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This table summarises the general requirements and standards for food and agricultural imports into Saudi Arabia.

Certification/ Requirements	Remarks
Regulatory Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA - www.sfda.gov.sa/En/Home/) is responsible for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – regulating, overseeing, and controlling food, drugs, and medical devices – inspecting imported food products at the ports of entry – setting food standards and ensuring the safety of food products • The Saudi Arabian Standards Organization (SASO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a dominant standard setting agency in the GCC countries – depends heavily on CODEX Alimentarius regulations and to some extent on European and U.S. standards when drafting most of Saudi or Gulf Standards – sometimes bans CODEX’s approved food additives if they are banned on health grounds by developed countries (mainly the United States and/or Europe) or if they contain substances banned for religious reasons – English copies of standards are available at the SASO (http://www.saso.org.sa/engsite/testindex4english.php). Interested exporters can purchase them from SASO’s information center – Gulf standards are available at http://www.gso.org.sa/gso/home.do • The Environmental Protection Department at the Ministry of Municipality and Rural Affairs (http://www.momra.gov.sa/) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Establishes nationwide food sanitation laws and guidelines – Monitors of products already in the market – Inspect retailers, wholesalers, restaurants, bakeries, fast food chains, vegetable and meat markets for expiration dates, sanitary and storage conditions as well as product handling
Health certificate	<p>For fresh and frozen meat and poultry indicating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • date of slaughtering, • kind of animals, • average age as well as • whether it is examined within 12 hours before slaughtering • Free from disease, verified by licensed vet • Also that the abattoir has implemented a HACCP in the product control process (Ministerial decree number 2436) <p>For meat and meat products – as above</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Also required to be certified that animals were not fed with feed containing protein, fat or remnants of animal origin and were not treated with any growth hormones
	For vegetable and fruit <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Should certify that they are free from pests, insect and disease and not irradiated
	For products containing GM vegetable (plant) ingredients <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Issued by a government agency stating that the GE ingredient used in the foodstuff is approved in the country of origin for human or animal consumption
Halal slaughter certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Per Saudi Arabia Standard No. SSA 630/1990 (Animal Slaughtering Requirements According to Islamic Law)• For livestock and poultry products, and cheese and cheese products if they contain rennet of animal origin.• Must be issued by recognized Islamic Centre/ organization in the country of origin
Product Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Required for herbal preparations, health and supplementary foods• With the General Directorate of Medical and Pharmaceutical Licenses of the Saudi Ministry of Health• Done through a local agent by submitting sample products and product brochures, which are studied and tested by the ministry's central laboratory• Takes about six months for the ministry to approve and license a product. The ministry charges about \$300 as a registration fee.• Please refer to USDA GAIN report SA9019 available at• http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/FAIRS%20Country%20Report_Riyadh_Saudi%20Arabia_7-7-2009.pdf .
Other Import Documentation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Commercial invoice showing FOB price, freight and CFR value (translated into Arabic language)2. Certificate of origin3. Halal slaughter certificate4. Health certificate from the country of origin5. Phytosanitary certificate for grain, grain products, edible nuts, fruits, vegetables, etc,.6. Bill of lading or airway bill.7. Packing list (highly recommended to expedite product inspection and clearing process)8. Weight list (for grain) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saudi Customs accepts the original commercial invoice and country of origin certificate attested by a local chamber of commerce and industry located in a city or area where the foodstuffs are purchased and shipped.

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Certification/ Requirements	Remarks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certificates number three to five listed above must be attested by any of the Saudi missions located in the country of origin.• Before taking the certificates to a Saudi mission, exporters must make sure that the certificates were first authenticated by any Arab Chamber of Commerce, Saudi Arabian Business Council, or Chamber of Commerce located in the city or area where the exporting firm is based.
Labeling	It is recommended for an exporter to cross check information contained on his/her food label, including Production/Expiration dates, with the Saudi buyer, when putting together an order for a Saudi importer.
General Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Must meet labeling requirements as indicated in Gulf Standard 9/1995<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Specific (not generic) product name– Name and address of the manufacturer/packer/distributor/importer/exporter– Ingredient list in descending order– Net contents in metric units (volume in case of liquids)– Additives, preservatives and coloring– Special Storage, transportation and preparation instructions, if any– Country of origin– end use, production and expiration date– the kind of animal that animal fats, meat and meat derivatives are taken from• Names and phrases provocative to Islamic religious feelings such as "made of pork flesh or its derivatives," "Alcoholic beverages," or any doctrinally forbidden symbols and marks in Islamic countries such as the sign of the Cross, etc. should not be used.• List of ingredients should include permitted additives, and should reflect the exact seasoning versus the usual language of "natural flavorings" used by the industry
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Should be in Arabic or include Arabic language translation of label• Sticker in Arabic is allowed to replace key ingredients and product information in English.
Date marking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regulated by SASO 457/2005• Clear and unambiguous production and expiration dates• The use of any of the following statements for expressing expiration date is permissible.<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Use by/before (date)– Fit for (from the day of production)– Sell by date (for food products having an expiration period exceeding 3 months)• The production and expiration dates should be declared on the label of the package in uncoded manner as follows:

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Certification/ Requirements	Remarks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Day-Month-Year: for foodstuffs with an expiration period less than three months.- Month-Year: for foodstuffs with expiration exceeding three months• Products with No Specific Expiration Date: Products with no specified shelf life such as salt, spices, milled rice, etc. only the date of production or processing would be shown as: mm/yy.• Dates shall be engraved or in relief, printed or stamped with permanent ink directly on all packages or on their original label by the producer only.• Adding stickers for production and expiration dates is not permissible.• There shall be not more than one date of production or of expiration on the same package.
Nutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regulated by Gulf Standard No. 654/ 1996 (General Requirements for Prepackaged Foods for Special Dietary Use)1. Name of the product followed by the characterizing essential features indicating that it is a food for special dietary use.2. The amount of energy expressed in kilojoules and kilocalories per 100 grams or 100 ml of the food product and where appropriate per the specified quantity of food as suggested for consumption.3. Its content of protein, carbohydrates, fat, dietary, fiber and each vitamin and mineral per 100 grams or 100 ml of the food (as sold) product and where appropriate per specified quantity of food as suggested for consumption.4. The total quantity of the specific nutrients, which provide the characterizing essential features per 100 grams or 100 ml of the food product and where appropriate per specified quantity of food as suggested for consumption.5. The special cases in which the food is used and the suitable amount permissible for daily consumption.6. Storage conditions before and after opening of the package.7. The procedures of preparation and use, and in the case of baby and infant foods the procedures shall be indicated according to the age of child.8. The following cautionary statement shall be declared: "To be Used Under Medical Supervision," wherever applicable to certain food.9. The amount of added sweeteners accompanied by the following cautionary statements:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Aspartame: "Not to be used by persons who have phenylketonuria," "The maximum intake shall not exceed 40mg/kg of body weight."- Saccharin: "Use of this product may be hazardous to your health, because it contains saccharin which has been determined to cause cancer to laboratory animals."- Manitol: "Excess of consumed quantity of manitol over 20g per day may cause diarrhea."

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Certification/ Requirements	Remarks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sorbitol or xylitol: Excess of consumed quantity of sorbitol or xylitol over 40g per day may cause diarrhea. <p>10. Not to be described or marked in such a manner that misleads the consumer.</p>
Biotech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saudi Arabia does not permit imports of foodstuffs that contain GE animal products. • If a product contains one or more GE plant ingredient, the information should be clearly communicated to the consumer by labeling. • A triangle should be drawn on the label with text that should read "Contains Genetically Modified Product (s). • MOCI will not accept a statement that says "This Product May Contain biotech Ingredients." • The biotech statement must be clearly written in Arabic and English languages with ink color different from that of the main product tag.
Colours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulated by GS 285/1999 (Coloring Matter Used in Food Stuff) • For Coloring matters, their mixtures, preparations and diluents used in foodstuffs, the following additional information must be declared: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Common name 2. Color index number 3. Name of solvent or diluents 4. Production and expiration dates in a non-coded manner (day-month-year) 5. Dye purity 6. The statement "Free from alcohol" 7. The statement "Color matter for use in foodstuffs.
Flavours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common name and code number if found (GS 707/1997)
Preservatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulated by (GS 356/1994) • SSA 73/1978 is concerned with Benzoic Acid, Sodium Benzoate and Potassium Benzoate Used in Preservation of Foodstuffs • Labelling requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Common name or EEC number - Statement "Preservative for Use in Food Products"
Emulsifiers, stabilizers and thickeners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labelling requirements: Common name or EEC no. (GS 381/1994)
Gelatin, lecithin and mono and diglycerides	The source shall be mentioned

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Certification/ Requirements	Remarks
Sweeteners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regulated by GS 995/1998• Labelling requirements:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The name of sweeteners or INS numbers– The amount of sweeteners matter, mg/liter or kg in case of using combination of sweeteners, the amount of each in combination shall be declared.• The following warning must be declared in the case of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Aspartame: "Not to be used by persons who have phenyl ketonuria."– Saccharine: "Use of this product may be hazardous to your health because it contains saccharin which has been determine to cause cancer in laboratory animals."– Sugar alcohol: "Excess of consumed quantity may cause diarrhea."– (Manitol: "Excess of consumed quantity of manitol over 20g per day may cause diarrhea."– Sorbitol or xylitol: Excess of consumed quantity of sorbitol or xylitol over 40g per day may cause diarrhea.)
Antioxidants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Labelling Requirements:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Common name or EEC number– A statement "Antioxidants permitted for use in foodstuffs" in case of antioxidant containers (GS 357/1994)
Permitted food additives in edible oils and fats	Refer to SSA 106/1978
Food products formulated specifically for use by diabetics uses	Shall contain the statement "Food for special dietary use or food for diabetic."
Prepackaged foodstuffs prepared for feeding animals	The statement "Unfit for human consumption" or "Special for animal Feeding only" shall be clearly and prominently declared on the label.
Other Information	
Product Inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At the port of entry:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Herbal preparations, health and supplementary foods are inspected by the Ministry of Health– Live animals, plants, seeds and animal feed are inspected by the Ministry of Agriculture– All other imported foodstuffs are inspected by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry inspectors• If a consignment is rejected for not adhering to pertinent Saudi Standards or gulf standards, the importer is requested to re-export or destroy the product
Baby Foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Canned Baby Foods regulated by SSA 676/1992

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infant foods based on milk are regulated by SSA 675/1994
Frozen Chicken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regulated by SSA 117/1979• If the result of the Salmonella test is positive in more than one sample out of five samples tested, the whole shipment is rejected
Biotech	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saudi Arabia does not permit imports of foodstuffs that contain GE animal products• Prohibited unless the GMO is certified safe for human and animal consumption• (Please refer to labeling requirements for biotech products above)• PCR Real Time Method used for GE testing, threshold is set at 0.9 percent. Products with less than 0.9 percent of GE content are exempt from further testing for six months (after which, these products must be tested and recertified)
Food Samples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Usually sent to Saudi Arabia by D.H.L. and similar carriers• Exempted from Saudi labeling and shelf life regulations• Subject to inspection at ports of entry• Must be accompanied by a commercial invoice specifying that the product is not for sale and has no commercial value
Packaging and Container Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some of the main requirements in SSA 1149/1997 (Food Packages-part 1-General Requirements) are listed below:<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. All packaging materials used in fabricating, forming, or treating packages shall be of food grade for contact with foods and in compliance with relevant Saudi standards.2. They shall be clean and in a condition that does not allow any contamination probabilities of the contained material.3. They shall maintain the properties of the packaged material and protect it from gaining undesirable odors, flavors and tastes.4. They shall offer protection to the product against contamination with microorganisms, insect, rodents, and dirt in the cases of products that requires it.5. They shall be impermeable to moisture in the cases of food products that require it.6. They shall offer necessary protection against environmental conditions and mechanical hazards such as impacts, vibration, static stresses, and they shall be in an intact appearance during handling.7. They shall not affect the container as a result of migration of some of their constituents that may react or be mixed with the food materials.8. It shall not be in a pharmaceutical shape.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SASO 1301/1997 deals with specifications for the general requirements of plastic packages used for packaging food materials. Per the standard, the following labeling information should be written on labels of plastic packages used to package foodstuffs: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Type of plastic material 2. Weight, capacity, number, or dimensions based on the type of packages 3. Statement of food grade 4. Purpose and type of application 5. Directions for usage 6. Warnings if applicable
Aflatoxins	Gulf Standard No. 841/1997 regulates the maximum limits aflatoxins permitted in foods and animal feeds.
Radioactivity Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gulf Standard No. 988/1998 is concerned with limits of radioactivity levels (gamma rays, cesium 134, 137) permitted in foodstuffs, drinking water and animal feeding stuffs. • The limits of radioactivity levels permitted in food products shall not exceed the following limits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 10 becquerel/kg or liter in water – 30 becquerel/kg or liter in milk and its products – 30 becquerel/kg liter in liter in baby foods – 75 becquerel/kg or liter in other food products – 300 becquerel/kg in animal feeds • For dried products requiring reconstitution, the limits are determined after it is reconstituted with water.
Pesticides and Other Contaminants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GS 382/1994 "Maximum Limits for Pesticide Residues in Agricultural Food Products-Part 1" established the maximum limits for ten pesticide residues in foods and agricultural commodities or animal feed: Malathion, Bromophos, Diquat, Fenchlorfos, Pyrethrins, Quintozense, Parathion, Orthophenyl Phenol, Methidathion and Fentin. • GS 422/1994 "Maximum Limits for Pesticide Residues in Agricultural Food Products-Part 2" establishes the maximum limits for nine pesticide residues in agricultural and food products intended for human consumption. The residues are: dimethoate, chlorfenvinphos, crufomate, diazinon, dioxathion, diphenyl, diphenylamine, ethoxyquin and folpet.
Important regulatory, non-tariff barriers	Encountered by food product exporters in Saudi Arabia include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – biotech labeling

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- production & expiration date regulations- Arabic labeling requirements- declaration that animals slaughtered and exported to Saudi Arabia were not fed with feed containing protein, fat or remnants of animal origin- Halal Slaughtering certificate for both livestock and poultry meat.

Reference: USDA FAS GAIN Report

DISCLAIMER:

This document has been prepared by SPRING Singapore with the intention of assisting Singapore based exporters of food products. While every possible care has been taken in the preparation of this document, the information may not be completely accurate as policies may have changed or clear and consistent information on these policies were not available. They cannot be taken as the official interpretation of the regulations. It is highly recommended that Singapore based exporters verify the full set of certification and import requirements with the relevant authorities in importing country. **Please note that final import approval of any product is subject to the importing country's rules and regulations as interpreted by custom officials at the point of entry.**