

Specifications for the import of Meat, Poultry and Fish GCC

Range includes: preparation of meats, fish, or crustaceans; sausages and similar products, frozen fish, fish filet, fresh and smoked salmon

An Import Permit is not required for these products, however all meat and poultry products must be accompanied by an Islamic (Halal) slaughter certificate issued by an approved Islamic center in the country of origin. It must also accompany shipments. They should also be accompanied by ***An Official Health Certificate***: this certificate should indicate the date of slaughter, the kind of animal and average age in each shipment. The health certificate must also indicate that animals were examined within twelve hours before being slaughtered, and directly after, by a licensed veterinarian, and were found free from disease and suitable for human consumption. According to a May 2011 draft on food imports, the GCC defined a health certificate for meat and meat products issued at the country of origin to include the following:

- The meat or meat product is fit for human consumption, in accordance with the hygiene requirements of the GCC.
- The meat has been derived from healthy animals that have no apparent evidence of any contagious or infectious disease as listed by OIE
- Animals have been slaughtered in a slaughterhouse that is approved by the GCC authorities and is under the supervision of the Competent Authority.
- The meat or meat product was handled in accordance with the GCC requirements, at an establishment that has been subjected to inspections by the Competent Authority and that implements a food safety management system based on HACCP principles or an equivalent system.
- Good veterinary practice has been applied in use of veterinary medicines (including growth hormones) and agriculture chemicals in live animals and any residues in meat comply with GCC requirements.
- The meat or meat product originates from animals that have not been slaughtered for the purpose of disease eradication /control.
- The meat or meat product has not been derived from animals fed with processed animal protein, excluding fish meal, according to the GCC requirements.

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP)

On February 9, 2003, the Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued the Ministerial decree number 2436 to all Chambers of Commerce in the country requiring the insertion of a new clause in health certificates accompanying imported meat and meat products to make sure that the abattoirs

used to produce meat and meat products exported to the Kingdom implement the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) as a system of production process control.

Halal Certificate/Halal Slaughter Certificate

Verification of the Halal certificate/Halal slaughtering certificate must be undertaken for all relevant consignments of food. In the case of meat and meat products, the Muslim agency approved by the GCC (Societies, Agencies / Islamic councils) in the exporting country will supervise the slaughter process and provide documentation according to GCC requirements. The competent authority in the exporting country may also provide Halal certification.

Where meat is manufactured in a country different from the origin of that meat, the competent authority in the country of manufacture must provide certification that the meat used in the manufacturing is the same as that described in the original Halal slaughtering certificate provided by the country of dispatch.

Halal Slaughtering Certificate for Export of Meat and Meat Products should include the following:

- Slaughtering has occurred in an approved slaughterhouse and under the supervision of the designated Islamic Authority which has been approved by the concerned authorities in the GCC and in the presence of the Islamic Authority representative, by Muslim butchers using the knife and in a place where swine is not permitted to be slaughtered.
- The fresh meat originated from a country and an establishment that is authorized to export Halal meat to the GCC; and the animal source is Halal.

Halal Certificate for Export of Products of Meat Origin should include the following:

- Fats and meat derivatives (such as gelatin) used as one of the ingredients of processed foods have been extracted under the supervision of an Islamic authority in the manufacturing country and approved by the GCC, on the basis of the original Halal certificate of the slaughtered animals issued by an Islamic association approved by the GCC in the country of origin; assurance has been provided that the meat and fat derivatives used in the food processing are the same ones covered by the original Halal certificates.

Imported frozen chickens must meet the Islamic slaughtering requirements mentioned above. The standard also calls for salmonella testing for imported frozen chickens. If the result of the test is positive in more than one sample out of five samples tested, the whole shipment is rejected.

Health Certificate for Export of Table Eggs and Egg Products should include the following:

- The eggs or egg product is fit for human consumption, in accordance with the hygiene requirements of the GCC.
- The eggs or egg products have been derived from healthy birds that were subject to the inspection by the Competent Authority, and in accordance with the GCC requirements.

- The eggs or egg products were handled in accordance with the GCC requirements, at an establishment that has been subjected to inspections by the Competent Authority and that implements a food safety management system based on HACCP principles or an equivalent system.
- Egg has not been derived from birds fed with processed animal protein, excluding fish meal.

Health Certificate for Export of Fish and Fish Products should include the following:

- The fish or fish product is fit for human consumption, in accordance with the hygiene requirements of the GCC.
- Where fish and fish products (including fin fish, amphibians, crustaceans and mollusks) are grown in farms or aquaculture production areas, hygiene requirements are under the control of the Competent Authority.
- The fish or fish product originates from areas that are free from OIE listed diseases.
- The fish or fish product has been fed from feed that is produced in compliance with GMP & HACCP principles or its equivalent and is free from any physical, chemical or biological contaminants that are prohibited internationally.
- The fish or fish product was handled in accordance with the GCC requirements, at an establishment that has been subjected to inspection by the Competent Authority and that implements a food safety management system based on HACCP principles or an equivalent system.

In addition to the general requirements and the general labeling requirements for the GCC please refer to the following standards:

- **GSO Standard No. 1016:1998 on microbiological criteria for food** (see GSO link below)
- **GSO Standard No. 150:2007 on the expiration periods of food products**
- **GSO Standard No. 988:1998 on the limits of radioactivity levels permitted in food stuffs part-1**

This standard is concerned with chilled or frozen meat kofta prepared from sheep, goats, beef or camel buffalo meats:

- **GSO Standard No. 1329:2002 on processed meat: chilled or frozen meat**

This standard is concerned with cooked and uncooked, chilled and frozen chicken and turkey meat sausages and does not include dried and canned sausages

- **GSO Standard No.1328:2002 on processed meat: poultry sausage**

The scope of this code covers hygiene provisions for raw meat, meat preparations and manufactured meat from the time of live animal production up to the point of retail sale. It further develops "the recommended international code of practice: General Principles of Food Hygiene " in respect of these products. Where appropriate, the Annex to that code (hazard analysis and critical control point system and guidelines for its application) and the principles for the establishment and application of microbiological criteria for foods are further developed and applied in the specific context of meat hygiene.

- **GSO Standard No. 58:2007 on Code of hygienic practice for meat**

This standard is concerned with meats from chilled, frozen beef, buffalo or camel, lamb, domesticated birds or rabbit which are cured with saline solution and heat treated with or without smoking and packed in suitable containers.

- **GSO Standard No. 2206:2012 prepared meats: meat treated with salt solution and heat treated**

This standard is concerned with frozen fish fillet blocks prepared from complete or incomplete fish fillets, or minced flesh of fresh or previously frozen fishes which used as a raw material for many products:

- **GSO Standard No.2043:2010 on frozen fish fillet blocks**

This standard is concerned with smoked fish and does not cover smoked mollusca or smoked crustaceans:

- **GSO Standard No.270:1994 on smoked fish**

This standard is concerned with meat beef, buffalo, camel, mutton or goat contained in suitable containers with vegetables or sauce or both and packaged in a suitable container

- **GSO Standard No.2203:2012 on packaged meat containing vegetable and sauce**

The technical regulations and standards of the GCC countries will be used as the primary basis for certification of food shipments by exporting countries. Where deemed appropriate by the GCC—e.g. where current GCC technical regulations and standards are not comprehensive in terms of specific requirements for certain imported foods—the GCC may defer to Codex, OIE (World Organization for Animal Health) and IPPC (International Plant Protection Convention) standards, guidelines and recommendations as the basis for certification (and other assurances).

Note: The link below permits access to GSO standards, which are not free and can be purchased online.

Useful Links

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

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

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