

MEAT POULTRY & FISH PRODUCTS USA

In the United States, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) regulate meat, poultry and egg products. However, all other foods are regulated by the Department of Health and Human Service's Food and Drug Administration (FDA). As such, there are different import requirements for different types of imported food.

FDA relies solely on point-of-entry inspection. FSIS, on the other hand, works collaboratively with the importing establishment's government and uses a three-part process to verify that other countries' regulatory systems for meat, poultry and egg products are equivalent to that of the U.S. and that products entering the U.S. are safe and wholesome.

FSIS, rather than dealing directly with individual companies, which is the case of the FDA, coordinates with the government of the country before accepting meat, poultry or egg products for sale into U.S. commerce.

Each meat, poultry and egg product shipment enters the country under the authority of U.S. Customs and USDA'S Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and is transferred to FSIS where inspectors visually inspect every shipment as well as its accompanying documentation.

Any foreign establishment that desires to export to the U.S. must apply to its own government, and that country's chief inspection official must certify to FSIS a list of all establishments in that country that meet FSIS' import requirements.

Meat and meat products

APHIS' Veterinary Services (VS) unit ensures that animals and animal products, such as semen and embryos, can be exported from a country without threatening the animal health in their countries of destination. All commercial shipments of meat and meat food products offered for entry into the United States are subject to the regulations of the Department of Agriculture and must be inspected by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) prior to release by U.S. Customs. Meat products from other sources (including, but not limited to wild game) are subject to APHIS regulations and the provisions of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Act, enforced by the Food and Drug Administration.

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/> or <http://www.usda.gov/agency/fsis/homepage.htm>

Meat and poultry (including game and fowl)

Products can only be imported from countries and plants approved by the United States. (See Link at the end of the page). **You will notice that Lebanon is not among those countries.** The Federal Meat Inspection Act requires countries that export meat and poultry to the United States to impose inspection requirements at least equal to U.S. requirements. Imported meat and poultry products are inspected in the country of origin just as domestic products are inspected in U.S. slaughter and processing plants. FSIS reviews foreign inspection systems to ensure that they are equal to the U.S. system. FSIS also reinspects imported meat and poultry products on a sample basis as they enter the United States. Data derived from import re-inspection constitute a check on the effectiveness of foreign inspection systems.

To determine if a country is eligible to export meat to the U.S., FSIS evaluates the country's entire inspection system. FSIS reviews the country's laws, regulations, directives, and other written materials that govern its inspection program; reviews administration; and conducts an on-site review of the country's inspection operations. A multi-disciplinary team, typically composed of a veterinarian, chemist, food technologist, microbiologist, statistician, and compliance officer, conducts the review. After a country is granted eligibility to export its products to the United States, FSIS relies on the exporting country to certify plants and carry out daily inspection. Individual plants must apply to the country's national inspection authorities for certification to export to the United States. In turn, the chief inspection official in the country certifies to FSIS those plants that meet all applicable standards and are authorized to export to the United States. The number of reinspections in a given year are determined by the country's adherence to the requirements. There may be up to four inspections per year by FSIS.

At the U.S. port of entry all meat products are checked for transportation damage, labeling, general condition, and proper certification and residue level. Residue levels must have certification. U.S. requirements also require foreign countries to impose controls equivalent to those of FSIS to prevent species substitution. A product labeled beef, for example, must be beef and cannot contain a less expensive product. FSIS scientists have developed verification tests which are quick and inexpensive. The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service Meat Export Library offer an Export Library System for computer users to obtain U.S. and foreign country specifications requirements for meat and meat products. To connect to the Meat Export Library using a modem, call +1-202-501-7608. For further information on the database and certification for meat and poultry products contact: FSIS, 1099 14th Street, Franklin Court, Suite 3700W, Washington, D.C. 20005 or telephone: +1-202-501-6022; Fax: +1-202-501-6029.

Sea food products

FDA's multifaceted and risk-informed seafood safety program relies on various measures of compliance with its seafood **Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)** regulations (See US std no.22), which describe a management system in which food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical, and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement and handling, to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product.

For imported seafood, these measures include:

1) Inspections of foreign processing facilities, 2) Sampling of seafood offered for import into the United States, 3) Domestic surveillance sampling of imported products, inspections of seafood importers, 4) evaluations of filers of seafood products, 5) foreign country program assessments, and relevant information from our foreign partners and FDA overseas offices.

FDA is also implementing a new screening system for imports, the Predictive Risk-based Evaluation for Dynamic Import Compliance Targeting ([PREDICT](#)), which will improve the current electronic screening system by targeting higher risk products for exam and sampling and minimizing the delays of shipments of lower risk products. PREDICT will improve the agency's ability to detect trends and investigate patterns. This, in turn, will help to make more efficient use of FDA's import resources and allow FDA to adjust import sampling levels for seafood products over time and as appropriate.

Imported Food Products Containing a Small Amount of Meat, Poultry, or Processed Egg Product Ingredients

FSIS statutes provide authority to exempt certain foods containing relatively small amounts of meat, poultry or processed egg product ingredients from FSIS inspection, FSIS must ensure that these ingredients are not adulterated. Accordingly, the meat, poultry, or processed egg product ingredients used in FSIS-exempted products must be from an [eligible source](#), i.e., prepared under USDA/FSIS inspection or in a foreign establishment certified by a foreign inspection system approved by FSIS. Importers of FSIS-exempted products containing meat, poultry, or processed egg product ingredients originating from countries with animal health restrictions [must apply for and obtain a VS-permit](#) from USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Also http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/animals/animal_import/animal_imports_anproducts.shtml

The need for a permit is based on the contents of the food product and on the animal health restrictions APHIS places on the country from which the food product is being imported. Accordingly, FSIS is advising importers of food products not required to have an APHIS veterinary import permit for entry into the U.S. that the meat, poultry or processed egg product ingredients used in the formulation of these products must originate from an approved source in order to qualify for FSIS import eligibility.

Standards

- Fish and fishery products: smoked fish, molluscan seafood.

<http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm?CFRPart=123&showFR=1>

- Fish and shellfish: Canned oysters, canned salmon, ..

<http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm?CFRPart=161&showFR=1>

- Egg and egg products: dried eggs, frozen eggs, pasteurized eggs

<http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm?CFRPart=160&showFR=1>

Useful Links

Import Permit Guide for Products with Small Amounts of Meat and Poultry

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Import_Permit_Guide.pdf

Countries/Products Eligible for Export to the U.S. (Sep 17, 2010; PDF Only)

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Countries_Products_Eligible_for_Export.pdf

Notice of Enforcement by the USDA, FSIS, Regarding Imported Food Products Containing a Small Amount of Meat, Poultry, or Processed Egg Product Ingredients (Mar 19, 2009; PDF Only)

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/pdf/Notice_of_Enforcement_Regarding_Imported_Food_Products.pdf

Apply for and obtain a VS-permit.

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/animals/animal_import/animal_imports_anproducts.shtml

Learn about e-permits.

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/permits/learn_epermits.shtml