Preface to the 2026 edition of the ISTA Rules

Since 2014, the *International Rules for Seed Testing* (ISTA Rules) are primarily available in electronic format. The ISTA Rules can be downloaded as a complete PDF file or as individual chapters from:

www.ingentaconnect.com/content/ista/rules

If required, users of the ISTA Rules can print their own copies. For further information on the ISTA Rules, see:

www.seedtest.org/en/publications/international-rules-seed-testing.html

The electronic version includes the English, French, German and Spanish versions of the ISTA Rules. If there are any questions on interpretation of the ISTA Rules, the English version is the definitive version.

Seed health testing methods

Previously, the seed health testing methods were published as a separate Annexe to Chapter 7 of the ISTA Rules. They are now available as separate method sheets from the ISTA website at:

www.seedtest.org/en/international-rules-for-seed-testing-rubric-3.html

Details of changes

The 2026 changes are editorial corrections or Rules changes adopted at the Ordinary General Meeting held in Christchurch, New Zealand in May 2025. Edits were made in Adobe InDesign by Vanessa Sutcliffe of Heart-Wood Editorial (www.heartwoodeditorial.co.uk).

The changes in the text content from the previous edition of the ISTA Rules are listed below. They can be displayed with yellow highlight boxes as a 'layer' over the English version within the electronic copy, with comments on what has changed.

Jodi Keeling, ISTA Rules Committee Chair

Janek Bartel, ISTA Rules Committee Vice-Chair

ISTA Secretariat

Changes to the ISTA Rules for 2026

Chapter 1

1.3: Consequential change due to revision of sublot allowance for *Solanum lycopersicum* and other fleshy vegetable species. New species added to 20 sublot option; maximum seed lot size for 20 sublots restricted to 1000 kg. Proposal developed in consultation with Bulking & Sampling and Purity TCOMs and supported by new experimental data from testing of seed lots and species, with summary report and analysis supplied by Statistics TCOM. Approved by Statistics TCOM and majority vote of Bulking & Sampling TCOM and ECOM–Vegetable Seed Industry working group.

1.5.2.8: Consequential change due to change in minimum number of seeds required for tetrazolium test, taking account of species with large seeds and species for which it is challenging to obtain 400 seeds. New tolerance tables developed for new testing schemes by Statistics TCOM.

1.5.2.18: Consequential change due to complete revision of Chapter 16.

1.5.2.21.2, 1.5.2.21.3: Consequential change due to updates in Chapter 19, clarifying conditions under which GMO test results can refer to either seed lot or seed sample, and therefore are reported on either Orange or Blue International Certificates. Proposal discussed and finally approved by majority vote of GMO TCOM.

Chapter 2

2.2.2: Revision of sublot allowance for *Solanum lycopersicum* and other fleshy vegetable species. New species added to 20 sublot option; maximum seed lot size for 20 sublots restricted to 1000 kg. Proposal developed in consultation with Bulking & Sampling and Purity TCOMs and supported by new experimental data from testing of seed lots and species, with summary report and analysis supplied by Statistics TCOM. Approved by Statistics TCOM and majority vote of Bulking & Sampling TCOM and ECOM–Vegetable Seed Industry working group.

2.5.2.2.4: Editorial change to remove erroneously added genus *Juglans* from list of tree and shrub genera for which hand halving is allowed under ISTA Rules.

2.5.4.2.1: Nomenclature changes according to *ISTA List of Stabilised Plant Names*, 8th edition (2026). Proposal submitted by Nomenclature TCOM and approved by ISTA Rules TCOM.

Table 2C: Nomenclature changes according to *ISTA List of Stabilised Plant Names*, 8th edition (2026). Proposal submitted by Nomenclature TCOM and approved by ISTA Rules TCOM.

Table 2C: Addition of new species to ISTA Rules. *Diplotaxis tenuifolia* (L.) DC. belongs to Brassicaceae family, traded as a vegetable (wild rocket). ISTA Certificates necessary for trade. Validation study done for germination test. Calculator for adding new species used for working weight; calculator results checked by Statistics TCOM. Proposal discussed and voted in Purity TCOM with majority vote; proposal submitted by Germination TCOM and supported by method validation report and vote within Germination TCOM.

Table 2C: Maximum seed lot size for *Solanum lycopersicum* (and linked *Lycopersicon* group of species) reset to 10 000 kg. Proposal developed in consultation with Bulking & Sampling and Purity TCOMs and supported by new experimental data from testing of seed lots and species, with summary report and analysis supplied by Statistics TCOM. Approved by Statistics TCOM and majority vote of Bulking & Sampling TCOM and ECOM–Vegetable Seed Industry working group.

Chapter 3

Table 3B Part 1: Nomenclature changes according to *ISTA List of Stabilised Plant Names*, 8th edition (2026). Proposal submitted by Nomenclature TCOM and approved by ISTA Rules TCOM.

Table 3B Part 1: Addition of new species to ISTA Rules. *Diplotaxis tenuifolia* (L.) DC. belongs to Brassicaceae family, traded as a vegetable (wild rocket). ISTA Certificates necessary for trade. Validation study done for germination test. Calculator for adding new species used for working weight; calculator results checked by Statistics TCOM. Proposal discussed and voted in Purity TCOM with majority vote; proposal submitted by Germination TCOM and supported by method validation report and vote within Germination TCOM.

Chapter 5

5.6.3.1: Change to allow solutions up to 0.2 % potassium nitrate (KNO_3) to be used in germination test to break physiological dormancy. Laboratories will state percentage KNO_3 used on ISTA Certificates. Proposal originates from question asked by ISTA Accreditation and Technical department and is supported by Germination TCOM.

5.6.4: Wording updated, clarifying that first count can be postponed or omitted. Paragraph split for readability. Proposal originates from ISTA Accreditation and Technical department and is supported by Germination TCOM.

5.10: Consequential change due to update of 5.6.4, clarifying that first count can be postponed or omitted. Proposal originates from ISTA Accreditation and Technical department and is supported by Germination TCOM.

5.10: Consequential change due to update of 5.6.3.1 to allow solutions up to 0.2 % potassium nitrate (KNO_3) to be used in germination test to break physiological dormancy. Proposal originates from ISTA Accreditation and Technical department and is supported by Germination TCOM.

Table 5A Part 1: Addition of new species to ISTA Rules. *Diplotaxis tenuifolia* (L.) DC. belongs to Brassicaceae family, traded as a vegetable (wild rocket). ISTA Certificates necessary for trade. Validation study done for germination test. Calculator for adding new species used for working weight; calculator results checked by Statistics TCOM. Proposal discussed and voted in Purity TCOM with majority vote; proposal submitted by Germination TCOM and supported by method validation report and vote within Germination TCOM.

Table 5A Parts 1 and 2: Nomenclature changes according to *ISTA List of Stabilised Plant Names*, 8th edition (2026). Proposal submitted by Nomenclature TCOM and approved by ISTA Rules TCOM.

Chapter 6

6.5.1, 6.7, 6.9: Change in minimum number of seeds required for tetrazolium test, taking account of species with large seeds and species for which it is challenging to obtain 400 seeds. New tolerance tables developed for new testing schemes by Statistics TCOM.

6.6.1 (new section): Addition of section on rounding results. Proposal developed by Tetrazolium TCOM with scope of aligning rounding results of viability test with categories of germination test.

Figures 6.3a,b: Editorial change submitted by Tetrazolium TCOM to add 'with seminal roots' to evaluation guide for cereals.

Table 6A Parts 1 and 2: Nomenclature changes according to *ISTA List of Stabilised Plant Names*, 8th edition (2026). Proposal submitted by Nomenclature TCOM and approved by ISTA Rules TCOM.

Tables 6B–6D: Change in minimum number of seeds required for tetrazolium test, taking account of species with large seeds and species for which it is challenging to obtain 400 seeds. New tolerance tables developed for new testing schemes by Statistics TCOM.

Chapter 7

Method 7-034: New method for detection of *Fusarium oxysporum* f.sp. *lycopersici* in *Solanum lycopersicum* (tomato) seed, including a plating method with a molecular detection PCR and an optional test to confirm pathogenicity of isolates.

Chapter 9

9.2.5.1: Clarification of appropriate period between sampling and moisture testing. Problem mentioned by an ISTA auditor; proposal developed and approved by Moisture TCOM.

9.2.5.2: Editorial change to correct diameter of 8 cm screen from 'greater than' to 'greater than or equal to'. Change submitted by Moisture TCOM.

Table 9A: Alignment with Table 2C, as master table for ISTA Rules. Only species listed in Table 2C should be included. Nomenclature updated according to *ISTA List of Stabilised Plant Names*, 8th edition (2026); proposal submitted by Nomenclature TCOM and approved by ISTA Rules TCOM. Inconsistencies between tables found and mentioned by ISTA members; proposal developed and approved by Moisture TCOM.

Chapter 13

Table 13A: Nomenclature changes according to *ISTA List of Stabilised Plant Names*, 8th edition (2026). Proposal submitted by Nomenclature TCOM and approved by ISTA Rules TCOM.

Chapter 15

15.3: Addition of *Glycine max* and *Brassica* spp. as species to which radicle emergence test can be applied. Editorial change to put list in alphabetical order. Proposals submitted by ISTA Rules TCOM Chair and Vigour TCOM, supported by validation report.

15.8.1.7: Correction of text regarding tolerances for conductivity test. Change submitted by Vigour TCOM.

15.8.2.5.1: Precision of temperature for accelerated ageing chambers. Change submitted by Vigour TCOM.

15.8.2.6.2: Addition of ±0.5 g to give accuracy to non-acceptable seed weights after ageing. Change submitted by Vigour TCOM.

Table 15B: Addition of *Brassica* spp. as species to which radicle emergence test can be applied, with specification for *B. napus*. Proposal submitted by Vigour TCOM and supported by validation report.

Chapter 16

Complete revision of chapter including deletion of requirement for airtight bag for sample submitted for analysis; revision and more detailed description of procedure; harmonisation with other chapters of ISTA Rules.

Chapter 19

19.2.15, 19.7.2, 19.7.3: Clarification on conditions under which GMO test results can refer to either seed lot or seed sample, and therefore are reported on either Orange or Blue International Certificates. Proposal discussed and finally approved by majority vote of GMO TCOM.