

Intralab Validation of the EN 15662 Method for the Determination of Pesticide Residues Using a Fused-Core™ Ascentis® Express RP-Amide HPLC Column by LC-MS/MS and Clean-up by Dispersive SPE (QuEChERS)

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Abstract:

LC/MS/MS methods have become very popular for the analysis of pesticides in food. Several methods currently exist for their extraction from a variety of different food matrices. A new method, known as the “QuEChERS” (Quick, Easy, Cheap, Effective, Rugged, and Safe) method has recently been introduced and optimised. This employs dispersive solid phase extraction (SPE) and chromatography mass spectrometry (GC-MS and LC-MS-MS) techniques. Recently this method became the European Norm (EN 15662). Whilst this method typically uses C18 HPLC reverse phase columns, in this article we describe an intra-lab comparison and validation procedure using a new Ascentis Express RP-Amide column.

Experimental:

The European guideline SANCO/3131/2007 document (Method Validation and Quality Control Procedures for Pesticide Residues Analysis in Foods and Feeds) was followed for the following different representative fruit and plant origin matrices:

- Pear as sugar matrix
- Kiwi as acid matrix
- Lettuce as chlorophyll matrix
- Maize flour as cereal

Preparation of Standard Solution

Signal suppression in MS/MS detection can arise from the matrix and other interferences. To avoid this, the calibration standard solutions were prepared using acetonitrile blank matrix extracts.

As recommended in the EN 15662:2008 method, the results obtained for the analytes to be identified in the sample extract are compared with those obtained for the pesticides in the calibration solutions. Although the use of matrix-matched standards is preferred, for a first estimate of the residue level of pesticides in food, or to show their absence, standard solutions in pure solvent can be used. They can also be used for quantification if preliminary experiments indicate that any suppression or enhancement effects experienced do not significantly

affect the results obtained. As soon as relevant residue concentrations are detected (e.g. suspected MRL violations), a more precise determination using matrix-matched standards, or using the standard addition method, should be used.

NOTE 1. Matrix effects influence the response of target analytes in sample extracts compared to the response of standard solutions in pure solvent.

NOTE 2. The calibration range should be appropriate to the residue concentrations to be quantified. Thus, it may be necessary to construct more than one calibration graph.

A group of 29 compounds (**Table 1**) was used as a representative group of different pesticides; these fall into the following categories: acaricides, insecticides, fungicides, and so forth.

Abamectina B1a	Acetamiprid	Aldicarb	Azoxystrobin
Buprofezin	Carbendazim	Carbofuran	Clothianidin
Cyazofamide	Cyprodinil	Difenoconazol	Dimethoate
Ethoprophos	Ethofenprox	Fenhexamide	Fenpropimorph
Fenpyroximate	Flufenoxuron	Imidacloprid	Methiocarb
Methomyl	Pirimicarb	Rotenone	Setoxydim
Spinosad A e D	Spiroxamine	Tebufozide	Thiabendazole
Thiametoxam			

Table 1 Representative group of pesticides for use in calibration

The calibration curve was prepared using six replicates of each of five concentrations over the ranges equivalent to the average concentrations expected:

- 0,006 mg/Kg (< LOQ)
- 0,01 mg/Kg (LOQ)
- 0,1 mg/Kg
- 0,2 mg/Kg
- 1 mg/Kg (MRL)

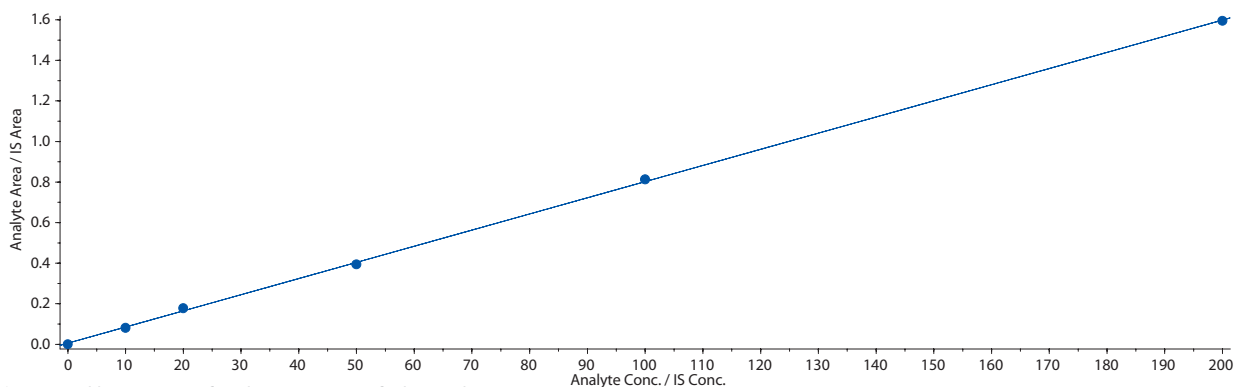


Figure 1 Calibration curve for a lettuce extract of Ethoprophos

(continued on page 4)

The calibration standard curve used the following five points of concentration: 0,01-0,02-0,05-0,1 and 0,2 µg/ml of each pesticide spiked into each of the above matrices. Triethylphosphate was used as internal standard as described in the EN 15662 method. A typical example of lettuce extract of Ethoprophos is shown on **Figure 1**.

Sample preparation:

As suggested in the SANCO document, frozen samples can be used to avoid the overheating that results from adding MgSO₄. The samples were homogenised and then spiked with standard solutions.

The QuEChERS Multiresidue method (4) shown in **Figure 2** and described in EN 15662 was used to prepare the final samples to be injected into the LC/MS/MS system.



Figure 2 Summary of the QuEChERS Multiresidue method

The full-size chart can be downloaded from sigma-aldrich.com/quenchers Technical Resources, QuEChERS Multiresidue Method (JWP)

Alternative Selectivity

Ascentis Express RP-Amide provides increased selectivity for polar compounds, especially those that can act as a hydrogen-bond donor. The selectivity differences between the RP-Amide and the C18 can be a useful tool in method development. In many cases, when peaks co-elute on a C18 phase, the RP-Amide can be substituted to achieve separation without a change in mobile phase.

Operating conditions:

column: Ascentis Express RP Amide, 10 cm x 2.1 mm ID, 2.7 µm particle size

HPLC: Shimadzu Prominence UFLC XR

MS/MS Detector: Applied Biosystems API 3200

mobile phase A: ammonium formate solution in water (5 mmol/l, 0.1 % Formic Acid)

mobile phase B: ammonium formate solution in methanol (5 mmol/l, 0.1 % Formic Acid)

column temp.: 40 °C

injection volume: 2 µl

elution: gradient:

Time	Mobile Phase A %	Mobile Phase B %
0	95	5
0.5	90	10
12	5	95
15	85	95

Results:

The recovery data (**Table 2**) were compared with the data described in the EN 15662 method and were shown to have comparable results that demonstrate the validity of our method. In most cases, an improved RSD % was obtained.

The results (**Figure 3**) show that the Ascentis Express RP-Amide HPLC column is particularly suitable for the resolution of those components having a $\log K_{ow} < 0,5$ that are weakly retained on a C18 column. The separation of a complex mix of 200 compounds on the Ascentis Express RP-Amide column under the same conditions is shown in **Figure 4**. The original method suggests that different columns and chromatographic conditions are needed for the analysis of this type of molecule, whereas our experimental conditions indicate that it is possible to resolve all molecules in one chromatogram with a good peak shape, speed and high resolution. This is particularly useful for routine analysis and for higher numbers of samples.

Conclusions

All of the analytical data that has been generated in this intra-lab validation complies with EN 15662:2008 method requirements and therefore we can assert that the Ascentis Express RP-Amide column is a valid alternative to C18. The selectivity differences between the RP-Amide and the C18 can be a useful tool in method development. In many cases, when peaks co-elute on a C18 phase, the Ascentis Express RP-Amide can be substituted to achieve separation without a change in mobile phase. Further, the QuEChERS extraction method provided good recovery and high reproducibility.

Chromatography:

The HPLC method developed here utilises an Ascentis® Express RP-Amide (Supelco®, Bellefonte) as an alternative to the C18 column traditionally used in the EN 15662 method.

Ascentis Express RP-Amide HPLC columns are the most recent product additions to the Supelco HPLC product line. Combining an embedded polar group (EPG) stationary phase with the Fused-Core™ particles, Ascentis Express RP-Amide provides a host of useful benefits to the HPLC chromatographer. The benefits come from both the phase technology and the particle technology, and can be summarised as:

Fused-Core Benefits

- Twice the efficiency of traditional 3 µm HPLC columns
- Half the backpressure of sub-2 micron columns
- Capable of UHPLC performance on traditional HPLC systems

RP-Amide Benefits

- Alternative reversed-phase selectivity to C18
- Improved peak shape for bases
- 100 % aqueous compatible reversed-phase column

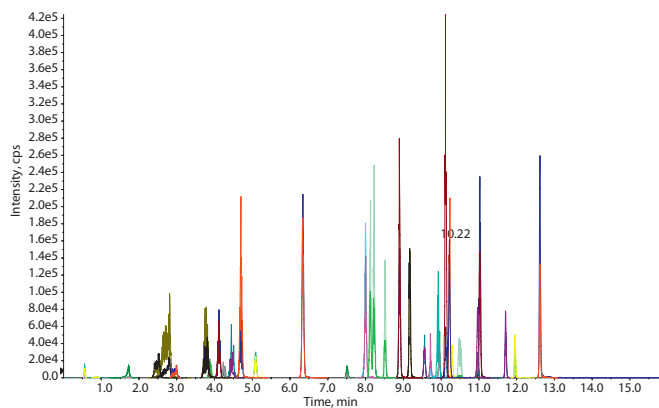


Figure 3 LC/MS/MS chromatogram of spiked group of 29 compounds used in this validation on Ascentis Express RP-Amide

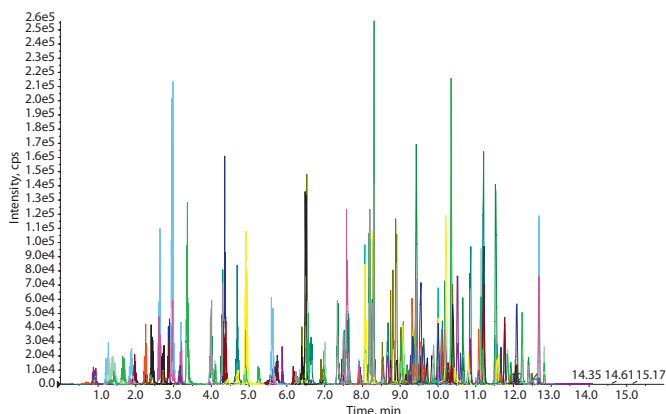


Figure 4 LC/MS/MS chromatogram of a mix of 200 compounds. The full list with this article can be downloaded from sigma-aldrich.com/quechers under Technical Resources

Under routine conditions with high numbers of samples, the Ascentis® Express RP-Amide column shows high robustness, reproducible peak shapes and excellent resolution. More than 1500 samples were injected before it was decided to replace the column.

References

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- [5] S.J. Lehotay, Interlaboratory Validation of the QuEChERS Method to Analyze Pesticide Residues in Fruits and Vegetables, *Proceedings AOAC Annual Meeting*, St. Louis, MO USA (2004).
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Featured Products

Description	Cat. No.	Price £
HPLC Column		
Ascentis Express RP-Amide 10 cm x 2.1 mm	53913-U	357.00

Related Information

Additional information on QuEChERS methods and suitable products can be found under sigma-aldrich.com/quechers

Compound (100 µg/Kg)	EN 15662		EN 15662	
	Rec %	Rec %	RSD %	RSD %
Abamectina b1a NH4	95.4		5.0	
Abamectina b1b NH4	92.5		17.6	
Acetamiprid	98.6	97.0	12.2	13
Aldicarb	107.7	85.0	5.9	23
Azoxystrobin	97.9	95.0	4.3	14
Buprofezin	97.3	95.0	2.6	6
Carbendazim	83.7	91.0	7.9	12
Carbofuran	100.7	99.0	3.3	11
Clotianidin	106.0		13.9	
Cyazofamide	101.3	90.0	9.3	17
Cyprodinil	101.5	93.0	13.1	14
Ciromazina	29.7		6.2	
Difenoconazol	97.6	97.0	5.9	12
Dimetoate	100.5	96.0	16.7	11
Ethoprophos	96.5	99.0	3.0	8
Etofenprox	82.9	94.0	6.1	12
Fenexamide	74.5	93.0	11.2	19
Fenpropimorph	107.3	100.0	4.7	11
Fenpyroximate	91.6	95.0	6.5	12
Flufenoxuron	91.7	96.0	5.4	17
Imidacloprid	105.3	102.0	5.4	18
Methiocarb	90.8		6.6	
Methomyl	98.5	99.0	5.1	18
Pirimicarb	103.8	95.0	5.7	11
Pimetrozine	36.8		5.1	
Rotenone	102.6		4.6	
Setoxydim	71.9		4.4	
Spinosad A	108.6		10.8	
Spinosad D	93.4		4.1	
Spiroxamine 1	89.5	90.0	4.2	17
Tebufenozide	88.1		9.9	
Tiabendazol	86.1	101.0	6.5	12
Thiametoxam	105.6	97.0	8.6	20

Table 2 Recovery data for the Ascentis Express RP-Amide method compared with the standard EN 15662 method

