

Oregon Hazelnut Industry Food Safety Initiative

Position Paper *(version 11.10.14)*

Although the U.S. food supply is among the safest in the world, all agricultural products are at some risk for contamination by pathogens. The health and safety of consumers is the primary priority of the Oregon hazelnut industry. Through the Hazelnut Marketing Board (HMB), the industry has co-operated with the recommendations of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as well as food safety experts to develop and implement a rigorous, industry-wide food safety plan designed to provide consumers with the safest possible hazelnuts from Oregon. Labeled the "Hazelnut Food Safety Initiative", the comprehensive program addresses each segment of the supply chain from Good Agricultural Practices in the orchards and Good Manufacturing Practices in the processing plants to a qualification of buyers who plan to further process the hazelnuts thereby ensuring that adequate safeguards are in place.

Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs)

Hazelnut growers employ Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) to minimize potential contamination while growing and harvesting hazelnuts.

General Farm Activities

- Food Safety Plan is in place
- Growers track deliveries back to the orchards

Employees and Sanitation

- Proper Sanitation and Hygiene Practices as required by OSHA or other agencies

Orchard Activities

- Water Use
- Wildlife
- Soil Type
- Soil Amendments

Harvest Activities

- Employee Field Sanitation
- Harvest Equipment
- Product Tracking

On Farm Wash and Dry Lines

- Wash Line Sanitizers
- Timeliness of Drying Process

Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs)

All processors have in place some form of HACCP plan. Each processor is set up differently, but all have the goal of minimizing microbiological hazards.

The main components of their plans address:

- I Personnel: Safety and Hygiene Requirements
- II Plant and Grounds: Exterior and Perimeter of Facility
- III Sanitary Operations: Toxic Chemicals and Pest Control
- IV Sanitary Facilities and Controls: Water, Sewage, Toilets, Hand Washing.
- V Design, Construction and Maintenance of Equipment and Utensils
- VI Processes and Controls
- VII Microbiological & Pathogen Kill Step Processes

Overall position on product leaving Oregon hazelnut processing facilities:

- Treatments and controls are employed throughout the growing, harvesting and processing steps to reduce risk of contamination by pathogens.
- All inshell product sold and shipped to North America is treated to reduce the risk of microbial contamination.
- It is strongly recommended that all raw kernels sold and shipped to North American destinations be subject to a process supported by scientific evidence to reduce pathogen load. As part of this recommendation sellers shall require a buyer to affirm in writing that such processing occurs under their supervision. Raw commodities sold in this manner shall be labeled “for further processing” by the seller.
- All hazelnut commodities packed in Oregon must be processed in a facility that employs a documented food safety system based on HACCP, with prerequisite programs that address the above GMPs.

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