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United Arab Emirates

FAIRS Subject Report

UAE Adopts New Standards on Shelf Life and Labeling of Food Products

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Report Highlights:

The Government of the UAE has adopted the shelf life and labeling standards that were unanimously approved by the member countries of the Gulf Standards Organization (GSO) in 2007. The new standards are expected to simplify the shelf life requirements for exporters of food products without sacrificing food safety or quality for consumers. Among the countries covered by ATO Dubai (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE), the UAE is the first to officially adopt the GSO standard as a country standard. Other countries are expected to adopt the new standards within the next few months.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Annual Report
Dubai [TC1]
[TC]

Disclaimer: This summary is based on a *cursory* review of the subject announcement and therefore should not, under any circumstances, be viewed as a definitive reading of the regulation in question, or of its implications for U.S. agricultural export trade interests. In the event of a discrepancy or discrepancies between this summary and the complete regulation or announcement as published in Arabic, the latter shall prevail.

Background: The Gulf Standards Organization (GSO) approved two new standards for food labeling of prepackaged foods (GSO 2007/9) and expiration dating (GSO2007/150) during 2007. Each member country then had to adopt those standards as national standards. The UAE is the first of the five countries for which ATO Dubai is responsible to adopt the new standards as national standards. The standard will be phased in over a period of six months. Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait are expected to adopt the new standards as national standards within a few months. See TC7026 for additional background
<http://www.fas.usda.gov/gainfiles/200711/146293093.pdf>

ATO Dubai Analysis: The new standards will eliminate the longstanding requirement that imported processed foods have half of the shelf life remaining at the time of importation. In addition, exporters and retailers may now use the manufacturer's recommended shelf life for many processed products. The new standards do not require the labeling of ingredients derived from biotechnology except in cases where allergens may be of concern. Exporters and retailers will have to continue the longstanding practice of dating products with both production and expiration dates in day/month/year format. ATO Dubai can provide copies of the new standards upon request.

The standards also continue the practice of Arabic labeling for food products. While the Gulf Cooperation Council countries already require Arabic labeling, the UAE, and particularly Dubai, has not always strictly enforced this requirement. In anticipation of this new standard and as a result of a UAE consumer protection law that was announced in early 2007, the UAE announced in early 2008 that Arabic labeling of food products would be mandatory starting in late April. At this time, the Emirates of Dubai and Abu Dhabi continue to work through the details of how the Arabic labeling requirement will be enforced and administered. See TC 8004 and TC8013 for additional background.

<http://www.fas.usda.gov/gainfiles/200803/146293857.pdf>
<http://www.fas.usda.gov/gainfiles/200804/146294405.pdf>

Important Dates:

- 1. Proposed Implementation Date:** Effective immediately, but with a six month phase-in period that will extend to October of 2008.
- 2. Validity Period:** Indefinite from the date adoption
- 3. Comments:** These are final standards. The United States has requested clarification of the meaning and usage of "best by" and "expiration" dating in the new standards. If exporters or regulators have concerns or comments they should contact ATO Dubai or USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service at IRSD@fas.usda.gov.

For More Information:

Should you require more information on the above, Please don't hesitate to contact us:

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