

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^{1a}: based on the experiences from EUTPS², "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%^{1a}. 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"³ 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).

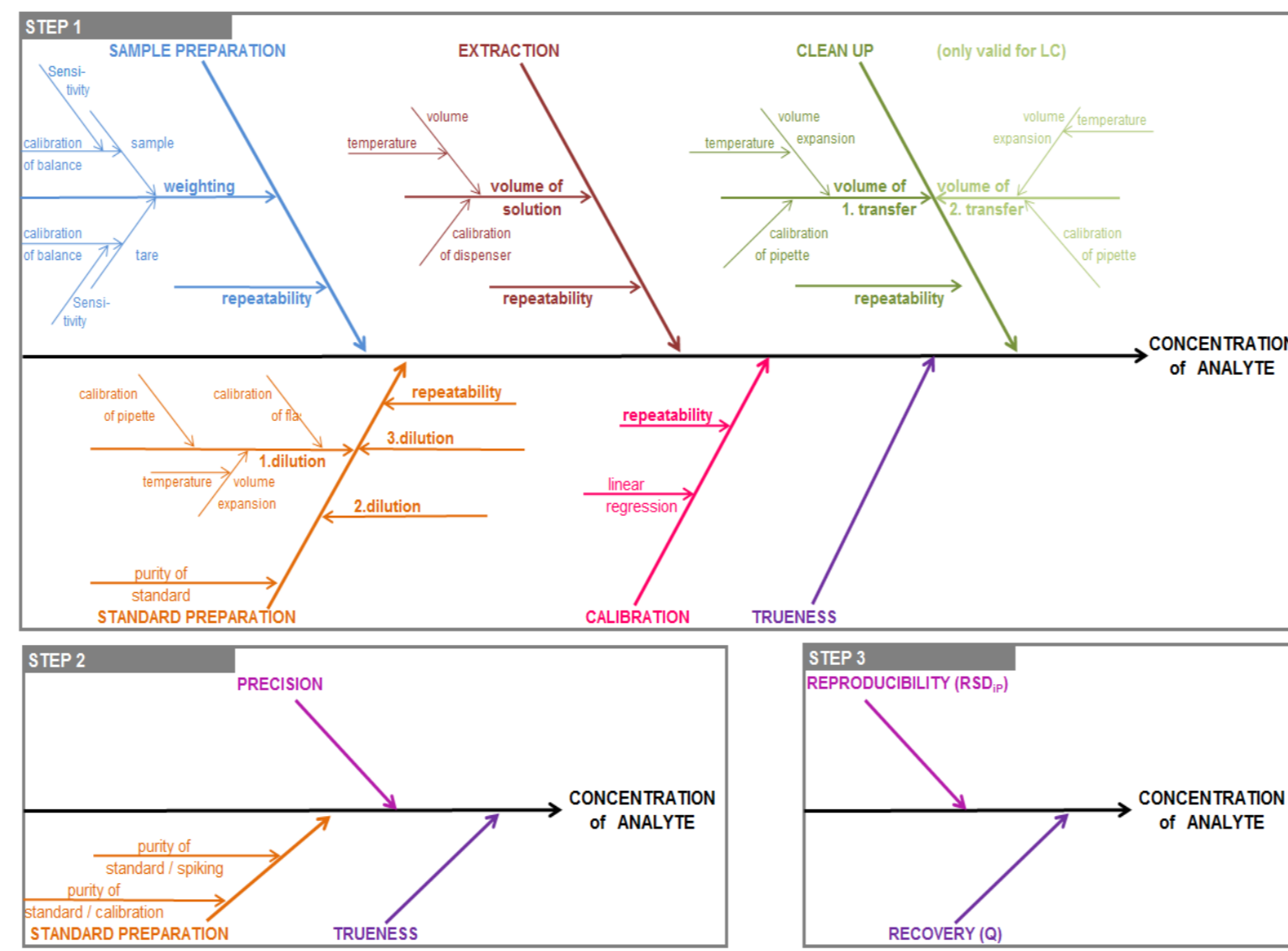


Fig. 1: Ishikawa diagrams for the QuEChERS method

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"⁴. 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 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^{1b} (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^{5,6} was settled with the harmonization of Codex⁷ and SANCO⁸ 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"³ on the results of ongoing quality controls using a rolling program covering all analytes^{1c} 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)

No Analyte	Validation results		expanded MU	No Analyte	Validation results		expanded MU	No Analyte	Validation results		expanded MU			
	RSD _p , %	uncorr. corrected			RSD _p , %	uncorr. corrected			RSD _p , %	uncorr. corrected				
529 Triazamat	0,947	1,030	9,5	86 Chlorazon	0,109	0,930	22,9	21,8	113 Cycloxydim	0,102	0,885	28,1	24,0	
171 Dinotefuran	0,063	0,070	13,0	12,6	391 Oxadiazon	0,107	0,919	23,0	21,8	238 Fipronil-Sulfid	0,129	0,981	28,1	25,9
476 Silthifon	0,007	0,010	13,6	13,6	484 Sulfentrazon	0,112	0,956	23,0	22,5	325 Lambda-Cyhalothrin	0,112	0,932	28,1	22,3
229 Fenitrothion	0,046	0,090	14,1	9,3	23 Azoxystrobin-ethyl	0,091	0,863	23,0	22,5	368 Mefenoxim-Methyl	0,126	0,976	28,2	25,3
52 Chlorothal-methyl	0,076	0,099	15,0	15,0	404 Pentachloronitrobenzol	0,095	0,874	23,0	19,1	618 Talcoposin-methyl	0,101	0,868	28,3	29,4
279 Fubienbutyl	0,074	0,125	15,2	15,0	161 Dimetopac	0,110	0,934	23,0	22,0	462 Pyrimorfen	0,130	0,941	28,4	27,9
355 Methocharb-Sulfatol	0,073	0,140	15,2	14,7	30 Bentazone	0,112	0,954	23,0	22,6	545 Vinclozolin	0,094	0,791	28,4	19,9
247 Fluazifop-p-butyl	0,082	0,080	15,3	10,5	314 Isoproturon-Methyl	0,115	0,955	23,1	22,2	425 Prochloraz	0,115	0,834	28,5	23,0
38 Bifenoxin	0,081	0,087	15,3	10,2	139 Dimethion-S-methyl sulfone	0,100	0,887	23,1	20,1	116 Cyfluthrin beta	0,099	0,798	28,5	19,8
48 Bromopropylat	0,059	0,094	15,5	11,2	309 Imazapros	0,094	0,887	23,1	18,8	533 Tricyclopyr	0,134	0,908	28,5	26,9
262 Fenoxycarbonyl	0,062	0,103	15,6	15,7	82 Chloromphos	0,114	0,946	23,1	22,9	272 Formatsulfuron	0,108	0,796	28,5	29,8
62 Carbendazim	0,078	0,105	15,6	15,6	125 Cyproconazole TOTAL	0,113	0,956	23,1	22,2	420 Ethiofomesate	0,113	0,930	28,5	29,6
421 Primicarb-desmethyl	0,079	0,087	16,0	15,9	389 Paclobutrazol	0,110	0,930	23,2	22,1	408 Penetconazole	0,126	0,981	28,6	25,2
331 Mefenoxim-ethyl	0,082	0,081	16,0	10,5	344 Metolachlor	0,112	0,939	23,4	22,5	184 Emanectenol	0,134	0,904	28,6	28,2
236 Fipronil	0,071	0,035	16,1	14,1	250 Flubendiamid	0,116	1,020	23,4	23,3	222 Fenpropimorph	0,140	0,941	28,6	28,0
26 Benflubutimid	0,079	0,073	16,2	16,0	203 Etoazox	0,113	0,942	23,4	22,6	290 Omethoate	0,105	0,809	28,6	21,1
359 Methoxychlor	0,069	0,094	16,3	13,1	179 Disulfoton-Sulfon	0,111	0,974	23,5	22,2	411 Phenthoate	0,139	0,933	28,6	27,9
85 Chloranil	0,077	0,087	16,4	15,6	127 Cyromazine	0,108	0,969	23,5	21,8	173 Difenoxin (Biphenyl)	0,119	0,868	28,7	24,9
180 Disulfoton-Sulfide	0,081	0,127	16,4	23,2	108 Cyanazin	0,109	0,912	23,5	21,9	497 Tebufos	0,135	0,936	28,7	27,1
384 Nitrofen isopropyl	0,083	0,104	16,7	16,7	202 Ethoxyquin	0,115	0,955	23,5	23,1	348 Metazachlor	0,095	0,781	28,7	16,9
21 Azoxystrobin	0,081	0,065	16,7	16,3	358 Methoxypropylthion	0,117	1,001	23,5	23,5	433 Propazine	0,123	0,883	28,7	24,6
209 Fenamiphos	0,082	0,072	16,7	16,5	527 Triamifos	0,116	1,027	23,5	23,9	399 Oxamyl	0,123	0,852	28,8	24,4
177 Diproprylat	0,077	0,034	16,8	15,4	82 Chloromphos	0,114	0,946	23,5	22,9	189 Epoxiconazole	0,142	0,948	28,8	28,6
422 Primicarb-desmethyl formamido	0,082	0,103	16,8	16,5	85 Acetochlor	0,109	0,899	23,6	21,7	347 Metolachlor	0,109	0,796	28,8	28,1
353 Metolachlor	0,083	0,109	16,8	16,8	114 Cyfluthrin	0,106	0,868	23,6	21,7	541 Trifloron	0,138	0,931	28,8	27,7
514 Thiofos-Sulfide	0,082	0,063	16,9	16,5	288 Imazazaquin	0,115	0,989	23,6	23,4	181 Dauron	0,113	0,923	29,0	27,2
143 Dichlofenol	0,084	0,099	16,9	16,9	472 Sazfl	0,115	0,951	23,6	23,1	115 Cyfluthrin alpha	0,104	0,806	29,0	20,8
217 Furalaxid	0,073	0,014	16,9	14,6	157 Diflufenican	0,114	0,940	23,6	22,9	87 Rimsulfuron	0,139	0,921	29,0	27,8
543 Uniconazole	0,079	0,036	17,0	15,8	40 Pentachloronitrobenzol	0,111	0,900	23,7	18,8	172 Doxatop	0,137	0,910	29,0	27,8
63 Carbopentachlor	0,085	0,115	17,1	17,0	394 Cyfluthrin	0,094	0,855	23,7	18,4	13 Acrin	0,116	0,924	29,2	29,8
57 Cidiazifop	0,087	0,089	17,1	16,7	140 Dimetopac-S-methyl sulfone	0,118	0,969	23,7	22,7	452 Propiconazole	0,106	0,868	29,2	29,3
361 Melonbromon	0,085	0,121	17,1	17,0	351 Methachlor	0,117	0,977	23,7	23,6	516 Thionazin	0,146	1,016	29,3	29,2
135 DDT, p,p'	0,093	0,099	17,2	13,8	452 Pyraflufen-ethyl	0,112	0,926	23,7	22,5	321 Isoaflatoxin	0,122	0,840	29,3	24,6
365 Metoluron	0,083	0,050	17,3	16,6	383 Naphthalacetamide	0,116	0,956	23,8	23,3	371 Malinate	0,114	0,816	29,3	22,8
513 Thiofos-Sulfone	0,086	0,114	17,4	17,4	87 Carfenflutimid	0,118	1,005	23,8	23,8	59 Carbaryl	0,109	0,807	29,3	21,9
237 Fipronil-desulfanyl	0,080	0,087	17,6	16,0	543 Metolachlor	0,117	0,959	23,9	23,4	204 Endosulfar	0,137	0,899	29,4	27,8
191 Etiofomesat	0,086	0,100	17,6	16,3	410 Phenthoamid	0,120	0,986	24,1	24,0	503 Terbufos	0,090	0,707	29,7	19,0
402 Fenoxycarbonyl	0,083	0,053	17,6	16,3	23 Acinophos-methyl	0,118	0,969	23,9	23,7	452 Propiconazole	0,106	0,868	29,7	29,6
291 Heptachlor	0,088	0,091	17,6	17,6	101 Cimoxan	0,116	0,940	24,1	24,0	254 Fludioxonil	0,144	0,946	29,5	28,8
506 Thiofenidazole	0,084	0,046	17,7	16,8	40 Bitertanol TOTAL	0,071	0,809	24,0	14,2	74 Chloridate, cis	0,080	0,769	29,5	17,9
423 Pirimiphos-methyl	0,081	0,087	17,7	14,3	102 Coumaphos	0,104	0,871	24,0	24,0	307 Jprodione	0,120	0,831	29,6	24,4
513 Isofenphos	0,086	0,087	17,9	17,4	332 Malathion	0,119	0,976	24,0	23,9	441 Propiconazole	0,142	0,920	29,6	28,5
222 Fenitrothion-Sulfide	0,089	0,105	17,9	17,9	410 Phenthoamid	0,120	0,986	24,1	24,0	303 Fenvalerate	0,112	0,808	29,6	24,6
504 Tetramethrin TOTAL	0,087	0,069	18,0	17,6	420 Fenoxycarbonyl	0,118	0,969	24,1	24,0	503 Terbufos	0,090	0,707	29,7	19,0
523 Trichlorfon	0,089	0,095	18,3	19,0	101 Cimoxan	0,116	0,940	24,1	24,0	159 Dibutylzin	0,127	0,942	30,0	25,4
312 Izodrin	0,088	0,052	18,4	17,7	107 Cimdin	0,120	0,987	24,1	24,1	810 Fluorfenoxim	0,150	0,975	30,2	30,0
98 Cimbutazol	0,090	0,067	18,4	18,1	467 Quetzalop free acid	0,117	0,882	24,1	21,5	303 Isomyl	0,143	0,922	30,2	19,3
498 Tetrabuton	0,091	0,096	18,4	18,4	341 Mesosulfuron-Methyl</									