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**Water quality — Determination of  
glyphosate and AMPA — Method  
using high performance liquid  
chromatography (HPLC) with tandem  
mass spectrometric detection**

*Qualité de l'eau — Détermination du glyphosate et de l'AMPA —  
Méthode par chromatographie en phase liquide à haute performance  
(CLHP) avec détection par spectrométrie de masse en tandem*



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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: Foreword - Supplementary information

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 147, *Water quality*, Subcommittee SC 2, *Physical, chemical and biochemical methods*.

## Introduction

Glyphosate [*N*-(phosphonomethyl)glycine] is a non-selective broad-spectrum herbicide. The efficiency of this compound makes it a top selling and one of the most widely used herbicides in the world since it entered the market in 1974. Together with its main degradation product, aminomethylphosphonic acid (AMPA), glyphosate is one of the most detected substances in water bodies in many developed countries. Note also that AMPA can be released during sewage treatment, e.g. due to breakdown of detergent formulations for textiles.

Glyphosate and AMPA belong to the aminophosphonate family and have specific physico-chemical properties that require the development of complex analytical methods for analysis and detection. The difficulty in analysis is mainly linked to the high solubility of glyphosate and AMPA and their chelating nature. To solve these problems, their pre-column derivatization with 9-fluorenylmethylchloroformate (FMOC-Cl) to form less polar derivatives allows a better separation using liquid chromatography.

Gluphosinate, another aminophosphonate, is less commonly subject to regulation and can be determined simultaneously, provided it can be demonstrated that there is no interference with the sample under analysis.

There is currently an International Standard for the determination by liquid chromatography and fluorometric detection; however, the determination by HPLC-ESI-MS/MS can be much more specific (unambiguous identification) and more sensitive (limits of quantification of approximately 30 ng/l for both glyphosate and AMPA). This International Standard is based on this analytical technique and is intended for laboratories involved in the regulatory control of the aquatic environment. Many such laboratories are now equipped with this kind of apparatus.



# Water quality — Determination of glyphosate and AMPA — Method using high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) with tandem mass spectrometric detection

**WARNING** — Persons using this International Standard should be familiar with normal laboratory practice. This International Standard does not purport to address all of the safety problems, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user to establish appropriate safety and health practices and to ensure compliance with any national regulatory conditions.

**IMPORTANT** — It is absolutely essential that tests conducted in accordance with this International Standard be carried out by suitably qualified staff.

## 1 Scope

This International Standard specifies a method for the determination of dissolved fraction of glyphosate and its major metabolite, aminomethylphosphonic acid (AMPA), in drinking water, ground water, and surface water at concentrations of 0,03 µg/l to 1,5 µg/l. It does not apply to marine or salty water. This method can be applicable to other types of waters, provided the method is validated for each case.

## 2 Normative references

The following documents, in whole or in part, are normatively referenced in this document and are indispensable for its application. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 3696, *Water for analytical laboratory use — Specification and test methods*

ISO 5667-3, *Water quality — Sampling — Part 3: Preservation and handling of water samples*

ISO 8466-1, *Water quality — Calibration and evaluation of analytical methods and estimation of performance characteristics — Part 1: Statistical evaluation of the linear calibration function*

## 3 Principle

Glyphosate and AMPA (dissolved fraction after filtration) are derivatized using 9-fluorenylmethylchloroformate (FMOC-Cl) ([5.17](#)) to lower their polarity and increase the retention of compound in a separation on a reverse phase column (e.g. C18) as well as to improve the mass spectrometric detection. If the mass spectrometer has sufficient detection capability, it is possible to omit the solid phase extraction and to analyse the analytes by direct injection (see [8.2.1](#)).

The derivatized sample is purified by liquid/liquid extraction and then concentrated by solid phase extraction (SPE).

The analysis is performed by high performance liquid chromatography coupled with tandem mass spectrometry via an electrospray source (HPLC-ESI-MS/MS), using matrix-matched calibration.