



BAGGED COFFEE WEIGHING - BEST PRACTICES

Introduction

The purpose of a public weigher is to perform an accurate weighing of a particular commodity or product to facilitate the fair exchange of goods, and to protect consumers and businesses from misrepresentation and fraud. The coffee industry is dependent on the accuracy and reliability of weight certificates issued by public weighers, warehouses and plant facilities against which commercial transactions are settled. The Green Coffee Association Traffic and Warehouse Committee has undertaken an effort to establish a guide for “best practices” on the procedures regarding the weighing of bagged green coffee beans and the issuance of weight certificates.

Legal Requirements

Commercial weighing services are generally regulated at the state level, usually by the state’s Office of Weights and Measures, a division of the Department of Agriculture. All companies involved in commercial weighing should be familiar and compliant with their state’s regulations. Information and guidelines can normally be found on each state’s website. A list of applicable state website links is listed below.

Weighmaster

A weighmaster is an individual bearing responsibility for the accuracy of the weights reported by the warehouse or weighing company. Many states issue licenses to weighmasters operating within that state.

Training

A seasoned weigher should train new personnel on proper weighing methods and techniques. This training should include proper scale operation and record keeping.

Weighing instructions

Authorized weighing instructions should be received from the owner of the cargo. All charges associated with the weighing operation are for the account of the party providing the instructions unless accepted and authorized in writing by another party.

Weight Scale

Scales should meet the specifications of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

Scale location

Scales should be positioned in an area away from the direct traffic of forklifts and other cargo handling equipment. They should be protected from accidental contact by means of bumpers or barricades.

Scale Maintenance

Scales should be inspected, calibrated and adjusted by a certified commercial scale company on a regular basis. Scales should be checked for cleanliness before the start of any weighing operation. Loose beans, dirt and debris can affect scale accuracy. For Exchange licensed weighmasters, scales should be calibrated within twenty (20) days before the first (1st) delivery date of each Exchange delivery period. For non-Exchange weighmasters, a minimum quarterly calibration is recommended.

Scale Testing

Test weights should be maintained in all weighing locations to check scale accuracy. Scales should be tested daily before normal weighing operations begin.

Taring

In order to obtain an accurate net weight, an average tare weight of the empty bags must be taken. A proper tare scale measuring in ounces or grams should be utilized to weigh the empty bags. It is important to ensure the bags are completely empty and free of beans prior to weighing. Normally, 3 bags are weighed for lots less than 500 bags, 5 bags for any lots 501 to 999 bags, and 8 bags for lots of 1000 bags or more.

Weight Certificate

A proper weight certificate should be issued for every weighed transaction. This certificate should include the following information: date of weighing, warehouse address, the container number and ICO number (if available), marks and lot numbers, total gross weight, average tare weight, calculated total tare weight and total net weight. Any exceptions or “light” bags should be noted with weights indicated separately. These would include reconditioned, torn & mended (slack) bags, remnant bags, light intact, pocket and/or butt bags. Reflecting individual bag or pallet drafts on the certificate is optional. All total figures on the weight certificate should be rounded off to the nearest whole number. The finalized weight certificate should be signed by the weighmaster or responsible party.

Records

Weight certificates should be kept on file for a minimum of 2 years from removal of the coffee from the warehouse. Retention periods may vary per state. Check your state’s website for specific guidelines. Several are listed below.

STATE	PERMITS REQUIRED	WEBSITE LINK
California	Yes	www.cdfa.ca.gov
Florida	Yes	www.doacs.state.fl.us
Louisiana	Yes	www.ldaf.state.la.us
New Jersey	Yes	www.state.nj.us/agriculture
New York	Yes	www.agmkt.state.ny.us
Texas	Yes	www.agr.state.tx.us
Virginia	Yes	www.vdacs.virginia.gov
Washington	Yes	www.agr.wa.gov