

**Guidance Values** are reference values providing an orientation on which product-specific microorganisms are to be expected and which numbers of microorganisms in the respective food are adequate in compliance with good hygiene and manufacturing practice. Samples with a microbial level lower than or equal to the guidance value are microbiologically satisfactory. The guidance value is, thus, comparable to the “m” value defined by ICMSF (2018)\*.

Within the framework of food quality assurance, an exceedance of the guidance value can point out deficiencies in the hygiene and manufacturing practice. Measures aiming to improve hygiene and manufacturing practice or the determination of the product’s shelf life need to be reviewed. If the guidance value is exceeded by spoilage organisms for which no critical values are defined, additional criteria, especially sensory deviations, should be assessed.