

Standard Management Rule 13: Fish – smoked (vacuum packed)

From the 1st July 2009 NZFSA replaced this SMR with a standardised format for all Imported Food Requirements.

For the current version refer to the Imported Food Requirement for fish - smoked (vacuum packed).

Recent Updates:

Date	Location	Information
1 July 2009	All	Made obsolete refer to the Imported Food Requirement for fish – smoked (vacuum packed).
15 September 2008	Section 2.1	Removal of Singapore Pathology Laboratory, Singapore General Hospital, for testing purposes.
20 July 2007	Section 3.4	Sampling and Inspection costs have been updated
24 November 2005	Section 2.1	New certification option for products from the European Union.
11 January 2005	Section 1.0	Raw fish should not be sampled – only ready-to-eat product should be sampled

Background Information:

SUMMARY OF HAZARD:

Smoked fish that is vacuum packed and ready to eat is a prescribed (high risk) food because vacuum packing provides an anaerobic environment that facilitates the growth of specific

microbiological pathogens (such as *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Clostridium botulinum Type E*) and the product is not cooked but 'ready to eat'.

Laboratories are unwilling to test directly for *Clostridium* due to the risks associated with growing these bacteria. As a result, testing examines the salt levels and aerobic plate count which indicate whether there has been an opportunity for microbial growth.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON AGENCY ROLES:

The following descriptions have been included to clarify the roles of the New Zealand Food Safety Authority and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in imported food.

New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA):

NZFSA was established on 1 July 2002 as a semi-autonomous body attached to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF). The Authority has responsibility for the food functions previously managed by MAF and the Ministry of Health. Establishment of the NZFSA provides a more integrated approach to food safety in New Zealand. NZFSA is the controlling authority for imports of food and sets policies, criteria and procedures to monitor the safety of imported food for human consumption and for food containers (see www.nzfsa.govt.nz).

- **Auckland Central Clearing House (ACCH):**
ACCH is part of the Auckland Regional Public Health Service, and is contracted by the NZFSA to carry out day to day operational procedures. The ACCH provides the initial point of contact for information to importers and customs brokers throughout New Zealand. It facilitates the inspection and clearance services of identified imported products.
- **Public Health Units (PHU):**
Food and Health Protection Officers (Food/HPOs) employed by the various public health services are responsible for the inspection and sampling of high-risk imported foods under the coordination of the ACCH.

Biosecurity New Zealand:

Biosecurity NZ is the lead agency in New Zealand's biosecurity system. 'Biosecurity' is the protection of New Zealand's economy, environment and people's health from pests and diseases. It includes trying to prevent new pests and diseases arriving. Established in November 2004 (replacing MAF Biosecurity), it has been tasked with a 'whole of system' leadership role, encompassing economic, environmental, social and cultural outcomes. Importers should contact Biosecurity NZ directly to check their requirements <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/>.

Import Criteria Applying to Smoked Fish (Vacuum Packed)

1.0 Products targeted:

Prescribed foods are targeted at the border using the New Zealand Customs tariff code system. Products classified with the following tariff codes are captured under this rule:

Tariff codes targeted for smoked fish (vacuum packed)	
<i>0305 Fish, dried, salted or in brine; smoked fish, whether or not cooked before or during the smoking process....</i>	
0305.41.00.00L	Smoked Pacific, Atlantic And Danube Salmon
0305.42.00.00E	Smoked Herrings
0305.49.00.01E	Smoked Blue Cod
0305.49.00.11B	Smoked Eel Fillets
0305.49.00.19H	Smoked Whole Eels
0305.49.00.21K	Smoked Hoki
0305.49.00.29E	Smoked Kahawai
0305.49.00.31G	Smoked Mackerel
0305.49.00.39B	Smoked Mullet
0305.49.00.41D	Smoked Red Cod
0305.49.00.49K	Smoked Snapper
0305.49.00.51A	Smoked Tarakihi
0305.49.00.59G	Smoked Trevally
0305.49.00.69D	Other Smoked Fish

INCLUDES:

Ready to eat product only

EXCLUDES:

Raw fish should not be tested. Where processed fish products clearly state the product should be cooked, then it is not covered by this Rule and is considered an inadvertent capture. For example, there are some smoked fish products that are raw and require cooking prior to consumption – the smoking is simply to provide flavour.

INADVERTENT CAPTURES:

As the tariff classification system is not designed specifically around the imported food regime, some food products may be inadvertently captured by the targeted tariff codes above. If this is the case, products will not be subject to the sampling and testing protocol outlined in this rule.

Obsolete

2.0 Clearance options:

The following 3 options are available to clear consignments captured under this rule:

2.1 Acceptance of recognised certification:

Where the NZFSA (or Ministry of Health prior to July 2002) has negotiated certification arrangements with other governments or specific manufacturers then approved certification may be accepted for a prescribed food. Importers should check specific certification requirements with their local PHU prior to importing a prescribed product.

For smoked fish that is vacuum packed approved certification may be accepted from:

- Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS)
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency (previously the Dept. of Fisheries and Oceans)
- Thailand Department of Fisheries
- Thailand Centre of Export Inspection and Certification for Agricultural Products (CEICAP)
- EU - Animal and Public Health Certificate: New Zealand has a Veterinary Agreement with the European Union (EU) to facilitate trade of live animal and animal products. The standard verification testing rate outlined below does not apply in this case; a reduced level of sampling/testing of 2% applies. Importers must obtain an MRP in order for this reduced rate to be implemented. Refer to <http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/imported-food/eu-nz-vet/index.htm> for more information.

PRODUCTS FROM THE USA:

USA products will not be accompanied by any certification and are to be monitored at the rate of 1 in every 10 shipments as they are covered by a Mutual Recognition Arrangement between New Zealand and USA.

In all cases certification is required with **each consignment**.

Consignments imported under certification are required to be tested at intervals. The standard testing rate used to verify certification which applies to most prescribed foods is 1 in every 20 where consignments are more frequent than 20 in a six month period.

2.2 Multiple Release Permits (MRPs):

MRPs are issued on a case by case basis to importers with the technical skill and experience to manage a quality imports system. They are specific to importer, broker, product and supplier and are issued for a defined time period. MRPs enable importers to bypass the normal import clearance procedure for prescribed foods saving time and clearance costs. Where testing is required, the sampling and testing protocol applied is specified below, unless a different protocol is a specific condition of the MRP.

MRPs are issued for imported food products that are:

- Inadvertently captured by the tariff codes monitored by the NZFSA
- From particular suppliers under an arrangement agreed to by the importer and NZFSA. This includes the importer maintaining an agreed imported food surveillance programme for the products covered by the MRP.

MRPs have been issued for product covered by this Rule. Importers wishing to apply for a MRP for this product should contact the NZFSA to discuss their situation prior to completing a MRP application form.

2.3 Clearance sampling and testing on arrival in New Zealand:

Apart from USA product, in the absence of approved certification or a MRP, smoked fish that are vacuum packed are sampled and tested in New Zealand according to the sampling and testing protocol in the table below.

3.0 Sampling and testing protocol:

3.1 Microbiological criteria:

In order to ascertain if a consignment is safe the consignment is inspected and samples taken for laboratory testing. The following criteria are used when deciding if a consignment captured by this rule is safe to be released:

Monitor parameters that control the growth and production of *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Clostridium botulinum Type E* as follows:

- Ensure salt content is more than 3.4% (tested on aqueous phase basis)
- Aerobic plate count per gram at 35°C (see Reject criteria for a full explanation)
 - $n = 5$
 - $c = 2$
 - $m = 10^4$
 - $M = 10^5$

3.2 Sampling requirements:

3.2.1 When to sample consignments:

ACCH identifies which consignments are to be sampled and tested. Sampling frequencies depend on whether certification or a MRP are used as clearance options:

In the absence of certification or a MRP:

The frequency of sampling is based on the sampling and testing history developed by each importer for a specific product. A “specific product” means a product that is exactly the same i.e. the same size bottle/packet, variety, brand, and is manufactured by the same company. As a compliant history is developed, the frequency of sampling and inspection is reduced for the importer for that specific product. This reduction is governed by the “switching rule”, which follows the steps below:

- Sampling initially starts out at the *tightened* level (where 100% or every consignment is sampled and tested) until 5 compliant consignments have been cleared, when:
- Sampling is then lowered to the *normal* level (where 20% or 1 consignment in 5 is sampled and tested), until another 5 compliant consignments have been cleared, when:
- Sampling is then lowered to the *reduced* level (where 10% or one consignment in 10 is sampled and tested).

The frequency of sampling returns back to the tightened when a product is tested and found not to comply.

ACCH selects the frequency of sampling that is to apply to an imported product at any particular time using the Switching Rule. However, application of the Switching Rule may also be affected by the difficulty of managing the hazards applying to particular food products e.g. peanuts & pistachios are not able to be tested at a reduced level. Importers can contact their local PHU to discuss application of switching rules.

Certification:

Where testing is required to verify certification the sampling frequency does not follow the Switching Rule but is 1 in 20 consignments – see point 1 under “Clearance Options” above.

MRPs:

Where sampling is a requirement of a MRP, the MRP will specify the sampling frequency.

3.2.2 Who samples consignments:

Sampling must be carried out by PHUs, who will arrange for one of their Food/HPOs to inspect and sample any consignment identified as requiring testing.

3.2.3 Products to be sampled:

Samples should be taken for each specific type of product (e.g. same size packet, variety, brand, and is manufactured by the same company).

3.2.4 Number of lots to be sampled per consignment:

Food/HPOs select the lot(s) to be inspected and sampled. Where a consignment contains more than one lot, the number of lots to be sampled is calculated using the table below. This table is standard for all prescribed foods.

Number of lot codes in consignment	Number of lots to sample	Reject lots if n samples fail
1	1	$n = 1$
2 -8	2	$n = 1$
9 -15	3	$n = 1$
16 – 25	5	$n = 1$
> 26	8	$n = 1$

3.2.5 Number of samples to take per lot:

Each product has its own sample requirements. For smoked fish that is vacuum packed the following applies:

- 5 samples per lot for microbiological analysis
- 5 samples per lot for salt content analysis

Samples from within the same lot shall be identified by the same sampling officer sample number, with each of these samples being identified by a letter (A - H) e.g. where an officer has the sample number 751, the first sample from within the same lot will be identified as 751A, the second 751B, and so on.

3.2.6 Sample weight

- Each microbiological lot sample must weigh a minimum of 100g
- Individual units or packets should be sampled if these are available

3.3 Testing requirements:

3.3.1 NZFSA approved laboratories:

Samples of imported food can only be tested by laboratories approved by the NZFSA. At present only laboratories that are accredited by International Accreditation New Zealand (IANZ) to do the

relevant test are approved by the NZFSA. NZFSA is currently updating its list of approved laboratories.

3.3.2 Methodology to be applied by laboratories:

AEROBIC PLATE COUNT:

- The preferred method of analysis for aerobic plate count analysis is described in the *Compendium of Methods for the Microbiological Examination of Foods*, American Public Health Association (APHA), and most up-to-date version.

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SALT ANALYSIS:

- The preferred method for salt analysis is described in the *Official Methods of Analysis of AOAC International 16th Edition*, 1995.

3.3.3 Compositing samples:

- Samples **cannot** be composited.

3.4 Sampling and testing costs:

All sampling and testing is at the importers expense. Permit and sampling costs are listed below, are in New Zealand dollars and include GST:

- Permit application assessment : \$48 per line assessment + \$96/hour
- Sampling and inspection: \$96 per hour payable in 15-minute units

For laboratory costs, contact NZFSA approved laboratories.

3.5 Reject criteria:

PHUs will apply the following criteria to lots after inspection and sampling:

REJECT lots that contain less than 3.4% NaCl (tested on aqueous phase basis)

REJECT lots where the aerobic plate count per gram at 35°C:

- $n = 5$
- $c = 2$
- $m = 10^4$
- $M = 10^5$

Some of the criteria are expressed in the format prepared by the International Commission on Microbiological Specifications for Food (ICMSF):

- n The number of sample units which must be examined from a lot of food to satisfy the requirements of a particular sampling plan
- c The maximum allowable number of defective sample units. When more than this number is found, the lot is rejected by the sampling plan.
- m Represents an acceptable level and values above it are marginally acceptable or unacceptable in the terms of the sampling plan.
- M A microbiological criterion which separates marginally acceptable quality from defective quality. Values above “M” are acceptable in terms of the sampling plan and detection of **one or more** samples exceeding this level would be cause for rejection of the lot.

- When lots fail the import criteria, those lots and any untested lots in the same consignment are rejected.
- Lots that fail the import criteria are not re-tested.
- Importers have the option of having any untested lots sampled and tested, and if any of these lots pass they can be cleared. Any untested lots in the same consignment of a reject lot must be sampled for clearance at the rate detailed in *Inspection Requirements and Testing Requirements* above.

3.6 Special Conditions that May Apply:

In unique or out of the ordinary situations, the NZFSA reserves the right to either stop trade or replace the above sampling regime with a special elevated programme of testing in order to regain confidence in a product.