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Switzerland

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and

Standards

Annual Report

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Report Highlights:

All Swiss food regulations referred to in this document are available on the internet in French and German. The address is: www.admin.ch/ch

SWITZERLAND:

FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL IMPORT REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS (FAIRS)

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DISCLAIMER: This report has been prepared by the Office of Agricultural Affairs of the USDA/Foreign Agricultural Service in Geneva, Switzerland for U.S. exporters of domestic food and agricultural products. While every possible care has been taken in the preparation of this report, information provided may not be completely accurate either because policies have changed since its preparation, or because clear and consistent information about these policies was not available. It is highly recommended that U.S. exporters verify the full set of import requirements with their foreign customers, who are normally best equipped to research such matters with local authorities, before any goods are shipped. FINAL IMPORT APPROVAL OF ANY PRODUCT IS SUBJECT TO THE IMPORTING COUNTRY'S RULES AND REGULATIONS AS INTERPRETED BY BORDER OFFICIALS AT THE TIME OF PRODUCT ENTRY.

Please contact this office, if you have any comments, corrections or suggestions about the material contained in this report.

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A. FOOD LAWS

The new Swiss Food Law (SR 817.0) was put in force in 1995. According to Swiss regulators the new implementing regulations fulfill the Swiss Federal Council policy to move towards greater harmonization with EC standards. Although Switzerland voted in 1992 against joining the European Economic Area (EEA), Switzerland is still member in the EFTA and has observer status in the EEA/EFTA working groups on standards. It is keen to keep on schedule with the general shift by EEA participants to EC standards.

The regulations cover all food products as well as tobacco and packaging and labeling standards. Regulations on labeling and declaration are also in the Regulation on Declarations (SR 941.281.1). As a general rule,

Switzerland applies the method of positive lists for food, food additives and preservatives. This means that only ingredients mentioned in the regulations are allowed. Ingredients not permitted by the regulation are generally forbidden but may be approved on request by the Federal authorities.

Genetically modified organisms (GMO) have to be approved by the Federal Office of Public Health according to the procedure prescribed by the Regulation on the Approval of GMO (SR 817.021.35).

B. LABELING REQUIREMENTS

For labeling requirements see the Regulation on Foodstuff (SR 817.02), the Regulation on Declarations (SR 941.281.1) and the Regulation on Nutritional Value (SR 817.021.55). Foodstuff has to be labeled in one of the three national languages (German, French and Italian). Country of origin has to be indicated. The nutrition value labeling requirement is less stringent than the "Nutrition Facts" labeling. Food or food ingredients containing DNA from GMO must be labeled as GMO product. As example: Lecithin (GMO product). Health claims on non-therapeutical food are generally not allowed. The labeling "Organic Food" is legally protected, see Regulations on Organic Food (SR 910.18).

C. FOOD ADDITIVE REGULATION

The use and declaration of additives in food is governed by the Regulation on Additives (SR 817.021.22). There is a positive list of additives permitted, which may vary from product to product depending on use and need of the additive. Ingredients not mentioned in the list may be approved, per request, on a single case decision by the Federal Office of Public Health.

D. PESTICIDE AND OTHER CONTAMINANTS

Limits and levels on pesticides and other contaminants can be found in the Regulation on Contaminants (SR 817.021.23).

E. OTHER REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

The imports of meat and meat products is under the authority of the Federal Office of Veterinary Affairs. The Federal Office of Public Health is responsible once the meat is imported into Switzerland. While standards on food are regulated by federal law, the testing and enforcement is done by Cantonal authorities. The Federal Office of Public Health, Division Approvals is the certification and approval agency for new food items, imported food and special food.

Therapeutical items have to be approved by the IKS, Intercantonal Control Agency for Drugs.

The main regulations on food are:

Swiss Food Law (SR 817.0)

Regulation on Foodstuff (SR 817.02)

Regulation on Additives (SR 817.021.22)

Regulation on Contaminants (SR 817.021.23)

Regulation on Nutritional Value (SR 817.021.55)

Regulation on Mushrooms (SR 817.022.291)

Regulation on Meat Hygiene (SR 817.190)

Regulation on Import, Transfer and Export of Foodstuff and Consumer Goods (SR 817.41)

F. OTHER SPECIFIC STANDARDS

Switzerland has a very strict approach on special claims, such as health claims. Special labeling / advertising for a quality naturally occurring in such a product is not permitted. For example: The statement of "Cholesterol free" on vegetable oil or "Fat free" on soft drinks is forbidden.

G. COPYRIGHT/TRADEMARK LAWS

The production and conditions of labeling for organic food is governed by the Regulations on Organic Food (SR 910.18).

H. IMPORT PROCEDURE

Import procedure is governed by the Regulation on Import, Transfer and Export of Foodstuff and Consumer Goods (SR 817.41). Special leaflets are available for the registration of new products, food supplements and special food like high energy food for sports persons.

I. APPENDIX A - MAJOR REGULATORY AGENCIES

BAG

Federal Office of Public Health
Dr. Martin Brügger
Section Approvals
Schwarzenburgerstrasse 165
3003 Bern
Switzerland

Phone: +41 31 322 95 70

Fax: +41 31 322 95 74

BVET

Federal Office of Veterinary Affairs Dr. Peter Dollinger
Division Approval and Enforcement
Schwarzenburgerstrasse 161
3003 Bern
Switzerland

Phone: +41 31 323 85 03

Fax: +41 31 323 85 22

IKS

Intercantonal Control Agency for Drugs Erlachstrasse 8
Postfach
3000 Bern 9

Phone: +41 31 322 02 11
Fax: +41 31 322 02 12

All regulations can be ordered with the number (SR X.X) at:

EDMZ
Swiss Government Printing Office
3005 Bern
Switzerland

Phone: +41 31 322 39 51
Fax: +41 31 322 39 75

APPENDIX B - LOCAL CONTACTS

FIAL
Swiss Food Industry Association
Elfenstrasse 19
Postfach 246
3000 Bern 16

Phone: +41 31 352 11 88
Fax: +41 31 352 11 85

Colgro
Food Retailers Association
Güterstrasse 78
Postfach 656
4010 Basel

Phone: +41 61 271 33 85
Fax: +41 61 272 30 39

SNV
Swiss Norms Association
Mühlebachstrasse 54
8008 Zürich

Phone: +41 1 254 54 54
Fax: +41 1 254 54 74

APPENDIX C - FOOD ADDITIVES

See Regulation on Additives (SR 817.021.22).

