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New Sampling Size for Aflatoxin Testing in Food

Report Categories:

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

Approved By:

Jeffrey Nawn

Prepared By:

Suguru Sato

Report Highlights:

The Government of Japan (GOJ) has proposed a revision to the standard sampling size for aflatoxin testing in food. Currently the regulated sample size for homogenization is 1 kg for products in container sizes over 20kg. Such a standard is applied to bulk commodities, such as corn. Under the new sampling procedure, GOJ is proposing 5 kg for bulk grain products which weigh more than 0.1g per grain, such as corn. GOJ notified the revision to WTO-SPS on November 4, 2010 and domestically on November 11, 2010. The comment periods will end on January 3, 2011 and December 10, 2010, respectively.

General Information:

The Government of Japan (GOJ) recently proposed a revision to the standard sampling size for aflatoxin testing in food. Under the current regulation, the sample size for homogenization is 1 kg for products in bags or containers of 20 kg or more, and 0.5 kg for products in cans or cartons of greater than 4.5kg (document # Shoku-an-yu-hatsu 0330-1, issued on March 30, 2010). A recent study by the National Institute of Health Sciences, Japan, suggested that a sample size of at least 10,000 grains is more appropriate for obtaining accurate test results for aflatoxin contamination. Therefore, in an effort to increase the precision of the aflatoxin testing regime, the GOJ is now proposing a new standard sample size. The proposed sample size change is as follows:

- 1) 1 kg for products equal to or less than 0.1 g per grain;
- 2) 5 kg for products greater than 0.1 g per grain;
- 3) 1 kg for powdered products.

As the average kernel of corn weighs more than 0.1 grams, the 5kg sample will be homogenized and used for the testing of aflatoxin. Rice, sesame, and canola seeds will fall into the 1 kg sampling size due to the mass of the grains. The GOJ notified the WTO-SPS on November 4, 2010 (G/SPS/NJPN265) and initiated a domestic comment period on November 11, 2010. The WTO-SPS and domestic comment periods will end on January 3, 2011 and December 10, 2010, respectively.

G/SPS/NJPN265 - GOJ notification to WTO-SPS

<http://docsonline.wto.org/imrd/directdoc.asp?DDFDdocuments/t/G/SPS/NJPN265.doc>

GOJ domestic comment period for revision of sampling size for aflatoxin in food (in Japanese)

<http://search.e-gov.go.jp/servlet/Public?CLASSNAME=PCMMSTDETAIL&id=495100241&Mode=0>

Notification G/SPS/NJPN265 includes proposed changes of the indicators for aflatoxin testing. Currently, GOJ uses only aflatoxin B1 as an indicator of aflatoxin in food. Under the proposal, total aflatoxin (B1, B2, G1 and G2) will be used as indicators. The action level of 10 micro gram per kg (=10 ppb) will remain the same. According to industry sources, the vast majority of aflatoxin in U.S. corn is B1.

Comments on this proposed change submitted to the GOJ through the WTO, or through the domestic window, should be copied to U.S. Embassy, Tokyo at agtokyo@usda.gov in order for inclusion in U.S. Government official comments.

GOJ's WTO-SPS enquiry point;

Standards Information Service

International Trade Division

Economic Affairs Bureau

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

2-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku

Tokyo 100-8919, Japan
Tel.: +(81 3) 5501 8344
Fax: +(81 3) 5501 8343
E-mail: enquiry@mofa.go.jp

GOJ's POI for doemstic comment;
Office of Import Food Safety
Inspection and Safety Division
Department of Food Safety
Pharmaceutical and Food Safety Bureau
Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labor
1-2-2, Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100-8916, Japan
Fax; +(81 3)3503-7964