

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

**Date:** April 26, 2021

**Report Number:** JA2021-0069

**Report Name:** Japan Lifted Aflatoxin Inspection Order on Walnuts

**Country:** Japan

**Post:** Tokyo

**Report Category:** Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety, Tree Nuts

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**Report Highlights:**

On April 1, 2021, Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) suspended a mandatory aflatoxin inspection regime imposed on walnuts from the United States and other exporting countries. The suspension marks the first time Japan lifted a 100 percent inspection requirement for aflatoxin-vulnerable imports since 2004 when the current monitoring plan was implemented. In 2020, the United States exported \$114 million of walnuts to Japan.

## General

Japan's [Food Sanitation Act](#) designates the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) as the country's competent authority for food safety. In that role, MHLW develops and enforces aflatoxin regulations for domestic and imported food products. Since 1996, MHLW has mandated a 100 percent hold-and-test approach (called "inspection order") for imported tree nuts, including walnuts, due to aflatoxin concerns. MHLW justified the inspection order as a response to violations of Japan's aflatoxin action limit (i.e., 10 parts per billion for walnuts).

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

1. No aflatoxin violations for two years OR for one year or longer with 300 compliant shipments
2. Bilateral discussion after exporting country
  - Completes root-cause investigation
  - Implements preventive measures based on investigation
  - Confirms effective implementation of the preventive measures through bilateral discussions, on-site inspections, and/or a series of non-violative inspection results.

On April 1, 2021, MHLW lifted the global aflatoxin inspection order on walnuts because all exporting countries satisfied the first condition described above. Therefore, MHLW's inspection schedule for U.S. walnut exports to Japan now follows [Schedule 1 of the Imported Foods Monitoring Plan](#).

According to MHLW, a single aflatoxin violation in walnut imports from the United States would lead to the immediate resumption of the inspection order on U.S. walnut exports. On the other hand, aflatoxin violations in shipments from other exporting countries would not impact inspection frequency for U.S. walnuts. MHLW indicated that the suspension of the aflatoxin inspection order on walnuts represents the first time since the implementation of the monitoring plan in 2004 that MHLW lifted a global inspection order imposed on imports due to aflatoxin concerns.

## Attachments:

No Attachments.