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POLICY

Voluntary - Public

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Japan

Post: Tokyo

New Action Level for Aflatoxin in Food

Report Categories:

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

On August 10, 2010, Government of Japan announced a proposed change to the aflatoxin limit for food. The proposal was to change the action level from current "aflatoxin B1 at 10 ppb" to "total aflatoxin at 10 ppb". GOJ is also in the process of changing the current sampling size (1 kg) taken for aflatoxin testing to a larger quantity. However, the issue of sampling size was not mentioned in the proposal on August 10.

The comment period for the proposed change will closed on August 24, 2010. After the domestic comment period closes, MHLW will then notify these proposed changes to the WTO/SPS committee, which will provide another chance for public comments to be submitted on this subject.

General Information:

On August 10, 2010, the Government of Japan announced a proposed change to the aflatoxin limit, aka "action level", for food. The proposal, put forth by the Standards and Evaluation Division, Department of Food Safety, Pharmaceutical and Food Safety Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), is to change the action level from current "aflatoxin B1 at 10 ppb" to "total aflatoxin at 10 ppb".

Concurrent with these proposed changes, the MHLW Import Food Safety Division is also in the process of proposing changes to sampling size required for aflatoxin analysis from current 1kg to larger unit quantity. As aflatoxin does not evenly contaminate grains, but rather localizes on a portion of grains, a smaller sample size can lead to inaccurate testing results. As of August 12, 2010, MHLW is not prepared to officially propose a new sampling size, though FAS/Tokyo expects an announcement in the near future.

The domestic comment period for the new aflatoxin action level will close on August 24, 2010. After the domestic comment period closes, MHLW will then notify these proposed changes to the WTO/SPS committee, which will provide another chance for public comments to be submitted on this subject.

The actual WTO-SPS notifications can be found at the site below.

http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/sps_e/work_and_doc_e.htm

After the closing of the comment period in the WTO, a final report will be made based on the conclusions of the Pharmaceutical Affairs and Food Sanitation Council, which has not yet been scheduled. These conclusions will constitute the final decision.

Comments to GOJ can be either Japanese or English.

If you have comments, please send them directly to the Japanese Government at:

<Contact>

Standards and Evaluation Division,
Department of Food Safety,
Pharmaceutical and Food Safety Bureau,
Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
1-2-2, Chiyoda-ku, Kasumigaseki, Tokyo, 100-8916
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Please also consider copying the U.S. Embassy, Tokyo at agtokyo@usda.gov on your comments in order for them to be considered as part of the official U.S. Government comments to the WTO.

Pesticides and Other Contaminants:

MHLW's official notification of the change is as below.

Starts.

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Indicator of Aflatoxins in Food

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Under the provision of Article 6 (2), no person shall sell, or handle, manufacture, import, process, use, prepare, store or display with intent to sell any food or food additive which contain or bear toxic or injurious substances or which are suspected to contain or bear these substances.

MHLW is revising the indication levels of aflatoxins in food, which is used to judge compliance with the above provision.

Outline of Revision

- The indicator of aflatoxins in food will be changed to “10 µg/kg as total aflatoxins (Aflatoxins B₁, B₂, G₁ and G₂)” from “10 µg/kg as Aflatoxin B₁.”
- This revision will be published in March, 2011 and will be put into effect in October of the same year.

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Ends.