

9<sup>th</sup> May 2008

Reference: IPA 38

Dear Stakeholder,

**RE: Aflatoxins in Turkish Fig Paste**

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007, the Agency notified it's stakeholders of an increase of aflatoxin contamination in derived products of Turkish dried fruit i.e. fig paste and recommended that Food Business Operators carry out aflatoxin sampling for such commodities in accordance with Commission Regulation (EC) 401/2006.

This advice has caused some confusion as sample sizes indicated in the legislation may be difficult to obtain and test. The Agency therefore is providing clarification on the issue.

Following these recent findings and in order to satisfy the "due diligence" defence set out in the Food Safety Act 1990, food business operators may wish to consider their safety assurance and control procedures to ensure that products such as fig paste, when placed on the market are not in breach of the requirements of Commission Regulation 1881/2006 in respect of aflatoxin contamination.

The Agency would therefore advise businesses to give consideration to Commission Regulation (EC) 401/2006 **as well as** the Guidance Document for Competent Authorities for the Control of Compliance with EU legislation on Aflatoxins when devising sampling plans or conducting their own sampling procedures in light of the heterogeneous nature of fig paste aflatoxin contamination.

The documents mentioned above can be accessed via the following web links:

- Commission Regulation (EC) 401/2006:  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:070:0012:0034:EN:PDF>
- Guidance Document for Competent Authorities for the Control of Compliance with EU legislation on Aflatoxins.  
[http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/chemicalsafety/contaminants/sampling\\_en.print.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/chemicalsafety/contaminants/sampling_en.print.htm). (This is soon to be updated and so the latest copy of the guidance is attached).

The Sampling Advice for Mycotoxins in Foodstuffs, produced by the Food Standards Agency, may also be considered to supplement this information. Click on the following link to access the document:

- [www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/mycotoxinsguidance.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/mycotoxinsguidance.pdf)

Companies may wish to devise their own sampling plans, it should be possible to use the official sampling guidance as a guide but take smaller incremental samples than are required for formal sampling, resulting in a smaller overall sample for laboratory analysis. It is the responsibility of the Food Business Operator to ensure that any sampling conducted is representative of the consignment. The Food Standards Agency, although it cannot endorse any such plan, would be happy to provide advice.

Although the Food Standards Agency does not endorse a specific laboratory, there are a number of commercial laboratories in the UK which are able to carry out the required testing.

Paula Waldron  
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