

Technical Requirements for Products of Non-Animal Origin GCC

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Food Import Procedures:

In 2007, the GCC Food Safety Committee developed a "Guide for Food Import Procedures for the GCC Countries." This guide was meant to unify the applied procedures for clearing food consignments, as well as unify the required import certificates for different types of foods. The intent was to help facilitate the movement of food products within the GCC once customs unification is fully implemented. In 2008, the GCC member countries decided to postpone the application of the guide to further study it to ensure it fully complies with the guidelines of international organizations such as Codex Alimentarius, the World Animal Health Organization and International Plant Protection Consortium. The guide is still being reviewed by GCC members.

KSA

Food certificates required:

Product	Title of Certificate	Attestation Required on Certificate	Purpose	Requesting Ministry
Fruits and Vegetables	Phytosanitary Certificate	Products are inspected and/or tested according to appropriate official procedures and are considered to be free from quarantine pests specified by importing country	Food safety	MOA
Processed Foodstuffs	Health Certificate	Exported products were processed or manufactured under conditions that comply with sanitary and health laws of the exporting country and are fit for human consumption	Food safety	SFDA
Planting Seed	Phytosanitary Certificate Seed Analysis Certificate Official Biotech Free Certificate	Products were inspected and/or tested according to appropriate official procedures and are considered to be free from quarantine pests specified by importing country Seeds were tested in accordance with ISTA rules and are free from insects, epidemic, diseases and weed seeds	Phytosanitary concern Seed quality Concern for biodiversity and food safety	MOA MOA and importing company MOA

		Imported seed is free from biotech contamination		
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Processed Foods

Health Certificate

The exporting company certifies on its letterhead that the products have been grown, processed, or manufactured under conditions that comply with the sanitary and health laws of the exporting country. It further declares that the goods are radiation free, and that their sale for human consumption in the supplier’s country has been authorized. The firm verifies that the merchandise is fit for human consumption. It is important to note that the exporting company on its letterhead issues health certificates for high-value products, with the exception of dairy and meat products. Since dairy and meat products can be easily contaminated, they are tested for bacterial and other contaminants by official exporting country government inspectors. **Processed foods that are not covered by Saudi Arabian or GCC countries’ standards must meet Codex or country of origin standards.**

The certificate also contains marks and numbers including: shipment booking number, container size, container number, seal number, and quantities and list of exported products, production and expiration dates, destination, country of origin, names and addresses of the shipper and receiver, mode of shipment, signature of the exporter and seal of chamber of commerce or notary public. Refer to GSO 9/1995 for processed foodstuff labeling and packaging requirements that summarized the following: In sum, prepackaged food product labels should be in Arabic or include an Arabic language translation of the label. Labels must contain at a minimum: the product name, packer’s name, country of origin or manufacture, listing of ingredients, instructions, where applicable, for the end use of the product, the shelf-life of the product. For more details go to GCC labeling requirements section.

Government Certificate’s Legal Entry Requirements

The required certificates must accompany all imported agricultural products at the time of entry, and the certificates are valid until the products are cleared through Saudi Customs. One export document is valid only for one shipment and cannot be used for clearing multiple shipments. The Saudi government accepts only manufacturers’ or exporters’ export declaration as certifications for country of origin, health certificate (for most processed foodstuffs) and commercial invoice declarations. Depending on the nature of exported goods to Saudi Arabia, or according to a request from the Saudi importer, some additional certifications may be required. Some of the additional documentations that may be required are discussed below.

Food Manufacturer’s Ingredients Certificate

This certificate should include a description of exported food products (contents and percentage of each ingredient), chemical data, microbiological standards, storage and life of product (date of manufacture and length of life). When the product contains any animal fats in their products, the

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certificate must confirm the kind of animal from which it is taken, or state that no pork meat or its artificial flavor nor its animal fat is being used. This certificate must be obtained from local health department and must be signed.

Consumer Protection Certificate

This certificate must confirm the healthiness of the various ingredients of the exported food products to Saudi Arabia, and their safety and fitness for human consumption. This certificate must be obtained from the Authorized Government Agency or one of its local offices, and must be signed.

QATAR

All new-to-market processed food products are subject to laboratory analysis. Subsequent shipments of a product that has passed the initial testing will be subject to further laboratory analysis again after six months. A product failing a previous inspection will be thoroughly examined on subsequent shipments for an undisclosed length of time.

UAE

Alcoholic beverages:

Those beverages having alcohol content >0.05%:

- Can be imported but only through authorized importers who run their own retail shops
- Are exempt from local labeling requirements.
- Require no special labeling beyond what is typically required in the country of origin

No alcohol is permitted in any foodstuff.

BAHRAIN

Alcoholic beverages as well as food products containing alcohol are highly regulated and cannot be sold in supermarkets or retail.

KUWAIT

Alcoholic beverages, pork and products containing alcohol and pork, as well as products with labels containing any pictures of alcohol or pork, or a recipe requiring these products (even though the imported product is free of these ingredients) are **not permissible** for imports.

Health certification for other products:

- Issued by the appropriate government agency in the country of origin.
- Required for all products to certify goods are fit for human consumption.

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Useful Links

Gulf Standard Organization (GSO); includes food standards; can purchase standards online.

<http://www.gso.org.sa/>

Codex alimentarius standards: many GCC standards match the codex standards, since GCC is a member of the WTO.

http://www.codexalimentarius.net/web/standard_list.do?lang=en