

Almond Board of California Criteria for Approval of Process Authorities

SCOPE: Pursuant to § 981.42 of the almond marketing order – 7 CFR Part 981, and as specified in § 981.442(b) of the marketing order’s regulations, handlers must subject their almonds to a treatment process or processes that have been determined to achieve in total a minimum 4-log reduction of *Salmonella bacteria*. Handlers may treat the almonds themselves prior to shipment, transport the almonds to a facility (Custom Processor) within California for treatment, ship untreated almonds to an approved manufacturer (DV User) within the United States, Canada, or Mexico, or ship untreated almonds labeled as “unpasteurized” outside of the United States, Canada, and Mexico. All treatment processes must be validated by a process authority approved by the Almond Board of California (Board or ABC). ¹ The Board administers the marketing order locally, with oversight by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

PROCESS AUTHORITIES: A process authority is a person who has expert knowledge of pasteurization processes or other treatment requirements for the safety of foods. The expert knowledge can be obtained from education or experience or both. Anyone who is establishing treatments must use adequate facilities for making the determinations. Anyone who is evaluating treatment deviations must utilize procedures recognized by competent process authorities as being able to detect any potential hazard to public health.

To establish treatment requirements the process authority shall have:

- knowledge about the product characteristics and the equipment used for the treatment process;
- experience in conducting appropriate studies to determine the ability of the equipment to deliver the appropriate treatment (such as heat penetration or heat distribution studies) and the determination of the lethality value needed to attain public health safety (such as microbiological challenge studies);
- ability to determine by evaluation of the acquired data that enough data have been gathered to identify the critical factors needed to ensure the safety of the final product. The written document delineating the treatment required should include all the critical factors and the maximum or minimum values for the appropriate factors;
- at least two references of current or past clients, a reference from a nut processor would be preferred;
- a statement that you have access to the microorganisms (or have a relationship with a third party and/or laboratory who can provide technical support) required to validate a system that requires microbiological work. Specifically, do you have access to thermocouples, leads and data acquisition systems; and
- should ABC request further information from the applicant to process an application, an initial response must be received within 30 days to keep the application open; failure to respond within 30 days will result in a rejected application. Correspondence thereafter must be received in a timely fashion as determined by the ABC.

The process authority may need to evaluate the ability of the processor to adhere to the requirements of the prescribed treatment. If necessary the process authority will need to provide the processor with sufficient information to understand the critical factors and how to measure and to control them.

The process authority is responsible for the evaluation of treatment deviations to determine whether a lot is a potential hazard to public health. (Note: Evaluation of deviations is not necessary if lots subject to a deviation are disposed of in a manner that assures they will not be used for edible purposes.) The evaluation of the treatment shall be undertaken using accepted methods for deviation analysis. All records of treatment and production activities associated with the critical factors required for the treatment must be made available to the process authority for the evaluation unless the product will not be used for edible purposes.

Potential almond process authorities shall submit an application (ABC Form No. 51) for inclusion in a list of process authorities that are approved by the Board.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is OMB 0581-0242. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 120 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

¹ Applications will be reviewed and approved by the ABC Technical Expert Review Panel (TERP). Should the applicant disagree with TERP’s decision, it may appeal the decision in writing to the Board, and ultimately to USDA

ALMOND BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
PROCESS AUTHORITY FOR ALMONDS APPLICATION FORM

Pursuant to authority provided in §981.42 of the almond marketing order –7 CFR Part 981, and as specified in §981.442(b) of the marketing order's regulations, handlers must subject their almonds to a treatment process or processes that have been determined to achieve in total a minimum 4-log reduction of *Salmonella* bacteria. Process authorities validate that the treatment technology and equipment have been demonstrated to achieve the minimum 4-log reduction. The Almond Board of California (Board or ABC) locally administers the marketing order, with oversight by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In consideration of the approval of this application, the following applicant requests approval as a Process Authority for almonds for _____ (crop year).

Date _____ Company _____

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone (_____) _____ Fax (_____) _____

Email Address _____

For New Applicants: Please provide the following information (attach a curriculum vitae and additional pages, if needed):

1. Professional Affiliation(s) and Education:
2. Length of time as a process authority:
3. Products/Equipment/Processes for which you have been a process authority:
4. Experience conducting or evaluating tests that determine the effects of the treatment on microorganisms, such as microbiological challenge studies. (Specify microorganisms and types of tests, including recovery and enumeration techniques):
5. Experience conducting or evaluating tests that determine the effects of the treatment on foods (note how this is relevant to processing of almonds or other nuts):
6. Experience establishing critical factors and monitoring intervals necessary to ensure a minimum 4-log reduction of *Salmonella* bacteria on almonds is consistently delivered, monitored and controlled.

Once approved, Process Authorities must submit an application annually by July 31st each year to renew their status.

The ABC Technical Expert Review Panel in coordination with the Board, may revoke approval for cause.

Undersigned hereby certifies to USDA and the Board that the information supplied herein is complete and correct. Making false statements or representations on this form, knowing them to be false, is a violation of Title 18, section 1001, United States Code, which provides for the penalty or imprisonment, or both.

Date _____ Signature _____

For ABC Use:

Date Received by ABC:	MM/DD/YR
Date Approved by ABC:	MM/DD/YR
Effective for Crop Year:	August 1 – July 31, 20__

Date Process Authority Notified of Approval:	MM/DD/YR

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.