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Voluntary Public

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BiH Accepts VASP Certificate for U.S. Almonds

Report Categories:

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

Tree Nuts

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Report Highlights:

Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) Food Safety Agency (FSA) has presented a bi-lingual "Certificate of Aflatoxin Sampling and Analysis for California Almonds for Import into BiH" following a recently introduced requirement according to which U.S. almonds and nut/dried fruit mix exports from the United States must be tested for aflatoxin content and certified by USDA. The certificate corresponds to the Voluntary Aflatoxin Sampling Plan approved by USDA. The current BiH's regulation sets a maximum residue limit (MRL) for aflatoxin B1 in almonds at 2-5 micrograms per kilogram, but FSA has drafted a new regulation (yet to be adopted) which will establish the Codex and European Union MRL that is set at 8-12 microgram per kilogram.

Executive Summary:

On December 3, 2013 Bosnia and Herzegovina’s (BiH) Food Safety Agency (FSA) presented a bi-lingual “Certificate of Aflatoxin Sampling and Analysis for California Almonds for Import into BiH” (attached to this report) following a recently introduced new requirement according to which U.S. almonds and nut/dried fruit mix exports from the United States must be tested for aflatoxin content and certified by USDA. The certificate corresponds to the Voluntary Aflatoxin Sampling Plan approved by USDA. This regulation also introduces a Common Entry Document and importers must provide prior notification to the competent authorities at the designated port of entry by phone or fax.

The current BiH “Regulation on Maximum Acceptable Quantities for Certain Contaminants in Foodstuffs” sets the maximum B1 aflatoxin level in nuts at 2-5 micrograms per kilogram (ug/kg). However, BiH FSA drafted a new regulation that complies with the Codex levels and the European Commission regulation No. 165/2010 setting maximum level for aflatoxin B1 in almonds to 8 -12 micrograms per kilogram ug/kg. This new regulation is to be adopted by BiH Council of Ministers in the next two months.

Table 1: Current maximum aflatoxins levels according to BiH “Regulation on Maximum Acceptable Quantities for Certain Contaminants in Foodstuffs” from 2009

<i>Part 2. Mycotoxins</i> Food (1)		Maximum levels (µg/kg)		
2.1	Aflatoxins	B1	Sum of B1, B2, G1 and G2	M1
2.1.1	Peanuts to be subjected to sorting, or other physical treatment, before human consumption or use as an ingredient in foodstuffs	8.0 (5)	15.0 (5)	—
2.1.2	Nuts, to be subjected to sorting, or other physical treatment, before human consumption or use as an ingredient in foodstuffs	5.0 (5)	10.0 (5)	—
2.1.3	Peanuts, nuts and processed products thereof, intended for direct human consumption or use as an ingredient in foodstuffs	2.0 (5)	4.0 (5)	—
2.1.4	Dried fruit to be subjected to sorting, or other physical treatment, before human consumption or use as an ingredient in foodstuffs	5.0	10.0	—
2.1.5	Dried fruit and processed products thereof, intended for direct human consumption or use as an ingredient in foodstuffs	2,0	4,0	—

Background

On July 24, BiH’s Council Of Ministers adopted the Food Safety Agency’s proposed “Decision

Imposing Special Conditions Governing the Import of Certain Foodstuffs from Certain Countries Due to Contamination Risk by Aflatoxins”. The decision introduces a new certification requirement for U.S. almonds, including nut and dried fruit mixes that contain US almonds. It also applies to nuts and dried fruits from Brazil, China, Egypt, Iran and Turkey. The testing level for U.S. products will be random, while for the specified products from the other countries the testing levels will vary between 5 and 50 percent. The regulation stipulates that U.S. shipments must refer to the VASP and must include the aflatoxin laboratory test results from an approved laboratory. The certificate will be valid for four months from the date of issuance. The decision will not apply to packages under 20 kilograms and composite foods that contain less than 20 percent of these products. This regulation also introduces the use of a Common Entry Document. Importers must provide prior notification to the competent authorities at the designated port of entry for the goods covered by this regulation.

In its letter dated August 27 FAS Rome offered to FSA the VASP health certificate agreed with the EU Commission for use with U.S. consignments of almonds and derived products. FAS also requested that FSA harmonize its 2009 “Regulation on Maximum Acceptable Quantities for Certain Contaminants in Foodstuffs with the Codex and EC regulation No. 165/2010. The FSA has earlier acknowledged US almond shipments did not have a record of elevated aflatoxin levels, but explained the introduction of the new requirements was the result of a recent aflatoxin problem in dairy products and to bring BiH practices into conformity with the European Union. The FSA authorities agreed to change the regulation and also to reassess the risk at a later date to determine whether this requirement could be removed for US almonds which have not historically had a problem with mycotoxins.

Attachment: Specimen of the “Certificate of Aflatoxin Sampling and Analysis for California Almonds for Import into BiH”

General Information: