



walnut news



Reminder of FDA Regulatory Criteria

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In light of recent Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recalls of peanuts and pistachios, there is increased focus on food safety in the nut industry. It is an important reminder to all members of the walnut industry to be extra vigilant about food safety practices.

What does this have to do with the Walnut Industry you might ask? Everything, from the need to be regulatory-ready for any agency of the State or Federal Government that asks for entry into your plant and the request to review your production, shipping and Quality Control/Quality Assurance records. Each plant and each grower need to be documenting the Good Agricultural Practices and Good Manufacturing Practices required by the Food and Drug Administration in their individual operations. Good Agricultural Practices and Good Manufacturing Practices brochures are available through the California Walnut Board and detail items that you need to pay attention to in order to produce product that will be safe in the market place.

The Handlers and Plant Processes must be following the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) programs in their various operations. These programs must be operational and documented. They include, but not limited to the following:

- Good Manufacturing Practices for employees
- Lot numbering program for traceability
- Recall programs
- Employee training for product protection and safety
- Microbiology and chemistry to assure pathogen free product to consumers
- Plant security and plant and equipment sanitation programs for plant and equipment cleanliness
- Sanitizing program for all product flow lines and bins



- Proper fumigation of all inbound product to kill field pests and outbound fumigation to assure that all stored product insects have been killed
- Carrier inspection for all out bound shipments to assure product safety
- Good Warehousing Practices for all raw product and finished goods
- A solid HACCP Program to ensure that all metal and/or other harmful items including Aflatoxin and pathogenic organisms do not make their way into the marketplace

Plant management has been given the edict by FDA to implement any and all practices to teach employees their roll in the overall product protection program and to make them accountable for their role in the process of food handling as well as any other plant practices and equipment cleaning necessary to producing a safe product for the consuming market.

The Food and Drug Good Manufacturing Practices and Hazard Analysis Programs are available on the FDA website. Our industry must diligent in implementation of the GMP and HACCP programs and the documentation required to guarantee a safe walnut product to the consuming public. Each processor must be sensitive to the needs

of the industry as one negative recall can affect the whole industry long term and bring additional regulatory requirements on the industry as evidenced by the Almond industry pasteurization process, which they were required to implement at great expense.

Home Land Security has added additional requirements of plant and product safety requirements that must be implemented to protect plants and product from any would be terrorist individual or group.

Please call if you have questions or need help!

Resources Available

Best Practices Brochure for Growers and Processors

Visit the Industry Information section of www.walnuts.org for the latest information.



Questions? Contact:

California Walnut Commission:

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Walnuts: Naturally Resistant to Salmonella

Growers and processors know that the California walnut industry prides itself on producing the highest quality walnut kernels.



As a result of industry practices, walnuts have maintained a superior food safety record, having never been implicated in any food borne illness outbreak. Due to recent contamination of other nuts as well increased consumer concern about food safety, it is important to remember that our track record is the result of both walnuts' unique structure and an industry membership committed to safe practices.

During Production

- The walnut kernel is encased completely in a hull and shell throughout its development until the husk split occurs just prior to harvest. After hull split, the shell remains as a protective barrier, therefore unlike some tree nuts, walnut kernels are never exposed after hull split.

- Walnuts are shaken from the trees, picked up, and run through the hulling and drying operation in a very short period of time, usually within one or two days. They never have the prolonged length of exposure in the field on the orchard floor. After harvest, walnuts are dried to 8% moisture via forced hot air.
- After hulling and drying, walnuts are placed in dry storage usually in large silos to be held for subsequent cracking.

During Processing

- No field meats are brought into the plant – the plant only receives Inshell walnuts. Walnuts are shelled only at the processing plant and not by the hullers.
- Inshell walnuts are cleaned by water wash, sodium hypochlorite and peroxide solutions that reduce the micro-flora.
- A high percentage of shelled walnuts are used as a baking ingredient at temperatures at or above 325° F which kills all micro-flora.

- The industry uses propylene oxide to sterilize and disinfect the product for many of its customers, again reducing the micro-flora.
- All plants must follow the U.S. FDA Good Manufacturing Practices Program and the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point Programs. These two programs are more universally known as GMPs and HACCP Programs. These two programs are requisite for clean plants and equipment and product safety as they embody all ancillary programs for industry safe food handling.
- Plants are constantly training personnel in the proper handling of a food product.
- All plants have a Quality Control program and a Quality Assurance program that embodies a hold and release program requiring review of all documents, including laboratory testing, grading and sizing requirements that pertain to both customer and regulatory requirements, prior to release of the product. 🍷

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