

Specifications for the import of Coffee, Tea, Herbals, and Spices GCC

Range: all types of coffee, tea, maté, pepper, nutmeg, cardamom, seeds of anise, badian, fennel, coriander, ginger, saffron, and turmeric

In addition to the general requirements and the labeling requirements, 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 to 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.

No import permits are required, however for non-animal origin requirements the specific product requirements for the product range are as follows:

Product	Title of Certificate	Attestation Required on Certificate	Purpose
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
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 Imported seed is free from biotech contamination	Phytosanitary concern Seed quality Concern for biodiversity and food safety

*Health Certificate (paper or electronic) is issued by the competent authority in the country of origin or the country of exportation, attesting that the safety (and suitability) of the consignment of food is in accordance with the relevant technical regulations of the GCC (including registration numbers of food establishments). According to the GCC May 2011 draft, the certificate should include the following:

“The plant product is fit for human consumption, in accordance with the hygiene requirements of the GCC.”

“The plant product was handled in accordance with the GCC requirements, at an establishment that has been subjected to inspections by the Competent Authority and implements a food safety management system based on HACCP principles or an equivalent system.”

**Phytosanitary Certificate should including the following: “Plants and plant products are free from quarantine pests and from regulated non quarantine pests, in accordance with the GCC requirements.”

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

- **GSO Standard No. 1016:1998 on microbiological criteria for food** (See GSO link below)
- **GSO Standard No. 150:2007 on expiration periods of food products**
- **GSO Standard No.783:1997 for instant coffee**
- **GSO Standard No.1391:2002 ground roasted coffee**

This standard is concerned with the maximum limits of the following pesticide residues permitted in agricultural and food products intended for human consumption: dimethoate, chlorfenvinphos, crufomate, diazinon, dioxathion, diphenyl, diphenylamine, ethoxyquin and folpet.

- **GSO Standard No.383:1994 on maximum limits of pesticide residues permitted in agro-food products**

This Gulf standard is concerned with the maximum limits of aflatoxins permitted in food and animal feed

- **GSO Standard No.841:1997 on maximum limits of mycotoxins permitted in foods and animal feeds**
- **GSO Standard No. 2130:2011 spices and condiments: star anise**

This Standard specifies requirements for whole and ground fruits of *Cuminum cyminum* L. Recommendations relating to storage and transport conditions are given in the Annex A.

- **GSO Standard No.2139:2011 spices: cumin specifications**

This standard is concerned with black pepper (*Piper Nigrum* Linnaeus) - whole and ground

- **GSO Standard No.717:1997 Spices: Black pepper whole and ground**

This GSO standard is concerned with various tea kinds, black, green, and instant, and does not include scented tea

- **GSO Standard No.978:1998 for tea**

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 the access to GSO standards; those standards 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