



Foreign Agricultural Service

**GAIN Report**

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**Saudi Arabia**

**Biotechnology**

**Saudi Arabia Bans Imports of GMO Animal  
Products, Revises GMO Labeling & Extends Grace  
Period**

**2000**

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**Report Highlights:**

**On December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2000, the Saudi Minister of Commerce, Mr. Osama J. Faqih issued ministerial directive no 166 to extend the grace period for GMO labeling, ban the importation of genetically modified animal products and put a new requirement for GMO health certificate.**

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Includes PSD changes: No  
Includes Trade Matrix: No  
Unscheduled Report  
Riyadh [SA2], SA

Following is the summary of the Saudi Minister of Commerce's Ministerial Directive No 166 issued on 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2000:

**1. Ban on GMO Animal Products:** one of the main features of the Ministerial Directive No 166, is the **IMMEDIATE AND TOTAL** ban placed on the imports of foodstuffs containing genetically engineered animal products to the Kingdom. The directive did not give reasons for the total ban of animal products. However, ATO\ trade sources believe that the decision was taken to make sure all imported foodstuffs are Halal and do not contain products from swine and other animals banned for consumption by Islamic religion.

**2. Rescinded Free GMO labeling:** the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) dropped the requirement for GMO free labeling for all food and pet foods as stipulated in its last August directive. One should remember that the earlier directive (now rescinded) called for a circle drawn and in the circle a statement printed that reads "Free of Genetically Modified Products."

**3. Positive labeling:** if a product contains **one or more genetically modified plant ingredients**, the information should be clearly communicated to the consumer by labeling. A triangle should be drawn and in it the text should read "Contains Genetically Modified Product (s)." **It should be noted that the Ministry will not accept a statement that says "This Product May Contain GMO Ingredients."**

**4. Bilingual Labeling:** The GMO statement must be clearly written in Arabic and English languages with an ink different from that of the main product tag.

**5. Health Certificate:** GMO products or genetically engineered products which are exported to Saudi Arabia must have been approved in the country of origin for human consumption. Each shipment must be accompanied by health certificate issued by GMO licensing government agencies (such as the FDA) stating that the GMO ingredient (s) used in the foodstuff is approved in the country of origin (United States) for human consumption. One certificate could be issued that certifies a list of GMO items used in a foodstuff.

**6. Quality Standard:** All genetically modified foods products should be in compliance with legal and ethical controls observed in the Kingdom and must meet pertinent Saudi Arabian standard specifications.

**7. Locally Produced Foodstuffs:** The GMO labeling requirements will also apply to locally produced agricultural products.

**8. Grace Period Extension:** The new directive extended the grace period (initially due to expire at the end of January 2001) to December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001 before enforcing the new GMO (one year grace period from the issuance of directive based on the Islamic calendar). The ministry believes the new deadline will give both local and foreign foodstuff suppliers\producers adequate time to comply with the new GMO labeling requirements. The extension was granted as a result of repeated requests to MOC officials by ATO\Riyadh, high level officials from USDA, USTR, State, and representatives of other agricultural product supplying countries. Also, the U.S. private sector (the U.S. Grains Council, American Soybean Association, and the Groceries Manufacturers of American) efforts to educate and mobilize the Saudi private sector to lobby the Ministry of Commerce were critical to obtaining the delay. The new labeling deadline will allow time for continued dialogue with the Saudi Ministry of Commerce on the safety of GMO foodstuffs.

END OF REPORT