



BSI Standards Publication

Microbiology of the food chain — Method validation

Part 3: Protocol for the verification of reference methods and
validated alternative methods in a single laboratory

National foreword

This British Standard is the UK implementation of EN ISO 16140-3:2021+A1:2025. It is identical to ISO 16140-3:2021, incorporating amendment 1:2025. It supersedes BS EN ISO 16140-3:2021, which is withdrawn.

The start and finish of text introduced or altered by amendment is indicated in the text by tags. Tags indicating changes to ISO text carry the number of the ISO amendment. For example, text altered by ISO amendment 1 is indicated by **A1** **A1**.

The UK participation in its preparation was entrusted to Technical Committee AW/9, Microbiology.

A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its committee manager.

BSI, as a member of CEN, is obliged to publish EN ISO 16140-3:2021+A1:2025 as a British Standard. However, attention is drawn to the fact that, during the development of this standard, the UK committee initially abstained from voting for it as a European Standard, and also disapproved publication as an International Standard. The UK committee took this stance due to concerns that some technical issues had not been addressed and supporting materials were not referenced at the time of publication.

At the time of publication of this British Standard, users are advised that the ISO working group responsible for the preparation of ISO 16140-3:2021+A1:2025 has produced the following supporting materials for publication on the ISO/TC 34/SC 9 website <https://committee.iso.org/home/tc34sc9>

- Training presentation on the ISO 16140 series of standards
- Training presentation on an overview of ISO 16140-3 ‘Method verification’
- Detailed training presentation on ISO 16140-3 ‘Method verification’
- “Excel tool” for use in conjunction with ISO 16140-3
- Transition period for the implementation of ISO 16140-3

The UK committee notes that the standard is for the verification of validated qualitative methods (Clause 5), quantitative methods (Clause 6) and alternative confirmation and typing methods (Clause 7). Clause 7 refers to an informative Annex E, containing two examples. The UK committee advises that users should take care when selecting strains for the inclusivity/exclusivity study, ensure that these are appropriate for the confirmation or typing method to be verified, and check applicability to the laboratory’s scope and matrices to be tested.

Annex F is normative and addresses verification of non-validated reference methods (e.g. ISO/CEN Standards without performance characteristics). This should be followed in conjunction with the document Transition period for the implementation of ISO 16140-3 available as detailed above. Users should note that the transition period stated for use of the interim procedures in Annex F is currently set to end on 31 December 2027.

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Amendments/corrigenda issued since publication

Date	Text affected
30 April 2021	Correction to links in national foreword
30 November 2025	Implementation of ISO amendment 1:2025 with CEN endorsement A1:2025. The national foreword has also been updated.

English Version

**Microbiology of the food chain - Method validation - Part 3:
Protocol for the verification of reference methods and
validated alternative methods in a single laboratory (ISO
16140-3:2021)**

Microbiologie de la chaîne alimentaire - Validation des
méthodes - Partie 3: Protocole pour la vérification dans
un seul laboratoire de méthodes de référence et de
méthodes alternatives validées (ISO 16140-3:2021)

Mikrobiologie der Lebensmittelkette -
Verfahrensvalidierung - Teil 3: Arbeitsvorschrift für die
Verifizierung von Referenz- und alternativen Verfahren
in einem einzelnen Labor (ISO 16140-3:2021)

This European Standard was approved by CEN on 28 December 2020.

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This European Standard exists in three official versions (English, French, German). A version in any other language made by translation under the responsibility of a CEN member into its own language and notified to the CEN-CENELEC Management Centre has the same status as the official versions.

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COMITÉ EUROPÉEN DE NORMALISATION
EUROPÄISCHES KOMITEE FÜR NORMUNG

CEN-CENELEC Management Centre: Rue de la Science 23, B-1040 Brussels

European foreword

This document (EN ISO 16140-3:2021) has been prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 34 "Food products" in collaboration with Technical Committee CEN/TC 463 "Microbiology of the food chain" the secretariat of which is held by AFNOR.

This European Standard shall be given the status of a national standard, either by publication of an identical text or by endorsement, at the latest by August 2021, and conflicting national standards shall be withdrawn at the latest by August 2021.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. CEN shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

According to the CEN-CENELEC Internal Regulations, the national standards organizations of the following countries are bound to implement this European Standard: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Endorsement notice

The text of ISO 16140-3:2021 has been approved by CEN as EN ISO 16140-3:2021 without any modification.

European foreword to Amendment 1

This document (EN ISO 16140-3:2021/A1:2025) has been prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 34 "Food products" in collaboration with Technical Committee CEN/TC 463 "Microbiology of the food chain" the secretariat of which is held by AFNOR.

This Amendment to the European Standard EN ISO 16140-3:2021 shall be given the status of a national standard, either by publication of an identical text or by endorsement, at the latest by February 2026, and conflicting national standards shall be withdrawn at the latest by February 2026.

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Endorsement notice

The text of ISO 16140-3:2021/Amd 1:2025 has been approved by CEN as EN ISO 16140-3:2021/A1:2025 without any modification.

Contents

Page

Foreword	v
Introduction	vi
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms and definitions	1
4 General principles of verification of qualitative (detection) methods and quantification methods	6
4.1 General	6
4.2 Implementation verification	6
4.3 (Food) item verification	7
4.4 Requirements for implementation verification and (food) item verification	7
4.5 Performance characteristics	10
5 Qualitative methods — Technical protocol for verification	10
5.1 Estimated LOD ₅₀ (eLOD ₅₀) determination	10
5.2 Experimental design	10
5.3 Selection of (food) items	11
5.4 Artificial contamination	11
5.4.1 Selection of strains	11
5.4.2 Inoculation of the test portions	12
5.5 Evaluation of results	14
5.5.1 Determination of eLOD ₅₀ using protocol 1	14
5.5.2 Determination of eLOD ₅₀ using protocol 2	17
5.5.3 Use of protocol 3	18
5.6 Acceptability limits	19
5.7 Root cause analysis	19
6 Quantitative methods — Technical protocol for verification	20
6.1 Intralaboratory reproducibility standard deviation determination	20
6.1.1 General	20
6.1.2 Experimental design	20
6.1.3 Selection of the (food) item	22
6.1.4 Natural contamination	22
6.1.5 Artificial contamination	22
6.1.6 Evaluation of results	23
6.1.7 Acceptability limit	24
6.1.8 Root cause analysis	25
6.2 Estimated bias (eBias) determination	26
6.2.1 General	26
6.2.2 Experimental design	26
6.2.3 Selection of (food) items	26
6.2.4 Artificial contamination	26
6.2.5 Evaluation of results	28
6.2.6 Acceptability limit	28
6.2.7 Root cause analysis	29
7 Validated alternative confirmation and typing methods — Technical protocol for verification	29
7.1 General	29
7.2 Implementation verification	29
7.3 Experimental design	29
7.3.1 General	29
7.3.2 Strain selection	30
7.4 Evaluation of results	30
7.5 Acceptability limit	30

	7.6	Root cause analysis	31	
8		Summary of acceptability limits for the verification of validated methods	31	
A1	9	Validated identification methods — Technical protocol for verification	32	
	9.1	General	32	
	9.2	Implementation verification	32	
	9.3	Experimental design	32	
	9.3.1	General	32	
	9.3.2	Strain selection	33	
	9.4	Evaluation of results	33	
	9.5	Acceptability limit	33	
	9.6	Root cause analysis	33	A1
		Annex A (informative) Classification of (food) categories and suggested target combinations for verification studies	34	
		Annex B (informative) Guidance on how to choose challenging (food) item(s) for (food) item verification	48	
		Annex C (informative) Qualitative method verification — Example	50	
		Annex D (informative) Quantitative method verification — Example	58	
		Annex E (informative) Validated alternative confirmation or typing method verification — Examples	63	
		Annex F (normative) Protocol for the verification of non-validated reference methods in a single laboratory	66	
A1		Annex F (informative) Validated identification method verification — Examples	73	A1
		Bibliography	80	

Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 34, *Food products*, Subcommittee SC 9, *Microbiology*, in collaboration with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Technical Committee CEN/TC 463, *Microbiology of the food chain*, in accordance with the Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement).

A list of all parts in the ISO 16140 series can be found on the ISO website.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

0.1 The ISO 16140 series

The ISO 16140 series has been expanded in response to the need for various ways to validate or verify test methods. It is the successor to ISO 16140:2003. **A1** The ISO 16140 series consists of several parts with the general title, *Microbiology of the food chain — Method validation*: **A1**

- *Part 1: Vocabulary;*
- *Part 2: Protocol for the validation of alternative (proprietary) methods against a reference method;*
- *Part 3: Protocol for the verification of reference methods and validated alternative methods in a single laboratory;*
- *Part 4: Protocol for method validation in a single laboratory;*
- *Part 5: Protocol for factorial interlaboratory validation for non-proprietary methods;*
- *Part 6: Protocol for the validation of alternative (proprietary) methods for microbiological confirmation and typing procedures;*
- A1** — *Part 7: Protocol for the validation of identification methods of microorganisms.* **A1**

ISO 17468 is a closely linked International Standard, which establishes technical rules for the development and validation of standardized methods.

In general, two stages are needed before a method can be used in a laboratory.

- The first stage is the validation of the method. Validation is conducted using a study in a single laboratory followed by an interlaboratory study (see ISO 16140-2, ISO 16140-5 and ISO 16140-6). In the case when a method is validated within one laboratory (see ISO 16140-4), no interlaboratory study is conducted.
- The second stage is method verification, where a laboratory demonstrates that it can satisfactorily perform a validated method. This is described in this document (i.e. ISO 16140-3). Verification is only applicable to methods that have been validated using an interlaboratory study.

In general, two types of methods are distinguished: reference methods and alternative methods.

A reference method is defined in ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.59, as an “internationally recognized and widely accepted method”. The note to entry clarifies that “these are ISO standards and standards jointly published by ISO and CEN or other regional/national standards of equivalent standing”.

A1 In the ISO 16140 series, reference methods include standardized reference (ISO and CEN) methods as defined in ISO 17468:2023, 3.7, as a “reference method described in a standard”. **A1**

An alternative method (method submitted for validation) is defined in ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.4, as a “method of analysis that detects or quantifies, for a given category of products, the same analyte as is detected or quantified using the corresponding reference method”. The note to entry clarifies that: “The method can be proprietary. The term ‘alternative’ is used to refer to the entire ‘test procedure and reaction system’. This term includes all ingredients, whether material or otherwise, required for implementing the method”.

ISO 16140-4 addresses validation within a single laboratory. The results are therefore only valid for the laboratory that conducted the study. In this case, verification (as described in this document) is not applicable. ISO 16140-5 describes protocols for non-proprietary methods where a more rapid validation is required or when the method to be validated is highly specialized and the number of participating laboratories required by ISO 16140-2 cannot be reached. ISO 16140-4 and ISO 16140-5 can be used for validation against a reference method. ISO 16140-4 (qualitative and quantitative) and ISO 16140-5 (quantitative only) can also be used for validation without a reference method.

The flow chart in [Figure 1](#) gives an overview of the links between the different parts mentioned above. It also guides the user in selecting the right part of the ISO 16140 series, taking into account the purpose of the study and the remarks given above.

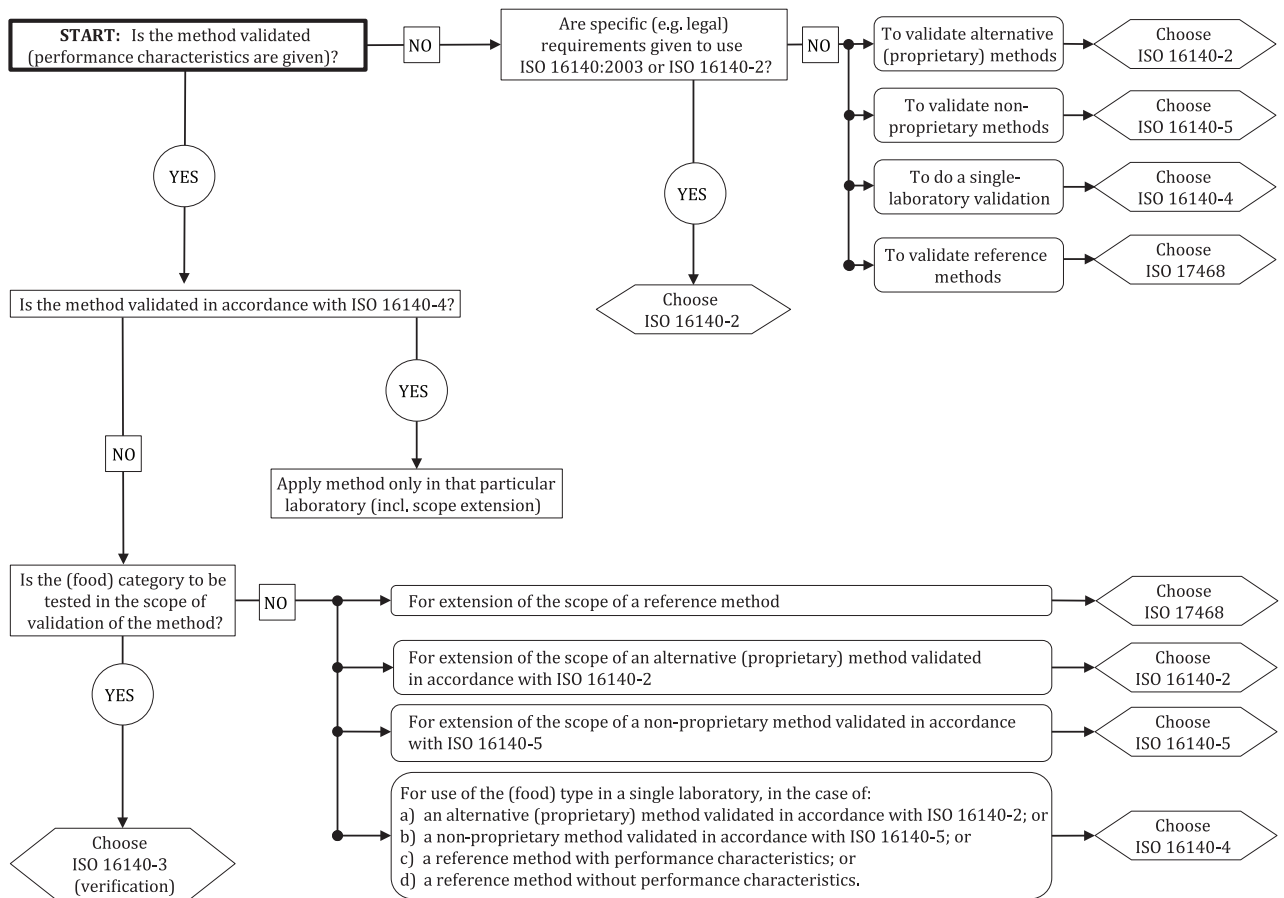


Figure 1 — Flow chart for application of the ISO 16140 series

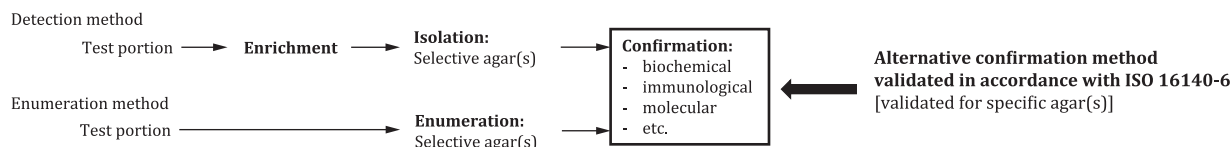
NOTE 1 In this document, the words “category”, “type” and/or “item” are sometimes combined with “(food)” to improve readability. However, the word “(food)” is interchangeable with “(feed)” and other areas of the food chain as mentioned in [Clause 1](#).

NOTE 2 The general principle for method verification is that the method to be verified (either alternative or reference) has been validated. However, some reference methods (including ISO or CEN standards) are not yet (fully) validated. For verification of these methods, the protocols are described in [Annex F](#).

[A₁] ISO 16140-6 and ISO 16140-7 are somewhat different from the other parts in the ISO 16140 series in that they relate to very specific situations. ISO 16140-6 is restricted to the confirmation procedure of a method to be validated [e.g. the biochemical confirmation of *Enterobacteriaceae* (see ISO 21528-2)].

[A₁] The confirmation procedure advances a suspected (presumptive) result to a confirmed positive result. The validation of alternative typing techniques (e.g. serotyping of *Salmonella*) is also covered by ISO 16140-6. The validation study in ISO 16140-6 clearly **[A₁]** specifies **[A₁]** the selective agar(s) from which strains can be confirmed using the alternative confirmation method. If successfully validated, the alternative confirmation method can only be used if strains are recovered on an agar that was used and shown to be acceptable within the validation study. [Figure 2](#) shows the possibilities where an alternative confirmation method validated in accordance with ISO 16140-6 can be applied (see text in the boxes).

A1 Reference method



Alternative method validated in accordance with ISO 16140-2

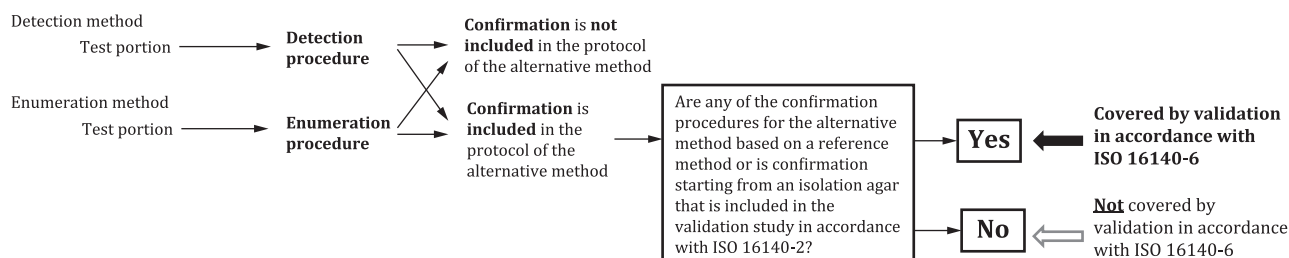


Figure 2 — Use of validated alternative confirmation methods (see ISO 16140-6)

EXAMPLE 1 An example application of a validated alternative confirmation method is as follows.

An alternative confirmation method based on ELISA has been validated to replace the biochemical confirmation for *Salmonella* as described in ISO 6579-1. In the validation study, XLD (mandatory agar in accordance with ISO 6579-1) plus BGA and a specified chromogenic agar (two optional agars for second plating in accordance with ISO 6579-1) were used as the agars to start the confirmation. The validated confirmation method can be used to replace the biochemical confirmation under the following conditions:

- by laboratories using the ISO 6579-1; or
- by laboratories using an ISO 16140-2 validated alternative method that refers to ISO 6579-1 for confirmation; or
- by laboratories using an ISO 16140-2 validated alternative method that starts the confirmation from XLD and/or BGA agar and/or the specified chromogenic agar.

The validated confirmation method cannot be used under the following conditions:

- by laboratories using an ISO 16140-2 validated alternative method that refers only to agars other than those included in the validation to start the confirmation (e.g. Hektoen agar and SS agar only); or
- by laboratories using an ISO 16140-2 validated alternative method that refers only to a confirmation procedure that does not require isolation on agar.

ISO 16140-7 addresses the validation of identification procedures (e.g. molecular identification using multiplex PCR or DNA sequencing or mass spectrometry). ISO 16140-7 differs from the other parts in the ISO 16140 series, as it is intended for microbial identification for which there is no reference method and, therefore, it is not possible to run a method comparison study. The validation study in ISO 16140-7 specifies the identification method principle, the identification database and algorithm when appropriate, and the agar(s) from which strains can be identified. If properly characterized and successfully validated, the identification method can only be validly used on strains recovered on the agars covered and shown to have been acceptable within the validation study.

NOTE 3 Whole-genome sequencing (WGS) in accordance with ISO 23418 will eventually be a reference method for all microorganisms, but the implementation of this technique is still at an early stage. Therefore, the use of WGS cannot currently be requested as a reference method for a large panel of strains.

ISO 16140-7:2024, Figure 3, shows the possibilities where an alternative confirmation method validated in accordance with ISO 16140-6 and an alternative identification method validated in accordance with ISO 16140-7 can be applied within a reference method or an ISO 16140-2 validated detection or enumeration method. The result provided by the ISO 16140-7 validated method can be considered as additional information on the identity of the tested colony(ies); this result cannot be taken as a confirmation result. When there is a discrepancy between the results of the ISO 16140-6 validated method and the ISO 16140-7 validated method, a root cause analysis is conducted. An ISO 16140-7 validated method can also be used to identify colonies within methods that do not require a confirmation step.

If the identification method is also validated in accordance with ISO 16140-6, the same method can be used for both, confirmation and identification.

When a confirmation method is used, it is possible to apply an identification method validated in accordance with ISO 16140-7 for further identification.

EXAMPLE 2 An alternative confirmation method of *Campylobacter* genus can be validated in accordance with ISO 16140-6 and compared to the mandatory confirmation procedure at the genus level described in ISO 10272-1. The identification at the *Campylobacter* species level is optional in ISO 10272-1 and ISO 10272-2 and is therefore not mandatory. In this instance, an identification method at the *Campylobacter* species level can be validated in accordance with ISO 16140-7. If the method is validated by ISO 16140-6 and ISO 16140-7, it can be used for both confirmation and identification purposes. A1

0.2 Verification versus validation

ISO 16140-1:2016 defines the terms for validation and verification, as follows:

- **validation:** establishment of the performance characteristics of a method and provision of objective evidence that the performance requirements for a specified intended use are fulfilled;
- **verification:** demonstration that a validated method performs, in the user's hands, according to the method's specifications determined in the validation study and is fit for its intended purpose.

NOTE 1 The user's hand means the user laboratory.

Method verification applies to methods that are:

- reference methods, including ISO or CEN standards, that are validated using at least an interlaboratory study;

NOTE 2 However, some reference methods (including ISO or CEN standards) are not yet (fully) validated. For verification of these methods, the protocols are described in [Annex F](#).

- alternative methods, proprietary or otherwise, when the validation included an interlaboratory study. The method has been validated in accordance with
 - ISO 16140-2 for alternative (proprietary) methods,
 - ISO 16140-5 for non-proprietary methods, or
 - ISO 16140-6 for alternative (proprietary) confirmation and typing methods;
- A1 — ISO 16140-7 for identification methods. A1

In a validation study, it is not possible to test all existing foods; the diversity and number of samples used in any validation study is limited. In most cases, the validation is based on five different food categories (categories as defined in ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.11, and specified in ISO 16140-2:2016, Annex A). Sometimes the validation is supplemented with additional (other) categories such as pet food and animal feed, environmental samples (food or feed production), and/or primary production samples.

When a minimum of five different food categories are validated, the method is regarded as being validated for a “broad range of foods”. And even though only five food categories are tested during the validation study, the method is expected to work for any type of food samples within the 15 food categories in ISO 16140-2: 2016, Annex A. In other words, the “scope” of validation of the method is a broad range of foods, corresponding to the 15 food categories included in ISO 16140-2:2016, Annex A. The scope of validation is important for selecting categories, types and items for the verification.

Two kinds of verification are distinguished:

- The first one is named **implementation verification**. Its purpose is to demonstrate that the user laboratory is able to perform the method correctly. The user laboratory tests a (food) item that was used in the validation study (for qualitative methods) and any (food) item within the scope of validation (for quantitative methods) and then compares the result obtained from the verification to the result obtained from the validation.
- The second one is named **(food) item verification**. Its purpose is to demonstrate that the user laboratory is capable of testing the (food) items it claims in the scope of laboratory application. The user laboratory tests (food) items included in the scope of validation that are commonly examined by the user. As not all (food) items can be included in the verification, the user laboratory is asked to test challenging (food) items.

The scope specifies the (group of) products – categories or types or items – for which the method can be applied. Different scopes are distinguished:

- **scope of the method:** (group of) products – categories or types or items – for which the method is claimed to be applicable.
- **scope of validation:** (group of) products – categories or types or items – for which the applicability of the method is claimed to be validated.

NOTE The claim for the scope of validation is in most cases wider than the products that are included in the validation study itself. For example, in the case of alternative (proprietary) methods validated in accordance with ISO 16140-2:2016: if at least five (≥ 5) food categories – by using a minimum of three different food types per category – were tested in the validation study, then the scope of validation is a “broad range of foods” (so all 15 food categories are claimed in the scope of validation). When less than five (< 5) food categories were tested, the scope of validation is limited to only those food categories included in the validation.

- **scope of laboratory application:** (group of) products – categories or types or items – for which the method is claimed to be used by the laboratory and are within the scope of validation.

The overlap between the different scopes (including an example) is illustrated in [Figure 3](#).

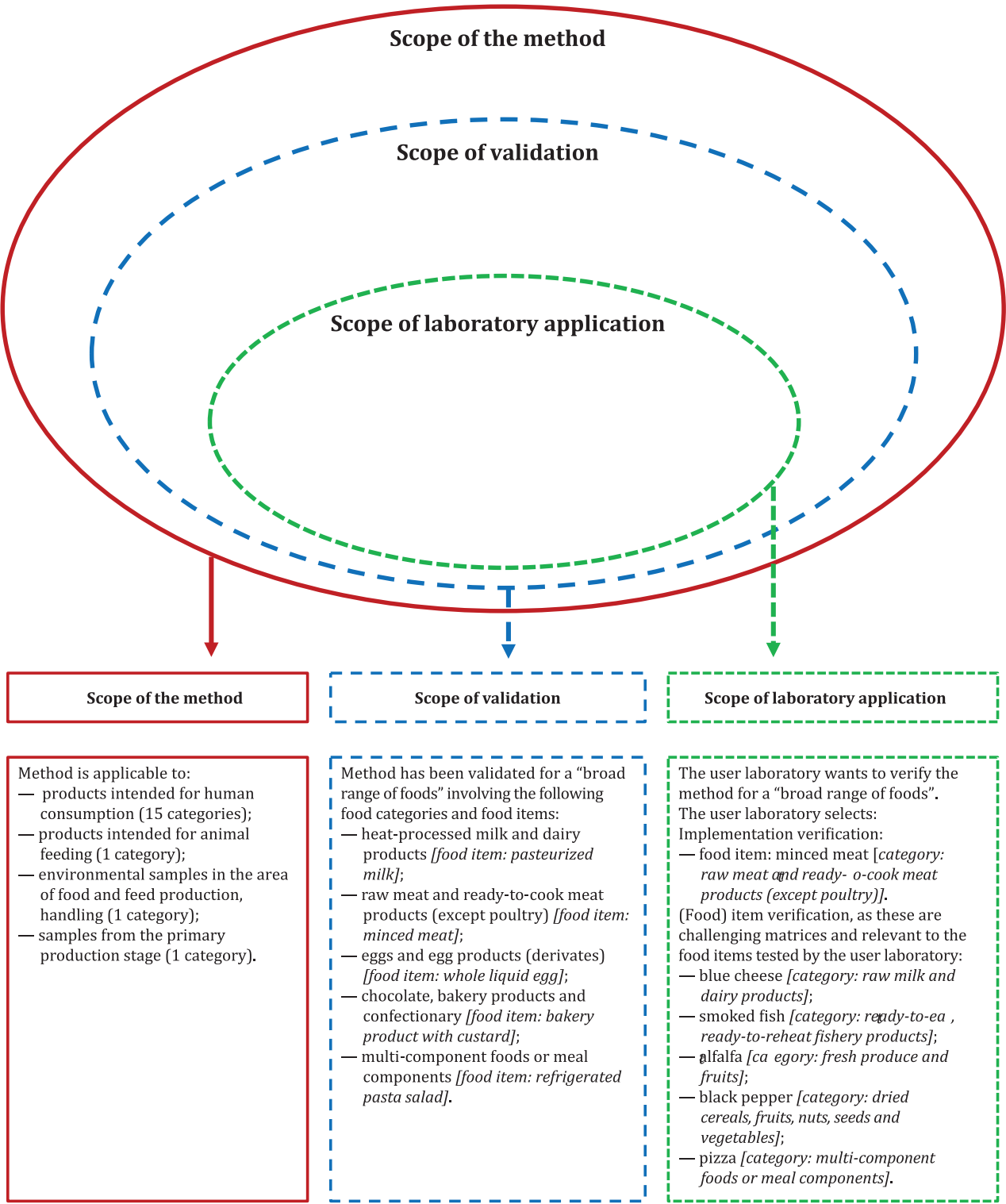


Figure 3 — Overlap between the different scopes (including an example)

At the time of publication of this document (i.e. ISO 16140-3:2021), some reference methods are not yet (fully) validated and would therefore fall outside the scope of this document. It is recognized that standardization organizations (including ISO and CEN committees) will need time to validate their reference methods. Therefore, these non-validated reference methods (including ISO or CEN standards) are verified in a user laboratory according to a specific protocol (see [Annex F](#)). This is seen as a temporary situation until these methods are validated by the ISO and/or CEN committees. For further information, see Reference [\[13\]](#).

In this document:

- “shall” indicates a requirement;
- “should” indicates a recommendation;
- “may” indicates a permission;
- “can” indicates a possibility or a capability.

Information marked “NOTE” is for guidance in understanding or clarifying the associated sentence.

Microbiology of the food chain — Method validation —

Part 3:

Protocol for the verification of reference methods and validated alternative methods in a single laboratory

1 Scope

This document specifies the protocol for the verification of reference methods and validated alternative methods for implementation in the user laboratory.

This document is applicable to the verification of methods used for the analysis (detection and/or quantification), confirmation and typing of microorganisms in:

- products intended for human consumption;
- products intended for animal feeding;
- environmental samples in the area of food and feed production, handling;
- samples from the primary production stage.

This document is, in particular, applicable to bacteria and fungi. Some clauses can be applicable to other (micro)organisms or their metabolites, to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

The technical protocols for the verification of validated qualitative methods and validated quantitative methods are described in [Clauses 5](#) and [6](#). The technical protocol for the verification of validated alternative confirmation and typing methods is described in [Clause 7](#). ^[A1] The technical protocol for the verification of validated identification methods is described in [Clause 9](#). ^[A1] The protocols for the verification of non-validated reference methods are described in [Annex F](#).

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.

ISO 6887 (all parts), *Microbiology of the food chain — Preparation of test samples, initial suspension and decimal dilutions for microbiological examination*

ISO 7218, *Microbiology of food and animal feeding stuffs — General requirements and guidance for microbiological examinations*

ISO 16140-1:2016, *Microbiology of the food chain — Method validation — Part 1: Vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 16140-1 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:—

ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>

— IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1
alternative confirmation or typing method
confirmation or typing method submitted for validation
method of analysis that confirms or types the same analyte as is confirmed or typed using the corresponding reference method

Note 1 to entry: The method can be proprietary. The term “alternative” is used to refer to the entire “test procedure and reaction system”. This term includes all ingredients, whether material or otherwise, required for implementing the method.

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-6:2019, 3.2, modified — Note 2 to entry has been deleted.]

3.2
bias
measurement bias
estimate of a systematic measurement error, or the systematic difference between the quantitative assigned value and the average of measurement replicate results

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.9]

3.3
(food) category
group of (*food*) types (3.18) of the same origin

EXAMPLE Food category: heat-processed milk and dairy products. Food type: pasteurized dairy products. Food item: crème brûlée.

Note 1 to entry: The (food) categories are listed in [Annex A](#).

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.11, modified — In the term, “(food)” has been added before “category”. In the definition, “(food)” has replaced “sample”. The example has been modified to align with the terms used in [Annex A](#). Note 1 to entry has been added.]

3.4
estimated bias
eBias
determination of the *bias* (3.2) based on the experimental design described in this document (i.e. ISO 16140-3)

Note 1 to entry: An accurate determination of the bias is not possible as the number of samples tested is small. Therefore, the term “estimated bias” (“eBias”) is used in this document.

3.5
estimated LOD₅₀
eLOD₅₀
determination of the LOD₅₀ (level of detection at 50 % probability of detection) based on the experimental design described in this document

Note 1 to entry: An accurate determination of the LOD₅₀ is not possible as the number of samples tested is small in comparison to the number of samples required in ISO 16140-2:2016. Therefore, the term “estimated LOD₅₀” (“eLOD₅₀”) is used in this document.

Note 2 to entry: LOD₅₀ is defined in ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.35.

3.6
exclusivity study
study involving pure *non-target strains* (3.11), which can be potentially cross-reactive, but are not expected to be detected or enumerated by the alternative method

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.22]

3.7**inclusivity study**

study involving pure *target strains* (3.15) to be detected or enumerated by the alternative method

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.31]

3.8**(food) item**

single specified food, feed, environmental or primary production *matrix* (3.10)

EXAMPLE Food category: heat-processed milk and dairy products. Food type: pasteurized dairy products.
Food item: crème brûlée.

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.34, modified — In the term, “(food)” has been added before “item”. The example has been modified to align with the terms used in [Annex A](#).]

3.9**laboratory sample**

sample prepared for sending to the laboratory and intended for inspection or testing

[SOURCE: ISO 6887-1:2017, 3.1]

3.10**matrix**

all the components of the sample

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.38, modified — In the term, “(product)” has been deleted.]

3.11**non-target strain**

strain, defined according to the scope of the reference method that would not reasonably be expected to be confirmed, detected or enumerated by the alternative method

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.44, modified — In the definition, “confirmed” has been added to “detected or enumerated”.]

3.12**reference material**

material, sufficiently homogeneous and stable with respect to one or more specified properties, which has been established to be fit for its intended use in a measurement process

Note 1 to entry: Properties can be quantitative or qualitative, e.g. identity of substances or species.

Note 2 to entry: Uses may include the calibration of a measurement system, assessment of a measurement procedure, assigning values to other materials, and quality control.

[SOURCE: ISO Guide 30:2015, 2.1.1, modified — The original Notes 1 and 4 to entry have been omitted and the notes have been renumbered.]

3.13**scope of laboratory application**

categories, matrices, analytes and concentrations for an analytical method that a *user laboratory* (3.19) claims to be capable of satisfactorily testing in its laboratory

Note 1 to entry: A method may have been validated to a broader range (scope) of analytes, matrices and concentrations than the scope that will be claimed by a user laboratory. The scope of laboratory application is $\leq$ the *scope of validation* (3.14).

3.14

scope of validation

categories, matrices, analytes and concentrations for which a validated method of analysis can be used satisfactorily

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.70, modified — “categories” has been added and “matrices” has been moved before “analytes”.]

3.15

target strain

strain, defined according to the scope of the reference method, that is expected to be confirmed, detected or enumerated by the alternative method

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.74, modified — In the definition, “confirmed” has been added to “detected or enumerated”.]

3.16

test portion

measured (volume or mass) representative sample taken from the *laboratory sample* (3.9) for use in the preparation of the initial suspension

Note 1 to entry: Sometimes preparation of a *test sample* (3.17) from the laboratory sample is required before the test portion is taken, but this is infrequently used in microbiological examinations.

[SOURCE: ISO 6887-1:2017, 3.5, modified — In the Note 1 to entry, “a test sample from” has been added before “the laboratory sample”.]

3.17

test sample

sample prepared from the *laboratory sample* (3.9) according to the procedure specified in the test method and from which *test portions* (3.16) are taken

Note 1 to entry: Preparation of the laboratory sample before the test portion is taken is infrequently used in microbiological examinations.

Note 2 to entry: For confirmation and typing methods, the sample is an isolated colony on defined selective or non-selective agar plates.

[SOURCE: ISO 6887-1:2017, 3.4, modified — In the definition, “test method” has replaced “method of test” and Note 2 to entry has been added.]

3.18

(food) type

for a given (*food*) *category* (3.3), a group of (*food*) *items* (3.8) processed in a similar way, with similar intrinsic characteristics and a similar microbial ecology

EXAMPLE Food category: heat-processed milk and dairy products. Food type: pasteurized dairy product.

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.78, modified — In the term and the definition, “(food)” has been added before “type”, “category” and “items”.]

3.19

user laboratory

laboratory that implements a validated alternative method and/or a validated reference method

Note 1 to entry: Some reference methods (including ISO or CEN standards) are not yet (fully) validated. For verification of these methods, the protocols are described in [Annex F](#).

3.20**validation**

establishment of the performance characteristics of a method and provision of objective evidence that the performance requirements for a specified intended use are fulfilled

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-1:2016, 2.81]

3.21**verification**

demonstration that a validated method performs, in the user's hands, according to the method's specifications determined in the *validation* (3.20) study and is fit for its intended purpose

Note 1 to entry: Some reference methods (including ISO or CEN standards) are not yet (fully) validated. For verification of these methods, the protocols are described in [Annex F](#).

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-1: 2016, 2.83, modified — In the definition, “performs” has replaced “functions” and “intended” has been added before “purpose”. Note 1 to entry has been replaced.]

A1 3.22**agreement**

identification agreement

method under validation study provides the same identification result as the assigned, i.e. original, identification of the tested strain

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-7:2024, 3.2]

3.23**assigned identity**

result of the microorganism identification displaying generally accepted molecular and/or biochemical characteristics

EXAMPLE Bergey's Manual of Systematics of Archaea and Bacteria.[21]

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-7:2024, 3.3]

3.24**deviation**

identification deviation

method under validation study does not provide the same identification result as the assigned, i.e. original, identification of the tested strain

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-7:2024, 3.7]

3.25**identification method**

method submitted for validation

method of analysis that provides the name (identity) of the microorganism (e.g. species or higher taxonomy ranking level)

Note 1 to entry: The method can be non-proprietary or proprietary.

Note 2 to entry: The methods can be based on various principles (e.g. phenotypic and molecular principles).

Note 3 to entry: The identification of microorganisms can help for example in determining whether it is a safety or spoilage concern, or is a specific technological or probiotic strain, or is likely to be resistant to an inactivation treatment.

[SOURCE: ISO 16140-7:2024, 3.10] **A1**

4 General principles of verification of qualitative (detection) methods and quantification methods

4.1 General

The verification of qualitative (detection) methods and quantitative methods is undertaken in two parts:

- implementation verification;
- (food) item verification.

The verification focuses on (food) items that are within the scope of validation and within the scope of laboratory application.

Before performing method verification, the user laboratory shall refer to the validation report(s) published by recognized standards bodies and/or method certification bodies as the source(s) for the scope of validation and to select appropriate (food) items for verification.

Implementation verification occurs before (food) item verification. The technical rules for performing implementation verification and (food) item verification are given in [Clause 5](#) for qualitative methods and [Clause 6](#) for quantitative methods.

For the verification of non-validated reference methods, the user laboratory shall use the technical protocols as described in [Annex F](#).

4.2 Implementation verification

Implementation verification aims to demonstrate the competence of the user laboratory to perform the validated method. This is achieved by its ability to obtain the expected results on a (food) item.

The user laboratory shall:

- review the validation data for the method;
- for qualitative methods:
 - select one (food) item tested during the validation study that belongs within the scope of laboratory application of the user laboratory;
 - when the (food) items included in the validation study do not belong within the scope of laboratory application of the user laboratory, the user laboratory shall obtain one of the (food) items; this is necessary because the limit of detection of the method is affected by the (food) item;
 - use this selected (food) item and the sample size that was used in the validation study to perform the implementation verification;
- for quantitative methods: select any (food) item that belongs within the scope of validation of the method (but not necessarily tested during the validation).

4.3 (Food) item verification

The (food) item verification aims to demonstrate the competence of the user laboratory to perform the validated method with (food) items that are tested in the user laboratory.

The user laboratory shall:

- select one challenging (food) item from each (food) category listed within the scope of validation (see 4.4 for details) that is also a (food) category tested within the scope of laboratory application of the user laboratory;
- use this (food) item and the sample size (or a smaller sample size if routinely used in the user laboratory) used in the validation study to perform the (food) item verification.

4.4 Requirements for implementation verification and (food) item verification

Figures 4, 5 and 6 show the number of (food) items required for implementation verification and (food) item verification under different circumstances. Figures 4 and 5 only refer to food categories. Figure 6 includes other categories.

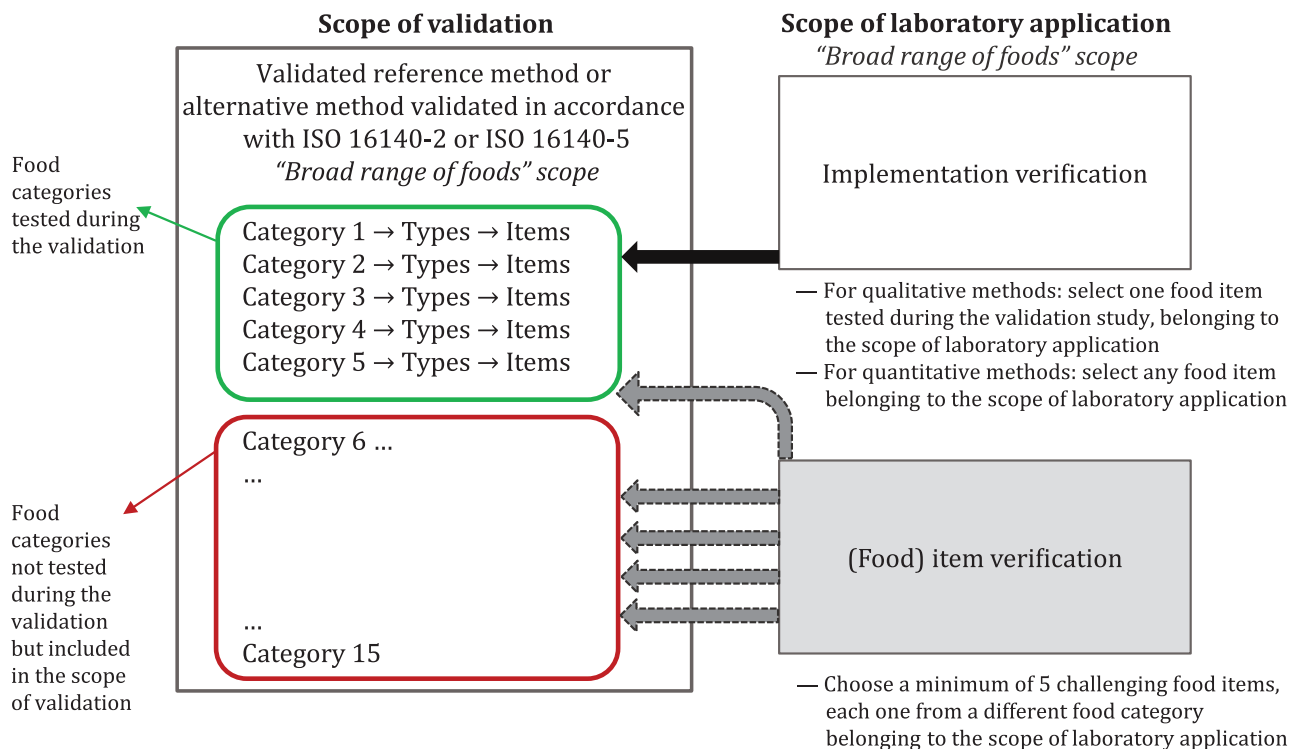


Figure 4 — Food items required when verifying a method for a "broad range of foods" scope

In Figure 4, the selection of the categories for (food) item verification is given only as an example (arrows with dotted outlines). In contrast to implementation verification, there is no obligation to select one food item from a category tested during the validation (in the case of qualitative methods) and four food items from four food categories not tested during the validation. The user laboratory can make its own selection from the 15 food categories.

The scope of laboratory application shown in [Figure 4](#) is for a “broad range of foods”, meaning that the user laboratory has included five or more food categories in its verification study and can therefore claim application for a “broad range of foods”. If the scope of laboratory application is smaller than the scope of validation, the user laboratory shall only test food items from its restricted food categories. For example, if the scope of laboratory application is limited to three food categories, then the user laboratory shall verify a minimum of one food item from each of the three food categories.

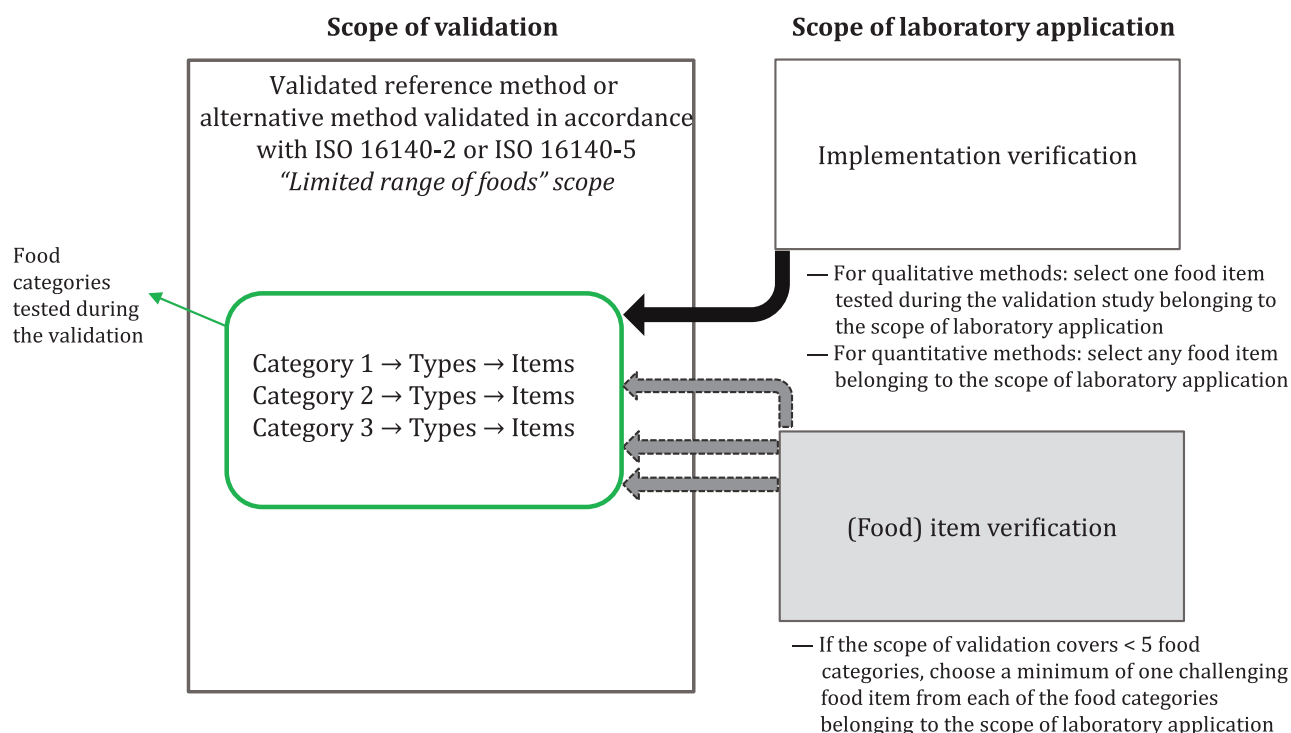


Figure 5 — Food items required when verifying a method for a “limited range of foods” scope

In [Figure 5](#), the selection of the categories for (food) item verification is given only as an example. For the “limited range of foods” scope, a limited number of food categories is tested during the validation. It means the scope of validation is restricted to the tested categories. Consequently, the user laboratory shall not verify the method with categories outside of the limited scope. If the scope of laboratory application is smaller than the scope of validation, the user laboratory shall only test food items from its restricted food categories (arrows with dotted outlines). When the scope of the validation is limited to one category, both implementation verification and (food) item verification shall still be performed, using a minimum of two items from the category: one item for implementation verification and another food item for the (food) item verification.

[Figure 6](#) shows the number of items required when food and other categories are validated and included in the scope of laboratory application. These categories include pet food and animal feed, environmental samples (food or feed production) and primary production samples (PPS). If any of these other categories was included in the validation study and if it is claimed to be within the scope of laboratory application of the user laboratory, then one item from each claimed category shall also be included in the (food) item verification.

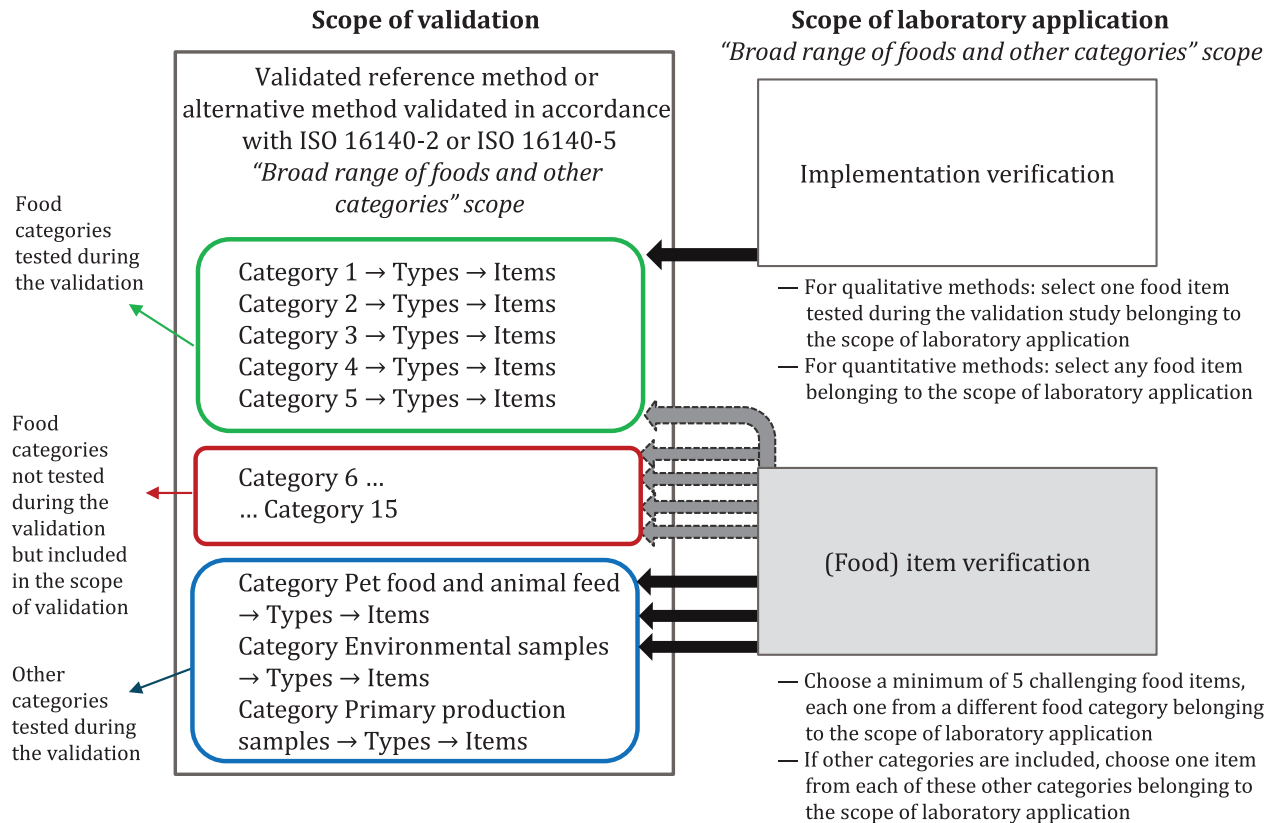


Figure 6 — Items required when verifying a method for a “broad range of foods and other categories” scope

[Table 1](#) summarizes the minimum number of (food) items required for the different scenarios.

Table 1 — Summary of the minimum number of (food) items required for verification

Scope of validation	Number of samples		
	Implementation verification	(Food) item verification	Total
“Broad range of foods” scope ≥ 5 food categories	1	≥ 5	≥ 6
“Limited range of foods” scope N_{food} categories	1	$N_{\text{food}} \leq 4$	$(N_{\text{food}} + 1) \leq 5$
“Broad range of foods” + other categories (N_{other}) scope	1	≥ 5 food items + 1 item from each of the N_{other} other categories	$\geq 6 + N_{\text{other}}$
“Limited range of foods” N_{food} categories + other categories (N_{other}) scope	1	$N_{\text{food}} \leq 4$ + 1 item from each of the N_{other} other categories	$(N_{\text{food}} + N_{\text{other}} + 1) \leq 8$
Other categories (N_{other}) scope only	1	$N_{\text{other}} \leq 3$	$(N_{\text{other}} + 1) \leq 4$

[Table A.1](#) provides the list of (food) categories and corresponding (food) items. [Annex B](#) provides further guidance on the selection of a challenging (food) item from each (food) category for (food) item verification. The (food) items chosen from each (food) category shall be items that reflect the range

of the laboratory samples received by the user laboratory, and should, as much as possible, be items with components such as natural antimicrobial properties, vitamins, flavours and probiotics that may interfere with the detection of the target microorganism.

4.5 Performance characteristics

[Table 2](#) lists the required performance characteristics for method verification.

Table 2 — Required performance characteristics to be determined for verification

Method	Performance characteristic	Implementation verification	(Food) item verification
Qualitative	Estimated LOD ₅₀ (eLOD ₅₀)	✓	✓
Quantitative	Intralaboratory reproducibility standard deviation (S_{IR})	✓	Not applicable
	Estimated bias (eBias)	Not applicable	✓

NOTE 1 The relationship between intralaboratory reproducibility standard deviation (S_{IR}) and ISO 19036 is explained in [6.1](#).

NOTE 2 For the verification of qualitative method, three protocols are proposed to the user laboratory. The protocol 3 does not require a determination of an eLOD₅₀ but to target a concentration of 3 cfu to 5 cfu/test portion.

5 Qualitative methods — Technical protocol for verification

5.1 Estimated LOD₅₀ (eLOD₅₀) determination

The eLOD₅₀ determination is required for both the implementation verification and the (food) item verification.

- The user laboratory first follows one of the selected technical protocols outlined below in its entirety to complete the implementation verification, demonstrating its ability to perform the validated method correctly.
- The user laboratory then applies this same technical protocol for (food) item verification.

During the method verification, run the full procedure of the method as described, including the confirmation procedure (if there is one). A minimum of one individual test portion at each inoculation level needs to be confirmed, and the number of colonies for confirmation may be reduced to one.

5.2 Experimental design

The user laboratory shall select one of the three protocols described in [Table 3](#).

Table 3 — Protocols to determine eLOD₅₀ and number of replicates needed per inoculation level

Protocol	Inoculation level of the test portion					Total number of replicates
	High level 9 × LOD ₅₀ / test portion	Intermediate level 3 × LOD ₅₀ / test portion	Low level 1 × LOD ₅₀ / test portion	3 cfu to 5 cfu /test portion	Blank	
1	1	4	4	–	1	10
2	–	3	5	–	1	9
3	–	–	–	7	1	8

NOTE The abbreviation of colony forming units is cfu.

The choice of protocol depends on the ability of the laboratory to achieve the desired level of contamination of the test portion. Laboratory grown cultures or reference materials can be used for inoculation (see [5.4.1](#)).

- Protocol 1 can be used when there is uncertainty of achieving the desired level of contamination of the test portions. This is relevant when a culture is used, without prior knowledge of the actual level of the inoculum, to inoculate the test portions.
- Protocol 3 can be used when the level of contamination of the inoculum is known, e.g. when using a reference material with known concentration.
- Protocol 2 can be used if the first chosen protocol did not work as anticipated, and the experiment needs to be repeated.

Additional dilutions to that prescribed for any of the protocols can be used to minimize the need to repeat the experiment when inoculation levels do not comply with the requirements or the verification test results cannot be interpreted (see [Tables 6](#) and [8](#)). This is, however, not mandatory, but the decision of the laboratory conducting the experiment.

The protocols shall be performed as follows.

- Prepare cultures of the target microorganisms for inoculating the (food) items.
- At a minimum, prepare the number of test portions of the same (food) item that are required for the selected protocol (see [Table 3](#)). Choose a (food) item that should not be naturally contaminated by the target microorganism.
- Inoculate the initial suspensions of the test portions according to the selected protocol in [Table 3](#).
- Determine the level of the target microorganism in the inoculum, at the same time as the test portions are inoculated, by plating on a non-selective medium (e.g. plate count agar) or by performing an MPN (e.g. 3 dilutions × 3 tubes). Enumerate in accordance with ISO 7218.

NOTE If the level of the culture used for inoculation is not known, additional test portions can be inoculated with extra dilutions to ensure that the target levels are included in the verification.

- Analyse the inoculated test portions using the full procedure of the method being verified.
- For protocol 1 and protocol 2: determine the eLOD₅₀ using the positive and negative results obtained (see [5.5](#) for details). For protocol 3, no eLOD₅₀ is determined. Instead, the results are evaluated based on the number of positives found out of the seven replicates tested.

See also [Annex C](#) for additional guidance and examples.

5.3 Selection of (food) items

One (food) item is required for the implementation verification. Any (food) item that is included in the validation and within the scope of laboratory application can be selected.

For the (food) item verification, the user laboratory shall test a minimum of one (food) item, preferably a challenging one, from each of the required (food) categories. Details on the required number of (food) categories to test according to the scope of validation or to the scope of laboratory application are described in [4.4](#). [Annex B](#) provides guidance on how to choose challenging (food) items.

5.4 Artificial contamination

5.4.1 Selection of strains

Strains can be from:

- culture collections;

- user laboratory collections;
- reference materials (including commercial reference materials, e.g. a freeze-dried strain with known concentration).

When choosing the test strains, the majority should originate from the (food) categories selected for the verification study and cover the recognized range of the target analyte with respect to the diversity in identification characteristics (e.g. biochemical, serotype, phage type), geographical distribution and incidence (see ISO 16140-2:2016, Annex E).

NOTE Preferably, the strains used in the verification are from sources relevant to the (food) item being verified and a different strain is used for each of the (food) items to be tested.

5.4.2 Inoculation of the test portions

Use the LOD₅₀ data of the corresponding (food) categories from the validation study of the method to determine the level of contamination (this should be between one to nine times the LOD₅₀, see [Table 3](#)) that will be used to inoculate the test portion. For protocol 3, use 3 cfu to 5 cfu/test portion.

If no corresponding (food) categories are available in the validation study [e.g. for a challenging (food) item tested in (food) item verification], the LOD₅₀ value is assumed to be equal to or lower than 1 cfu/test portion.

The following guidance is given as an example of procedures suitable for producing inocula.

- The selected strain is grown in a culture medium under conditions that enable the optimal growth of the strain (e.g. overnight culture). Follow the procedures specified in ISO 11133:2014, 5.4.

NOTE In this document, overnight culture is specified as 16 h to 24 h of incubation.

- Enumerate the culture on a non-selective medium to determine the concentration of the strain in cfu/ml. It is assumed that this level will be consistently achieved when the same culture conditions are used.
- Repeat the culture under the same conditions and take into account the previously determined concentration to prepare dilutions to cover the range for inoculation. This step is not required if the stability of the strain is known by the user laboratory (e.g. viability after storage at 4 °C overnight).

If the user laboratory works with ready-to-use target strains with known levels (e.g. reference material), the steps described above are not required.

The prepared inoculum is introduced directly into the initial suspension of the individual test portions. After inoculation, the suspension is mixed thoroughly. The use of stressed cultures is recommended but is not required (see ISO 16140-2:2016, Annex C).

[Table 4](#) provides a guide on how to achieve the inoculation levels for each protocol.

Table 4 — Inoculation levels for each protocol

Protocol	High level $9 \times \text{LOD}_{50}$ /test portion	Intermediate level $3 \times \text{LOD}_{50}$ /test portion	Low level $1 \times \text{LOD}_{50}$ /test portion	3 cfu to 5 cfu/test portion
1	This should be at a maximum of nine times the expected LOD_{50} .	From the high inoculation level, perform a 1:3 dilution to achieve the intermediate level.	From the intermediate inoculation level, perform 1:3 dilution to achieve the low level.	—
2	—	This should be at a maximum of three times the expected LOD_{50} .	From the intermediate inoculation level, perform 1:3 dilution to achieve the low level.	—
3	—	—	—	The level of contamination of the inoculum is known, (e.g. reference material with known concentration).

More dilutions can be tested to ensure that the target levels are included. Use as many dilutions as needed but always take into account a 1:3 dilution factor between the levels.

To determine the inoculum level, enumerate, at the time the test portions are inoculated, the high-level inoculum when using protocol 1, the intermediate-level inoculum when using protocol 2 or the 3 cfu to 5 cfu/test portion inoculum when using protocol 3, in accordance with ISO 7218 (using a non-selective medium, e.g. plate count agar). Take into account the fact that the level of contamination of the inoculum is very low and thus more replicates and/or a larger volume of the inoculum shall be analysed to obtain a valid result in accordance with ISO 7218. The concentration of the low and intermediate levels using protocol 1 or 2 will be calculated using the counts obtained and the dilution factors used.

Alternatively, an MPN determination of the inocula can be performed using a 3 dilutions $\times$ 3 tubes MPN approach; the use of a non-selective medium for enrichment (e.g. Brain Heart Infusion broth or Tryptone Soy Broth) is suitable (see also [Annex C](#) for more information). In this case, the results are determined according to [Table C.1](#).

EXAMPLE A user laboratory wants to verify the *Salmonella* method (see ISO 6579-1) using protocol 1.

- Based on the LOD_{50} (2,5 cfu/test portion) determined in the validation study, the range of contamination for (food) item A will, theoretically, be 22,5 cfu/test portion, 7,5 cfu/test portion and 2,5 cfu/test portion.
- An overnight culture is prepared. Based on the preliminary enumeration, this is assumed to contain 6×10^8 cfu/ml.
- As the actual count of the new overnight culture is unknown, the user laboratory can use several dilutions to cover the three target levels, using each dilution and test portions required in [Table 5](#). In this case:
 - Dilution A (60 cfu/ml): use 1 ml of 10^{-7} dilution of the overnight culture;
 - Dilution B (20 cfu/ml): use 1 ml of 1:3 dilution of A;
 - Dilution C (6,7 cfu/ml): use 1 ml of 1:3 dilution of B;
 - Dilution D (2,2 cfu/ml): use 1 ml of 1:3 dilution of C;
 - Dilution E (0,7 cfu/ml): use 1 ml of 1:3 dilution of D;
 - Dilution F (0,2 cfu/ml): use 1 ml of 1:3 dilution of E.

In this particular example, six dilutions are used to make sure the right dilutions are included. In total, 21 inoculated test portions will be examined together with one blank test portion. Only the three relevant levels and the blank level (not inoculated) will be retained for the $eLOD_{50}$ determination.

Table 5 — Example of dilutions and corresponding number of replicates for protocol 1, 2, and 3 using more than the minimum number of required dilutions

Protocol	Dilution A (10^{-7})	Dilution B (1:3 of A)	Dilution C (1:3 of B)	Dilution D (1:3 of C)	Dilution E (1:3 of D)	Dilution F (1:3 of E)
1	1	4	4	4	4	4
2	–	3	5	5	5	5
3	–	–	7	7	7	7

- In this example, the count making the final average contamination level for this dilution is 54 cfu/ml.
- Using this selected dilution (A) for the preparation of the dilutions according to [Table 5](#) will result in dilution B containing 18 cfu/ml; dilution C (1:3 dilution of dilution B) containing 6 cfu/ml and dilution D (1:3 dilution C) containing 2 cfu/ml. Dilutions B, C and D are considered to be the three relevant levels as a 1 ml inoculum of dilution D is closest to the LOD_{50} (2,5 cfu/test portion) of the method. See also [Annex C](#) for additional guidance and examples.

5.5 Evaluation of results

5.5.1 Determination of $eLOD_{50}$ using protocol 1

Record the number of positive results obtained at each inoculum level and use [Table 6](#) to determine the $eLOD_{50}$. The blank level shall not produce a positive result. If a positive result is obtained for the blank level, the experiment shall be repeated for all levels.

For the evaluation of the results using protocol 1, the high-level inoculum ($9 \times LOD_{50}$) shall produce only positive results. If negative results are obtained, the experiment shall be repeated for all levels. Some of the MPN combinations indicated as “unreliable MPN result” (see [Tables 6](#) and [7](#)) are very unlikely to occur and the experiment shall therefore be repeated.

When more dilutions are used, the three dilutions, with the low inoculation level closest to the LOD_{50} level, shall be used to evaluate the data according to [Table 6](#).