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Plant biostimulants — Determination of *Escherichia coli*

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National foreword

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European foreword

This document (CEN/TS 17716:2022) has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/TC 455 “Plant Biostimulants”, the secretariat of which is held by AFNOR.

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This document has been prepared under a Standardization Request given to CEN by the European Commission and the European Free Trade Association.

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Introduction

This document was prepared by the experts of CEN/TC 455 "Plant Biostimulants". The European Committee for Standardization (CEN) was requested by the European Commission (EC) to draft European standards or European standardization deliverables to support the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2019/1009 of 5 June laying down rules on the making available on the market of EU fertilizing products ("FPR" or "Fertilising Products Regulation").

This standardization request, presented as M/564, also contributes to the Communication on "Innovating for Sustainable Growth: A Bio economy for Europe". The Working Group 5 "Labelling and denominations", was created to develop a work program as part of this request. The technical committee CEN/TC 455 "Plant Biostimulants" was established to carry out the work program that will prepare a series of standards. The interest in biostimulants has increased significantly in Europe as a valuable tool to use in agriculture. Standardization was identified as having an important role in order to promote the use of biostimulants. The work of CEN/TC 455 seeks to improve the reliability of the supply chain, thereby improving the confidence of farmers, industry, and consumers in biostimulants, and will promote and support commercialisation of the European biostimulant industry.

Biostimulants used in agriculture can be applied in multiple ways: on soil, on plants, as seed treatment, etc. A microbial plant biostimulant consists of a microorganism or a consortium of microorganisms, as referred to in Component Material Category 7 of Annex II of the EU Fertilising Products Regulation.

This document is applicable to all microbial biostimulants in agriculture.

Table 1 summarizes many of the agro-ecological principles and the role played by biostimulants.

Table 1 — Agro-ecological principles and the role played by biostimulants [1]

Increase biodiversity
By improving soil microorganism quality/quantity
Reinforce biological regulation and interactions
By reinforcing plant-microorganism interactions
— symbiotic exchanges i.e. *Mycorrhizae*
— symbiotic exchanges i.e. *Rhizobiaceae/Faba*
— secretions mimicking plant hormones (i.e. *Trichoderma*)
By regulating plant physiological processes
— e.g. growth, metabolism, plant development
Improve biogeochemical cycles
— improve absorption of nutritional elements
– improve bioavailability of nutritional elements in the soil
– stimulate degradation of organic matter

WARNING — Persons using this document should be familiar with normal laboratory practice. This document does not purport to address all of the safety problems, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user to establish appropriate safety and health practices and to ensure compliance with any national regulatory conditions.

IMPORTANT — It is absolutely essential that tests conducted in accordance with this document be carried out by suitably trained staff.

1 Scope

This document gives general guidelines for the detection and identification of the specified microorganism *Escherichia coli* in technical and formulated biostimulant products, both in liquid and solid state, and also the horizontal method for the enumeration of *ß*-glucuronidase-positive *Escherichia coli* in plant biostimulants products (both in liquid and solid state).

The qualitative method described in this document is based on the detection of E*scherichia coli* in a non-selective liquid medium (enrichment broth), followed by isolation on a selective agar medium. Other methods can be appropriate, depending on the level of detection required.

NOTE For the detection of *Escherichia coli*, subcultures can be performed on non-selective culture media followed by suitable identification steps (e.g. using identification kits).

The quantitative method described in this document uses a colony-count technique at 44 °C on a solid medium containing a chromogenic ingredient for detection of the enzyme *ß*-glucuronidase.

WARNING — Strains of *Escherichia coli* which do not grow at 44 °C and, in particular, those that are *ß*-glucuronidase negative, such as *Escherichia coli* O157, will not be detected.

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.

CEN/TS 17708, *Plant Biostimulants — Preparation of samples for microbial analysis*

EN ISO 21148, *Cosmetics — Microbiology — General instructions for microbiological examination (ISO 21148)*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1
Escherichia coli
gram-negative rod, motile, smooth colonies, member of *Enterobacteriaceae*

Note 1 to entry: The main characteristics for identification are catalase positive, oxidase negative, fermentation of lactose, production of indole, growth on selective medium containing bile salts with characteristic colonies.

Note 2 to entry: *Escherichia coli* can be isolated from moist environmental sources (air, water, soil) and is a faecal contamination indicator.

3.2
enrichment broth
non-selective liquid medium containing suitable neutralizers and/or dispersing agents and demonstrated to be suitable for the product under test

3.3
ß*-glucuronidase-positive *Escherichia coli
bacteria which at 44 °C form typical blue colony on tryptone-bile-glucuronide medium (TBX) under the conditions specified in the relative part of this document