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Germany

Tree Nuts

VASP Situation in Germany

2008

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Report Highlights:

Imports of U.S. almonds by Germany reached record levels during the fall 2007 shipping season. The successful implementation of the VASP guaranteed a smooth handling of the product. Even though overall destination testing was higher than expected and several issues remain to be resolved, trade and border inspectors report having confidence in the VASP.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Annual Report
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Almonds – VASP Experience 2007

German trade and trade associations report that imports of U.S. almonds reached record levels during the fall 2007 shipping season. While there was concern that imports would be hampered due to new EU aflatoxin testing requirements, these did not materialize in Germany because of confidence in the new Voluntary Aflatoxin Sampling Program (VASP). Even though some consignments that were retested at arrival exhibited higher aflatoxin levels than the original certificates, traders and border control officials did not see this as an overall problem given the nature of the issue.

Even with the confidence that exists in the VASP, there were still issues that almond imports encountered in 2007. Traders reported some technical problems with VASP and VASP handling. In addition, Hamburg port officials indicated that the testing rate was approximately 30 percent, significantly higher than the standard 5 percent. The main reasons for the additional inspections included inconsistencies in information such as:

- lot numbers and sub lot numbers on shipping documents were different than on VASP certificates;
- weight differences between certificates;
- date of issuance of the VASP certificate was later than the date of shipping; and
- copies of documentation were presented rather than original certificates.

Specifically Hamburg officials only identified four positive samples in the 300 that were tested. One sample showed an aflatoxin B1 value of 321.6 and total aflatoxin of 339.1. A second sample showed total aflatoxin of 94.8; and a third had total aflatoxin of 20.4. All of these consignments were accompanied by valid VASP certificates.

As the results of the 2007 VASP are reviewed and evaluated, it is important to consider ongoing outreach efforts to German Government officials and traders. The outreach conducted by the Almond Board of California was instrumental in educating importers and government officials about the program and should be continued in future years. These types of activities help to maintain confidence in the integrity of U.S. almonds.