

# Recovery Correction and its impact on measurement uncertainty: Data from QuEChERS Verifications

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## Introduction

In pesticide residue analysis, most laboratories use the pragmatic approach for measurement uncertainty (MU) estimation given in the SANCO document 10684/2009<sup>1a</sup>: based on the experiences from EUTPS<sup>2</sup>, “a default expanded uncertainty figure of 50% (corresponding to a 95% confidence level and a coverage factor of 2), in general covers the inter-laboratory variability between the European laboratories and is recommended to be used by regulatory authorities in cases of enforcement decisions (MRL-exceedances).” As prerequisite to be allowed to use this default expanded MU, laboratories have to prove that their own (within laboratory) expanded MU is smaller than 50%<sup>1a</sup>. This is done using data obtained from method validation, quality controls, and/or PT results, i.e. data sources with a limited number of representative analytes.

Since the Turkish Accreditation Body, TÜRKAK, does not accept the use of representative analytes for method validation, two within-laboratory verifications of the QuEChERS method for a total of 546 pesticides analyzed by LC-MS/MS and GC-MS were carried out using the approach of the IUPAC/AOAC/ISO “Harmonized Guidelines for Single-Laboratory Validation of Methods of Analysis”<sup>3</sup> with ANOVA validation of the results. With this multitude of data, individual MU estimations were calculated for all analytes considering the effect of a possible recovery correction.

## Sources of uncertainty in QuEChERS

Based on the work flow of the QuEChERS method, an Ishikawa diagram was drawn to find the contributing standard uncertainties (Figure 1 step 1). Since balances, volumetric measuring devices and environmental conditions were under regular control, and the verification studies were carried out over a longer period of time with variations in analysts, laboratory tools, and calibrations, it can be assumed, that the influences of the variability of most sources on the measurement uncertainty are covered by the within-laboratory precision. The only source exempted from this assumption is the purity of the standard materials, which were used for the preparation of the calibration standard solutions as well as for spiking the samples in the precision and trueness studies. While their average content was compensated during initial weighting, the uncertainty in content must be considered twice, as possible errors might occur in both, standard solutions and spiked samples. Taking these assumptions into consideration, the Ishikawa diagram could be simplified as shown in step 2. During the evaluation of the individual results, it could be seen, that the effect of standard purity was negligible for all analytes. Thus, the Ishikawa diagram could be further simplified by reducing the important sources of measurement uncertainty to precision and trueness, i.e. intermediate (or within-laboratory) reproducibility and recovery (step 3).

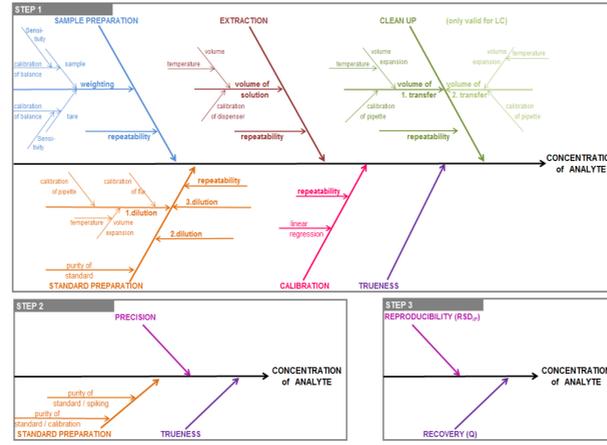


Fig. 1: Ishikawa diagrams for the QuEChERS method

## Calculating uncertainty from recovery and combined uncertainty

Whether to correct the result of an analysis for recovery or not, and how this decision influences the MU estimation, was calculated according to the “Protocol for uncertainty evaluation from validation data”<sup>4</sup>. Recovery correction is not necessary, if the recovery value is not significantly different from 1 when compared to the precision for the individual analyte. This comparison is done by means of a t Test (Formula 1).

$$t = \frac{|1 - Q|}{RSD_{IP} / \sqrt{n}} \quad (1)$$

$$\frac{u(Q)}{Q} = \frac{RSD_{IP}}{\sqrt{n} \times Q} \quad (2)$$

$$\frac{u(y)}{y} = \sqrt{RSD_{IP}^2 + \left(\frac{RSD_{IP}}{\sqrt{n} \times Q}\right)^2} \quad (3)$$

$$\frac{u(Q)^*}{Q} = \sqrt{\left(\frac{RSD_{IP}}{\sqrt{n} \times Q}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{1 - Q}{t_{crit}}\right)^2} \quad (4)$$

$$\frac{u(y)^*}{y} = \sqrt{RSD_{IP}^2 + \left(\frac{RSD_{IP}}{\sqrt{n} \times Q}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{1 - Q}{t_{crit}}\right)^2} \quad (5)$$

In case the recovery value is not significantly different from 1 (which was true for 59 out of 546 analytes, i.e. 10.8%) or the recovery is significantly different from 1, but is corrected using a correction factor derived from the average recovery obtained in method validation studies, the uncertainty from trueness can be estimated as the uncertainty of the average recovery value via formula 2. Thus, the combined MU for an individual analyte can be calculated from formula 3.

In case the recovery value is significantly different from 1 (shown by a negative t Test), but is not corrected, an additional term must be included to calculate the uncertainty from trueness (Formula 4). Thus, the combined MU for an individual analyte must be calculated from formula 5.

## Theoretical Approach

With the above mentioned assumption of precision and trueness being the only important sources of uncertainty accepted, values for the MU can be calculated for each combination of reproducibility and recovery values acceptable according to the SANCO criteria<sup>1b</sup> (Figure 2 left). Using n = 100 (means a quite thoroughly method verification), the “worst case” (i.e. reproducibility = 20% and recovery = 70%) yields an expanded MU of 50,2 %, while the other extreme (reproducibility = 20% and recovery = 120%) adds up to 45,0 % for uncorrected results. Recovery correction would cease the influence of trueness nearly completely and improve expanded MU to a constant value of approx. 40% for poorest acceptable precision values (Figure 2 right).

## Calculations from Verification Data

The same calculations were used for the results of each of the 546 analytes (Table 1). For uncorrected results, all expanded MUs were better than 46%, even for three analytes, which were included although they slightly failed the SANCO recovery criterion: Deltamethrin (69%), Dichlorvos (68%), and Bentazone (65%) (Figure 3 left). Again, recovery correction would yield a significant gain in the calculated uncertainty (Table 2): all expanded MUs would be better than 35% (Figure 3 right).

Tab. 2: Comparison of expanded MUs

	uncorrected		corrected	
	no of analytes	portion	no of analytes	portion
MU < 25%	254	46,5%	384	70,3%
25% < MU < 40%	282	51,6%	162	29,7%
40% < MU < 46%	10	1,8%		

## Conclusion

For MRMs in pesticide analysis, the long lasting dispute on the advisability of recovery correction<sup>5,6</sup> was settled with the harmonization of Codex<sup>7</sup> and SANCO<sup>8</sup> recommendations on MU estimation. For laboratories involved in pesticide analysis, this consensus implied a remarkable facilitation: too huge efforts are required to create a sufficient data base for the recovery correction of each analyte within the scope of an up-to-date application of the MRM like QuEChERS during method validation/verification. (The values given in this poster are based on more than 86.000 measurements.) This, is hardly counterbalanced by the gain in MU. But applying the calculative principle of the “Harmonized Guidelines for Single-Laboratory Validation” on the results of ongoing quality controls using a rolling program covering all analytes<sup>1c</sup> in combination with convenient software solutions might offer an alternative approach with little extra expenses. Thus, the discussion on recovery correction in MRMs for pesticide analysis might be revised in near future.

## Literature

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Tab. 1: Verification data and expanded MUs for individual analytes (sorted by uncorrected expanded MU)

Validation results			expanded MU			Validation results			expanded MU			Validation results			expanded MU		
No Analyte	RSD <sub>p</sub> [%]	uncorr. corrected	No Analyte	RSD <sub>p</sub> [%]	uncorr. corrected	No Analyte	RSD <sub>p</sub> [%]	uncorr. corrected	No Analyte	RSD <sub>p</sub> [%]	uncorr. corrected	No Analyte	RSD <sub>p</sub> [%]	uncorr. corrected	No Analyte	RSD <sub>p</sub> [%]	uncorr. corrected
529 Triazamat	0,047 1,00	9,5 9,5	86 Chloroxon	0,109 0,930	22,9 21,8	113 Cycloxydim	0,102 0,858	28,1 24,0	232 Fenitrothion	0,129 0,881	28,1 25,9	171 Dinotefuran	0,063 0,870	13,0 12,6	238 Fenitrothion-Sulfid	0,129 0,881	28,1 25,9
476 Silthiflufen	0,007 1,00	13,6 13,6	484 Sulfolantzen	0,112 0,956	23,0 22,5	325 Lambda-Cyhalothrin	0,112 0,832	28,1 22,3	229 Fenitrothion-oxon	0,046 0,896	14,1 9,3	23 Azinphos-ethyl	0,091 0,863	20,0 18,5	368 Methyluron-Methyl	0,126 0,876	28,2 25,3
52 Chlorothal-dimethyl	0,078 0,999	19,0 19,0	404 Pentachloronitril	0,095 0,874	23,0 19,1	418 Tolclofos-methyl	0,101 0,868	28,2 26,9	277 Fubenthiolone	0,074 1,025	15,2 10,0	161 Dimepiperat	0,110 0,934	23,0 22,0	462 Pyridinofen	0,130 0,941	28,4 27,9
385 Methiochlor-Sulfidox	0,073 1,040	15,2 14,7	30 Benfuracat	0,112 0,954	23,0 22,6	545 Vinclozolin	0,094 0,791	28,4 19,9	247 Fluazifop-p-butyl	0,082 0,890	15,3 10,5	314 Isopentho-Methyl	0,112 0,954	23,0 22,6	545 Vinclozolin	0,094 0,791	28,4 19,9
38 Bifenoxin	0,081 0,887	15,3 10,2	133 Dimeton-S-methyl sulfone	0,100 0,887	23,1 20,2	425 Prochloraz	0,115 0,834	28,5 23,0	31 Bifenoxin	0,081 0,887	15,3 10,2	116 Cyfluthrin beta	0,099 0,799	28,5 19,8	533 Tricyclopy	0,134 0,908	28,5 26,9
48 Bromopropylat	0,056 0,894	15,9 11,2	309 Isazaphos	0,094 0,887	23,1 18,8	179 Disulfoton-Sulfon	0,111 0,974	23,5 22,2	209 Fenamiphos	0,082 0,972	16,7 16,5	127 Cyromazine	0,108 0,989	23,5 21,6	272 Formafururon	0,130 0,908	28,5 26,9
282 Fenitrothion	0,078 0,999	19,0 19,0	82 Chloromphos	0,114 0,946	23,5 22,9	193 Ethion	0,108 0,989	23,5 21,6	180 Disulfoton-Sulfidox	0,081 1,027	16,7 16,5	125 Cyanoazobenzol-TOTAL	0,113 0,976	23,5 21,7	420 Endosulfone	0,102 0,865	28,2 26,8
62 Carbendazim	0,078 1,025	15,2 10,0	394 Cyfluthrin	0,094 0,885	23,7 18,8	203 Fenamiphos	0,082 0,972	16,7 16,5	514 Thiofos-Sulfidox	0,082 0,983	19,9 15,5	140 Dimeton-S-methyl sulfidox	0,106 0,868	23,1 21,7	541 Triflorfen	0,130 0,941	28,4 27,9
279 Fubenthiolone	0,074 1,025	15,2 10,0	351 Methidathion	0,117 0,977	23,7 23,6	149 Fenprophat	0,108 0,912	23,5 23,1	149 Fenprophat	0,108 0,912	23,5 23,1	408 Pentachloronitril	0,095 0,874	23,0 19,1	408 Pentachloronitril	0,095 0,874	23,0 19,1
385 Methiochlor-Sulfidox	0,073 1,040	15,2 14,7	452 Pyraflufen-ethyl	0,112 0,956	23,7 22,6	202 Ethioyazin	0,115 0,955	23,5 23,1	348 Metazachlor	0,095 0,781	28,7 19,9	545 Vinclozolin	0,094 0,791	28,4 19,9	545 Vinclozolin	0,094 0,791	28,4 19,9
247 Fluazifop-p-butyl	0,082 0,890	15,3 10,5	344 Metalaxyl	0,112 0,939	23,4 22,5	358 Methoxypropylthion	0,117 1,001	23,5 23,5	184 Emamectin-benzoat	0,134 0,904	28,6 25,2	425 Prochloraz	0,115 0,834	28,5 23,0	425 Prochloraz	0,115 0,834	28,5 23,0
38 Bifenoxin	0,081 0,887	15,3 10,2	250 Flubendiamid	0,116 1,020	23,4 23,3	203 Fenamiphos	0,082 0,972	16,7 16,5	222 Fenpropatrin	0,140 0,941	28,6 28,0	116 Cyfluthrin beta	0,099 0,799	28,5 19,8	116 Cyfluthrin beta	0,099 0,799	28,5 19,8
48 Bromopropylat	0,056 0,894	15,9 11,2	203 Etoazox	0,113 0,942	23,4 22,6	527 Triamphos	0,116 1,027	23,5 23,4	309 Omethoat	0,105 0,809	28,6 21,1	533 Tricyclopy	0,134 0,908	28,5 26,9	533 Tricyclopy	0,134 0,908	28,5 26,9
282 Fenitrothion	0,078 0,999	19,0 19,0	179 Disulfoton-Sulfon	0,111 0,974	23,5 22,2	417 Phenthoat	0,139 0,933	28,6 27,9	175 Difenitrophenol (diphenyl)	0,139 0,933	28,6 27,9	272 Formafururon	0,130 0,908	28,5 26,9	272 Formafururon	0,130 0,908	28,5 26,9
62 Carbendazim	0,078 1,025	15,2 10,0	394 Cyfluthrin	0,094 0,885	23,7 18,8	108 Cyanazin	0,108 0,912	23,5 21,8	497 Tebufenoz	0,135 0,936	28,7 27,1	420 Endosulfone	0,102 0,865	28,2 26,8	420 Endosulfone	0,102 0,865	28,2 26,8
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