

## **THE ISO 9001 MULTI-SITE QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OF THE BELGIAN COORDINATED COLLECTIONS OF MICRO-ORGANISMS, BCCM**

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Abstract:

The Belgian Coordinated Collections of Microorganisms are a consortium of 4 public collections of biological resources: bacteria (BCCM/LMG), plasmids and DNA banks (BCCM/LMBP), yeasts and filamentous fungi (BCCM/IHEM, BCCM/MUCL), and mycorrhizal fungi (BCCM/MUCL), managed decentralized at different locations, but coordinated centrally by a special cell at the Belgian Science Policy Office. Sharing the same concern for meeting customers' expectations, the BCCM collections were de facto committed to deliver quality material and services. In order to further improve and formalize their internal operations and know-how, as well as to ensure traceability of activities, it was decided in 2004 to implement a formal, internationally recognized, quality management system (QMS), a decision also triggered by the work of the OECD's Task Force on Biological Resource Centres. Due to its network structure and central coordination, the BCCM complied with the definition of a multi-site organisation, i.e. an organisation having an identified central function at which certain activities are planned, controlled or managed and a network of local offices or branches (sites) at which such activities are fully or partially carried out (IAF GD 2: 2003 Guide 62 Issue 3 annex 3). For these reasons, the BCCM consortium has implemented a multi-site QMS according to the international standard ISO 9001. In order to fully meet the eligibility criteria for multi-site certification, the BCCM QMS has to be centrally administrated. Therefore, the BCCM QMS is built around a single strategic plan and a single quality policy. The QMS is subject to a central management review and monitored via common (key) performance indicators. The internally audits are centrally managed and internal auditors are exchanged between members of the consortium. The treatment of complaints, non-conformities, corrections, corrective and preventive actions is harmonised. These aspects of the QMS are described in unique consortium documents. Processes that are site-specific or related to the type of biological material conserved are described at each site. The certified BCCM QMS complies with most aspects of the OECD Best Practice Guidelines for BRCs. Aspects with regard to biosecurity, validation of methods and user validation need more attention in order to fully comply with the guidelines.

**Key words:** quality management, ISO 9001, multi-site, culture collection