Protocol

EURL-*Salmonella* Proficiency Test Food 2026
Detection of *Salmonella* in canned tomatoes

- Version 2 -

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EURL *Salmonella*

Co-funded by the European Union

1. Introduction

This protocol describes the procedures for the Proficiency Test (PT) Food 2026 on the detection of *Salmonella* spp. in canned tomatoes amongst the National Reference Laboratories (NRLs) for *Salmonella* in the EU. The parcels will be shipped on Tuesday 7 April 2026 and the submission of data has to be finalised by Wednesday 6 May 2026 at the latest.

2. Objective

The main objective of the Proficiency Test is to evaluate the performance of the NRLs-*Salmonella* on their ability to detect *Salmonella* at different contamination levels in canned tomatoes.

3. Outline of the Proficiency Test

Tomato samples

Each participant will receive one box containing 1 large plastic safety bag, packed with cooling elements.
The plastic safety bag contains 15 sample bags, consisting of:

- 14 samples of tomatoes (25 g per sample) artificially contaminated with different levels of a *Salmonella* serovar (coded A1-A14);
- 1 sample bag containing a small electronic temperature recorder (coded with your laboratory code).

*Note1: The sample bags are individually sealed with a temporary closing clip to prevent leakage during transport and storage. Please remove these closing clips before analysing your samples. The clip consists of two parts: pull the top part away from the bottom part to remove the clip. You do not need to return the closing clips to EURL-*Salmonella.

*Note2: Sample bags for control samples will no longer be provided. Each NRL-*Salmonella *is expected to include (process) control samples according to its own Standard Operating Procedure and quality system. Still some information will be requested about the laboratory control samples used.*

The parcels will be sent on Tuesday 7 April 2026 by door-to-door courier service DHL (for non-EU MS sometimes door-to-airport). The parcel will be shipped as biological substance category B (UN3373).

Immediately after arrival of the parcel, or in the following days, the NRL-*Salmonella* can start the analysis of the samples. The latest possible date to start the analysis is by Monday 13 April 2026.

If not analysed immediately:

- **Store the tomato samples at 5 °C (± 3 °C)**
  - **Please store the temperature recorder together with the samples until the start of the analysis.**

Temperature recorder

The small electronic temperature recorder will measure the temperature during transport and storage of the samples at the laboratory. The EURL-*Salmonella* uses the temperature profile to monitor the quality of the samples received by each participant. The sample bag and the temperature recorder are coded with your laboratory code. **You are urgently requested to return this complete plastic bag with recorder and laboratory code to the EURL-*Salmonella*, on the day your laboratory starts the PT (at the latest by 13 April 2026).**
For this purpose, a return envelope with a preprinted address label of the EURL-*Salmonella* is included.

Analysis of the samples

The performance of the PT can start *immediately after receipt* of the samples but no later than by Monday 13 April 2026.

Since the publication of Commission implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2463 in September 2024, laboratories are permitted to use alternative validated methods for the official control of foodstuffs. For that reason, we do not longer prescribe the use of EN ISO 6579-1 for analyses of the PT samples, but ask the NRLs-*Salmonella* to use the method which they (routinely) apply for official control analyses. This can be EN ISO 6579-1:2017(/A1:2020), but can also be an alternative validated analytical methods (for example PCR, real-time PCR, Vidas, etc.) to analyse the PT samples. The reported results of this method will be used to assess the performance of the NRL-*Salmonella*.

Mind that the alternative method has to be properly validated in accordance with EN ISO 16140-2 and in case of a proprietary method, it shall be certified by an independent certification body. If an alternative method is used, we will ask to report the reference to the validation report and (if relevant) to the certificate. If this information can not be supplied, we can not assess the performance of the NRL-*Salmonella* when using this alternative method in the PT.

The samples do not need a special pre-treatment. The tomato samples are delivered in closed, resealable, plastic sample bags. The laboratories can follow their own procedure for preparation of the test samples for this type of matrix or follow the procedure below.

1. Remove the temporary closing clip from the test sample;
2. Add the BPW to the 25 gram test sample (instead of weighing accurately the sample into a pre-dispense volume of BPW);
3. Homogenize for 30 seconds by hand;
4. Continue with the non-selective pre-enrichment procedure (as described in EN ISO 6579-1:2017(/A1:2020))

The media to be used for this PT will not be supplied by the EURL-*Salmonella*.

4. Reporting

All data have to be reported through the result form. The link will be sent by e-mail to the participants.

Submission of data has to be finalised on **Wednesday 6 May 2026 (23:59 h CET)** at the latest. Mind that the result form is no longer accessible after this deadline. In case you foresee problems with the deadline, please contact us beforehand.

In case of deviating results, the EURL-*Salmonella* may ask the NRLs-*Salmonella* to send additional information or to perform additional tests. Therefore, we ask you to conserve (at least) one *Salmonella* confirmed colony from each positive sample (A1 – A14), as well as of the (own) positive control.

The EURL-*Salmonella* will prepare a summary of the results soon after the PT to inform all NRLs-*Salmonella* on the overall results.

Relevant documents

- Protocol EURL-*Salmonella* Proficiency Test Food 2026. Detection of *Salmonella* in canned tomatoes. Version 2 (this document);
- Short guidance on the electronic submission of data in the result form for the EURL-*Salmonella* Proficiency Test.
- Screenshots of the result form EURL-*Salmonella* PT Food 2026.
- EN ISO 6579-1:2017. Microbiology of the food chain – Horizontal method for the detection, enumeration and serotyping of *Salmonella* – Part 1: Horizontal method for the detection of *Salmonella* spp.
- EN ISO 6579-1:2017/A1:2020. Microbiology of the food chain - Horizontal method for the detection, enumeration and serotyping of *Salmonella* - Part 1: Detection of *Salmonella* spp. - Amendment 1 Broader range of incubation temperatures, amendment to the status of Annex D, and correction of the composition of MSRV and SC.
- ISO 6887-1 & 4:2017 Microbiology of food and animal feeding stuffs – Preparation of test samples, initial suspension and decimal dilutions for microbiological examination. Part 1: General rules for the preparation of the initial suspension and decimal dilutions. Part 4: Specific rules for the preparation of miscellaneous products.
- Commission implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2463 laying down analytical methods applicable to official controls performed for the verification of compliance of food business operators with Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005. Official Journal of the European Union, EN L series 13.9.2024. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024R2463&qid=1772119297960

Timetable

EURL- *Salmonella* Proficiency Test Food 2026

Detection of *Salmonella* in canned tomatoes

Week	Date	Subject
		Preparation of media by the NRLs.
15	Tuesday **7 April 2026**	Shipment of the parcels with PT samples to the participants as Biological Substance Category B (UN3373).
15-16	**Immediate after receipt of the parcel and at the latest on 13 April 2026**	**Start performance of the Proficiency Test.**
19	Wednesday **6 May 2026** at the latest	Deadline for completing the result form: **6 May 2026** (23:59h CET) After this deadline the result form will be closed.
	July 2026	Interim summary report

If you have questions about this Proficiency Test, please contact:

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