

Coffee Quality Assurance: Current Tools and Perspectives

J. PRODOLLIET

Nestlé Research Center Lausanne, Quality & Safety Assurance Department, P.O. Box 44,
Vers-chez-les-Blanc, CH-1000 Lausanne 26, Switzerland

SUMMARY

The quality of a good cup of coffee, as experienced daily by millions of consumers, is not a matter of chance. It is the result of a quality assurance programme implemented by all the key players of the coffee production-to-consumer chain.

What does it mean at the level of a soluble coffee manufacturer? Clearly, quality assurance starts in the coffee field, where good agricultural and transport practices are essential to develop and preserved the natural quality of the green beans up to the coffee processor's door. This paper focuses on the main controls carried out at the factory level to check the quality and safety of raw materials (green coffee, water used for the extraction process, packaging materials) and finished products, and discusses the rationale behind them. The corresponding analytical procedures, in particular available official standards (ISO, AOAC, DIN, etc), are presented and compared. Current technologies for process monitoring are also extensively reviewed and perspectives for using alternative (e.g. more rapid, simple or efficient) methods are debated. In addition to pure analytical controls, quality systems and procedures are an integral part of the quality assurance programme. The HACCP approach to guarantee food safety, good manufacturing practises to define what is and what is not acceptable in production, and good laboratory practises to ensure the reliability of analytical results have to be implemented too. These systems are also briefly discussed.