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Storage of cereals and pulses —

Part 1:

General recommendations for the keeping of
cereals

Stockage des céréales et des légumineuses —

Partie 1: Recommandations générales pour la conservation des céréales

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Foreword

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Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

International Standard ISO 6322-1 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 34, *Agricultural food products*, Subcommittee SC 4, *Cereals and pulses*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 6322:1981), which has been technically revised.

ISO 6322 consists of the following parts, under the general title *Storage of cereals and pulses*:

- *Part 1: General recommendations for the keeping of cereals*
- *Part 2: Essential requirements*
- *Part 3: Control of attack by pests*

Annexes A and B of this part of ISO 6322 are for information only.

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Introduction

The seasonal nature of cereal production, in conjunction with year-round consumer requirements, has always made it necessary to store grain for short or long periods.

However, the caryopsis of cereals, like all plant life with a reduced metabolic rate, undergoes an unavoidable physiological development which can have beneficial effects (breaking of dormancy, improved baking quality, quality for making pasta, cooking quality), but which leads to ageing and, after a time, to changes which are detrimental and of a nature and intensity which are dependent upon the storage environment.

When considered on a worldwide scale, these various changes result in very substantial qualitative and quantitative losses.

Storage losses have been estimated as being an average of 5 % but sometimes as much as 30 %, especially in countries with climates favourable to the rapid development of agents of deterioration and where storage techniques are poorly developed, such as developing countries in the damp tropics. The principal causes of loss of quantity and quality are metabolic changes in the grain and the attacks of microorganisms (bacteria and moulds) and of vertebrate and invertebrate animals.

The magnitude of these figures highlights the need for promoting throughout the world a rapid improvement in techniques of conservation.

Storage of cereals and pulses —

Part 1:

General recommendations for the keeping of cereals

1 Scope

This part of ISO 6322 gives general guidance related to the problems of keeping cereals. Other aspects of the storage of cereals and pulses are dealt with in ISO 6322-2 and ISO 6322-3.

2 Normative reference

The following standard contains provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this part of ISO 6322. At the time of publication, the edition indicated was valid. All standards are subject to revision, and parties to agreements based on this part of ISO 6322 are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent edition of the standard indicated below. Members of IEC and ISO maintain registers of currently valid International Standards.

ISO 5527:1995, *Cereals — Vocabulary*.

3 Definitions

For the purposes of this part of ISO 6322, the definitions given in ISO 5527 and the following definition apply.

3.1 relative humidity: Ratio of the vapour pressure in a sample of moist air to the saturation vapour pressure with respect to water at the same temperature.

4 Aspects of the problems

4.1 Technical factors

The problem of keeping cereals arises at two different stages, as discussed in 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.

4.1.1 Immediately after harvesting, the cereals may sometimes remain moist for periods of time ranging from a few hours to several months. The product is particularly unstable and as a rule it is at this stage that storage conditions are least favourable. It is frequently a question of storage on the farm or in small, not always adequately equipped, silos and storerooms, whilst awaiting the appropriate treatment.

4.1.2 Up to and including the international marketing stage, cereals are stored for anything from a few months to several years at or below a maximum moisture content, the level of which may be fixed in each country. Such

storage can be handled by very large bulk storage organizations with modern, well-equipped silos, or other types of bulk storage facility. The type of problem arising varies with the type of store, its condition, location and expected period of storage.

4.2 Environmental and socio-economic factors

Problems peculiar to the keeping of grain vary greatly from one country to another. These variations depend upon the factors listed in 4.2.1 to 4.2.3.

4.2.1 Climatic conditions

Undoubtedly, climatic conditions are one of the most important factors affecting the quality of grain, from growth in the field to final animal or human consumption.

Geographical areas can be roughly divided into the following:

- a) hot and damp tropical climates, where deterioration of the grain can be very rapid;
- b) hot and dry climates, where cereals are harvested naturally dried and where, because of this, the problem is simpler (e.g. the southern United States of America and the Middle East); however, in these regions the grain can remain hot for long periods after harvesting, which exacerbates insect infestation problems;
- c) temperate climates, where part of the harvest may be moist (e.g. Europe);
- d) very cold regions posing very special problems such as cereals which have spent some time under snow.

It is frequently the case that some of the developing countries have less favourable climates and are therefore at a disadvantage in the fight against grain deterioration.

4.2.2 Importing/exporting activities of the country

All countries which produce cereals have storage problems at the farm level. Those which export and import grain have further problems. Exporting countries, in particular, have to use storage structures which make it possible to deliver cereals which comply with the often very stringent standards set by official organizations in those countries as well as by the importing countries (especially where microorganisms and insects are concerned). It should be remembered, however, that in many exporting countries it is important that any equipment used should be of low cost.

4.2.3 Technical management development

Some developing countries are not well informed about the many problems and are often ill-equipped to deal with them. On the other hand, the development of modern harvesting techniques (e.g. use of the combine harvester) considerably modifies the specific nature of the first storage (4.1.1) because of the potential influx of moist grain.

The organization of the storage system is very important because of size differences in the storage structures used; the presence of huge quantities of grain can present practical and logistical problems.

At the present time, varying types of more or less advanced storage systems (bulk or sack) exist side by side throughout the world and often in the same country.

It is desirable to segregate lots of grain on arrival at the bulk storage depot according to moisture content so as to avoid mixing damp and dry grain.

4.3 Qualitative factors

Whether or not a cereal is in good condition should be judged in relation to the ultimate use of the cereal: i.e. for human or animal consumption, in the natural state or after processing, or for non-edible industrial products.

The quality factors are usually laid down in regulations which, for each country, determine quality criteria, for example the quality of the grain itself and the permissible quantities of foreign substances (other varieties of grain, insect or rodent residues, residues of pesticides or toxins).

Mandatory quality standards set by importing countries obviously have an effect on the storage problems facing exporting countries. Countries with less advanced storage methods at their disposal may find difficulty in meeting these standards.

Thus, although each individual country may have its own problem, because of international trade there are very great overlaps and many problems which, at the technical and scientific level, are similar; present knowledge makes it possible to formulate guidelines for ensuring the safe storage of cereals.

5 Specific characteristics of cereals as products to be stored

5.1 Cereal seed as a living organism

The resting grain is a living caryopsis in which the germ and the aleurone layer have a reduced rate of metabolic activity which may accelerate very rapidly when the environment is favourable. The endosperm cells are composed essentially of reserve substances (carbohydrates, proteins and, in smaller quantities, lipids), which supply energy for the metabolic processes.

The fundamental metabolic activities of grain are of two kinds, as given in 5.1.1 and 5.1.2.

5.1.1 Respiration, which mainly affects carbohydrates and lipids, occurs under aerobic conditions if the moisture content and temperature of the grain are sufficiently high; the respiration produces carbon dioxide, water vapour and a considerable amount of heat (2 830 kJ per mole of glucose oxidized).

Under anaerobic conditions, a fermentative metabolic process occurs, producing less heat (92 kJ per mole of glucose). The fermented grain has a typical sour-sweet alcoholic smell and has undergone other changes that make it unsuitable for human consumption, although it is suitable for animal feeding.

Oxidation phenomena are normal in stored grain, but take place only at a low rate if grain is dry; care should be taken that no appreciable acceleration occurs, since this indicates that the grain is unsuitable for further storage.

5.1.2 Germination of the seed, which is the normal outcome of its metabolic activity in the presence of oxygen and optimum conditions of moisture and temperature, occurs in several successive stages: imbibition, activation of the enzymes, active cellular multiplication, soon accompanied by cell growth and followed by the development of the young plant; only the last stage is visible externally.

Germination, even in its initial stages, is a serious change in grain already stored or to be stored. It occurs most frequently in wet years, while the crop is still standing in the fields. There are two important practical consequences:

- a) chemical change of the reserve substances;
- b) increase of enzymic activities: wheat with high α -amylase content, harvested in northern Europe in wet years, is a well-known example.

Such cereals are often unfit for human consumption.

The germination potential, which determines the viability of the grain in general, has to be preserved if the grain is to be used in malting or for seed.

5.2 Microflora

The seed is permanent host to a considerable microflora; most of these microorganisms are cosmopolitan and innocuous, but some produce harmful by-products. Microflora communities present on freshly harvested grain include many types of bacteria, moulds and yeasts.

While the grain is ripening and its moisture content falling, the number of field microorganisms, mainly bacteria, diminishes. When the grain is harvested, it is invaded by storage microorganisms and the field microflora gradually

dies out. If the moisture content is below 14 % on wet mass basis, the microflora does not multiply, whereas above 14 % on wet mass basis it does so rapidly. However, the moisture content limit is temperature-dependent (see 7.3).

Thus, at harvest, the qualitative and the quantitative compositions of the microflora depend more upon ecological factors than upon the species of cereal.

During transport and storage, additions to the microfloral population occur.

5.3 Weed seeds and other foreign matter

Most commercial bulks of grain, which have not been screened or aspirated, contain a proportion of other grains, weed seeds, chaff, straw, stones, sand, etc. The vegetable materials may have physical and biological properties that differ from those of the main constituent and may therefore affect the storage behaviour.

5.4 Important physical properties affecting storage

The most relevant physical properties affecting storage are the moisture and temperature conditions of the grain.

5.4.1 A bulk of cereal contains, besides the grains, a considerable interstitial volume of air; for example, in wheat, approximately 40 % of the total bulk volume is air.

The fluid-flow property of bulk grain is such that the grain can be fed into either hoppers or pipelines and makes it suitable for drying or cooling by blowing (or sucking) dry air through it.

5.4.2 Because of the very low thermal conductivity of the grain [0,125 W/(m·K) to 0,167 W/(m·K)], the heat resulting from metabolic phenomena, in the absence of ventilation, builds up locally, bringing about spectacular temperature rises, more especially as the specific heat capacity of grain is relatively low [approximately 1,88 kJ/(kg·K) for wheat with 15 % moisture content]; however, it increases as the moisture content of the grain increases. In addition to inherent metabolic activity, heat may be produced by the activity of microorganisms and insects.

5.4.3 Grain is hygroscopic and gives up or absorbs moisture so as to maintain an equilibrium with the concentration of moisture in the air surrounding it. The relationship may be expressed as a sigmoid curve, which is practically straight over most of the significant storage range between 20 % and 80 % relative humidity. There is some variation in the relationship between moisture content of the grain (usually expressed as a percentage on wet mass basis) and that of the air (usually expressed as a percentage as relative humidity) with temperature. As the temperature increases, the moisture content is lower at a constant relative humidity. There is also some difference between grain which is gaining moisture and that which is losing it; i.e. there is a hysteresis phenomenon in the relationship between the moisture content of the grain and the relative humidity of the intergranular atmosphere. Examples of adsorption-desorption isotherms are given in annex A.

Periodic changes in the relative humidity of the atmosphere only affect the surface layers of bulks of grain, the relative humidity of the interstitial air between grains below the surface being principally controlled by the original moisture content and temperature. Gradients of equilibrium relative humidity and moisture content may be set up by persistent differences in temperature between the surface and the interior of the grain bulk caused by changes in external temperature or heating within the grain mass. The moisture flows down the temperature and vapour pressure gradients to the coolest part of the grain and raises the moisture content there.

5.4.4 The terms "dry", "moist" and "safe" can be applied to grain in storage.

"Dry" or "safe" indicates that the grain has a moisture content at which, taking into account the likely range of temperature to be experienced during storage and transport, there is no risk of appreciable metabolic activity of the grain itself nor of attack by moulds and other microorganisms.

"Moist" grain is that whose moisture content is above that level. The range of "safe" moisture content varies with the crop and is dependent on the temperature (including artificial means of reducing temperature) and period of storage. As a general rule, a "safe" moisture content is one not exceeding that in equilibrium with 65 % relative humidity.

5.5 Preservation of grain quality

It is essential to retain certain indispensable properties in grain which is to be used for human or animal food, for malting or for seed:

- a) a certain level of enzymic activity, especially α -amylase, in the case of cereals to be used for bread making;
- b) the original nature of the various protein constituents, as these determine the rheological properties of dough;
- c) the percentage germination and germinative energy, which should be kept very high for seed and malting barley.

These requirements preclude any intense heat treatment such as heat sterilization which denatures the proteins and limits the use of high-temperature drying systems.

For utilization in food (human or animal) it is obviously essential to maintain the food value of the product (flavour, nutritive elements, nutritious effectiveness) at the highest possible level. It is also necessary to safeguard product hygiene with regard to any possible toxic substances (toxins) and pesticide residues.

6 Deteriorative changes which occur in grain

Causes of changes which occur during storage can be divided into two quite distinct categories:

- a) the immediate causes of the deteriorative changes;
- b) the environmental factors affecting these causes.

6.1 Causes of change

6.1.1 Enzymic changes

Enzymic changes produced within the grain manifest themselves in a variety of ways. Such changes to proteins, carbohydrates and lipids may occur during storage, but these are insignificant unless the grain is moist.

However, some enzymes, for example the lipases, can be active in dry grain over a long period.

6.1.2 Other changes of biochemical and chemical origin

By their very nature, reactions of biochemical and chemical origin are varied. These reactions generally require fairly high temperatures such as are encountered during drying or as the result of "heating" caused by the activity of insects, moulds and other microorganisms:

- a) Maillard reactions which produce many intermediate compounds, the physiological activity of which has been recognized, eventually lead to non-enzymic browning;
- b) deterioration of the starch granule structure, which involves very substantial changes, for example damage to the granule and formation of dextrins at the time of drying;
- c) denaturation of proteins, which leads to the loss of specific properties such as solubility, rheological properties in the hydrated state and enzymic activities;
- d) diminution of the quantity of available lysine;
- e) destruction of vitamins (B₁, E and carotenoids).

Some reactions, especially non-enzymic oxidation of lipids, may take place within the normal range of storage temperatures.

6.1.3 External causes: Living organisms

Deterioration may be caused by living organisms; i.e. vertebrate and invertebrate animals and microorganisms. Although the direct effects of attack by living organisms are important, certain indirect effects may be much more