transporting the harvested grain from the field to drying facilities, and to storage facilities after drying, should be clean, dry and free of insects and visible fungal growth before use and re-use.

3.3.2 As far as possible, avoid mechanical damage to the grain and avoid contact with soil during the harvesting operation. Steps should be taken to minimize the spread of infected seed heads, chaff, stalks, and debris onto the ground where spores may inoculate future crops.

3.3.3 During the harvesting operation, the moisture content should be determined in several spots of each load of the harvested grain since the moisture content may vary considerably within the same field.

3.3.4 Immediately after harvest, determine moisture levels of the crop; where applicable, dry the crop to the moisture content recommended for storage of that crop. Samples taken for moisture measurements should be as representative of the lot as possible. To reduce the variation of moisture content within a lot, the grain may be moved to another facility (or silo) after the drying process.

3.3.5 Cereals should be dried in such a manner that damage to the grain is minimized and moisture levels are lower than those required to support mold growth during storage depending on the commodity (13.5% and 14%). This is necessary to prevent further growth of a number of fungal species that may be present on fresh grains, especially *Fusarium* species.

3.3.6 Freshly harvested cereals should be cleaned to remove damaged kernels and other foreign matter. Kernels containing symptomless infections cannot be removed by standard cleaning methods. Seed cleaning procedures, such as gravity tables, may remove some infected kernels. More research is needed to develop practical procedures for separating symptomless infected kernels from those that are not infected.

3.4 Drying

4.4.1 Immediately after harvest, determine moisture levels of the crop; where applicable, dry the crop to the moisture content recommended for storage of that crop.

4.4.2 Cereals should be dried in such a manner that damage to the grain is minimized and moisture levels are lower than those required to support mold growth during storage depending on the commodity (13.5% and 14%).

3.5 Storage

3.5.1 Avoid piling or heaping wet, freshly harvested commodities for more than a few hours prior to drying or threshing to lessen the risk of fungal growth. Sun drying of some commodities in high humidity may result in fungal infection. Aerate the commodities by forced air circulation.

3.5.2 Make sure that the storage facilities include dry, well-vented structures that provide protection from rain, drainage of ground water, protection from entry of rodents and birds, and minimum temperature fluctuations.

3.5.3 Crops to be stored should be dried to safe moisture levels and cooled as quickly as possible after harvest. Minimize the amount of foreign materials and damaged kernels in stored grains. Refer to paragraph 29 to evaluate the use of approved pesticides.

3.4.4 The mycotoxin level in in-bound and out-bound grain should be monitored when warranted, using appropriate sampling and testing programs.

3.5.5 For bagged commodities, ensure that bags are clean, dry and stacked on pallets or incorporate a water impermeable layer between the bags and the floor.

3.5.6 Where possible, aerate the grain by circulation of air through the storage area to maintain proper and uniform temperature levels throughout the storage area. Check moisture content and temperature in the stored grain regularly during the storage period.

3.4.7 Measure the temperature of the stored grain at several fixed time intervals during storage. A temperature rise of 2°C - 3 °C may indicate microbial growth and/or insect infestation. Separate the apparently infected portions of the grain and send samples for analysis. When separated, lower the temperature in the remaining grain and aerate. Avoid using infected grain for food or feed production.

3.5.8 Use good housekeeping procedures to minimize the levels of insects and fungi in storage facilities. This may include the use of suitable, registered insecticides and fungicides or appropriate alternative methods. Care should be taken to select only those chemicals that will not interfere or cause harm based on the intended end use of the grains and should be strictly limited.

3.5.9 The use of a suitable, approved preservative (e.g., organic acids such as propionic acid) may be beneficial. These acids are effective in killing various fungi and thus prevent the production of mycotoxins in grains intended only for animal feed. The salts of the acids are usually more effective for long-term storage. Care must be taken because these compounds can negatively affect the taste and odor of the grain.

3.5.10 Document the harvesting and storage procedures implemented each season by making notes of measurements (e.g., temperature, moisture, and humidity) and any deviation or changes from traditional practices. This information may be very useful for explaining the cause(s) of fungal growth and mycotoxin formation during a particular crop year and help to avoid similar mistakes in the future.

3.6 Transportation

3.6.1 Transport containers should be dry and free of visible fungal growth, insects and any contaminated material. As necessary, transport containers should be cleaned and disinfected before use and re-use and be suitable for the intended cargo. The use of registered fumigants or insecticides may be useful. At unloading, the transport container should be emptied of all cargo and cleaned as appropriate.

3.6.2 Shipments of grain shall be protected from additional moisture by using covered or airtight containers or tarpaulins. Avoid temperature fluctuations and measures that may cause condensation to form on the grain, which could lead to local moisture build-up and consequent fungal growth and mycotoxin formation.

3.6.3 Avoid insect, bird and rodent infestation during transport by the use of insect-and rodent proof containers or insect and rodent repellent chemical treatments if they are approved for the intended end use of the grain.

4 Complementary management system

4.1 The Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system is a food safety management system that is used to identify and control hazards within the production and processing system. The general principles of HACCP have been described in RS 184.

4.2 The HACCP concept is an all-encompassing integrated management system. When properly implemented, this system should result in a reduction of the levels of mycotoxins in many cereal grains. The use of HACCP as a food safety management system has many benefits over other types of management control systems in some segments of the food industry. At farm level, especially in the field, many factors that influence the mycotoxin contamination of cereals are environmentally related, such as weather and insects, and are difficult or impossible to control. In other words, critical control points often do not exist in the field. However, after harvesting, critical control points may be identified for mycotoxins produced by fungi during storage. For example, a critical control point could be at the end of the drying process and one critical limit would be the water content/water activity.

4.3 It is recommended that resources be directed to emphasizing Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) at the pre-harvest level and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) during the processing and distribution of various products. A HACCP system should be built on sound GAPs and GMPs.

4.4 The implementation of HACCP principles will minimize mycotoxin contamination through applications of preventive controls to the extent feasible in the production, handling, storage and processing of each cereal crop.

NOTE Consideration may also be given to the manuals for mycotoxin control published by FAO/IAEA.

PUBLIC REVIEW

Annex A

(normative)

Prevention and reduction of contamination by zearalenone in cereal grains—Recommended practices based on good agricultural practice (GAP) and good manufacturing practice (GMP)

A.1 General

Good Agricultural Practice includes methods to reduce Fusarium infection and zearalenone contamination of cereals in the field and during planting, harvest, storage, transport and processing.

A.2 Planting

Refer to 3.1.1 - 3.1.6

A.3 Pre-harvest

A.3.1 Refer to 3.2.1 - 3.2.6

A.3.2 The establishment of Fusarium infection in cereal heads during flowering should be monitored before harvest by sampling and determination of infection by standard microbiological methods. Also, mycotoxin content in representative preharvest samples should be determined. Utilization of the crop should be based on prevalence of infection and mycotoxin content of the grain.

A.4 Harvest

Refer to 3.3.1 - 3.3.6.

A.5 Storage

Refer to 3.4.1 - 3.4.10.

A.6 Transport from storage

Refer to 3.5.1 - 3.5.3.

A.7 Processing

Small, shriveled grain may contain more zearalenone than healthy normal grain. Winnowing grains at harvest or later will remove shriveled grain.

A.8 Zearalenone management system based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point system (HACCP)

Refer to 4.1 - 4.5.

PUBLIC REVIEW

Annex B (normative)

Prevention and reduction of contamination by fumonisins in cereal grains —Recommended practices based on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)

B.1 General

Good Agricultural Practice includes methods to reduce *Fusarium* infection and fumonisin contamination of cereals during planting, harvest, storage, transport and processing.

B.2 Planting

Refer to 3.1.1 - 3.1.6.

B.2.1 Pre-harvest

Refer to 3.2.1 - 3.2.6.

B.3 Harvest

B.3.1 Refer to 3.3.1 - 3.3.6.

B.3.2 The time of harvest for maize should be carefully planned. It has been shown that maize grown and harvested during warm months may have fumonisin levels significantly higher than maize grown and harvested during cooler months of the year.

B.4 Storage

Refer to 3.4.1 - 3.4.10.

B.5 Transport from storage

Refer to 3.5.1 - 3.5.3.

B.6 Fumonisins management system based on hazard analysis critical control point system (HACCP)

Refer to 4.1 - 4.5 in RS 184

Annex C (normative)

Prevention and reduction of contamination by fumonisins in cereal grains —Recommended practices based on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)

C.1 General

Good Agricultural Practice includes methods to reduce fungal infection and ochratoxin A contamination of cereals during harvest, storage, transport and processing.

C.2 Planting

Refer to 3.1.1 - 3.1.6.

C.3 Pre-harvest

C.3.1 Refer to 3.2.1 - 3.2.6.

C.3.2 Factors during pre-harvest that may affect levels of ochratoxin A in harvested grains include frost damage, presence of competitive fungi, excessive rainfall and drought stress.

C.4 Harvest

Refer to 3.3.1 - 3.3.6.

C.5 Preservation

Grain should be allowed to dry as much as possible before harvest consistent with local environment and crop conditions. If unable to harvest the grain when it has a water activity below 0.70, then dry the grain to a moisture content corresponding to a water activity of less than 0.70 depending on the commodity (less than 14 % moisture content) as quickly as possible. To avoid ochratoxin A formation, start the drying process immediately after harvest and preferably use heated-air drying. In the temperate climate region, when intermediate or buffer storage is necessary because of low drying capacity, make sure that the moisture content is less than 16 %, that the buffer storage time is less than 10 days, and the temperature is less than 20 °C.

C.6 Storage

Refer to 3.4.1 - 3.4.10.

C.7 Transport

Refer to 3.5.1 - 3.5.3.

C.8 Ochratoxin a management system based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP)

Refer to 4.1 - 4.5.

PUBLIC REVIEW

Annex D (normative)

Prevention and reduction of contamination by fumonisins in cereal grains —Recommended practices based on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)

D.1 General

Good Agricultural Practices includes methods to reduce Fusarium infection and tricothecene contamination of cereals during planting, harvest, storage, transport and processing.

D.2 Planting

Refer to 3.1.1 - 3.1.6.

D.3 Pre-harvest

D.3.1 Refer 3.2.1 - 3.2.6.

D.3.2 Do not permit mature grains to remain in the field for extended periods of time, particularly in cold, wet weather. T-2 and HT-2 toxins are not usually found in grains at harvest, but can result from grains that are water-damaged in the field or grains that become wet at harvest or during storage.

D.3.3 Refer A.3.2.

D.3.4 Cereal growers should maintain close relations with local cereal trade groups. Such groups should be important sources of information and advice regarding choice of appropriate plant protection products, cultivars and strains that will take into account those resistant to Fusarium and are available for their location.

D.4 Harvest

Refer to 3.3.1 - 3.3.6.

D.5 Storage

D.5.1 Refer 3.4.1 - 3.4.10.

D.5.2 Be aware that cereal grains may be contaminated by more than one tricothecene mycotoxin along with their derivatives; therefore simple, rapid screening methods should be available for the analysis of several tricothecenes. Zearalenone, which is not a tricothecene, has been noted to regularly co-occur in cereals contaminated with DON and other tricothecenes.

D.6 Transport from storage

Refer to 3.5.1 - 3.5.3.

D.7 Tricothecene management system based on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point System (HACCP)

Refer to 4.1 - 4.5.

PUBLIC REVIEW

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PUBLIC REVIEW

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