


Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fishing and Food Undersecretariat of Agricultural Policy and Food National Food Administration	AUDITOR'S APPROVAL	
Code: SAA110	Version: 01	10.26.07

**Audit date:**

**Auditing company:**

**Audited company:**

Location:

Head Office:

Town or City:


Telephone:

**Name of company's employee responsible for quality / position**

**Product: *Yerba Mate***

**Reference protocol code: SAA009**


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### RESULTS


Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
<b>Product</b>			
<b>1. Physicochemical composition:</b>			
<b>a.</b> Composed of: <i>Ilex paraguarienses</i> Saint Hilaire.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis.
<b>b.</b> Seeds and drupes: max. 0.5 % (Assay method IRAM Standard 20531, "Yerba Mate. Detection of foreign vegetal substances, impurities, seeds and drupes")			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
<b>c.</b> Humidity: max. 7%. (Assay method IRAM Standard 20503 "Yerba Mate. Detection of mass loss at 103°C")			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
<b>d.</b> Aqueous extract: min. 35 %, on dry product.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis

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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
(Assay method IRAM Standard 20510, "Yerba Mate. Detection of aqueous extract")			
<b>e. Aqueous activity (Aw): max. 0.6, tolerance + 0.05.</b> (Measured by using calibrated hydrometers and standard saline solutions)			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
<b>f. Insoluble ashes: max. 1% p/p, in HCl at 10%.</b> (Assay method IRAM Standard 20507, "Yerba Mate. Detection of insoluble ashes in acid")			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
<b>g. Leaf and twig fractions:</b> - Leaves: minimum 65%. - Twigs: maximum 35%. (Assay method IRAM Standard 20514 "Yerba Mate. Detection of twig contents").			Verify that this is indicated in the label.

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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
<b>2. Non desired organoleptic characteristics</b> (internal sensory evaluation)			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
<b>a.</b> Intense green color and black dots: not present.			
<b>b.</b> Humidity or moldy taste: not present.			
<b>c.</b> Bitter and hot taste: not present.			
<b>d.</b> Verify internal schedule of sensorial evaluation carried out by qualified personnel.			Verify register/s.
<b>3. Microbiological characteristics</b> Verify carrying out of microbiological controls to end product.			Specify analysis carried out.
<b>Processing</b>			

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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
<b>1. Management systems:</b>			
<b>a.</b> Verify traceability registers.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
<b>b.</b> Verify cleaning schedule and plant cleaning registers.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
<b>c.</b> Verify registers of corrective actions related to SSOPs applied at the plant.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
<b>d.</b> Verify that personnel comply with harvesting health procedures and requirements defined in the protocol.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
<b>e.</b> Evaluate registers of defined CCPs.			

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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
f. Verify calibration of the corresponding measuring instruments.			
<b>2. Process characteristics</b>			
<b>Reception of raw materials</b>			
a. Control registers where it is indicated that harvested material is transported within 5 hours after harvest.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
b. Verify that the condition of the yard complies with the parameters defined in the protocol.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
<b>Zapicado (Brief exposure of leaves to direct fire)</b>  Verify control registers from the <i>zapecador</i>			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis


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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
(responsible for the <i>zapecado</i> ).			
<b>Drying and <i>canchado</i> (rough crushing)</b>			
a. Verify registers of residence time and temperature controls <sup>1</sup> to attain humidity content compatible with the aqueous activity value.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
b. Use of magnetic and pneumatic separation system.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
<b>Ageing</b>			
a. Ageing time: up to 24 months.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis
b. Verify and indicate product evaluation at this stage.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis

<sup>1</sup> To record the frequency of these controls specifying drying shed batch.

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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
<b>Packing</b>			
a. Product packed at origin.			
b. Verify guarantee certificate from packaging and inputs supplier.			
c. Verify that packing date appears on packaging.			
<b>Storage</b>			
a. Verify system for product distribution in different storing areas according to expiration date.			
b. Verify the correct isolation of rejected batches.			Verify chart with specifications for batch rejection.

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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
<b>Transportation</b>			
Evaluate registers of transportation and transportation conditions.			
<b>3. Packaging</b>			
Comply with packaging specifications for yerba mate defined in the protocol.			

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## Conclusions

Audited company's employees interviewed: -----  
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On behalf of the auditing company


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In agreement, on behalf of the audited company

Signature, name and seal

Signature and name


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Code: SAA009	Version: 08	06.08.2007

## QUALITY PROTOCOL FOR *YERBA MATE*

**MADE OFFICIAL ON: October 25, 2007**


**RESOLUTION SAGPyA Nr: 271 / 2007**

Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fishing and Food Undersecretariat of Agricultural Policy and Food National Food Administration	QUALITY PROTOCOL	
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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Scope

This protocol defines and describes the top quality attributes Yerba Mate must have to be authorized to carry the “Argentine Food – A Natural Choice” Seal.

The objective of this document is to provide Yerba Mate producers and manufacturers in the Argentine Republic with an additional tool for obtaining differentiated quality products.

Being a dynamic document, this protocol may be periodically revised according to the needs of the public and/or the private sectors.

Producers aspiring to implement this protocol must take into account that compliance with current regulations for yerba mate is implicit. These regulations are described in the Argentine Food Code - AFC - Chapter XV "Stimulant or enjoyable products", Articles 1193 to 1198bis; Chapter IV "Tools, recipients, containers, packaging, machinery and accessories", Chapter V “Standards for Food Labeling and Advertising” (Mercosur Technical Regulations for Packed Food Labeling Nr 26/03).

It is also obligatory to comply with the concepts and parameters defined in the Guide for applying Good Manufacturing Practices for Yerba Mate “*Ilex paraguariensis*” (2006) published by the National Food Administration of the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fishing and Food.

In addition, companies must provide evidence of compliance with Argentine labor laws.


This protocol intends to comprise regulations in force as well as enumerate and describe the quality differentiating characteristics that identify the Yerba Mate.

### 2. General criteria

According to the Argentine Food Code, Yerba Mate or Yerba is a product consisting of dried, slightly toasted and crushed leaves of *Ilex paraguariensis* Saint Hilaire (Aquifoliaceas) exclusively, mixed or not with fragments of dry twigs, petioles or flower stems.

The quality of the Yerba Mate is evidenced by its taste, appearance, characteristic composition and sanitary quality.

The final quality of this product depends on several factors that may affect the outcome of the productive and manufacturing process. Important factors are the

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climate and soil of the production region (north, center or south of the province of Misiones and north of the province of Corrientes), plantation genetics, harvesting and manufacturing processes, drying, ageing, packing, transportation and storage. Coordination among all responsible members of the different links of the chain is indispensable for ensuring constant quality.

As a general requirement, the Yerba Mate must be harmless, free from foreign matters and must not contain colorants<sup>1</sup>.

The following rules have been taken into account for elaborating this protocol:

- ✓ Standard Nr 3500193: *Yerba Mate. Specifications*. National Institute of Technology and Standardization of Paraguay. March 1995, second edition.
- ✓ Technical regulations for determining the identity and quality of the yerba mate. Secretariat of Sanitary Vigilance, Health Ministry, Brazil.
- ✓ IRAM 20530. Manufactured Yerba Mate.
- ✓ IRAM 20550-1. Yerba Mate. Good manufacturing practices (BPM in Spanish). General Recommendations.
- ✓ IRAM 20550-2. Yerba Mate. BPM. Recommendations on raw material.
- ✓ IRAM 20550-3. Yerba Mate. BPM. Recommendations for primary processing.
- ✓ IRAM 20550-4. Yerba Mate. BPM. Recommendations for ageing and manufacturing.
- ✓ IRAM 3800. Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems.
- ✓ IRAM 3801. Guide for the application of IRAM 3800 Standard.

## **GROUND FOR DETERMINING DIFFERENTIATING ATTRIBUTES**


### **Product attributes**

The final quality of the yerba mate depends mainly on the quality of the raw material. Most of the chemical substances that convey organoleptic characteristics to the yerba mate result from the quality of raw material and are produced during the processing of leaves and twigs.

This protocol defines attributes exceeding the requirements of the Argentine Food Code, based mainly on:

1. Physicochemical composition of the product
2. Organoleptic characteristics.

<sup>1</sup> Although the product sold in our country as Yerba Mate does not contain colorants, it is pertinent to mention this as colorant use has been detected in compound yerbas.

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## Process attributes

This protocol includes conditions related to primary production as the implementation of Good Farming Practices (BPA in Spanish) with the purpose of assuring raw material quality. Companies applying for the Seal must comply with the implementation of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (AOOCC or HACCP) System in the Yerba Mate manufacturing process.

Transportation and storage characteristics that ensure product quality have also been defined in this protocol.


Following are the points developed:

1. *Food quality management system*
2. *Process characteristics*
  - 2.1 *Harvest*
  - 2.2 *Transportation and reception of raw material*
  - 2.3 *Zapicado (Roasting)*
  - 2.4 *Drying and crushing*
  - 2.5 *Ageing*
  - 2.6 *Milling*
  - 2.7 *Packing*
  - 2.8 *Storage*

## Packaging attributes

The criterion followed was to comply with current regulations for packaging in general, and favor the use of packaging that may protect products from humidity and foreign flavors or odors and avoid loss of their own aromas and flavors. The packaging preference of destination markets has also been taken into account.



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## PRODUCT DIFFERENTIATING ATTRIBUTES

The characteristics defined in Art.1195 - (Res 307, 11.29.90) from **CHAPTER XV “STIMULANT OR ENJOYABLE PRODUCTS”**- Argentine Food Code have been included in this protocol with the differences listed below:


### 1. *Product physicochemical composition*

The Yerba Mate must be exclusively composed of “*Ilex paraguariensis* Saint Hilaire” (Aquifoliaceas) dried leaves, slightly toasted and crushed, mixed or not with fragments of dry young twigs, petioles and flower stems. Any variety/ecotype of said species is accepted.

Implantation of selected clones of identified varieties in lots is suggested for obtaining a homogeneous production with uniformly developed specimens that may facilitate cultural tasks.

The end product Yerba Mate must have the following characteristics:

- Seeds and drupes: maximum 0.5 %.  
Assay method IRAM Standard 20531 “*Yerba Mate. Determination of foreign vegetable substances, impurities, seeds and drupes*”.
- Humidity: not exceeding 7%.  
Assay method IRAM Standard 20503 “*Yerba Mate. Determination of mass loss at 103°C*”.
- Aqueous extract: minimum 35% on dry product.  
Assay method IRAM Standard 20510 “*Yerba Mate. Determination of aqueous extract*”.
- Water activity (Aw): maximum authorized 0.6 + 0.05 tolerance.  
(Measured by using calibrated electric hydrometers and standard saline solutions).  
The control of this value prevents the growth of fungi and other microorganisms in the ageing stage.
- Insoluble ashes: maximum 1% p/p, in chlorhydric acid at 10%. Assay method IRAM Standard 20507 “*Yerba Mate. Determination of insoluble ashes in acid*”
- Leaf and twig fraction content must comply with or improve the proportion specified in the Argentine Food Code:

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- Leaves: minimum 65%
- Twigs: maximum 35%

This proportion is determined according to the Argentine Food Code - Chapter XV "*Stimulant or enjoyable products*", Art.1194 (Res. MsyAS Nr307 from 11/29/90 and Nr 80 from 10/13/94). The method established by IRAM Standard 20514 "*Yerba Mate. Detection of twig contents*" may be used for determining gross fiber content until a national technique is made official.

## **2. Organoleptic characteristics**

As there is no tasting panel officially recognized for this product or standardized methods for evaluating the organoleptic characteristics of Yerba Mate authorized to carry the Seal, only some non desired qualities are indicated in this document.


- a) It must not have an intense green color. This is associated with insufficient ageing. It must neither have black dots as these refer to burnt or badly handled Yerba Mate at the green leaf reception yard.
- b) It must not have a humidity or moldy taste. This is related to high humidity content or inadequate ageing and/or preservation processes.
- c) It must not be excessively bitter (this is associated with inadequate ageing processes) or hot (this is related to degraded product).
- d) It must not have excessive aroma of smoke. This is related to careless manufacturing process.

Companies must submit an internal sensory evaluation scheme carried out by qualified personnel and must indicate the sampling method used.

**Important:** In case other determinations are carried out as a result of external demands or as a consequence of the company internal controls that are not mentioned in this protocol, copy of related registers (internal and/or external) must be attached to audits corresponding to the "Argentine Food, A Natural Election" Seal system.

## **PROCESS DIFFERENTIATING ATTRIBUTES**

### **1. Food quality management systems**

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Yerba Mate production plants aspiring to obtain the "*Argentine Food, a Natural Choice*" Seal must operate under the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP or APPCC)<sup>2</sup> System from reception of raw material to end product. In the case of outsourcing part of the process or service, suppliers must demonstrate compliance with harmlessness assurance systems.

Companies must provide evidence of compliance with traceability. For this purpose, a key selected by the manufacturer must be shown on the packaging to enable tracing the product back to production of its raw material.

## **2. Process characteristics**

### **2.1 Harvest**

Harvest must consist in carefully cutting branches full of leaves. This is considered to be a rational pruning process.

It can be manual, semi-mechanized or mechanized, provided that harvested products maintain quality and health and process causes the least possible damage to plants. It must be remembered that this is a perennial crop. Harvested twigs are placed on *ponchadas* (pieces of cloth) that must not touch the ground and must weigh up to 60Kg to avoid crushing that might contribute to raw material deterioration. This also facilitates the tasks of the "*tareferos*" (harvesters) as it avoids their having to carry an excessive weight of their back. The *raídos* (tied up *ponchadas* or bundles) are used to carry harvested material to transportation trucks.


Leaves must be ripe and may be one or two years old according to the type of harvest carried out.

Harvesters must carry out their task wearing adequate clothes, shoes, and gloves. Clothes and gloves must be washed to keep them clean and must be replaced when they are damaged. The team carrying out the harvest must be composed of qualified personnel, trained to carry out the task following rational pruning guidelines.

Annual production controls must be carried out individually in each lot. Lots must be identified by an acronym, name or number in order to individualize them in registers.

### **2.2 Transportation and reception of raw material**

<sup>2</sup> The implementation of this system does not imply obligation of granting the Seal.

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The material harvested must remain in the field the shortest time possible. It must be transported to the reception yard within 5 hours after harvest and long exposure to sun and to humidity must be avoided.

It is recommended to use adapted vehicles that provide adequate hygiene, ventilation and safety conditions for the product. They must have a comfortable and hygienic unloading system. Yerba mate must not be transported together with other products, people, animals or any other element that might contaminate it. In case vehicles were used for transportation of other products, a profound cleaning must be carried out before using them again, and in any case, they must be periodically cleaned following the corresponding Sanitation Standard Operating Procedure.

Branches full of leaves must be transported in bulk, avoiding direct exposure to sun, air and powder. They must be protected with covers that should not increase their temperature. Walking on, crushing or flattening the raw material must be prevented and hygiene conditions must be maintained throughout the loading, transportation and unloading processes.

Drying plant operators must control the cleanness of trucks after unloading and in case of non compliance with requirements they must apply the corresponding penalties.


Reception yards must be paved (dirt yards are not accepted) and must be delimited and dedicated exclusively to reception of raw material. They must be protected to avoid the entry of animals and people that might step on the green leaves and they cannot be traveled by trucks.

They can neither be used out of the harvest season for storing elements, machines, or any other objects alien to this stage of the process.

### 2.3 *Zapecado* (roasting)

The material coming from the yard must pass to the *zapecador* (roasting room) for receiving a severe thermal treatment. The process must be controlled by personnel trained in the *zapecado* technique, with permanent control of the fire and/or adequate elements for that purpose that may ensure a continuous and uniform flame. This procedure defines the further evolution of raw material.

The *zapecado* is a stage of the process that consists in the direct exposure of leaves to flames during a short time, depending on the type of *zapecador* (roasting system). The objective of this stage is to generate enzymatic inactivity, humidity loss by 40 to 60% and vesicle breaking by reaching high temperatures in a very short time.

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Operators must wash themselves and keep themselves clean following the guidelines of a procedures manual.

#### *2.4 Drying and canchado (crushing)*

Drying is a process by which leaves and twigs are subject to dehydration during a period of time that depends on the type of drying system used. The objective is that the raw material humidity, at the end of this process, may satisfy the end product requirements indicated in this document.

It is convenient to control residence time and temperature throughout the drying process according to drying facilities (*barbacuá*, bedstead, belt, rotating, pneumatic conveyor, mixed, and others) in order to attain an adequate humidity content thus avoiding the growth of fungi in the ageing stage. This parameter must be regularly controlled and registered specifying the corresponding drying room batch number.

After the drying stage and before passing to the crushing mill, the yerba mate must be controlled by means of magnetic and pneumatic separation systems.

*Canchado* is a coarse crushing operation to which dry yerba mate is submitted with the purpose of facilitating its packing in bags, transportation and ageing.

#### *2.5 Ageing*


This stage is important for achieving optimal color, flavor and aroma. It may be traditional or natural (it requires 24 months), accelerated or mixed (using both ageing schemes)

Product evolution must be followed up by means of representative samples by batch, with adequate frequency. This follow-up consists in visual observation, tasting, and physicochemical analyses (ex.: humidity content) that may deserve being evaluated to assure product quality.

Ageing rooms must have isolated floors, adequate and controlled ventilation, efficient handling of doors, safe roofs and other characteristics required to protect products from humidity and plagues.

#### *2.6 Milling*

Aged yerba batches are submitted to milling and/or mixing processes according to the proportions or formula that each company's trademark determines.

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In this stage, the yerba mate must be sieved before mixing it in order to obtain its different components: fine and coarse twigs, fine and coarse leaves, powder and gum. These components are then mixed in the proportions indicated by the different recipes so that product composition is maintained constant.

## *2.7 Packing*

Manufacturers aspiring to obtain the seal must pack their products at origin, i.e. the yerba mate production zone.

Personnel hygiene must be controlled during the packing process and physical, chemical and biological contamination of the Yerba Mate must be avoided.

Packaging materials must be protected to prevent contamination and their required quality must be guaranteed by the supplier.

Packing date must be indicated on the packaging.

## *2.8 Storage*

Batches must be stored in places free from humidity, smoke, foreign aromas, powder, plagues and contaminants. They must be placed on raised platforms to avoid contact with the ground and possible contamination.

Finished products must be arranged so that they may be best handled and sent to distribution according to their expiration date.


Products must be protected by means of a secondary packaging for their transportation and distribution in containers of different materials. Then they must be placed on treated and certified pallets to avoid the spreading of plagues and diseases.

Defective, rejected, expired or doubtful batches must be clearly identified and isolated in a specific area with the purpose of eliminating them properly.

## *2.9 Transportation<sup>3</sup>*

Companies must ensure that carriers of finished products comply with vehicle hygiene conditions, and that vehicles are authorized and used only for food transportation.

<sup>3</sup> Reference rule: AFC – Chapter II Art.154bis (Joint Res. SPRyRS and SAGPyA Nr 040 and Nr 344 from 04.23.03)

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**Important:** *Products covered by this protocol and by SAGPyA Resolution Nr 392/05 must be separated from the rest, and batches and shipments must be correctly identified in order to ensure they are handled separately from products not protected by the Seal. To this end, companies must count with documentation and registers safeguarding the goods carrying this mark.*

## **PACKAGING DIFFERENTIATING ATTRIBUTES**

Innocuous materials must be used for packing products in order to protect them from humidity and avoid deterioration. Packaging must be suitable for food and must be labeled according to current regulations in destination countries.

Primary packaging accepted by this protocol may have two or three layers, and may be made of tinplate or other materials that may guarantee the organoleptic properties and the harmlessness of products.

Functionality attribute: primary packaging must be sealed to prevent violation and its opening must be devised so as to avoid damages to the rest of the package.

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Agencies and people that have cooperated with the National Food Administration in the elaboration of this protocol:

- Valeria Trápaga. Sommelier. Yerba Mate Taster.
- Universidad Nacional de Misiones.
- Establecimiento Las Marías S.A.C.I.F.A.
- INTA – Experimental Agriculture Station Cerro Azul, Misiones.
- Federation of Yerba Millers.
- Chamber of Yerba Mate Millers from the production zone.
- INTI Center – Grains and Oil Crops