

Specifications for the import of Cereal-Based Products GCC

Range of cereal products: flours, pasta (all types), bread, biscuits, wafers, corn flakes, pastry

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 facilitate 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
Cereal products	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
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

*Health Certificate (paper or electronic) should be 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 include 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. 194:2006 for wheat flour**
- **GSO Standard No. 1976:2009 for sorghum flour**

The following standard applies to whole maize (corn) meal prepared from kernels of common maize as described in item 3.1. This meal is used for direct human consumption. This standard does not apply to the following products: degermed maize meal, enriched maize meal, maize flour, maize grits, quick grits, hominy grits, self-rising maize meal, bolted maize meal, maize flakes, other maize based ready-to-eat cereals, maize flaking grits, alkaline treated maize products, maize meal for use as a brewing adjunct, maize meal used for manufacturing of starch and industrial use, and maize meal for use as an animal feed.

- **GSO Standard No.1925:2009 for whole maize (corn) meal**

This standard is concerned with fried corn chips ready to eat, as defined in section 3.1 such as chips, tortillas, tacos or similar products. It does not apply to pop corn.

- **GSO Standard No. 2205:2012 for fried corn chips/crisps**

This standard applies for instant noodles which is prepared for human consumption and not applied for pasta, macaroni and spaghetti.

- **GSO Standard No. 1871:2008 for instant noodles**
- **GSO Standard No.259:1994 for corn flakes**
- **GSO Standard No.989:1998 for biscuits**
- **GSO Standard No. 1370:2002 frozen dough**

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