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Saudi Arabia

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards

Update

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Report Highlights:

Saudi Arabian Standards Organization (SASO) is responsible for setting national standards for commodities and products. The Ministry of Commerce does testing of prepackaged foodstuffs. The following report contains key regulations and standards applied to imported food products in the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia is a $6 billion market for food and agricultural products with the U.S. share estimated at about 5 percent.

Includes PSD Changes: No
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DISCLAIMER: This report has been prepared by the Office of Agricultural Affairs of the USDA/Foreign Agricultural Service in (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia) 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 maybe no longer complete nor precise as some import requirements are subject to frequent change. It is highly recommended that U.S. exporters ensure that all necessary customs clearance requirements have been verified with local authorities through your foreign importer before the sale conditions are finalized. FINAL IMPORT APPROVAL OF ANY PRODUCT IS ALWAYS SUBJECT TO THE RULES AND REGULATIONS AS INTERPRETED BY THE COUNTRY OF IMPORT AT THE TIME OF PRODUCT ENTRY.

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I. FOOD LAWS

Saudi Arabia is the most influential member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which includes five other countries in the Arabian Peninsula: United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar. As a group, the GCC is striving to create a common set of food standards, with the Saudi Arabian Standards Organization (SASO) as the lead agency. SASO is the only Saudi organization responsible for setting national standards for commodities and products, measurements, testing methods, meteorological symbols and terminology, commodity definitions, safety measures, and environmental testing, as well as other subjects approved by the organization's Board of Directors. While standards are set by SASO, Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry Laboratories does testing of most processed and packaged food items at various ports of entry. The Saudi Ministry of Municipality and Rural Affairs' Environmental Control Department tests foodstuffs at the point of sale for product safety standards.

Although SASO has an advisory, rather than executive role, it coordinates its activities among different executing agencies in the Kingdom to control product quality and standards. SASO has issued about 600 production and testing standards on food since its establishment in 1972 and is presently working on new standards. Saudi standards are based mainly on CODEX Alimentarius regulations and to some extent on European and U.S. standards but modified to reflect local conditions.

The Kingdom is the largest and fastest growing market for high value foodstuffs in the gulf region. With the exception of very limited non-tariff barriers, foodstuffs are imported freely. The main regulatory barriers that U.S. foodstuff exporters encounter are: BIOTECH labeling, shorter shelf life requirements compared to U.S. standards, strict production and expiration dates regulations, Arabic labeling and Halal Slaughtering (animal slaughtering requirements according to Islamic Law). See Appendix 3 for major trade barriers.

II. LABELING REQUIREMENTS

A. General Requirements

Regulations for labeling of prepackaged foodstuffs are found in Gulf Standard 9/1995. This is a GCC-wide standard, which was prepared by the State of Kuwait. In sum, prepackaged food product labels should be in Arabic or include an Arabic language translation of the label. Labels must contain at a minimum: the product name, packer's name, country of origin or manufacture, listing of ingredients, instructions, where applicable, for the end use of the product, the shelf-life of the product.

GCC 9/1995 is a document of 10 pages. The labeling requirements are as follows:

? Labels of prepackaged foodstuffs and the attached labeling shall be in Arabic language. When one language or more is used in addition to Arabic language, all information in the other languages shall be the same as the information written in the Arabic language.

? In case of food products containing animal fats, meat and meat derivatives, excretions and their products such as gelatin and rennet, the kind of animal from which they are taken shall be declared taking into consideration to declare on the label that they are legally permitted.

? In case of 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.

? Name of foodstuff: Specific, not generic, name of the prepackaged food. 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: Complete list of ingredients in descending order of proportion, including additives permitted for use according to Saudi or International Standards and Legislation such as preservative, coloring matters, etc.

In June 2006, Saudi Arabia dropped a requirement that labels on imported products be revised to reflect the exact seasoning versus the usual language of “natural flavorings” used by the industry. The requested label modifications were bordering on a demand for proprietary information which forced some U.S. exporters to contemplate removing their products from the market. Saudi Arabia’s decision not to request this additional information follows intervention by the Foreign Agricultural Service.

? Net contents in metric units (volume in case of liquids).

? Name and address of the manufacturer, packer, distributor, importer, exporter or vendor.

? Special Storage, transportation and preparation instructions, if any.

? Additives

? Country of Origin

B. Shelf Life

In December 2005, Saudi Arabia implemented a voluntary shelf life standard (manufacturer-determined use-by dates) for most foodstuffs with the exception of selected perishable foods (fresh or chilled meat and poultry; fresh milk and fresh milk based products; margarine; fresh fruit juice; table eggs, and baby foods) that must meet SASO’s established mandatory expiration periods. The revised standard (SASO 457/2005) will no longer ban imports of food product with less than half of its shelf life remaining.

Shelf life can only be shown by clear and unambiguous production and expiration dates. The use of any of the following statements for expressing expiration date is permissible.

- Expiration Date
- Use by (date)
- Fit for (from the day of production)
- Use Before (date)
- 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:

- ❖ Day-Month-Year: for foodstuffs with an expiration period less than three months.
- ❖ Month-Year: for foodstuffs with expiration exceeding three months.

Dates shall be engraved or in relief, printed to stamped with permanent ink directly on all packages or on their original label by the producer only. Adding stickers for production and expiration dates in not permissible. There shall be not more than one date of production or of expiration on the same package. Both dates shall not be subject to deletion, change or deceit.

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.

We recommend that when putting together an order for a Saudi importer, a U.S. exporter should cross check information contained on his/her food label, including Production/Expiration dates, with the Saudi buyer.

C. Additional Labeling Requirements

In addition to requirements per GCC 9/1995, the following labeling information must be declared for food additives and antioxidants used in foodstuffs:

? For coloring matters, their mixtures, preparations and diluents used in foodstuffs, the following additional information must be declared:

1. Common name
2. Color index number
3. Name of solvent or diluent
4. Production and expiration dates in a non-coded manner (day-month-year)
5. Dye purity
6. The statement “Free from alcohol”
6. The statement “Color matter for use in foodstuffs.”

? For Flavors permitted for use in Foodstuffs common name and code number (if found) must be declared on food products containers contained flavors.

? For preservatives permitted for use in food products, common name or EEC number and a statement “Preservative for Use in Food Products” in case of preservatives containers.

? For emulsifiers, stabilizers and thickeners permitted for use in foodstuffs, the following additional information must be declared:

1. Common name or EEC no.

2. In case of gelatin, lecithin and mono and diglycerides the source shall be mentioned.

? For Sweeteners Permitted for Use in Food Products:

1. The name of sweeteners or INS numbers

2. Food products formulated specifically for use by diabetics or for other special nutritional uses shall contain the statement “Food for special dietary use or food for diabetic.”

3. 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:

4. In case of aspartame, “Not to be used by persons who have phenyl ketonuria.”

5. In case of 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.”

6. In the case of sugar alcohol "Excess of consumed quantity may cause diarrhea.”

? The following additional labeling information must be declared for antioxidants permitted for use in foodstuffs:

1. Common name or EEC number

2. A statement “Antioxidants permitted for use in foodstuffs” in case of antioxidant containers.

D. Requirements Specific to Nutritional Labeling

In addition to the general labeling requirements as stated in GS 9/1995, further information must be declared for prepackaged foods for special dietary use per Gulf Standard No. 654/1996 (General Requirements for Prepackaged Foods for Special Dietary Use). Following is some of the labeling information to be stated.

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:

a) In the case of aspartame: “Not to be used by persons who have phenylketonuria,” “The maximum intake shall not exceed 40mg/kg of body weight.”

b) In the case of 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.”

c) In the case of manitol: “Excess of consumed quantity of manitol over 20g per day may cause diarrhea.”

d) In the case of sorbitol or xylitol: Excess of consumed quantity of sorbitol or xylitol over 40g per day may cause diarrhea.

10. Not to be described or marked in such a manner that misleads the consumer.

E. Biotech Labeling

In December 2001, Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Industry (MOCI) implemented its biotech labeling decree for processed foodstuffs. The decree requires a positive biotech labeling if a product contains genetically modified vegetable (plant) ingredients. In a similar move, the Saudi Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) implemented in January 2004 a comparable biotech-labeling requirement on animal feed, fruit and vegetables while banning imports of biotech seeds.

Following is a summary of the biotech labeling requirements implemented by the MOCI:

A. Positive labeling: If a product contains one or more genetically modified 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). The Ministry will not accept a statement that says "This Product May Contain biotech Ingredients." Saudi Arabia does not permit imports of foodstuffs that contain genetically engineered animal products. According to the MOCI, local food producers must also abide by the biotech labeling requirements.

B. Bilingual labeling: The biotech statement must be clearly written in Arabic and English languages with ink color different from that of the main product tag.

C. Health certificate: Biotech products exported to Saudi Arabia must have been approved in the country of origin for human or animal consumption. Each shipment must be accompanied by a health certificate issued by a government agency stating that the biotech ingredient used in the foodstuff is approved in the country of origin for human or animal consumption.

D. PCR Real Time Method: MOC approved the PCR Real Time Method for biotech testing and set a one percent threshold for cross contamination. King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center (KFSH) based in Riyadh conducts biotech testing on imported and locally

produced foodstuffs. Saudi importers are charged a testing fee of $480 per product sample tested. It takes approximately four weeks for the importer to receive the test results. If the test results reveal more than one percent of biotech ingredient, the product is either destroyed locally or re-exported to the country of origin.

E. Biotech health certificate: The Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry has agreed to accept health certificates issued by state departments of agriculture for high value products instead of the previous requirement that the certificates be issued by a federal government agency such as USDA or FDA for U.S. products. The Ministry has reiterated its refusal to consider any health certificate issued by exporting companies or other private organizations including notary public statements.

F. For U.S. grains: The MOA has accepted a one-time biotech grains certification statement from the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) submitted to the Ministry in 2003. The statement certified that the exported transgenic grains are the same as those consumed in the United States. The approved statement eliminates the need for a shipment-by-shipment positive biotech certification for corn and soybean meal exported to the Kingdom. The MOA still requires each shipment of biotech fruits and vegetables to be labeled and accompanied by a biotech health certificate. In 2004, the MOA banned imports of all types of biotech seeds.

G. It is required that 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 a biotech licensing government agency (such as the FDA) stating that the biotech 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 biotech items used in a foodstuff.

H. All genetically modified food products should be in compliance with legal and ethical controls observed in the Kingdom and must meet pertinent Saudi Arabian standard specifications. The biotech labeling requirements will also apply to locally produced agricultural products. The biotech-labeling requirement went into effect December 1, 2001.

In February 2005, the Saudi Government announced the establishment of a national high-level committee consisting of four ministries, the Saudi Arabian Standard Organization (SASO), universities and the private sector to conduct a comprehensive policy review of current biotech labeling requirements. The committee distributed its first draft standard for public comment in early May 2005 and received comments through August 2005. After taking into consideration comments received from all interested parties including USDA, SASO distributed for public comment three draft standards in early 2006 (General Requirements for Genetically Modified Processed Food and Feed, General Requirements for Genetically Modified unprocessed Agricultural Products, and General Requirements for Risk Assessment and Traceability). Comments on all of the three draft standards were delivered to SASO by the end of March 2006. The organization is currently reviewing comments delivered on the three draft standards. SASO is currently considering two options: (1) issue another sets of final draft standards after incorporating major comments received or (2) go ahead and issue its biotech standard based on the available information. FAS\Riyadh anticipates SASO would include some of the comments provided by the U.S. industry in its final standard that could benefit US agricultural interests.

I. Following is a sample certificate issued by a state department of agriculture and accepted by Saudi port authorities:

Certificate of Health and Free Sale, Sanitary and Purity

> "I, (name of state official), do hereby certify that (name of U.S. company and address) operates a food manufacturing plant which is inspected at regular intervals by full-time inspectors employed by the (name of state) Department of Agriculture. The facility's equipment and raw materials, as well as the processing and packaging procedure, meets all sanitary requirements and the operation is in good standing in every respect. We certify the following listing of products as freely, and without qualification, sold and used in the United States of America (USA).
>
> This product may contain genetically modified organisms.
>
> This certificate shall be good for one year from the date of issue.
>
> This certificate is not to be construed as either an expression of implied warranty of any products of said company, nor shall it be used for propaganda, advertising, or other simple purposes.
>
> This certificate shall not be altered after the issue date, or it will be deemed void by the (name of state) Department of Agriculture and the undersigned.

(The certificate should be issued with the seal of the State Department of Agriculture, notarized, and signed by the appropriate State Department of Agriculture official)."

II. Below is GIPSA's one-time grains certification statement accepted by the Saudi Ministry of Agriculture in lieu of a shipment-by-shipment biotech certification requirement.

Crop	Statement
Soybeans	We hereby certify that the soybeans may come from genetically modified soybeans of the type Monsanto Roundup Ready Soybeans that have been approved for import into the EEC under directive 96/281/ EC. The soybeans may come from genetically modified soybeans of the type Monsanto Roundup Ready Soybeans. Transgenic soybeans commercially produced in the United States have completed the necessary review under the U.S. regulatory process for determining the safety of new agricultural biotechnology products. This well coordinated regulatory process sets U.S. standards for human, animal, and plant health, and environmental safety. The transgenic soybeans used for domestic purposes are the same as those used for export.
Corn	Transgenic corn commercially produced in the United States has completed the necessary review under the U.S. regulatory process for determining the safety of new agricultural biotechnology products. This well coordinated regulatory process sets U.S. standards for human, animal, and plant health, and environmental safety. The transgenic corn used for domestic purposes is the same as corn used for export.
Testing Parameters	The sample was tested using a method equal to or exceeding the performance of the A's GIPSA testing recommendations, as set out in Directive 9181.1.

III. PACKAGING AND CONTAINER REQUIREMENTS

In 1997, Saudi Arabia issued standard No. SSA 1149/1997 entitled Food Packages-part 1-General Requirements. Some of the main requirements are listed below:

? 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.

? They shall be clean and in a condition that does not allow any contamination probabilities of the contained material.

? They shall maintain the properties of the packaged material and protect it from gaining undesirable odors, flavors and tastes.

? They shall offer protection to the product against contamination with microorganisms, insect, rodents, and dirt in the cases of products that requires it.

? They shall be impermeable to moisture in the cases of food products that require it.

? 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.

? 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.

? It shall not be in a pharmaceutical shape.

Saudi standard No. SASO 1301/1997 deals with specifications for the general requirements of plastic packages used for packaging food materials. The three page regulations require limits among other things that the concentration of a vinyl chloride monomer not to exceed 1 mg per kg of the plastic material, or 0.01 mg per kg of the packaged food material if the packages are made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC).

Per the standard, the following labeling information should be written on labels of plastic packages used to package foodstuffs:

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

IV. FOOD ADDITIVE REGULATIONS

1. The Kingdom and the other five Gulf Cooperation countries have established the following major gulf-wide standards that regulate additives used in foodstuffs. Each standard contains a positive additive list.

_ An eight-page Gulf Standard No. 285/1999 entitled “Coloring Matter Used in Food Stuff.” See appendix II for coloring matter permitted.

_ Gulf Standard No. 707/1997 deals with flavors permitted for use in foodstuffs. The standard lists all natural and artificial flavors as well as flavor enhancers permitted for use in food products intended for human consumption.

_ Gulf Standard No. 356/1994 lists preservatives permitted for use in food products. See appendix II for preservatives permitted in foodstuffs.

_ Gulf Standard No. 381/1994 lists emulsifiers, stabilizers and thickeners permitted for use in foodstuffs (see appendix II for permitted list).

_ Gulf Standard No. 995/1998 deals with sweeteners permitted for use in food products. Refer to appendix II for the list.

_ SSA 73/1978 is concerned with Benzoic Acid, Sodium Benzoate and Potassium Benzoate Used in Preservation of Foodstuffs.

SSA 106/1978 lists permitted food additives in edible oils and fats

English copies of the above and other standards are available at the SASO. Interested U.S exporters can purchase them from SASO’s information center. Please refer to appendix 1 for coordinates of the center.

SASO depends heavily on CODEX Alimentarius regulations and to some extent on European and U.S. standards when drafting most of Saudi or Gulf Standards including food additives,

pesticide and other contaminants. The Kingdom 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.

V. PESTICIDE AND OTHER CONTAMINANTS

The Kingdom and other members of the Gulf Cooperation countries have developed positive pesticide and other contaminants lists. Per SASO the lists have international context as they were mainly adapted from CODEX Alimentarius standards. The following are the major Gulf/Saudi standards enforced in the Kingdom:

Gulf Standard No. 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.
Gulf Standard No. 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.

Gulf Standard No. 357/1994 "Antioxidants Permitted for use in Foodstuffs" lists antioxidants and antioxidants synergists permitted for use in food products. Refer to appendix II for permitted antioxidants.

Gulf Standard No. 841/1997 regulates the maximum limits aflatoxins permitted in foods and animal feeds.

Gulf Standard No. 988/1998 is concerned with limits of radioactivity levels (gemma 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:

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.

English copies of the above and other standards are available at the Saudi Arabian Standard Organization. Interested U.S. exporter can purchase them from SASO's information center. Please refer to appendix 1 for coordinates of the center.

The Ministry of Agriculture's (MAW) registers and enforces Saudi Arabian or Gulf standards on feed additives as well as pesticides used in agricultural products. Coordinates of the Ministry are found in Appendix I.

VI. OTHER REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

A. Product Registration

Herbal preparations, health and supplementary foods must be registered with the General Directorate of Medical and Pharmaceutical Licenses of the Saudi Ministry of Health in order to be marketed in the Kingdom. The registration is done through a local agent by submitting sample products and product brochures, which are studied and tested by the ministry's central laboratory. It takes about six months for the ministry to approve and license a product. The ministry charges about $300 as a registration fee.

A U.S. exporter needs to submit the following documents through its local agent to the Ministry in order to initiate the product registration and licensing process:

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2. An Authenticated copy of the agency registration certificate at the Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

3. When registering for herbal products, a copy of pharmaceutical wholesale license should be submitted by the local agent.

4. Certificate (s) issued by the health authorities in the country of origin clearly stating that the following should be provided:

- The company is licensed to manufacture the products in the country of origin (state license number and date).
- The company is permitted to sell the product in the country of origin (certificate of free sale)
- The company follows good manufacturing practice.
- Coloring agents, diluents and other incorporate substances in the product formula are permitted in the country of origin (if the free sale certificate states such information it will be sufficient).
- Package insert and applicable information stated on the pack are the same as that approved and currently marketed in the country of origin. Package insert shall be in Arabic and English languages. The company is obliged to add and/or delete any information required for handling the product in the Kingdom as determined by the registration committee.

5. A certificate issued by the company and authenticated by the relevant authorities in the country of origin clearly stating the following information about the product:

- Registration number and date and date of marketing in the country of origin.
- Trade and/or generic name.
- Full composition (the scientific name of active and inactive ingredients and their quantities)
- Therapeutic category (if any).
- The composition of product to be exported to the kingdom is the same as that market in the country of origin.

- Names of countries where the product is currently marketed.
- A certificate of analysis indicating the results of completed analyses for the submitted samples.
- If the product contains ingredients of animal source the kind of animal must be specified.
- Percentage of alcohol in the finished product, if present, should be indicated with justification of that percentage.

6. Full specifications and methods of analyses of the finished product, as well as stability study and data including storage conditions.

7. Six samples of the product as well as samples of the outer package and product's label.
8. Abstracts of scientific references brochures and international scientific periodicals testifying to the efficacy and safety of the product.

B. Products Inspection

With the exception of herbal preparations, health and supplementary foods (inspected by the Ministry of Health) and live animals, plants, seeds and animal feed (inspected by the Ministry of Agriculture), all imported foodstuffs are inspected by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry inspectors at the port of entry. 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.

C. Imports of Samples

Samples destined to potential Saudi buyers or for display in Food Shows are exempt from Saudi labeling and shelf life regulations, but are subject to inspection at ports of entry. Samples, which are usually sent to Saudi Arabia by D.H.L. and similar carriers, must be accompanied by a commercial invoice specifying that the product is not for sale and has no commercial value.

D. Foodstuff Monitoring

The Environmental Protection Department at the Ministry of Municipality and Rural Affairs is responsible for establishing nationwide food sanitation laws and guidelines. Monitoring of products already in the market is done by inspectors at the municipality levels. The authorities inspect retailers, wholesalers, restaurants, bakeries, fast food chains, vegetable and meat markets for expiration dates, sanitary and storage conditions as well as product handling. Outlets found selling unhygienic or expired products are exposed to stiff financial fines, temporary closure or both.

F. Certification and Documents Requirements

All food products, whether imported for commercial purpose, or for display, or for sampling, must be fit for human consumption and should be within the shelf life set. The products must have a label or sticker showing the statutory information such as product name, country of origin, producer's name and address, production and expiry dates, etc. Bilingual labeling (Arabic/English) is required if the products are commercially imported. English labeling is sufficient for foodstuffs imported for display or sampling purposes.

For commercial importation, the following documents are required:

1. Commercial invoice showing FOB price, freight and CFR value
2. Certificate of origin
3. Halal slaughter certificate for meat and meat products. Halal certificate is also required for cheese and cheese products if they contain rennet of animal origin.
4. Health certificate from the country of origin
5. 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)

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. Certificates number three to five listed above must be attested by any of the Saudi missions located in the States. Before taking the certificates to a Saudi mission, U.S. exporters must make sure that the certificates were first authenticated by any U.S./Arab Chamber of Commerce, U.S. Saudi Arabian Business Council, or U.S. Chamber of Commerce located in the city or area where the exporting firm is based.

For small samples, simple documentation as follows is required:

* Invoice, showing consignee's name and address, details of product/s and also origin of goods.

* Packing list, if there are many items.

The above documents do not require legalization by the Saudi mission. An exporting company stamp and signature are sufficient. It is advisable to show on the invoice a nominal value of $5 -$10 for Customs purpose, with a statement that the goods are "Not For Sale – No Commercial Value"

For clearance of sea or airfreight cargo, a full set of documentation is required while for cargo sent by courier which do not require special certifications such as Halal, an invoice and country of origin certificate will be sufficient, provided the value is not more than $3,000.

VII. OTHER SPECIFIC STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

A. Certificate of Islamic Slaughter

Per Saudi Arabia Standard No. SSA 630/1990 (Animal Slaughtering Requirements According to Islamic Law), a Certificate of Islamic Slaughter must be issued for all meat and poultry products entering the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This certificate issued by Islamic institutions recognized by the Saudi Embassy or Consulates in the United States. Information related to the approved Islamic institutions may be obtained from the Saudi Embassy in Washington or the nearest Saudi Consulate (New York, Houston, or Los Angeles). Such certificates contain language certifying Islamic slaughter. The following language was taken from a recently issued Islamic Slaughtering certificate issued in the United States:

“ This is to certify that an Islamic representative inspected the above slaughter facility. The healthy animals/and or/poultry were inspected within 12 hours previous to slaughter by the United States Department of Agriculture official veterinarian. After processing, inspection was made and approved by the USDA Government Health inspector. Further, the animals

and /or poultry were slaughtered under the following statement, “slaughtered and processed in the name of God, the Almighty, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, God is Greatest.” Bismillahi Rahmani Rahim-Allahu Akbar. The animals and /or poultry covered by this certificate were slaughtered by means of a sharp knife, cutting through the skin, jugular vein, and trachea, to result in thorough bleeding of the carcass in preparation for dressing and evisceration.

B. Baby Foods

There are two Saudi Arabian standards that establish quality specification for baby foods. Canned Baby Foods and infant foods based on milk are regulated by SSA 676/1992 and SSA 675/1994 respectively. Copies of the standards can be purchased from the SASO’s Information Center.

C. Frozen Chickens

SSA 117/1979 deals with frozen chickens standard. Per the regulation, imported frozen chickens must meet the Islamic slaughtering requirements mentioned above. The standard also calls for salmonella testing for imported frozen chickens. If the result of the test is positive in more than one sample out of five samples tested, the whole shipment is rejected.

D. Animal Feed Requirements:

In 2001, the Saudi Ministry of Commerce issued a new requirement for poultry meat, beef and further processed meat and poultry products imports to the Kingdom. This directive requires that health certificates for imported poultry, and beef products clearly indicate that the animal slaughtered was not fed animal protein, animal fats, or animal by-products before it is allowed entry into the Kingdom. In January 2006, the Kingdom implemented a two-certificate approach for U.S. poultry and bovine meat products exports. The two-stage approach consists of: (1) an official FSIS export certificate and (2) a producer or manufacturer self-certification to cover any additional requirements not related to food safety or animal health. These requirements have sharply reduced imports of U.S. livestock and poultry meat and products to the Kingdom.

E. Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP)

On February 9, 2003, the Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued the Ministerial decree number 2436 to all Chambers of Commerce in the country requiring the insertion of a new clause in health certificates accompanying imported meat and meat products to make sure that the abattoirs used to produce meat & meat products exported to the Kingdom implement the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) as a system of production process control.

Following is the summary of unofficial translation of a copy of the new decree number 2436:

Reference is made to the Ministerial decree #123 of April 10, 2001 which spelled out the rules and regulations to be followed when importing all types of meat: chilled, frozen or canned beef, veal, mutton, goat meat and poultry meat and their by products from safe origins to the Saudi Arabian.

Based on the need to protect consumer safety and health, it is required to implement the HACCP regime in all abattoirs producing meat and meat products. To facilitate this, a further Ministerial decree number 2436 was issued on February 8, 2003. The decision requires the insertion of a new clause, referred to as number 13, to the general regulations and condition

to be followed when meat and meat products are imported to Saudi Arabia. The text of the clause # 13 should read as follows:

“The abattoir (s) implements HACCP procedures in all stages of meat and meat”

F. Animal Quarantine Regulations

Over the years, Saudi Arabia has banned cattle, meat and meat products imports for health reasons. Cattle imports from countries affected by Mad Cow" disease, or Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), Foot and Mouth, and Cattle Plaque diseases have been banned for several years. Cattle imports from countries not affected by the diseases are subjected to strict quarantine regulations on arrival at Saudi ports. The country also bans meat and meat derivatives from countries affected by BSE (the Kingdom banned live cattle and cattle meat imports from Washington State due to the BSE case in that State). Saudi Arabia also banned transshipped livestock meat through countries banned from exporting meat and meat products because of infestation by BSE, FMD and other animal diseases. In addition it requested additional statements on the health certificate accompanying livestock and poultry meat shipment to indicate that the animals slaughtered for export to the Kingdom were not fed animal ruminants and were not treated with growth hormones.

Imports of live poultry, poultry meat and products are banned from countries affected by bird flu. Imports of live poultry are also banned from countries with the West Nile Virus epidemic.

VIII. COPYRIGHT AND/OR TRADEMARK LAWS

Royal Decree No. M/5 and Resolution of Council of Ministers No. 75 dated 1984 regulate trademark registration laws in the Kingdom. According to the decree, trademarks are registered with the Trademark Registration Department of the Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry through a local agent or lawyer.

Once registration application is received, the Trademark Registration Department will require one month time to study the presented documents to decided on the request. If an application is approved, the department will publish the trademark in the official government Arabic language newspaper (Hum Al-Qura) with the cost of publication paid by the agent or owner of the trademark. The total registration cost is estimated at about $2,000. Registered trademarks are protected for 10 years and can be renewed for another similar period or periods without any new inspection after republishing it in the official paper.

IX. IMPORT PROCEDURES

The majority of Saudi food imports enter the country via Jeddah port on the Red Sea or Dammam port on the Arabian Gulf. About 60-70 percent of all foodstuffs enter Jeddah port. Imports from Jordan, Syria, and nearby countries enter the Kingdom by truck.

King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh and King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah also receive significant quantities of food items, particularly fresh fruits, vegetables and chilled meat. Fresh and chilled products are usually cleared within 24 hours of arrival.

Customs Clearance

As stated earlier, foodstuff shipments must be accompanied by commercial invoice, health certificates and other documents listed in page 9. An importer translates the commercial invoice into Arabic language (per Saudi customs requirements) and hands it to his customs clearing agent along with the other required documents in order to start customs clearing

process. Containers can be cleared in less than ten days provided all required documents are in order and imported products meet Saudi Arabian/Gulf specifications. If products are rejected by one of the Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry laboratories at a port of entry, an importer can appeal for re-test to the Director General of the Quality Control and Inspections Department of the Ministry. If an appeal is accepted, the Director General orders a sample (s) sent and re-tested by another Ministry's laboratory located in a different port (city). If the second test authenticates the initial results, the exporter is ordered to re-export or destroy the product.

APPENDIX I. GOVERNMENT REGULATORY AGENCY CONTACTS

In Saudi Arabia, standards are set by the Saudi Arabian Standards Organization (SASO). The testing of imported goods is implemented by Saudi Ministry of Commerce and Industry Laboratories at various ports of entry. The following are coordinates for SASO and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry:

Mr. Nabil Molla
Director General of SASO and Secretary General for Standardization & Metrology Org. of the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries.
Tel. 966-1-452-0000
Fax: 966-1-452-0086
Website: www.saso.org.sa

Saeed Al-Zahrani
Director Information Center
SASO
Tel: 966-1-452-0000, Extension 1335
Fax: 966-1-452-0193

Dr. Hamad Al-Awfy
Director General, Quality Control and Inspection Department
Ministry of Commerce and Industry
Tel: 966-1-401-3265
Fax: 966-1-402-8985
Website: www.commerce.gov.sa

Dr. Mohammed Al-Jasir
Director General
General Directorate of Nutrition Department
Ministry of Health
Tel: 966-1-464-0811
Fax: 966-1-464-5536
Website: www.moh.gov.sa

Mr. Mohammed Al-Issa
Director General
Environmental Protection
Ministry of Municipality and Rural Affairs
Tel: 966-1-442-1593
Fax: 966-1-441-6748

Live animals & plants and animal feed are inspected by the Saudi Ministry of Agriculture (MOA). Following are coordinates of some the important departments.

Dr. Abdul Ghaniy Al-Fadhl
Director General
Plant and Animal Quarantine Department
MOA
Tel: 966-1-404-4292
Fax: 966-1-401-1323

Mr. Khalid Al-Ahmed
Director General
Livestock Department (registers and tests feed additives)
MOA
Tel: 966-1-404-4555
Fax: 966-1-404-4265

Mr. Mohammed Al-Mazroa
Director General (registers and testes seeds as well as pesticides used in foodstuff)
Agricultural Research Department
MOA
Tel: 966-1-405-5848
Fax: 966-1-405-5848

APPENDIX II. LIST OF MAJOR FOOD ADDITIVES

Coloring Matters Used in Foodstuffs per Gulf Standard No. 23/1984

Table-1: Natural colors permitted for use in coloring of foodstuffs

Color	Color Index Number 1971	Notes
Red to Yellow Shades		
Annatto Extract	75120	Bixin, Norbixin
Beta-Carotene	75130	
Beta-Apo-8-Carotenal	40820	
Beta-Apo-8-Carotenoic Acid	40825	
Canthaxanthin	40850	
Carrot Oil		
Red to Purple Shade		
Enocianina	-	Grape skin extract (anthocyanine)
Beet Powder	-	
Paprika	-	
Orange and Yellow Dyes		
Saffron	75100	
Turmeric Powder	75300	
Curcumine	75300	
Turmeric Oleoresin	-	
Riboflavin	-	
Green Dyes		
Chlorophyll	75810	
Chlorophyll copper complex	75810	
Brown Dyes		
Caramel	-	Plain
Caramel	-	Made by the ammonium sulphite process
Black Dyes		
Toasted partially defatted cooked cotton seed flour	-	
Inorganic Dyes		
Titanium dioxide	77891	White dye 6
Iron oxides	77489	

Color	Color Index Number 1971	Notes
Gold Aluminum Silver	77480 77000 77820	Metallic Metallic
Different Dyes Fruit juices Vegetable juices	 - -	

TABLE – 2: Permitted synthetic colors for use in foodstuff

Color	Color Index Number 1971	Chemical Formula	Notes
Red Colors Azorubine	 14720	 C20 H12 N2 Na2 O7 S2	 Food Red 3 (carmoisine)
Erythrosine	45430	C20 H6 I4 Na2 O5	Food Red 14
Ponceau 4 R	16255	C20 H11 N2 Na3 O10 S3	Food Red 7
Red 2G	18050	C18 H13 N3 Na2 O8 S2	Food Red 10
FD & C Red 40	16035	C18 H14 N2 Na2 O8 S2	Food Red17 (Allura Red)
Yellow Colors Sunset Yellow FCF	 15985	 C16 H10 N2 Na2 O7 S2	 Food Yellow 3
Tartrazine	19140	C16 H9 N4 Na3 O9 S2	Food Yellow 4
Quinoline Yellow	47005	C18 H9 N Na2 O8 S2	Food brown 13
Brown Colors Chocolate brown HT	 20285	 C27 H18 N4 Na2 O9 S2	 Food brown 3
Green Colors Fast green FCF	 42053	 C37 H34 N2 Na2 O10 S3	 Food green 3
Blue Colors Indigotine	 73015	 C16 H8 N2 Na2 O8 S2	Food blue 1(Indigo carmine)
Brilliant Blue FCF	42090	C37 H34 N2 Na2 O9 S2	Food blue 2
Black Colors Brilliant Black PN	 28440	 C28 H17 N5 Na4 O14 S4	 Food black 1

TABLE – 3: Requirements for synthetic colors

Property	Purity (dye) % Min.	Volatile* Matter at 135C % Max.	Water Insoluble % Max.	Ether Extract % Max.	Subsidiary % Max.
Azorubine	85	15	0.2	0.2	2
Erythrosine	85	15	0.2	0.2	-
Ponceau 4R	82	18	0.2	0.2	2
Red 2G	82	18	0.2	0.2	2
Sunset Yellow FCF	85	15	0.2	0.2	4
Tartrazine	85	15	0.2	0.2	1
Quinoline Yellow	-	-	0.2	0.2	-
Chocolate Brown HT	80	20	-	0.2	15
Fast green FCF	85	15	0.2	0.2	1
Indigotine	85	15	0.2	0.2	1
Brilliant Blue FCF	85	15	0.2	0.2	3
Brilliant Black PN	84	15	0.2	0.2	4
FD & C Red 40	85	14	0.2	-	-

TABLE – 4: Number of containers selected as sample from coloring matter

Lot size	Number of containers to be selected
2 - 15	2
16 - 40	3
41 - 65	4
66 - 110	7
More than 110	10

Permissible Daily Intake of the Coloring Matterals Per Body Weight (Appendix 1)

Colors	*ADI	Colors	*ADI
Annatto	0-1.25	Iron oxides	0-0.5
Azorubine	0-1.25	Ponceau 4 R	0-0.125
Beta-Carotene	0-5	Quinoline Yellow	0-0.5
Beta-Apo-8-Carotenal	0-5	Red 2 G	0-0.006
Beta-Apo-8-Carotenoic acid	0-5		
Beet powder	-	Riboflavin	0-0.5
Brilliant black PN	0.2.5	Sunset yellow FCF	0-5
Brilliant blue FCF	0-12.5	Tartrazine	0-7.5
Canthaxanthine	0-25	Titanium Dioxide	-
Caramel	-	FD & C Red 40	-
Caramel made by ammonium Sulphite process	0-100	Aluminum	-
Chlorophyll	-	Enocianine	-
Chlorophyll copper complex	0-15	Carrot oil	-
Chocolate brown HT	0-0.25		
Turmeric	0-2.5		
Curcumine	0-0.1		
Erythrosine	0-2.5		

Colors	*ADI	Colors	*ADI
Fast green FCF Gold Indigotine	0-12.5 - 0-5		

* <<Acceptable Daily Intake>> expressed as mg/kg body weight.

Preservatives Permitted for Use in Food Products per Gulf Standard No. 356/1994

Preservatives	EEC No.	Preservatives	EEC No.
Sorbic acid	200	Diphenyl (Biphenyl)	230
Sodium sorbat	201	Orthophenyl phenol	231
Potassium sorbat	202	Sodium Orthophenyl phenate	232
Calcium sorbat	203	Thiabendazole	233
Benzoic acid	210	Formic acid	236
Sodium benzoate	211	Sodium formate	237
Potassium benzoate	212	Calcium formate	238
Calcium benzoate	213	Hexamine (heamethylene	239
Ethyl P-Hydroxy benzoate	214	teteramine)	249
Ethyl P-Hydroxy benzoate	215	Potassium nitrite	250
Sodium	216	Sodium nitrite	251
Propyl P-Hydroxy benzoate	217	Sodium nitrite	252
Propyl P-Hydroxy benzoate		Potassium nitrite	260
Sodium	218	Acetic acid	261
Methyl P-Hydroxy benzoate	219	Potassium acetate	262
Methyl P-Hydroxy benzoate		Sodium diacetate	263
Sodium	220	Calcium acetate	270
Sulphur dioxide	221	Lactic acid	280
Sodium sulphite	222	Propionic acid	281
Sodium bisulphite	223	Sodium propionate	282
Sodium metabisulphite	224	Calcium propionate	283
Potassium metabisulphite	226	Potassium propionate	290
Calcium sulphite	227	Carbon dioxide	
Calcium bisulphite	-	Calcium disodium ethylene diamine	-
Natamycin (pimaricin)	-	tetra-acetate	
Nisin		Disodium ethylene diamine tetra	-
		acetate	-
		Heptyl Paraban	

Antioxidants Permitted for Use in Foodstuffs per Gulf Standard No. 357/1994

EEC NO.	Antioxidant
220 221 222	Sulphur dioxide Sodium sulphite Sodium bisulphite

EEC NO.	Antioxidant
223	Sodium metabisulphite
224	Potassium metabisulphite
226	Calcium sulphite
300	L-ascorbic acid
301	Sodium ascorbate
302	Calcium ascorbate
304	Ascorbyl palmitate
306	Tocopherol (from nature sources)
307	Alpha-tocopherol (synthetic)
308	Gamma-tocopherol (synthetic)
309	Delta-tocopherol (synthetic)
310	Propyl gallate
311	Octyl gallate
312	Dodecyl gallate
320	Butylated hydroxyanisole
321	Butylated hydroxy toluene
322	Lecithin
-	Isoascorbic acid (erythorbic) and its sodium salt
-	Tertiary butyl hydroquinone
-	Trihydroxy butrophenone
-	Thiodipropionic acid
-	4-Hydroxymethyl 2-6 ditert butyl phenol
-	Guaiac resin (guaiac gum artificial)
270	Lactic acid
325	Sodium lactate
326	Potassium lactate
327	Calcium lactate
330	Citric acid
331	Sodium citrate
332	Potassium citrates
	Calcium citrates
333	Tartaric acid
334	Sodium tartrates
335	Potassium tartrate
336	Sodium Potassium tartrate
337	Orthophosphoric acid
338	Sodium orthophosphate
339	Potassium orthophosphate
340	Calcium orthophosphate
341	Citric acid esters of mono and di-glycerides of fatty acids (citroglycerides)
472	Phosphoric acid
-	Ethylenediamine tetra-acetic calcium disodium
385	Ethylenediamine tetra-acetic disodium
-	

Emulsifiers , Stabilizers and Thickeneres Permitted for use in Food Products *

E.E.C No.	NAME
322	Lecthins
339	Sodium orthophosphates : - mono sodium dihydrogen phosphates - di sodium mono hydrogen phosphates - tri sodium phosphates
340	Potassium orthophosphates - mono potassium dihydrogen phosphates - di potassium mono hydrogen phosphates - tri potassium phosphates.
341	Calcium orthophosphates. - mono calcium tetra hydrogen di phosphates. - mono calcium mono hydrogen phosphates. - tri calciums di phosphates.
400	Alginic acid.
401	Sodium alginate
402	Potassium alginate
403	Ammonium alginate
404	Calciums alginate
405	Propane-1,2-diol alginate (Gycol propalin alginate)
406	Agar
407	Carrageenan
410	Locust bean gum
-	Ghatti gum
412	Guar gum
413	Tragacanth
414	Acacia
415	Xanthan gum
416	Karaya gum
420	Sorbitol, sorbitol syrup.
421	Mannitol
422	Glycerol
430	Polyoxyethylene (8) stearate
432	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan monolaurate.
433	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan mono-oleate.
434	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan mono-palmitate.
435	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan mono-stearate.
-	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan tri stearate.
436	Polyoxyethylene (8) sorbitan tri-stearate.
-	Polyoxyethylene (40) stearate.
-	Amylose and amylopectin
-	Calcium acetate
-	Cholic acid
-	Desoxy cholic acid
-	Modified starch
-	Polydextroses A x N

E.E.C No.	NAME
322	Lecthins
339	Sodium orthophosphates : - mono sodium dihydrogen phosphates - di sodium mono hydrogen phosphates - tri sodium phosphates
340	Potassium orthophosphates - mono potassium dihydrogen phosphates - di potassium mono hydrogen phosphates - tri potassium phosphates.
341	Calcium orthophosphates. - mono calcium tetra hydrogen di phosphates. - mono calcium mono hydrogen phosphates. - tri calciums di phosphates.
400	Alginic acid.
401	Sodium alginate
402	Potassium alginate
403	Ammonium alginate
404	Calciums alginate
405	Propane-1,2-diol alginate (Gycol propalin alginate)
406	Agar
407	Carrageenan
410	Locust bean gum
-	Ghatti gum
412	Guar gum
413	Tragacanth
414	Acacia
415	Xanthan gum
416	Karaya gum
420	Sorbitol, sorbitol syrup.
421	Mannitol
422	Glycerol
430	Polyoxyethylene (8) stearate
432	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan monolaurate.
433	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan mono-oleate.
434	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan mono-palmitate.
435	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan mono-stearate.
-	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan tri stearate.
436	Polyoxyethylene (8) sorbitan tri-stearate.
-	Polyoxyethylene (40) stearate.
-	Potassium sodium L (+) tartrate
-	Tartric acid
-	Polyvinyl pyrolidone
-	Sodium casinate
-	Succinylated moboglycerides
-	Sodium stearyl fumarate
-	Gelatin edible
-	Sorboyl palmitate

E.E.C No.	NAME
322	Lecthins
339	Sodium orthophosphates : - mono sodium dihydrogen phosphates - di sodium mono hydrogen phosphates - tri sodium phosphates
340	Potassium orthophosphates - mono potassium dihydrogen phosphates - di potassium mono hydrogen phosphates - tri potassium phosphates.
341	Calcium orthophosphates. - mono calcium tetra hydrogen di phosphates. - mono calcium mono hydrogen phosphates. - tri calciums di phosphates.
400	Alginic acid.
401	Sodium alginate
402	Potassium alginate
403	Ammonium alginate
404	Calciums alginate
405	Propane-1,2-diol alginate (Gycol propalin alginate)
406	Agar
407	Carrageenan
410	Locust bean gum
-	Ghatti gum
412	Guar gum
413	Tragacanth
414	Acacia
415	Xanthan gum
416	Karaya gum
420	Sorbitol, sorbitol syrup.
421	Mannitol
422	Glycerol
430	Polyoxyethylene (8) stearate
432	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan monolaurate.
433	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan mono-oleate.
434	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan mono-palmitate.
435	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan mono-stearate.
-	Polyoxyethylene (20) sorbitan tri stearate.
436	Polyoxyethylene (8) sorbitan tri-stearate.
-	Polyoxyethylene (40) stearate.
-	Stearyl citrate
-	Stearyl tartrate
-	Stearyl monoglyceridyl citrate.

APPENDIX III. IMPORT TARIFFS

Saudi Arabia imposes a 5 percent import duty on all food and agricultural products with the exception of the following:

A. Products Imported Duty Free

Because Saudi Arabia is largely desert land, crop production depends entirely on irrigation, mainly from non-renewable underground water. Recognizing the country's limited agricultural potential, the Saudi Government has exempted selected foodstuffs, feed, and livestock from import duties.

B. Products Subject to 6,7, 8,10, 12, 20, 25 or 40 percent Import Tariff

In order to protect local food processing and production from competitively priced foodstuff imports, the Kingdom levies a 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 20, 25 or 40 percent import duty depending on the level of local production of similar products. As a general rule, the maximum import tariff rate of 40 percent is applied when local production of a food or agricultural product exceeds self-sufficiency level. Currently, the 40 percent import duty applies only to fresh, dried and processed dates. To discourage consumption, a maximum tariff of 100 percent is imposed on tobacco and tobacco products.

C. Import Bans

For religious reasons, Saudi Arabia bans the importation of alcoholic beverages, live swine, pork and foodstuff ingredients or additives that contain pork products including pork fat, and gelatin. Meat and poultry shipments must be accompanied by a "Halal" slaughter certificate issued by an Islamic center in the country of origin. For complete list of Saudi Arabian 2006 Applied Tariff Rates for Agricultural Products, please see our GAIN Report Number SA6006 which was issued on 5/31/2006.