

Specifications for the import of Cocoa Products and sugar confectionery

GCC

Range of cocoa products: all type of chocolates, cacao powder; soft and hard candy;halawa.

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 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

*Health Certificate (paper or electronic) is issued by the competent authority in the country of origin or the country of exportation attesting to the safety (and suitability) of the consignment of food, and that it 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.”

In addition to the general requirements and the labeling requirements, all cocoa and chocolate products imported to GCC should abide with the following GCC standards:

- **GSO Standard No. 1016:1998 on microbiological criteria for food** (See GSO link below)
- **GSO Standard No. GSO 150:2007 on the expiration periods of food products**
- **GSO Standard No. 1304:2012 on cocoa powders and dry mixtures of cocoa and sugars**
- **GSO Standard No.263:2009 on Hard Candy.**
- **GSO Standard No 1320:2009 on Soft Candy.**
- **GSO Standard No 1404:2011 on Jelly candy.**

This GSO Standard is concerned with Halawa Tehenia which is prepared from white Tehena and natural nutritive sugars:

- **GSO Standards No.1071:2002 on Halawa Tahinieh**

These specifications apply to chocolate products intended for human consumption.

- **GSO Standard No. 567:2009 on cocoa and its products; chocolate**

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