

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Japan Lifts Mandatory Aflatoxin Testing on Compliant US Almonds

Country: Japan

Post: Tokyo

Report Category: Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety, Tree Nuts, Exporter Guide

Prepared By: Tomohiro Kurai

Approved By: Craig Elliott

Report Highlights:

On April 1, 2025, Japan formally lifted the mandatory aflatoxin testing requirements on U.S. almonds compliant with the new almond export protocol. Henceforth, U.S. almonds being exported to Japan that conform to the requirements of the new U.S.-Japan Almond Export Protocol will be waived from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare's ordered-inspection upon arrival. In 2024, U.S. almond (HS 0802.11 and 0802.12) exports to Japan were valued at \$193 million.

On April 1, 2025, Japan formally revised its import regulations to remove mandatory aflatoxin testing on almonds imported from the United States. U.S. almonds exported to Japan must meet the trade conditions agreed to between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW). This export program is exclusively for U.S. almonds to Japan and is operated by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and Almond Board of California (ABC).

The following list shows some of the key program requirements:

- U.S. almond kernel (Harmonized System (HS) 0802.12) and in-shell almond (HS 0802.11) consignments shipped directly from the United States to Japan.
- U.S. almonds must be shipped from the registered handlers listed on [this MHLW's website](#).
- U.S. almonds must be tested for aflatoxin by the USDA-approved laboratories that AMS has registered for this program.
- Certificate of Analysis (CoA) confirming compliance to Japan's regulatory action limit of 10 parts per billion (ppb) total aflatoxin (Total of B1, B2, G1 and G2) must be attached to the consignments.
- The respective handler's name and address must be consistent and identical in all trade documents (e.g. Bill of Lading, handler's list, and CoA)

Interested handlers are strongly advised to consult with AMS and ABC about this protocol and operational details.

Background

Japan's [Food Sanitation Act](#) (FSA) designates MHLW as Japan's competent authority for food safety. In this capacity MHLW formulates and implements policies to safeguard the safety and sanitation of food distributed in Japan, including imported food products. Japan prohibits the import of food products that do not comply with Japan's aflatoxin action limits of 10 ppb based on Article 6 of the FSA.

According to FSA Article 27, imported food products are subject to the requirements set out in the "[Imported Foods Monitoring Plan](#)," which is an annual nationwide monitoring plan developed by the MHLW Minister for imported foods, food additives, packages, and containers. The "[Imported Foods Monitoring Plan](#)" states that "when a violation of the Act has been detected as a result of the monitoring inspection of aflatoxin, pathogenic microorganisms, etc., the imported food manufactured by the same manufacturer, processed by the same processor, or imported from the same exporting country will be immediately subjected to an inspection order." Because of the naturally occurring characteristics of aflatoxin, U.S. almonds have been under Japan's inspection orders (i.e., 100 percent hold and test) since 1996.

According to Japan's "[Imported Foods Monitoring Plan](#)," MHLW may lift an aflatoxin-related inspection order (either country-specific or global) for an exporting country if one of the following conditions is met:

1. No aflatoxin violations for two years OR for one year or longer with 300 consecutive and compliant shipments
2. Bilateral discussions following these actions from an exporting country:
 - complete a root-cause investigation
 - implement preventive measures based on an investigation
 - confirm effective implementation of the preventive measures via bilateral discussions, on-site inspections, and/or a series of non-violative inspection results.

The USDA and Japan's MHLW have agreed to implement a bilateral export program for U.S. almonds to Japan, thus lifting the MHLW inspection order for protocol-compliant U.S. almonds while also maintaining the food safety of U.S. almonds exported to Japan.

Attachments:

No Attachments.