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Event-specific Method for the Quantification of Maize DAS1131 Using Real-time PCR

Validation Report

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2024

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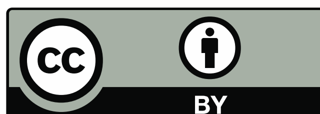

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Contents

Abstract 2
Quality assurance 3
1 Introduction 4
2 Dossier reception and acceptance (step 1) 4
3 Scientific assessment and bioinformatics analysis (step 2) 4
3.1 Specificity assessment conducted by the applicant 5
3.2 Specificity assessment conducted by the EURL GMFF 5
3.3 Verification of the ENGL acceptance parameters 6
3.4 DNA extraction 8
4 Materials and method 9
4.1 Samples 9
4.2 Method for the PCR analysis 9
4.3 EURL GMFF experimental testing (step 3) 10
4.3.1 Determination of the zygosity ratio in the positive control sample 10
4.3.2 In-house verification of the method performance against ENGL method acceptance criteria 11
4.4 International collaborative study (step 4) 12
4.4.1 List of participating laboratories 13
4.4.2 Real-time PCR equipment used in the study 13
4.4.3 Materials used in the international collaborative study 14
4.4.4 Design of the collaborative study 14
4.4.5 Deviations reported from the protocol 15
5 Results 15
5.1 EURL GMFF experimental testing 15
5.1.1 Zygosity ratio in the positive control sample 15
5.1.2 In-house verification of method performance against ENGL method acceptance criteria 16
5.2 Results of the international collaborative study 18
5.2.1 PCR efficiency and linearity 18
5.2.2 GMO quantification 19
5.2.3 Method performance requirements 21
6 Compliance of the method for detection and quantification of event DAS1131 with the requirements of Regulation (EU) No 619/2011 22
7 Conclusion 23
8 References 24
List of abbreviations and definitions 25
List of boxes 26
List of figures 27
List of tables 28
Annex 1. Event-specific Method for the Quantification of Maize DAS1131 Using Real-time PCR 29

Abstract

In line with its mandate (1) the European Union Reference Laboratory for GM Food and Feed (EURL GMFF), in collaboration with the European Network of GMO Laboratories (ENGL), validated an event-specific real-time polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) method for detecting and quantifying maize event DAS1131 (unique identifier DAS-Ø1131-3). The validation study was conducted according to the EURL GMFF validation procedure (https://gmo-crl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/guidance-documents) and the relevant internationally accepted guidelines (2-6).

In accordance with current EU legislation (1), Corteva Agriscience Belgium B.V. (on behalf of Corteva Agriscience LLC) provided the detection method and the positive and negative control samples (genomic DNA from seeds of DAS1131 maize as positive control DNA, and genomic DNA from seeds of conventional maize as negative control DNA). The EURL GMFF verified the method performance data provided by the applicant, where necessary experimentally, prepared the validation samples (calibration samples and blind samples at different GM percentage [copies GM/total maize haploid genome copies]), organised an international collaborative study and analysed the results.

The EURL GMFF in-house verification and the collaborative study confirmed that the method meets the method performance requirements as established by the EURL GMFF and the ENGL, in line with the provisions of Annex III-3.C.2 to Regulation (EU) No 503/2013 (5), and it fulfils the analytical requirements of Regulation (EU) No 619/2011 (6). This validation report is published at https://gmo-crl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/method-validations.

Quality assurance

The EURL GMFF is ISO/IEC 17025:2017 accredited [certificate number: BELAC 268 TEST (Flexible Scope for determination of Genetically Modified content in % (m/m) and % (cp/cp) in food and feed by DNA extraction, DNA identification and Real-time PCR and for determination of Genetically Modified content in % (cp/cp) in food and feed by DNA extraction and digital PCR)].

The original version of the document containing evidence of internal checks and authorisation for publication is archived within the EURL GMFF quality system.

Event-specific Method for the Quantification of Maize DAS1131 Using Real-time PCR

Validation Report

04/12/2024

European Union Reference Laboratory for GM Food and Feed

1 Introduction

In line with Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 (1), Corteva Agriscience Belgium B.V. (on behalf of Corteva Agriscience LLC) provided the EURL GMFF with an event-specific method for detection and quantification of maize event DAS1131 (unique identifier DAS-Ø1131-3) together with genomic DNA as positive and negative control samples.

The dossier was found complete (step 1 of the EURL GMFF validation procedure) and the scientific dossier assessment (step 2) concluded that the reported method performance characteristics, assessed against the ENGL method acceptance criteria (7), allowed moving the method forward to step 3 of the procedure (experimental testing), where the EURL GMFF verified the purity of the control samples provided and conducted an in-house testing of samples and method.

The positive and negative control DNA, submitted in accordance with Art 5(3)(j) and Article 17(3)(j) of Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003, were found of good quality.

Step 3 was completed with the conclusion that the method could be submitted to the collaborative study (step 4). This study confirmed that the method is well suited for quantifying genomic DNA of GM maize DAS1131, appropriately extracted from food or feed, down to a GM content level of 0.1% m/m.

The preparation of the report (step 5) was aligned with the timeline communicated by EFSA for its risk assessment.

2 Dossier reception and acceptance (step 1)

Corteva Agriscience Belgium B.V. (on behalf of Corteva Agriscience LLC) submitted the identification and quantification method, data demonstrating its adequate performance when applied to genomic DNA extracted from maize DAS1131 GM event and from non GM maize, and the corresponding positive and negative control DNA samples.

The dossier was found to be complete and was thus moved to step 2.

3 Scientific assessment and bioinformatics analysis (step 2)

Documentation and data supplied by the applicant were evaluated by the EURL GMFF for compliance with the ENGL method acceptance criteria.

The specificity of the event-specific method was verified by the applicant and confirmed by the EURL GMFF by means of bioinformatics analysis, on the basis of the sequence data provided by the applicant.

3.1 Specificity assessment conducted by the applicant

The specificity of the event-specific method was assessed by the applicant in triplicate real-time PCR reactions, according to the method described in Annex 1 (Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), using at least 50 ng genomic DNA extracted from at least 4%:

maize DAS1131, DP915635, DP202216, DP56113, DP23211, DP910521, DP51291, T25, TC1507, NK603, MIR162, MIR604, MON810, 3272, 98140, 59122, 5307, MON88017, MON89034, MON863, GA21, Bt11, Bt176, MON87427, MON87460, DAS-40278-9, DP4114, VCO-1981-5, MON87403, MON87411, MZHG0JG, MZIR98, MON87429, MON95379, MON87419;

soybean DAS-44406-6, A2704-12, A5547-127, BPS-CV127-9, DAS-81419-2, MON87705, MON87751, FG72, MON87769, 356043, 305423, GTS-40-3-2, MON87701, DAS-68416-4, MON89788, MON87708, SYHT0H2, CV127, GMB151, DBN-09004-6, COR23134, COR1921;

cotton LLCotton25, GHB614, MON531, MON15985, MON1445, 281-24-236 x 3006-210-23, GHB119, T304-40, MON88913, MON88701, DAS-81910-7, COT102, GHB811;

oilseed rape Rf3, GT73/RT73, MON88302, Rf1, Ms1, T45, Rf2, Ms8, Topas 19/2, 73496, Ms11, MON94100, LBFLFK;

rice LLRICE62;

potato EH92-527-1, AM04-1020, AV43-6-G7, PH05-026-0048;

sugar beet H7-1;

and conventional maize, conventional soybean, conventional cotton, conventional oilseed rape, conventional rice, conventional potato, conventional sugar beet and conventional wheat.

According to the method developer the DAS1131 method did not react with any sample except the positive control.

In addition, the applicant performed an in-silico specificity analysis by using the amplicon sequence as a query for BLASTN (using NCBI software version 2.15.0+) algorithm search against public sequence of National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) and Patent Genbank databases. No sequence showed alignment of both forward and reverse primers or with the full length of the probe, besides relevant similarity hits to DAS1131 patents.

A previously validated maize-specific PCR method (http://gmo-crl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/summaries/EURL-VL-02-14-VP.pdf), which amplifies a 79 base pair (bp) fragment of the *high mobility group* (*hmg*) of *Zea mays L.*, was used as a reference method. Notably, the TAMRA quencher was replaced with a Black Hole Quencher 1 (BHQ1) quencher and the master mix was substituted with a Taqman Universal PCR Master Mix, no UNG.

3.2 Specificity assessment conducted by the EURL GMFF

The detection method spans the 5' plant-to-insert junction in maize DAS1131. The forward primer "PHN201280_f" binds to the maize genomic DNA. The reverse primer "PHN201282_r" binding site was found

in the insert. The probe “PHN201284 6-FAM:MGB/NFQ Probe” binds to the junction between the 5’ genomic region of *Zea mays L.* and the insert.

The amplicon size is expected to be 98 bp, consistent to what reported by the applicant. The sequence of the amplicon was analysed by BLAST (NCBI) against local copies of the "nt" and "patents" databases, and no significant similarity was found with any other published sequence. In addition, the primers were tested against the sequences of the other GMO events present in the Central Core Sequence Information System (CCSIS) of the JRC, as well as the whole genomes of more than 80 plants (including *Brassica rapa*, *Glycine max*, *Oryza sativa*, *Solanum lycopersicum* and *Zea mays*) using the e-PCR prediction tool (NCBI), and no potential amplicon was identified.

3.3 Verification of the ENGL acceptance parameters

The applicant prepared the calibration curve from a DNA solution (S1) of 10% maize event DAS1131 genomic DNA (expressed as copy number ratio) which was serially diluted (with 1:6 dilution factors) to respectively obtain samples S2, S3 and S4. The parameters (slope, R^2 coefficient) of eight runs of the calibration curve are reported as provided by the applicant (Table 1). These runs were performed on QuantStudio 5 RT PCR instrument. In addition, the applicant also used other PCR instruments (LC480 I, LC480 II and ABI7500, data is not shown in this report).

Table 1. Summary of the slope and R^2 values obtained by the applicant

	DAS1131		***hmg***	
Run	**Slope**	**R^2**	**Slope**	**R^2**
1	-3.49	1.000	-3.39	1.000
2	-3.43	1.000	-3.37	1.000
3	-3.47	1.000	-3.36	1.000
4	-3.46	1.000	-3.44	0.999
5	-3.51	0.999	-3.39	1.000
6	-3.41	1.000	-3.38	1.000
7	-3.35	1.000	-3.37	1.000
8	-3.44	0.999	-3.41	1.000
Mean	-3.45	1.000	-3.39	1.000

According to the ENGL method acceptance criteria, the average value of the slope of the standard curve shall range from -3.1 to -3.6 and the R^2 coefficient shall be ≥ 0.98.

Table 1 indicates that the slope and R^2 coefficient of the standard curves for the GM (DAS1131) and the maize-specific *high mobility group* (*hmg*), as established by the applicant, were within the ENGL acceptance criteria.

Precision and trueness of the method were established by the applicant and sixteen values (eight independent experiments, tested twice and measured in triplicate) for each of four GM levels (expressed as copy number ratio) were provided. Table 2A reports precision and trueness values for the four GM-levels as provided by the

applicant. Both parameters were within the ENGL acceptance criteria (trueness ± 25%, RSD_r ≤ 25% across the entire dynamic range).

Table 2A. Mean %, precision and trueness values (*) provided by the applicant

	Test results			
Expected GM % **	**5.0**	**0.90**	**0.09**	**0.058**
Measured mean GM %	4.94	0.906	0.088	0.056
Precision (RSD_r %)	5.4	6.9	8.9	20.5
Trueness (bias %)	-1.2	0.7	-2.2	-3.4

* Numbers are not rounded but are presented as reported by the applicant

** Expressed as copy number ratio

The method met the ENGL acceptance criteria for trueness and precision at the lowest GM level [i.e. 0.058% (expressed as copy number ratio)], which contains 48 copies of DAS1131 in 225 ng of total DNA per reaction. The GM content of this sample is in line with the requirements for testing the Limit of Quantification (LOQ, below or equal to 0.09% or 50 copies).

The absolute limit of detection (LOD_{abs}) of the DAS1131 event specific and the maize reference real-time PCR methods was assessed by the applicant in 60 PCR replicates. The LOD_{abs} was found to be below 10 haploid genome copies for DAS1131 event-specific method and below 20 haploid genome copies for *hmg* reference method. The relative LOD (LOD_{rel}) of the combined method was assessed by the applicant in 60 PCR replicates and it was found to be at least 0.012% (related to copies GM/total haploid genome copies) in 225 ng of total maize DNA per reaction. The LOD_{abs} and LOD_{rel} are in line with the ENGL acceptance criteria (below 0.045% or 25 copies with a level of confidence of 95%).

The robustness of the method was assessed in sixteen combinations of the following variations to the method: exact/+/-10% enzyme mix concentration, exact/+/-30% primer concentration, exact/+/-30% probe concentration, exact/+/-1 µL Master Mix volume, +/-1 °C in annealing temperature, on either of the following PCR instruments: BioRad CFX Opus 96Real-Time and ABI7500 (fast). The RSD_r and the trueness calculated for each combination of variations on a sample at the LOQ level (0.058%) did not exceed 30%, thus meeting the ENGL acceptance criteria.

Precision and trueness of the method were tested in a transferability study: mean values from triplicates for each of three GM levels (expressed as copies GM/total haploid genome copies) were provided. Table 2B reports precision and trueness values for the three GM-levels as provided by two laboratories different from the method developer, using a QuantStudio 5 and a QuantStudio 6 PCR instruments. Both parameters were within the ENGL acceptance criteria (trueness ≤ 25%, RSDr ≤ 25% across the entire dynamic range).

Table 2B. Mean %, precision and trueness values obtained in the transferability study of the applicant

	Test Results					
Laboratory	**Laboratory 2 (QS6*)**			**Laboratory 3 (QS5*)**		
Expected GM %	**0.9**	**0.09**	**0.058**	**0.9**	**0.09**	**0.058**
Measured mean GM %	0.905	0.095	0.059	0.955	0.088	0.052
Precision (RSD_r %)	3.9	5.2	5.9	3.7	7.3	2.7
Trueness (bias %)	0.6	5.6	1.7	6.1	-2.2	-10.3

* QS = QuantStudio PCR instrument

3.4 DNA extraction

Genomic DNA was isolated from ground maize seeds, using a cetyltrimethylammonium bromide (CTAB)-based DNA extraction protocol previously submitted for detection of maize event DP4114 that has already been validated in-house by the EURL GMFF. The protocol for DNA extraction and a report on testing are published at https://gmo-crl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/summaries/EURL-VL-02-14-XP.pdf. According to the experimental data submitted by the applicant, the protocol for DNA extraction generated DNA of suitable quantity and quality for PCR based applications when applied to ground seeds from the maize event DAS1131.

In agreement with the ENGL position, endorsing the modularity principle (see also Annex III to Regulation (EU) No 503/2013), and given the similarity in the matrix, the EURL GMFF considers the above mentioned DNA extraction protocol applicable in the context of the validation of the method for maize event DAS1131.

Annex III to Reg. (EU) No 503/2013 (5) requires the applicant to discuss the validity and limitations of the detection methods in the various types of foods and feeds (matrices) that are expected to be placed on the market. To this regard the applicant stated that *"the foundation to detect the presence of transgenes in seed, food and feed matrices is primarily based on the quality of genomic DNA template that is utilized. Pure DNA extractions such as the cetyltrimethyl ammonium bromide (CTAB) method or the Wizard (Promega) method are suitable for the isolation of pure genomic DNA from a wide variety of cereal-based matrices ([1, 2, 3]). Exceptionally pure DNA, applicable for molecular biology procedures, such as Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) amplification, is imperative to provide adequate source template suitable for use for a wide variety of agricultural products, including maize grain and derived matrices supporting food and feed products. The processing of maize grain involves varying degrees of mechanical, enzymatic, solvent, heat, acid, pressure treatment, or combinations of these steps ([4, 5 ,6, 7, 8, 9, 10]). These steps influence the quality and intactness of DNA contained in the final processed maize products ([1, 11, 12 13]) which may result in significant degradation of high molecular weight DNA and failure to PCR amplify products greater than a few 100 base pairs ([11, 12]). Random DNA fragmentation is known to lead to variability in quantifying DNA by qPCR ([14]), thus affecting the ability to accurately quantify the presence of a GM event and taxon-specific target in processed fractions. Moreover, the DNA extraction procedure necessary for some of these processed matrices may need additional rounds of processing to clean-up the DNA, to eliminate PCR inhibitors in order to achieve quality genomic DNA suitable for PCR testing ([15, 16]). These extraction methods are widely used for plant-based materials, are economical and can be easily scaled ([17]). The DAS1131 maize detection method has been developed and was*

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[16] *Peano C, et al. (2004). Qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the genomic DNA extracted from GMO and Non-GMO foodstuffs with four different extraction methods. Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, 52, 6962-6968.*

[17] *Smith DS, et al. (2005) Comparison of Several Methods for the Extraction of DNA from Potatoes and Potato-Derived Products. Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry. 53: 9848-9859*

pre-validated on maize seed and tissues. The DAS1131 maize detection method can, in principle, be applied to any sample from which sufficient quantities of maize DNA, free of PCR inhibitors, can be purified. This DNA extraction method will be specifically applicable to the certified reference materials that have been produced for quality control and calibration of the detection method."

Whenever DNA is extracted from more complex and difficult matrices, a thorough control of the quality of the DNA is recommended in order to ensure that it has the required quality for subsequent PCR analysis.

4 Materials and method

4.1 Samples

The following positive and negative control samples were provided and described by the applicant to the EURL GMFF in accordance to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 Art 2.11 ([18]):

- genomic DNA extracted by the applicant from hemizygous maize seeds harbouring the DAS1131 event, and
- genomic DNA extracted by the applicant from conventional maize seeds genetically similar to those harbouring the DAS1131 event.

4.2 Method for the PCR analysis

The PCR method provided by the applicant is an event-specific, quantitative, real-time TaqMan® PCR procedure for the determination of the relative content of GM event DAS1131 DNA to total maize DNA. The procedure is a simplex system, in which a maize-specific method targeting the endogenous gene *high mobility group* (*hmg*), and the GM method for DAS1131 are performed in separate wells. The validated method protocol is published by the EURL GMFF at https://gmo-crl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/method-validations and can be found in Annex 1 to this report.

For the detection of GM event DAS1131, a 98 bp fragment of the region spanning the 5' plant-to-insert junction in maize DAS1131 is amplified using specific primers. PCR products are measured during each cycle (real-time) by means of a target-specific oligonucleotide probe labelled with FAM (6-carboxyfluorescein) as reporter dye at its 5' end and MBG (minor groove binder) as NFQ (non-fluorescent quencher) dye at its 3' end.

For the relative quantification of GM event DAS1131, a maize taxon-specific method amplifies a 79 bp fragment of a maize *hmg* endogenous gene, using *hmg* gene-specific primers and a *hmg* gene-specific probe labelled with FAM (6-carboxyfluorescein) as reporter dye at its 5' end and BHQ1 (Black Hole Quencher 1) as non-fluorescent quencher dye at its 3' end.

Standard curves are generated for both the DAS1131 and the *hmg* by plotting the Cq values measured for the calibration points against the logarithm of the DNA copy numbers and by fitting a regression line into these data. Thereafter, the standard curves are used to estimate the copy numbers in the test sample DNA by interpolation from the standard curves.

[18] Control sample defined as the GMO or its genetic material (positive sample) and the parental organism or its genetic material that has been used for the purpose of the genetic modification (negative sample).

For the relative quantification of event DAS1131 DNA in a test sample, the DAS1131 copy number is divided by the copy number of the maize haploid genome and multiplied by 100 to obtain the percentage value (GM % = DAS1131/ maize haploid genome x 100).

The absolute copy numbers of the calibration curve samples are calculated by dividing the sample DNA mass (nanograms) by the published average 1C value for the maize genome (2.73 pg) (8). The copy number values used in the quantification, the GMO contents of the calibration samples, and the total DNA quantity used in the PCR reactions are listed in Table 3.

The applicant originally relied on a fifth standard sample (S5) solely used to assess the dynamic range of the taxon-specific *hmg* method below 50 haploid genome copies, but irrelevant to the assessment of the DAS1131 quantification method. Therefore, the EURL GMFF decided not to use it.

Note: Numerical values presented in the following tables were rounded keeping two digits for values ≤ 1, one digit for values between 1 and 10 and no digit for values ≥ 10, unless otherwise reported. The calculations in the MS Excel files however were done over not rounded data. This approach might create small inconsistencies in the numerical values reported in the tables but it allows a higher precision in the final results.

Table 3. Copy number values of the standard curve samples

Sample code	S1	S2	S3	S4
Total amount of maize DNA in the reaction (ng)	250	42	7.0	1.16
Target taxon haploid genome copies	91575	15263	2544	424
Target DAS1131 copies	9158	1526	254	42

4.3 EURL GMFF experimental testing (step 3)

4.3.1 Determination of the zygosity ratio in the positive control sample

The EURL GMFF experimentally verified the zygosity ratio (GM-target to reference target ratio) in the positive control sample to assess the method performance at 0.1% GM level -expressed as mass fraction of GM material- in relation to the provisions of Regulation (EU) No 619/2011 (6).

The copy number of the DAS1131 and of the *hmg* targets in the positive control sample were determined by digital PCR (dPCR) performed on the Bio Rad QX200 Droplet Reader.

Reaction mixes were prepared in order to test the zygosity in eighteen replicates to a final volume of 22 µL and contained 1X ddPCR Super Mix no dUTP (Bio Rad, Cat. number 64469973), primers and probes at concentrations indicated in the corresponding validated method (PHN201280 and PHN201282 primers at 600 nM each, PHN201284 probe at 120 nM; PHN89439 and PHN89440 primers at 600 nM each, PHN149436_FAM probe at 120 nM), and 5 µL of DNA at a concentration of 10 ng/µL). The zygosity test made use of the *hmg* probe originally submitted by the applicant (with MGB quencher, prior to changing to BHQ1 quencher).

Reaction mixes were loaded into a semi skirt 96-well plate. 'No template controls' were included. After sealing with a sealing aluminium foil using the PX1™ PCR Plate Sealer, the plate was briefly centrifuged (1 min at 1000 rpm) and placed on Bio Rad Automated Droplet Generator (AutoDG).

The instrument added the Automated Droplet Generation oil for Probes (Bio Rad, Cat. number 1864110), generated the droplets in a final volume of 40 µL of the emulsion containing droplets. The AutoDG then transferred all the emulsions into a new semi skirt 96-well plate. The new plate was sealed with a sealing foil with the PX1™ PCR Plate Sealer and run in a Bio Rad C1000 TouchThermal Cycler. The thermal cycling conditions in a final volume of 40 µL is described below.

Box 1: Thermal cycling conditions in a final volume of 40 µL.

<table>
<tr><th>Step</th><th>Temperature (°C)</th><th>Time (mm:ss)</th><th>Ramp rate</th><th>Number of cycles</th></tr>
<tr><td>Polymerase activation</td><td>95</td><td>10:00</td><td rowspan="5">2°C/sec</td><td>1</td></tr>
<tr><td>DNA denaturation</td><td>94</td><td>00:30</td><td rowspan="2">40</td></tr>
<tr><td>Annealing/extension</td><td>60</td><td>01:00</td></tr>
<tr><td>Enzyme deactivation</td><td>98</td><td>10:00</td><td>1</td></tr>
<tr><td>Hold</td><td>4</td><td>infinite</td><td>1</td></tr>
</table>

The sealed 96-well plate was then placed in the QX200 Droplet Reader to determine through cytofluorimetry the fraction of fluorescent PCR-positive droplets with respect of the total number of droplets in the original sample by selecting the proper fluorescent dye used. Data analysis and copy number calculations were performed using the Bio-Rad QX200 Droplet Reader Analysis software (QuantaSoft version 1.7.4).

Calculations of means and variances were carried out according to the procedure outlined for random variables in the Annex 4 of the ENGL guidance document 'Verification of analytical methods for GMO testing when implementing interlaboratory validated methods - Version 2' (9).

4.3.2 In-house verification of the method performance against ENGL method acceptance criteria

The method performance characteristics were verified by quantifying on a copy number basis five blind test samples distributed over a range of GM levels (5.0% - 0.059%, see Table 4). The blind test samples were prepared by the EURL GMFF from the genomic DNA provided by the applicant (see 4.1 for details) by mixing DAS1131 maize DNA and non-GM maize DNA.

Table 4. DAS1131 blinded samples GM % contents

DAS1131 GM % GM copy number/maize haploid genome copy number x 100
5.0
2.0
0.90
0.09
0.059

The calibration sample S1 was prepared from the genomic DNA provided by the applicant by mixing the appropriate amount of DAS1131 DNA with control non-GM maize DNA to obtain a 10% (in copy number ratio related to haploid genome copies) GM sample. Calibration samples S2-S4 were prepared by 6-fold serial dilutions from the S1 sample and successive samples (see Table 3).

The experiments were performed on an ABI 7500, a QuantStudio 7 Flex System and a Roche LC480 II real-time platform under repeatability conditions and followed the protocol provided by the applicant.

Test samples from GM level 5.0%, to 0.09%, were tested in two real-time PCR runs with two replicates for each GM-level on each plate (total of four replicates per GM-level). The test sample with GM level 0.059% (in copy number ratio, equal to 0.1% mass ratio), containing 49 copies of DAS1131 in 225 ng of total DNA per reaction, was tested in 15 replicates in an additional run for each platform. Average values of the slope and of the R^2 coefficient of the standard curves and method trueness and precision over the dynamic range were evaluated against the ENGL method acceptance criteria. On Roche LC480 II platform the method was run at 45 cycles as described in the validated method published at https://gmo-crl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/method-validations and in Annex 1 below, and analysed with the second derivative maximum method.

4.4 International collaborative study (step 4)

The international collaborative trial involved twelve randomly selected laboratories, all being "national reference laboratories, assisting the EURL GMFF for testing and validation of methods for detection", as listed in annex to Regulation (EC) No 120/2014 (10) who had expressed their interest in participation. The study was carried out in accordance with the following internationally accepted guidelines:

- The IUPAC "Protocol for the design, conduct and interpretation of method-performance studies." (Horwitz, 1995) (2)
- 5725-1: 2023 "Accuracy (trueness and precision) of measurement methods and results. General principles and definitions." (3)
- 5725-2: 2019. "Accuracy (trueness and precision) of measurement methods and results — Basic method for the determination of repeatability and reproducibility of a standard measurement method" (4)

The objective of the international collaborative study was to verify in experienced laboratories the trueness and precision of the PCR analytical method provided by the applicant and verified in-house by the EURL GMFF.

4.4.1 List of participating laboratories

The twelve laboratories participating in DAS1131 international collaborative study were randomly selected from twenty-four national reference laboratories (NRL) that offered to participate.

Guidance was given to the selected laboratories for strictly following the validation protocol that was provided to them. The participating laboratories are listed in Table 5.

Table 5. Laboratories participating in the validation of the detection method for maize event DAS1131

Laboratory	**Country**
Wageningen Food Safety Research (WFSR)	NL
National Institute of Biology	SI
Environment Agency Austria	AT
National Centre for Food, Spanish Agency for Food Safety and Nutrition (AESAN)	ES
Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment "BIOR"	LV
Institute for Agricultural, Fisheries and Food Research	BE
Sciensano	BE
Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety- BVL	DE
LUFA Speyer	DE
Plant Health Laboratory	FR
Plant Breeding and Acclimatization Institute – National Research Institute, GMO Control	PL
BioGEVES - Groupement d'Intérêt Public – Groupe d'Etude et de contrôle des Variétés	FR

4.4.2 Real-time PCR equipment used in the study

Laboratories involved in the collaborative study used the following real-time PCR equipment: three laboratories used ABI 7500, two used QuantStudio 5, one QuantStudio 3, one QuantStudio 6 Flex, one QuantStudio 7 Flex, one BioRAD CFX96, one BioRAD CFX OPUS, one ABI QS7 Pro and one Roche LC480II.

This variability of equipment, with its known potential influence on PCR results, reflects the real-life situation in the control laboratories and provides additional assurance that the method is robust and usable under real conditions.

4.4.3 Materials used in the international collaborative study

For the validation of the quantitative event-specific method, calibration samples (of known GMO content) and blind test samples (of undisclosed GM content = blind samples) were provided by the EURL GMFF to the participating laboratories (for test samples preparation see 4.3.2).

The twelve NRLs participating in the validation study received the following materials:

✓ Four calibration samples with known concentrations of GM-event (175 µL of DNA solution each) labelled from S1 to S4 (Table 3).

✓ Twenty blinded test DNA samples (87.5 µL of DNA solution, each at 45 ng/µL) labelled from U1 to U20, representing five GM levels, each in four replicates (Table 4)

✓ Reaction reagents:

- TaqMan Universal Master Mix, no UNG (2x), one vial: 8 mL
- Distilled sterile water, one vial: 4 mL

✓ Primers and probes (1 tube each) as follows:

hmg (taxon-specific)

- MaiJ-F2 (10 µM): 240 µL
- mhmg-rev (10 µM): 240 µL
- mhmg-probe (FAM/BHQ) (10 µM): 144 µL

DAS1131 (GM)

- PHN201280 primer (10 µM): 480 µL
- PHN201282 primer (10 µM): 480 µL
- PHN201284 probe (10 µM): 120 µL

4.4.4 Design of the collaborative study

Participating laboratories received a detailed validation protocol that included the exact design of the PCR plates, ensuring that on each PCR plate the samples were analysed for the DAS1131 and for the *hmg* taxon-specific. In total, two plates were run by each participating laboratory.

The laboratories prepared the PCR master-mixes for the maize event DAS1131 and the *hmg* method in accordance with the description provided in the validation protocol. Calibration and test samples were loaded on the PCR plates as per pre-determined plate layout.

The amplification reaction followed the cycling program specified in the protocol. Participants determined the GM % in the test samples according to the instructions and also reported the raw data to the EURL GMFF on an Excel sheet that was designed, validated and distributed by the EURL GMFF. All data are stored by the EURL GMFF on a dedicated and protected server.

The EURL GMFF analysed the data against the parameters and the limits set by the ENGL, i.e. trueness, precision, amplification efficiency and linearity.

4.4.5 Deviations reported from the protocol

Nine laboratories reported no deviations from the validation protocol. One laboratory reported that the instrument used could not allow for the selection of the quencher dye. One laboratory reported the setting of a reaction volume of 50 µL (instead of 25 µL as instructed). Finally, one laboratory performed a first run on QS5 and noticed abnormally high S1 transgene Cts; therefore the run was repeated on a LC480 II (using the 2nd Derivative Maximum Analysis Method and 45 cycles).

5 Results

5.1 EURL GMFF experimental testing

5.1.1 Zygosity ratio in the positive control sample

The results of the digital PCR analysis conducted by the EURL GMFF on the DAS1131 and *hmg* targets to determine the zygosity ratio in the positive control samples are shown in Table 6. For reference, the zygosity ratio reported by the applicant was 0.58.

Table 6. Zygosity ratio of the DAS1131 and *hmg* targets in the positive control sample.

Mean ratio (DAS1131/*hmg*)	0.59
Standard deviation	0.02
RSD_r (%)	3.1
Standard error of the mean	0.004
Upper 95% CI of the mean	0.60
Lower 95% CI of the mean	0.58

The mean ratio (DAS1131/*hmg*) is 0.59. The 95% confidence interval (CI) spans around 0.59, the expected ratio for a maize control sample, hemizygous for the GM-locus, with a GM parental contribution of female origin and assuming single - copy endogenous gene target.

Hence, 0.059 % GM in haploid genome copy numbers corresponds to 0.1 % in mass fraction of GM DNA.

Box 2: Note on reporting of analytical results

The zygosity ratio herein reported is valid for the positive control sample DNA in the context of the present validation study. It is used to assess the method performance at 0.1% GM level -expressed as mass fraction of GM material- in relation to the provisions of Regulation (EU) No 619/2011.

When analytical results of official laboratories are primarily expressed as ratio of GM- DNA copy numbers, they shall be translated into mass fraction results by means of the specific conversion factor published in the document "Conversion factors (CF) for certified references materials (CRM)" ((https://gmo-crl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/guidance-documents).

5.1.2 In-house verification of method performance against ENGL method acceptance criteria

Test samples with GM levels from 5.0% to 0.09% (expressed in copy number) were tested in two real-time PCR runs with two replicates for each GM-level on each plate (total of four replicates per GM-level). The sample at 0.059% GM-level (copy number, corresponding to 0.1% mass fraction) was tested for its precision in quantification in 15 replicates in separate runs.

Tests were conducted on ABI 7500, a Q7 (QuantStudio 7 Flex System) and a Roche LC480 II for robustness.

The standard curve parameters and the results of efficiency, linearity, trueness and precision obtained in the three real-time PCR runs with the test samples are shown in Tables 7A, 7B, 8, 9 and 10.

According to the ENGL method acceptance criteria, the average value of the slope of the standard curve shall range from -3.1 to -3.6 and the R^2 coefficient shall be ≥ 0.98. Table 7A and 7B document that the slopes of the standard curves and the R^2 coefficients were within the limits established by the ENGL. The EURL GMFF in-house results confirm the data provided by the applicant.

Table 7A. Standard curve parameters of the real-time PCR tests, carried out on ABI 7500, Q7 and Roche LC480 II to quantify GM-levels in the range 5.0% to 0.09% in four replicates each. Slope and R^2 coefficient values were rounded to two digits.

	DAS1131			***hmg***		
	Slope	PCR efficiency (*)	R^2	Slope	PCR efficiency (*)	R^2
Run A	-3.54	92	1.00	-3.48	94	1.00
Run B	-3.51	93	1.00	-3.48	94	1.00
Run C	-3.47	94	1.00	-3.45	95	1.00
Run D	-3.51	93	1.00	-3.40	97	1.00
Run E	-3.53	92	1.00	-3.45	95	1.00
Run F	-3.45	95	1.00	-3.45	95	1.00

* PCR efficiency (%) is calculated using the formula Efficiency = $(10^{(-1/slope)}) - 1) \times 100$

Runs A-B were carried out on ABI 7500; runs C-D were carried out on Q7; runs E and F were carried out on Roche LC480 II.

Table 7B. Standard curve parameters of the real-time PCR tests, carried out on ABI 7500, Q7, and Roche LC480 II to quantify the GM-level 0.059% (copy number, equal to 0.1% in mass fraction) in 15 replicates. Slope and R^2 coefficient values were rounded to two digits.

	DAS1131			***hmg***		
	Slope	PCR efficiency (*)	R^2	Slope	PCR efficiency (*)	R^2
Run G	-3.53	92	1.00	-3.46	95	1.00
Run H	-3.51	93	1.00	-3.50	93	1.00
Run I	-3.45	95	1.00	-3.49	93	1.00

* PCR efficiency (%) is calculated using the formula Efficiency = $(10^{(-1/slope)}) - 1) \times 100$

Run G was carried out on ABI 7500; run H was carried out on Q7; run I was carried out on Roche LC480 II.

According to the ENGL method acceptance criteria the method trueness (measured as bias in % of the target GM level) should be within ± 25% of the accepted reference value over the entire dynamic range and the

precision, expressed as RSD_r % (relative standard deviation of repeatability), should be ≤ 25 %, also over the entire dynamic range.

Tables 8, 9 and 10 show that trueness and precision of quantification were within the limits established by the ENGL for the PCR machines used.

Table 8. Values of trueness and precision as established by the EURL GMFF in its in-house verification using an ABI 7500. GM % in copy/copy haploid genomes.

Target GM-levels %	Measured GM-level %	Bias % of the target GM-level	Precision (RSD_r %)
5.0	5.3	6.4	0.55
2.0	2.3	17	1.6
0.90	1.0	12	2.6
0.09	0.11	17	11
0.059	0.07	20	17

Table 9. Values of trueness and precision as established by the EURL GMFF in its in-house verification using a Q7. GM % in copy/copy haploid genomes.

Target GM-levels %	Measured GM-level %	Bias % of the target GM-level	Precision (RSD_r %)
5.0	5.4	8.8	2.4
2.0	2.4	18	0.67
0.90	1.0	11	1.9
0.09	0.11	22	7.0
0.059	0.07	17	9.9

Table 10. Values of trueness and precision as established by the EURL GMFF in its in-house verification using a Roche LC480 II. GM % in copy/copy haploid genomes.

Target GM-levels %	Measured GM-level %	Bias % of the target GM-level	Precision (RSD_r %)
5.0	5.4	7.4	2.6
2.0	2.2	8.5	1.1
0.90	0.98	8.6	2.2
0.09	0.10	13	2.1
0.059	0.07	10	13

5.2 Results of the international collaborative study

5.2.1 PCR efficiency and linearity

The PCR efficiency (%) and R^2 values (expressing the linearity of the regression) for the standard curve, reported by participating laboratories are displayed in Table 11. The PCR efficiency (%) was calculated from the standard curve slopes using the formula:

$$\text{Efficiency (\%)} = \left(10^{\frac{-1}{slope}} - 1\right) \times 100$$

Table 11 indicates that the efficiency of amplification for DAS1131 ranges from 88 % to 113% and the linearity from 0.98 to 1.00; the amplification efficiency for the maize-specific method ranges from 90% to 114% and the linearity from 0.99 to 1.00. The mean PCR efficiency was 94% for DAS1131 and 96% for the *hmg* one. The average R^2 of the methods was 1.00 for both the DAS1131 and *hmg*. Both PCR efficiency and linearity values were within the ENGL acceptance criteria.

Table 11. Values of slope, PCR efficiency and R^2 obtained during the international collaborative trial. Slope and R^2 coefficient values were rounded to two digits.

		DAS1131			***hmg***		
Lab	**Plate**	**Slope**	**PCR Efficiency (%)**	**R^2**	**Slope**	**PCR Efficiency (%)**	**R^2**
1	A	-3.49	93	1.00	-3.41	96	1.00
	B	-3.55	91	1.00	-3.37	98	1.00
2	A	-3.51	93	1.00	-3.48	94	1.00
	B	-3.51	93	1.00	-3.46	94	1.00
3	A	-3.58	90	1.00	-3.44	95	1.00
	B	-3.47	94	1.00	-3.42	96	1.00
4	A	-3.56	91	1.00	-3.47	94	1.00
	B	-3.45	95	1.00	-3.45	95	1.00
5	A	-3.55	91	1.00	-3.49	94	1.00
	B	-3.47	94	1.00	-3.58	90	1.00
6	A	-3.44	95	1.00	-3.45	95	1.00
	B	-3.45	95	1.00	-3.46	95	1.00
7	A	-3.66	88	1.00	-3.47	94	1.00
	B	-3.63	89	1.00	-3.42	96	1.00
8	A	-3.05	113	0.98	-3.10	110	0.99
	B	-3.05	113	0.98	-3.04	114	0.99
9	A	-3.44	95	1.00	-3.35	99	1.00
	B	-3.47	94	1.00	-3.43	96	1.00
10	A	-3.50	93	1.00	-3.49	94	1.00
	B	-3.59	90	1.00	-3.44	95	1.00
11	A	-3.57	91	1.00	-3.55	91	1.00
	B	-3.37	98	1.00	-3.45	95	1.00
12	A	-3.64	88	1.00	-3.49	93	1.00
	B	-3.60	90	1.00	-3.52	92	1.00
	Mean	-3.48	94	1.00	-3.43	96	1.00

These results confirm the appropriate performance characteristics of the methods tested in terms of efficiency and linearity.

5.2.2 GMO quantification

Table 12 reports the values of quantification for the four replicates of each GM level as reported by each of the twelve participating laboratories.

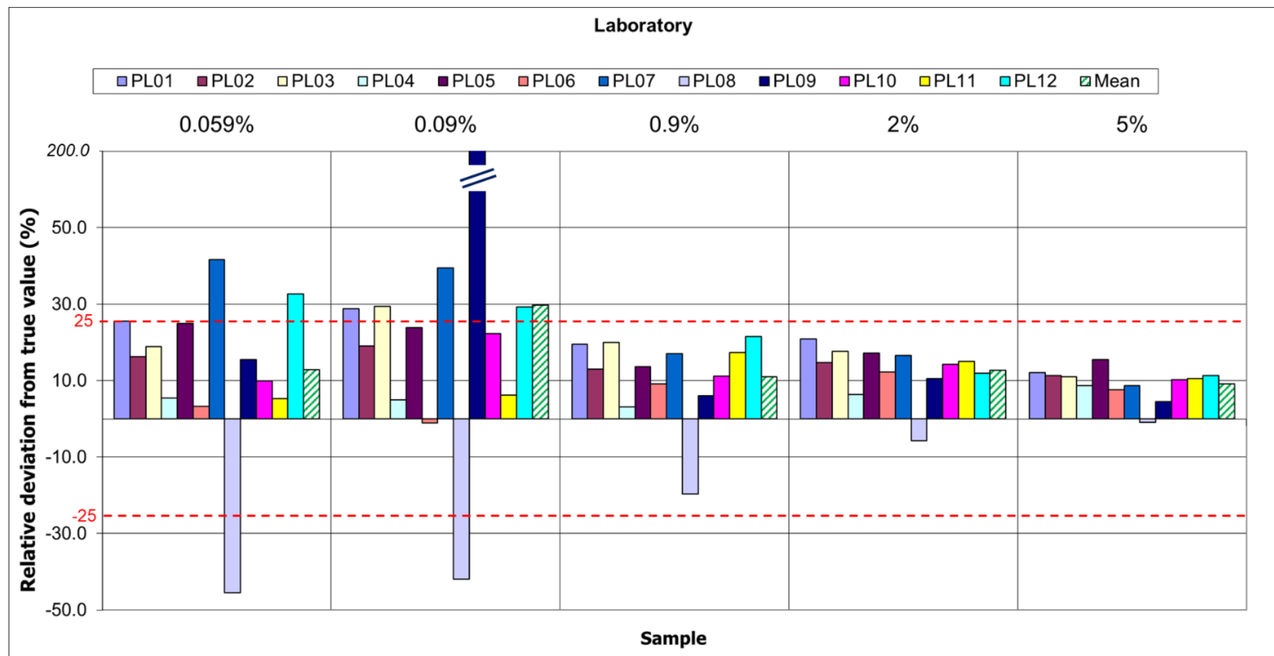
Table 12. GM % values determined by laboratories for test samples (Cochran outlier in bold)

	GMO content (%) (*)																			
LAB	0.059				0.09				0.90				2.0				5.0			
	REP 1	REP 2	REP 3	REP 4	REP 1	REP 2	REP 3	REP 4	REP 1	REP 2	REP 3	REP 4	REP 1	REP 2	REP 3	REP 4	REP 1	REP 2	REP 3	REP 4
1	0.07	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.11	0.13	0.12	0.11	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.1	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.6	5.9	5.3	5.7	5.5
2	0.08	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.11	0.96	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	5.6	5.4	5.4	5.8
3	0.06	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.12	0.11	0.12	0.11	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.1	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.3	5.5	5.5	5.7	5.5
4	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.10	0.12	0.90	0.90	0.96	0.95	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.1	5.6	5.5	5.3	5.4
5	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.13	0.10	0.12	0.10	0.97	1.1	1.0	0.99	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.1	5.3	6.3	6.0	5.6
6	0.06	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.09	0.09	0.08	0.09	0.97	0.94	1.0	1.0	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.2	5.5	5.4	5.4	5.3
7	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.12	0.12	0.14	0.12	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.1	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.4	5.5	5.4	5.4	5.4
8	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.73	0.69	0.74	0.73	1.8	1.9	2.0	1.9	5.0	4.9	4.9	5.0
9	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.12	0.09	0.10	**0.76**	1.1	0.91	0.97	0.85	2.2	2.4	2.1	2.1	5.1	5.6	4.9	5.3
10	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.11	0.11	0.12	0.10	0.95	0.91	1.0	1.1	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.5	5.5	5.6	5.2	5.6
11	0.05	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.09	0.09	0.10	0.09	1.1	0.99	1.1	1.03	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.2	5.5	5.5	5.8	5.3
12	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.09	0.12	0.11	0.11	0.12	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1	2.4	2.4	1.9	2.3	5.5	5.6	5.7	5.4

* GMO % = (GMO copy number/maize haploid genome copy number) x 100

A graphical representation of the data reported in Table 12 is provided in Figure 1 that shows the relative deviation from the true value for each GM level tested by the participating laboratory. The coloured bars represent the deviation of the GM level measured in % of the true GM level; the green-stripes bar on the right represents the mean relative deviation over all data before eliminating outliers for each GM level.

Figure 1. Relative deviation (%) from the true value of GM level (*)



* Laboratory outliers are included in the graph. The red-dotted lines represent relative deviation levels of +/- 25%. PL = participating laboratory.

Overall, most laboratories' mean relative deviations from the true values were within a maximum of ± 25%. At GM-level 5%, 2% and 0.9% all laboratories were within the limit; at GM-level 0.09% five laboratories were within the limit; at GM level 0.059% eight laboratories were within the limit. Five laboratories overestimated GM-level 0.09% by more than 25%, while one laboratory underestimated GM-level 0.09% by more than 25%. Three laboratories overestimated GM-level 0.059% by more than 25%, while one laboratory underestimated GM-level 0.059% by more than 25%. With the exception of one laboratory (PL08), a trend of overestimation was observed at GM-level 0.09% and 0.059%.

Laboratory PL08 reported a deviation leading to the repeating of the run; a closer look at the slope and PCR efficiency results (Table 11) suggests issues with calibration, with late onset of Cq values for sample S1. PL09 showed a relative deviation from true value of +200% at GM-level 0.09% (outlier according to Cochrane’s test) which seems to be a potential artefact (as it occurred in only one out of four replicates).

5.2.3 Method performance requirements

Among the performance requirements established by ENGL and adopted by the EURL GMFF ((https://gmo-crl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/guidance-documents), repeatability and reproducibility are to be assessed through an international collaborative trial. Table 13 illustrates the estimation of repeatability and reproducibility at the various GM levels tested during the study (see Table 5 for a list of the participant laboratories).

According to the ENGL method performance requirements the relative reproducibility standard deviation (RSD_R), that describes the inter-laboratory variation, should be below 35% at the target concentration and over the majority of the dynamic range, while it should be below 50% at the lower end of the dynamic range.

As it can be observed in Table 13, the method satisfies this requirement at all GM levels tested. Indeed, the highest value of RSD_R % is 21% at the 0.09% GM level, thus within the acceptance criterion.

Table 13. Summary of validation results for the DAS1131 method, expressed as GM copy numbers in relation to target taxon haloid genome copy numbers.

	Test Sample Expected GMO %				
	0.059	**0.09**	**0.9**	**2**	**5**
Laboratories having returned valid results	12	12	12	12	12
Samples per laboratory	4	4	4	4	4
Number of outliers	1	1	1	1	0
Reason for exclusion (*)	G	C	G	G	-
Mean value	0.07	0.10	1.0	2.3	5.5
Relative repeatability standard deviation, RSD_r (%)	11	8.3	5.7	5.4	3.8
Repeatability standard deviation	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.12	0.21
Relative reproducibility standard deviation, RSD_R (%)	14	21	7.2	5.8	5.0
Reproducibility standard deviation	0.01	0.02	0.07	0.13	0.28
Bias (**) (absolute value)	0.01	0.01	0.12	0.29	0.46
Bias (%)	18	15	14	14	9.2

* C= Cochran's test (PL09); G = Grubbs' single test (all from PL08); identification and removal of outliers through Cochran and Grubbs tests, according to ISO 5725-2.

** Bias is estimated according to ISO 5725 data analysis protocol.

Table 13 also documents the relative repeatability standard deviation (RSD_r) estimated for each GM level. In order to accept methods for collaborative study, the EURL GMFF and ENGL require that the RSD_r value indicated by the applicant and confirmed by the EURL GMFF through in-house experiments, is below 25% (see ENGL document "Definition of Minimum Performance Requirements for Analytical Methods of GMO Testing" (https://gmo-crl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/guidance-documents). As it can be observed from the values reported, the repeatability standard deviation is below 25% at all GM levels, with the highest value of 11% at the 0.059% GM level.

The trueness of the method is estimated using the measures of the method bias for each GM level. According to ENGL method performance requirements, trueness should be ± 25% across the entire dynamic range. The

method satisfies this requirement across the dynamic range tested, with the highest value of bias (%) of 18% at the 0.059% GM level.

6 Compliance of the method for detection and quantification of event DAS1131 with the requirements of Regulation (EU) No 619/2011

To verify the compliance of the method under validation with the requirements of Regulation (EU) No 619/2011, the following steps were carried out and their outcome is summarised in Table 14:

- at step 2 of the validation process (scientific assessment of the dossier), the EURL GMFF acknowledged that the RSD_r value at the 0.058% level shown by the applicant's dossier (expressed as copy number ratio) was 20.5% (rounded to 21%), based on sixteen replicates (Table 2A), and 2.7-5.9% based on triplicates in the transferability study (Table 2B), hence below the maximum value of 25% required by the ENGL. The EURL GMFF therefore concluded that it could accept the applicant's data on method performance;

- at step 3 of the validation process (experimental testing of samples and methods), the EURL GMFF determined the RSD_r % value at the level of 0.1% in mass fraction of GM-material (corresponding to 0.059% expressed in terms of copy number ratio to haploid genome copy numbers). The experiments were carried out under repeatability conditions on fifteen replicates. The RSD_r resulted to range between 9.9% and 17% (Table 8, 9 and 10) depending on the qPCR platform applied, hence also below 25%;

- the collaborative study (step 4 of the validation process) established that over the twelve participating laboratories at the level of 0.1% related to mass fraction of GM-material the RSD_r of the method was 11%, therefore also below 25% and well in line with the previous data.

The outcome of the different steps is summarised in Table 14.

Table 14. Precision of the event-specific method for quantitative detection of DAS1131 at or around 0.1% level related to mass fractions of GM material.

Source	**RSD_r %**	**GM %**
Applicant's method optimisation	21%	0.058%*
Applicant's transferability study	2.7 – 5.9%	0.058%*
EURL GMFF tests	9.9 - 17%	0.1%
Collaborative study	11%	0.1%

*Expressed in copy number ratio

Based on the results of the EURL GMFF in-house verification and of the international collaborative study, it is concluded that the method RSD_r % is lower than 25% at the level of 0.1% related to mass fraction of GM material, hence the method meets the requirement laid down in Regulation (EU) No 619/2011.

7 Conclusion

The method provided by the applicant has been validated in accordance to the EURL GMFF validation process, respecting all requirements of the relevant EU legislation and international standards for method validation.

This validation study confirmed that the method is applicable to the control samples provided by the applicant (see paragraph 4.1), in accordance with the requirements of Annex I-3.C.2 to Commission Regulation (EU) No 503/2013 and (EU) No 619/2011 and meets all method performance requirements established by the ENGL and the EURL GMFF. The method is therefore valid to be used for regulatory purposes, including the quantification of low level presence of 0.1% (m/m) of the GM event. It can be assumed that it is applicable to any appropriately extracted maize genomic DNA.

In any case the user of the method is advised to verify the quality of the extracted genomic DNA in order to ensure that it is suitable for the subsequent PCR analysis. This is particularly relevant for more complex matrices of samples from food and feed products.

The validated method is described in detail as "Validated Method" at https://gmo-crl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/method-validations and in Annex 1.

8 References

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10. Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 120/2014 of 7 February 2014 amending Regulation (EC) No 1981/2006 on detailed rules for the implementation of Article 32 of Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and the Council as regards the Community reference laboratory for genetically modified organisms.

List of abbreviations and definitions

EURL GMFF	European Union Reference Laboratory for GM Food and Feed
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
dPCR	Digital Polymerase chain reaction
ddPCR	Droplet Digital Polymerase chain reaction
ENGL	European Network of GMO Laboratories
LOD	Limit of Detection
LOQ	Limit of Quantification

List of boxes

Box 1: Thermal cycling conditions in a final volume of 40 µL. 11

Box 2: Note on reporting of analytical results 15

List of figures

Figure 1. Relative deviation (%) from the true value of GM level (*) 20

List of tables

Table 1. Summary of the slope and R^2 values obtained by the applicant 6

Table 2A. Mean %, precision and trueness values (*) provided by the applicant 7

Table 2B. Mean %, precision and trueness values obtained in the transferability study of the applicant 7

Table 3. Copy number values of the standard curve samples 10

Table 4. DAS1131 blinded samples GM % contents 11

Table 5. Laboratories participating in the validation of the detection method for maize event DAS1131 13

Table 6. Zygosity ratio of the DAS1131 and *hmg* targets in the positive control sample. 15

Table 7A. Standard curve parameters of the real-time PCR tests, carried out on ABI 7500, Q7 and Roche LC480 II to quantify GM-levels in the range 5.0% to 0.09% in four replicates each. Slope and R^2 coefficient values were rounded to two digits. 16

Table 7B. Standard curve parameters of the real-time PCR tests, carried out on ABI 7500, Q7, and Roche LC480 II to quantify the GM-level 0.059% (copy number, equal to 0.1% in mass fraction) in 15 replicates. Slope and R^2 coefficient values were rounded to two digits. 16

Table 8. Values of trueness and precision as established by the EURL GMFF in its in-house verification using an ABI 7500. GM % in copy/copy haploid genomes. 17

Table 9. Values of trueness and precision as established by the EURL GMFF in its in-house verification using a Q7. GM % in copy/copy haploid genomes. 17

Table 10. Values of trueness and precision as established by the EURL GMFF in its in-house verification using a Roche LC480 II. GM % in copy/copy haploid genomes. 17

Table 11. Values of slope, PCR efficiency and R^2 obtained during the international collaborative trial. Slope and R^2 coefficient values were rounded to two digits. 18

Table 12. GM % values determined by laboratories for test samples (Cochran outlier in bold) 19

Table 13. Summary of validation results for the DAS1131 method, expressed as GM copy numbers in relation to target taxon haloid genome copy numbers. 21

Table 14. Precision of the event-specific method for quantitative detection of DAS1131 at or around 0.1% level related to mass fractions of GM material. 22

Annex 1. Event-specific Method for the Quantification of Maize DAS1131 Using Real-time PCR

Validated Method

Method development:

Corteva Agriscience Belgium B.V. (on behalf of Corteva Agriscience LLC)

1. General information and summary of the methodology

This protocol describes an event-specific real-time quantitative TaqMan® PCR (polymerase chain reaction) procedure for the determination of the relative content of maize event DAS1131 DNA to total maize DNA in a sample.

Template DNA extracted by means of suitable methods should be tested for quality and quantity prior to use in PCR. Tests for the presence of PCR inhibitors (e.g. monitor run of diluted series, use of DNA spikes) are also recommended to ensure suitability of the extracted DNA.

For the detection of GM event DAS1131, a 98 bp fragment of the region spanning the 5' plant-to-insert junction in maize DAS1131 is amplified using specific primers. PCR products are measured during each cycle (real-time) by means of a target-specific oligonucleotide probe labelled with FAM (6-carboxyfluorescein) as reporter dye at its 5' end and MBG (minor groove binder) as non-fluorescent quencher dye at its 3' end.

For the relative quantification of GM event DAS1131, a maize taxon-specific method amplifies a 79 bp fragment of a maize *high mobility group (hmg)* endogenous gene (Accession number, GeneBank: AJ131373), using *hmg* gene-specific primers and a *hmg* gene-specific probe labelled with FAM (6-carboxyfluorescein) as reporter dye at its 5' end and BHQ1 (Black Hole Quencher 1) as non-fluorescent quencher dye at its 3' end.

The measured fluorescence signal passes a threshold value after a certain number of cycles. This threshold cycle is called the "Cq" value. For quantification of the amount of DAS1131 DNA in a test sample, Cq values for the DAS1131 and the *hmg* are determined for the sample. Standard curves are then used to estimate the relative amount of DAS1131 DNA to total maize DNA.

2. Validation and performance characteristics

2.1 General

The method was optimised for suitable DNA extracted from genetically modified and conventional maize seeds. Precision and trueness of the method were tested through an international collaborative ring trial using DNA samples at different GM contents.

2.2 Collaborative trial

The method was validated in an international collaborative study by the European Union Reference Laboratory for GM Food and Feed (EURL GMFF). The study was undertaken with twelve participating laboratories in October 2024.

A detailed validation report can be found at https://gmo-crl.jrc.ec.europa.eu/method-validations.

2.3 Limit of detection (LOD)

According to the method developer, the relative LOD of the method is at least 0.012% (related to copies GM/total haploid genome copies) in 225 ng of total suitable maize DNA. The relative LOD was not assessed in the collaborative study.

2.4 Limit of quantification (LOQ)

According to the method developer, the relative LOQ of the method is at least 0.058% (related to mass fraction of GM material) in 225 ng of total suitable maize DNA. The lowest relative GM content of the target sequence included in the collaborative trial was 0.1% (mass fraction of GM-material).

2.5 Molecular specificity

The method exploits a unique DNA sequence in the region spanning the 5' plant-to-insert junction in maize DAS1131 and is therefore event-specific for the event DAS1131 (§ 3.1 and 3.2 in the Validation Report).

3. Procedure

3.1 Instructions and precautions

- The procedures require experience of working under sterile conditions.
- Laboratory organisation, e.g. “forward flow direction” during PCR-setup, should follow international guidelines, e.g. ISO 24276:2006.
- PCR reagents should be stored and handled in a separate room where no nucleic acids (with exception of PCR primers or probes) or DNA degrading or modifying enzymes have been handled previously. All handling of PCR reagents and controls requires dedicated equipment, especially pipettes.
- All the equipment should be sterilised prior to use and any residue of DNA should have been removed. All material used (e.g. vials, containers, pipette tips, etc.) must be suitable for PCR and molecular biology applications. They must be DNase-free, DNA-free, sterile and unable to adsorb protein or DNA.
- Filter pipette tips protected against aerosol should be used.
- Powder-free gloves should be used and changed regularly
- Laboratory benches and equipment should be cleaned periodically, with 10% sodium hypochlorite solution (bleach).
- Pipettes should be checked regularly for precision and calibrated, if necessary.
- All handling steps, unless specified otherwise, should be carried out at room temperature.
- In order to avoid repeated freeze/thaw cycles aliquots should be prepared.

3.2 Real-time PCR for quantitative analysis of maize event DAS1131

3.2.1 General

The real-time PCR set-up for the taxon (*hmg*) and the GMO (event DAS1131) target sequences are carried out in separate vials. Multiplex qPCR (using differential fluorescent labels for the probes) has not been tested or validated by the EURL GMFF.

The method is developed for a total volume of 25 µL per reaction mixture for the GM (event DAS1131) and the taxon (*hmg*) method with the reagents as listed in Table 2 and Table 3.

3.2.2 Calibration

The calibration curves have to be established on at least four samples. The first point of the calibration curve (S1) should be established for a sample containing 10% maize DAS1131 DNA in a total of 250 ng of maize DNA (corresponding to 91575 maize haploid genome copies with one haploid genome assumed to correspond to 2.73 pg of maize genomic DNA) (1). Standards S2 to S4 are to be prepared by serial dilutions (dilution factors 1:6) according to Table 1 below.

Table 1. Copy number values of the standard curve samples

Sample code	S1	S2	S3	S4
Total amount of maize DNA in reaction (ng) (*)	250	42	7.0	1.16
Maize haploid genome copies	91575	15263	2544	424
DAS1131 copies	9158	1526	254	42

* Total nanograms are rounded to the integral value

A calibration curve is to be produced by plotting the Cq values against the logarithm of the target copy number for the calibration points. This can be done by means of spreadsheet software, e.g. Microsoft Excel, or directly by options available with the software. The copy number measured for each unknown sample DNA is obtained by interpolation from the standard curves.

3.2.3 Real-time PCR set-up

1. Thaw, mix and centrifuge the components needed for the run. Keep thawed reagents on ice.
2. In two tubes on ice, add the components in the order mentioned below (except DNA) to prepare the reaction mixes for DAS1131 (Table 2) and the *hmg* (Table 3). Please note that additional volume is included in the total to cover pipetting variability due to the viscosity of the solution.

Table 2. Amplification reaction mixture in the final volume/concentration per reaction well for DAS1131.

Component	Final concentration	µL/reaction
Universal MasterMix no UNG (2X)	1x	12.5
PHN201280 (10 µM)	600 nM	1.5
PHN201282 (10 µM)	600 nM	1.5
PHN201284 probe (*) (10 µM)	150 nM	0.375
Nuclease free water	-	4.125
DNA	-	5.0
Total reaction volume:		25 µL

*TaqMan® probe labelled with 6-FAM at its 5'-end and MGB at its 3'-end

Table 3. Amplification reaction mixture in the final volume/concentration per reaction well for maize *hmg*.

Component	Final concentration	µL/reaction
Universal MasterMix no UNG (2X)	1x	12.5
MaiJ-F2 (10 µM)	300 nM	0.75
mhmg-rev (10 µM)	300 nM	0.75
mhmg-probe (FAM/BHQ1) (*) (10 µM)	180 nM	0.45
Nuclease free water	-	5.55
DNA	-	5.0
Total reaction volume:		25 µL

*TaqMan® probe is labelled with 6-FAM at its 5'-end and BHQ1 at its 3'-end

3. Mix well and centrifuge briefly.
4. Prepare two 0.5 mL reaction tubes (one for DAS1131 and one for *hmg*) for each DNA sample to be tested (standard curve samples, unknown samples and control samples).
5. Add into each reaction tube the amount of reaction mix for 3.5 PCR repetitions (70 µL for DAS1131 and 70 µL for *hmg*). Add to each tube the correct amount of DNA for 3.5 PCR repetitions (17.5 µL DNA). The volume for the additional 0.5 repetition will ensure adequate volume when loading the samples. Vortex each tube for approx. 10 seconds. This step is mandatory to reduce to a minimum the variability among the repetitions of each sample.
6. Spin down the tubes. Aliquot 25 µL for DAS1131 and for *hmg* in each well.
7. Place an optical cover on the reaction plate and briefly centrifuge the plate.
8. Place the reaction plate in the real-time PCR apparatus (possibly apply a compression pad, depending on the model), according to the manufacturer's instructions and your Standard Operating Procedures and start the run.
9. Select FAM as reporter dye for both DAS1131 and *hmg*. Define MGB or non-fluorescent as quencher dye for DAS1131 and BHQ1 for *hmg*. Select ROX as the passive reference dye if needed. Enter the correct reaction volume (25 µL).
10. Run the PCR with the cycling program described in Table 4. Users who plan to use the second derivative maximum analysis method (an option e.g. on Roche LC480 instruments) are advised to program 45 cycles instead of 40, in order to be able to quantify down to Cq 40.

Table 4. Cycling program for DAS1131/*hmg*.

Step	Stage		T (°C)	Time (s)	Acquisition	Cycles
1	Initial denaturation		95	600	No	1
2	Amplification	Denaturation	95	15	No	40 (*)
		Annealing & Extension	60	60	Yes	

* see comment above for users of second derivative maximum analysis method

3.4 Data analysis

After the real-time PCR, analyse the run following the procedure below:

a) Set the threshold following the automatic or the manual mode. In the manual mode display the amplification curves of the event-specific method in logarithmic mode. Locate the threshold line in the area where the amplification profiles are parallel (exponential phase of PCR) and where there is no “fork effect” between repetitions of the same sample. Press the “update” button to ensure changes affect Cq values (only needed for some analysis software). Switch to the linear view mode by clicking on the Y axis of the amplification plot and check that the threshold previously set falls within the exponential phase of the curves.

b) Set the baseline following the automatic or the manual mode. In the manual mode: determine the cycle number at which the threshold line crosses the first amplification curve and set the baseline three cycles before that value (e.g. earliest Cq = 25, set the baseline crossing at Cq = 25 – 3 = 22).

c) Save the settings.

d) Repeat the procedure described in a), b) and c) on the amplification plots of the taxon specific method.

e) Save the settings and export all the data for further calculations.

3.5 Calculation of results

After having defined a threshold value within the logarithmic phase of amplification as described above, the instrument’s software calculates the Cq values for each reaction.

The standard curves are generated both for the *hmg* and the DAS1131 by plotting the Cq values measured for the calibration points against the logarithm of the DNA copy numbers and by fitting a linear regression line into these data.

Thereafter, the standard curves are used to estimate the DNA copy number in the unknown samples.

To obtain the percentage value of event DAS1131 DNA in the unknown sample, the DAS1131 copy number is divided by the copy number of the maize endogenous gene *hmg* and multiplied by 100 (GM% = DAS1131/*hmg* x 100).

4. Equipment and Materials

4.1 Equipment

- Real-time PCR instrument for plastic reaction vessels (glass capillaries are not recommended for the described buffer composition) and appropriate analysis software
- 96-well reaction plates
- Optical caps/adhesion covers
- Microcentrifuge
- Micropipettes
- Standard bench top centrifuge with rotor or standard microfuge fit for 0.5 mL reaction tubes, centrifuge for 96-Well reaction plates
- Vortex

- Racks for reaction tubes, also cooled
- 0.5, 1.5 mL and 5 or 15 mL DNAse free reaction tubes

4.2 Reagents

- Universal MasterMix no UNG™ Part No 4324020 #2312051.

4.3 Primers and Probes

Table 5. Primers and probes for DAS1131 and *hmg*

	DAS1131	**DNA Sequence (5' to 3')**	**Length (nt)**
Forward primer	PHN201280	CTA AGA GCT AAG ATT GCG CGG	21
Reverse primer	PHN201282	TTC GGG CCT AAC TTT TGG TG	20
Probe	PHN201284	6-FAM- ACA TAT TTT TTG AGG ATA ACA GCA -MGB	24
	hmg	**DNA Sequence (5' to 3')**	**Length (nt)**
Forward primer	MaiJ-F2	TTG GAC TAG AAA TCT CGT GCT GA	23
Reverse primer	mgmg-rev	GCT ACA TAG GGA GCC TTG TCC T	22
Probe	mhmg-probe (FAM/BHQ1)	6-FAM-CAA TCC ACA CAA ACG CAC GCG TA-BHQ1	23

FAM: 6-carboxyfluorescein; MGB Minor Groove Binding; BHQ1: Black Hole Quencher.

5. References

1. Plant DNA C-values Database. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, https://cvalues.science.kew.org/

List of abbreviations and definitions

EURL GMFF	European Union Reference Laboratory for GM Food and Feed
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
ENGL	European Network of GMO Laboratories
LOD	Limit of Detection
LOQ	Limit of Quantification

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