

## Standard Management Rule 22: Tahini or crushed sesames seeds or any products containing these

**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 tahini or crushed sesame seeds or any products containing these.**

### Recent Updates:

Date	Location	Information
1 July 2009	All	Made obsolete refer to the Imported Food Requirement for tahini or crushed sesame seeds or any products containing these.
15 August 2008	<a href="#">Section 1.0</a>	Products targeted updated
20 July 2007	<a href="#">Section 3.4</a>	Sampling and Inspection costs have been updated

### Background Information:

#### Summary of hazard:

Tahini is sesame seed paste and used as a base product for many Middle Eastern spreads and dips. It is also used by itself and as a flavour enhancer in dishes. It is a high risk food due to the risk of contamination during processing. Tahini products do not normally receive a heat treatment to inactivate pathogenic bacteria; hence it is critical to ensure they are free of *Salmonella*.

This Rule covers tahini or crushed sesame seeds or any foods containing them (including sesame seed paste, sesame paste, sesame seed butter, hamas tahini, tahina, tahine, tahineh, halva desert mix, hummus, halawa halva, helva and babaganoush).

The Director-General issued an Emergency (Prescribed Food) Food Standard 2003 for tahini based products following several recalls during July 2003. The recalls were due to *Salmonella* contamination and a New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) led investigation found that the

contamination was due to imported tahini. The permanent food standard for tahini came into force on 11 June 2004.

## Import Criteria Applying to Tahini or Crushed Sesame Seeds

### 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 standard. However, if importers are importing tahini or crushed sesame seeds or any foods containing them under other tariff codes they are required to notify NZFSA as these targeted tariff codes may need to be reviewed and the products monitored. Other foods containing sesame seeds may include for example sesame seed paste, sesame paste, sesame seed butter, hamas tahini, tehina, tahina, tahine, tahineh, halva desert mix, hummus, halawa halva, helva and babaganoush and sesame sweet food.

Tariff codes targeted for tahini or crushed sesame seeds	
<i>1207 Other oil seeds and oleaginous fruits, whether or not broken</i>	
1207.40.00.00A	Sesamum Seeds
<i>2005 Other vegetables prepared or preserved otherwise than by vinegar or acetic acid, not frozen, other than products of heading 2006</i>	
2005.59.00.00B	Prepared Or Preserved Homogenised Vegetables Other Than Potatoes Peas Beans (For Tahini - Certain Importers Only)
<i>2008 Fruit, nuts and other edible parts of plants, otherwise prepared or preserved, whether or not containing added sugar or other sweetening matter or spirit, not elsewhere specified or included</i>	
2008.19.09.29H	Roasted Nuts (Other Than Ground-Nuts) & Seeds Whether Or Not Mixed Together
2008.19.09.39E	Un-Roasted Nuts (Other Than Ground-Nuts & Seeds) Whether Or Not Mixed Together
<i>2103 Sauces and preparations thereof; mixed condiments and mixed seasonings; mustard flour and meal and prepared mustard</i>	

2103.90.00.29D	Other Sauces & Preparations (Not Mixed Condiments Or Seasonings) (For Tahini & Soy Sauce Certain Suppliers Only)
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**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.

**2.0 Clearance options:**

The following 2 options are available to clear consignments captured under this rule:

**2.1 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.

To date no MRPs have been issued for these products. MRPs are currently only available for inadvertent captures (see NZFSA website at [www.nzfsa.govt.nz](http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz) for a MRP application form).

**2.2 Clearance sampling and testing on arrival in New Zealand:**

As a result, all imported consignments require testing on entry into New Zealand (as per sample protocol outline below) to establish a compliant import test history.

## 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:

- Nil tolerance for *Salmonella* per 25g

### 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.

### 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 bottle/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 tahini and sesame seed products the number of samples to take per lot should be calculated as follows in order to detect low levels of *Salmonella* in product:

Number of samples per lot = 10

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 - J) 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 sample must weigh a minimum of 200g

- 25g of each of those must be analysed (test weight)
- 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:**

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

#### **3.3.3 Compositing samples:**

- A maximum of 5 samples (of approximately equal weight) may be composited per lot. See note below under *Methodology*.
- Laboratories analysing tahini samples for the presence of *Salmonella* can reduce the workload and cost by compositing five 25g analytical units. The proportion of broth added to the composite sample is the same as if the sample is being treated as a single analytical unit. If 5 samples are analysed as a composite, 5 times the amount of broth must be used, i.e. five 25g samples (125g sample) added to 1125ml of broth. Following the appropriate incubation period a single analysis is performed on the composite sample.
- Note: When fatty/oily products such as tahini are tested it is necessary to include an appropriate surfactant in the pre-enrichment.
- Results from composite samples are acceptable if the analysis methodology is sufficiently sensitive to demonstrate compliance for each individual sample. Each sample should be entirely ground before compositing.

### **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 are positive for *Salmonella*

- 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.

## 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](http://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/>.