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**Prepared By:** Omar Gonzalez

**Approved By:** Candice Bruce

**Report Highlights:**

This report outlines the current regulatory situation in The Bahamas for imported food and agricultural products. With new food safety, animal, and plant health legislation in place and new regulatory and standard setting entities created in recent years, the stage has been set for increased regulation of imported food and agricultural products in the years ahead.

This report was prepared by the Caribbean Basin Agricultural Trade Office (CBATO) in Miami, Florida, 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 PRODUCTS IS SUBJECT TO THE IMPORTING COUNTRY’S RULES AND REGULATIONS AS INTERPRETED BY BORDER OFFICIALS AT THE TIME OF PRODUCT ENTRY.

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## Executive Summary

Agricultural land in The Bahamas totals 141 sq. km. (2016 estimate), less than two percent of the country's total land area. Thus, farm activity plays a very small role in the island chain's economy. Given this very limited agricultural base, The Bahamas relies heavily on imported food to feed a population of 338,000 (July 2020 estimate) and millions of tourists who visit the country annually. In 2019 The Bahamas imported \$359.6 million<sup>1/</sup> in agricultural products from all sources. Of this amount, \$271.1 million<sup>1/</sup> (75 percent) came from the United States, The Bahamas' main trading partner. Consumer-oriented agricultural products make up 90 percent of U.S. agricultural exports to The Bahamas.

The Bahamas is the only country in the Western Hemisphere that is not a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Although a Working Party on the accession of The Bahamas was established back in 2001, only limited progress in this regard has been made over the past two decades. Nonetheless, in 2016 The Bahamas enacted several laws to modernize its Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) regimes as part of its efforts to accede to the WTO.

Historically, The Bahamas has imposed only a minimal amount of requirements on imported food and agricultural products. Things may begin to change as early as 2021, however, as The Bahamas seeks to develop and slowly implement new import regulations. To date, no trade restrictive measures have been put in place and The Bahamas remains one of the most import-friendly countries for U.S. agricultural suppliers.

1/ - Source: Trade Data Monitor. Based on export statistics of reporting countries.

## Section I: Food Laws

The following three legislative pieces constitute the backbone of The Bahamas' SPS regime:

- a) Food Safety and Quality Act, 2016;
- b) Plant Protection Act, 2016; and
- c) Animal Health and Production Act, 2016

In addition to these laws, the Bahamas Agricultural Health and Food Safety Authority (BAHFSA) Act of 2016 created an overarching food safety authority under the portfolio of the Ministry of Agriculture. BAHFSA is governed by a Board that also advises the Minister of Agriculture on BAHFSA's work in advancing its priorities and programs, especially on matters affecting public policy.

BAHFSA is responsible for overseeing the administration and enforcement of all three of the above-specified laws. In doing so, BAHFSA addresses SPS matters associated with Food Safety, Plant and Animal Health. The Ministry of Agriculture's Director of Veterinary Services is responsible for the implementation of the Animal Health and Production Act, 2016 and works closely with BAHFSA on animal health matters. Similarly, the Ministry's Director of Plant Health is responsible for the implementation of the Plant Health Protection Act, 2016 and works closely with BAHFSA on plant health matters. The Department of Environmental Health Services (DEHS), a dependency of the Ministry of the Environment and Housing, may also assist BAHFSA on food inspection matters. The Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality (BBSQ) also plays a key role in formulating and adopting food standards. Although The Bahamas' food import regulations are generally trade-friendly, it is the responsibility of BAHFSA to effectively enforce any BBSQ's mandatory food standards and other import regulations to ensure compliance. The above-specified laws and other Bahamian laws can be viewed at [Bahamas Laws On-Line](#). A link is also provided in Appendix II B.

## Section II: Labeling Requirements

Bahamian labeling requirements are quite broad and deal mainly in general terms with protecting consumers from false product descriptions and misleading information regarding the nature, substance or quantity of foods. The Bahamas fully accepts all standard U.S. labels including the standard U.S. nutritional fact panel. Meat and poultry products from the United States must have the USDA inspection seal and come from a federally inspected U.S. facility.

The following general labeling requirements were introduced with the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2016:

"No person shall offer for sale in The Bahamas any package of food unless the label thereon:

(a) is written in English; (b) specifies the product name; (c) specifies the date of manufacture and expiration; (d) permits the traceability of the food as prescribed in regulations; and (e) sets out such particulars as may be prescribed in regulations.”

### Section III: Packaging and Container Regulations

No special packaging or container sizes are required or preferred. Packaging materials that meet U.S. standards are accepted.

### Section IV: Food Additive Regulations

The Bahamas accepts the CODEX list of approved food additives. The Bahamas does not maintain its own positive or negative list of additives. Laboratory capacity for scientific testing of food products is very limited.

### Section V: Pesticide and Other Contaminants

Local authorities do not have their own regulations on pesticide and other contaminant residues in foods. Instead, they rely on CODEX maximum residue limits (MRL's) and tolerance levels for pesticides. Pesticide registration is not required.

### Section VI: Other Requirements, Regulations and Registration Measures

Imported meat, poultry, unprocessed dairy products, fresh table eggs, unprocessed seafood and some other animal products require an import permit and must be accompanied by a sanitary export permit certifying compliance with any requirements listed on the import permit. The same holds true for live plants and plant products such as fresh produce. For specifics regarding export certificates, please see the FAIRS Export Certificate Report for The Bahamas. This and other CBATO reports can be found in the [USDA Global Agriculture Information Network \(GAIN\)](#).

When food-related health threats arise, the regulating agencies will monitor imports and work with local distributors and retailers to ensure that affected products are removed from the distribution system. Certain items may be restricted if the government decides they pose a risk to food safety or plant and animal health.

Local businesses that produce, manufacture, prepare, treat, pack, package, store, transport, handle, serve, or offer up food for sale must register with BAHFSA. Registration consists of submitting an application to BAHFSA's Director of Food Safety and payment of a prescribed fee. If approved, the certificate of registration is valid for a year and subject to renewal upon payment of a renewal fee. Local businesses (including importers) specifically involved with plants, plant products, other regulated plant products or with animals, animal products, other animal-related products must also register with the Director of Plant Protection and the Director of Veterinary Services, respectively. In both cases,

the registration process is very similar to the registration process with BAHFSA outlined above. Sanitary registration of food products is not required.

## Section VII: Other Specific Standards:

Since becoming operational in 2015, the BBSQ has set forth several national standards in the area of food and agricultural products (see below). These standards, which are *voluntary*, apply to the specified products (including imported products) when offered for sale in The Bahamas.

- BNSCP 2: 2014 – Code of Practice General Principles of Food Hygiene

This national standard outlines the essential principles of food hygiene within the food chain from primary production to the final consumer, stipulating the acceptable hygienic conditions for producing food that is safe and suitable for consumption.

- BNS CRS 5: 2010 – Labeling of Pre-Packaged Foods

This national standard outlines labeling requirements for the quality and safety of pre-packaged food offered for sale in The Bahamas.

- BNS CRS 28:2012 - Specification for Poultry and Poultry Products

This national standard specifies requirements for primary processed poultry consisting of carcasses, poultry parts and poultry products for human consumption. It defines and distinguishes between the market classes of poultry.

- BNS CRS 29:2011 - Specification for Poultry feed and feed ingredients

This national standard establishes specifications for nutrient requirements in the rations fed to poultry. It provides guidance on good manufacturing practices for the production of poultry feeds and good on-farm feeding practices. It applies to the production and use of all materials designed for poultry feed and feed ingredients at all levels, whether produced industrially or on farm.

- BNS CRS 52: 2005 - Specification for Grading and Quality Requirements for Table Eggs

This national standard establishes specification for: 1) grading criteria and grades; 2) weight classification; 3) labeling requirements, and; 4) sampling protocols and methods of test. This standard is applicable to table eggs that are prepackaged, and also establishes labeling requirements for processed egg products, which are prepackaged, distributed and offered for sale in The Bahamas.

More information is available on the BBSQ website. A link is provided in Appendix II B of this report.

## Section VIII: Trademarks, Brand Names and Intellectual Property Rights

In The Bahamas, trademark registration is voluntary but highly recommended in order to obtain protection against infringement. Trademarks can be registered with the Intellectual Properties Section of the Office of the Registrar General for a period of 14 years on a renewable basis. Registration must be made through a local agent (attorney). The Intellectual Properties Section of the Office of the Registrar General can be helpful in identifying a local attorney specializing in intellectual property issues (see Appendix I for contact information). The cost of a trademark registration is \$50 per class (but it can also depend on the size of the logo) plus legal fees. From submission of application to obtaining the Certificate of Registration, the process can take up to 18 months. Searches of the trademark registry may be conducted at the Intellectual Properties Section of the Office of the Registrar General for a small fee.

The Bahamian government is taking steps to strengthen Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) protection as part of its WTO accession process. To this end, in 2015 the Government passed IPR legislation (among them the Trade Marks Act, 2015) which seeks to amend or add to the existing IPR regime. These new laws cover patents, trademarks, copyrights, integrated circuits, false trade descriptions, protection of new plant varieties, and geographical indications. Implementing regulations have not yet been promulgated, however. The Bahamian government anticipates that once implemented, the new legislation will bring The Bahamas into compliance with the terms of the WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

## Section IX: Import Procedures

Bahamian importers are very knowledgeable about import requirements and clearance procedures and are essential in guiding U.S. exporters through the process. Customs clearance procedures are generally efficient and focused on customer service. Bahamian law allows importers to begin the import clearance of goods before arrival in The Bahamas using standard shipping documents. Depending on the size and nature of the shipment, the clearance process can usually be completed within two to 24 hours after submission of the documents.

The primary requirements for importing into the Bahamas are proof of authorization for processing, proof of value of the goods (Invoices or receipts), and proof of freight charges (Bill of Lading or Freight Invoice) along with the relevant Customs documentation for declarations, depending on the purpose of the importation. For select agricultural products (meat, poultry, unprocessed dairy products, fresh table eggs, unprocessed seafood and other animal products), Customs documentation usually includes a sanitary or phytosanitary health certificate from the country of origin and an import permit issued by the appropriate Bahamian regulatory authority.

All imported goods shall be purposed for:

- Home consumption;

- Warehousing in a bonded warehouse;
- Temporary admission; or
- Transshipment.

Goods imported into The Bahamas shall be declared by either the owner of the goods or an authorized agent:

- In an electronic format;
- Within five days, exclusive of Sundays and public holidays of the commencement of discharge, or within such further time as the Comptroller may allow.

The owner of the goods or the authorized agent shall provide the Customs authority with full details supported by documentary evidence of the goods referenced in the entry document. All entries must be signed by either the owner of the goods or an authorized agent. The use of an electronic signature is authorized for the purpose of making an entry under the Act. The person importing goods shall:

- Answer any question asked by the Customs officer with respect to the goods; and
- Upon request of the Customs officer, present the goods to the officer, remove any covering from the goods, unload any conveyance or open any part of it, or open and unpack any package or container that the officer wishes to examine.

Customs clearance of product samples may be more expeditious. U.S. exporters are advised to check with their importer or authorized customs agent when shipping samples to The Bahamas.

Any disputes or discrepancies are generally resolved directly with Customs Department at the time of entry. See Appendix I for contact information.

## Section X: Trade Facilitation

A series of taxes and fees is collected by The Bahamas Customs Department at the time of import, which include import duties, value added tax (VAT), container fees, and processing fees. Information on these taxes and fees (legislation, rates, exemptions, etc.) can be found on [The Bahamas Customs Department website](#). Bahamian Customs require entry forms for goods shipped by sea or air, including mail. An original invoice is required for processing. The Bahamas Customs Department recently implemented an Electronic Single Window, now referred to as [Click2Clear](#) to facilitate one access point for those businesses conducting import and export activities in The Bahamas. Click2Clear is connected to various government agencies involved in the import and export processes. Certain Customs procedures that used to take two to three hours to complete in the past, have reportedly been reduced to just a few minutes since the introduction of Click2Clear. The Click2Clear system is currently being implemented throughout the Bahamian islands, with the exception of Grand Bahama.

Along these same lines, in 2021 The Bahamas is preparing to integrate electronic phytosanitary certificates (ePhytos) through the Global ePhyto hub managed by the International Plant Protection

Convention (IPPC). Currently a phytosanitary certificate is required to accompany every consignment of imported plants and plant products. By accepting ePhytos, which would be received prior to the consignment's arrival at a port of entry, The Bahamas expects to further expedite the entry of imports.

## Appendix I: Government Regulatory Key Agency Contacts

Bahamas Agricultural Health and Food Safety Authority (BAHFSA)

The Source River Centre

1000 Bacardi Road

New Providence, The Bahamas

T: (242) 604-7001

E: [bahfsa@bahamas.gov.bs](mailto:bahfsa@bahamas.gov.bs)

W: [www.bahfsa.org](http://www.bahfsa.org) (under development)

Department of Agriculture

Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources

Darville's Business Complex

Gladstone and Munnings Roads

P.O. Box N-3028

Nassau, New Providence

The Bahamas

T: (242) 397-7450/325-7438

F: (242) 325-3960

E-mail: [minagriculturemarine@bahamas.gov.bs](mailto:minagriculturemarine@bahamas.gov.bs)

Customs Department

Customs House

Thompson Blvd.

P.O. Box N-155

Nassau, New Providence, The Bahamas

T: (242) 325-6550, 604-3124/5

F: (242) 322-6223

E-mail: [customs@bahamas.gov.bs](mailto:customs@bahamas.gov.bs)

Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality

P.O. Box N- 4843

The Source River Centre

1000 Bacardi Road

New Providence, The Bahamas

T: (242) 362-1748 to 55

F: (242) 362-9172

E-mail: [info@bbsq.bs](mailto:info@bbsq.bs) ; [bbsq@bahamas.gov.bs](mailto:bbsq@bahamas.gov.bs)

Intellectual Properties Section  
Registrar General's Department  
Corner of Shirley and Charlotte Street  
P.O. Box N 532  
Nassau, New Providence, The Bahamas  
T: (242) 397-9114/9119  
F: (242) 322-5553  
E-mail: [RegistrarGeneral@bahamas.gov.bs](mailto:RegistrarGeneral@bahamas.gov.bs)

## Appendix II: Other Import Specialist Technical Contacts

Caribbean Basin Agricultural Trade Office (CBATO)  
Foreign Agricultural Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
909 SE 1st Avenue, Suite 720  
Miami, FL 33131  
Tel: (305) 536-5300  
Fax: (305) 536-7577  
E-mail: [atocaribbeanbasin@fas.usda.gov](mailto:atocaribbeanbasin@fas.usda.gov)

### A. U.S. Government websites/links

1. [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/export/international-standard-setting-activities-oie/regionalization/sa\\_by\\_country/sa\\_b/ct\\_animal\\_bahamasactivities-oie/regionalization/sa\\_by\\_country/sa\\_b/ct\\_animal\\_bahamas](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/export/international-standard-setting-activities-oie/regionalization/sa_by_country/sa_b/ct_animal_bahamasactivities-oie/regionalization/sa_by_country/sa_b/ct_animal_bahamas) -- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. From this page, users can obtain Bahamian import requirements for live animals.

### B. Non-U.S. Government websites/links

*The following websites are provided for the readers' convenience; USDA does NOT in any way endorse, guarantee the accuracy of, or necessarily concur with the information contained in the websites that follow:*

1. [Bahamas Agricultural Health and Food Safety Authority](#) – this website provides general information on BAHFSA.
2. [www.bahamas.gov.bs](http://www.bahamas.gov.bs) -- Official Government of The Bahamas web portal. The portal contains links to several useful webpages and websites for the following agencies, among others:

- a. [The Bahamas Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources](#) – Webpage with basic information about the Ministry.
- b. [The Bahamas Customs Department](#) -- Webpage containing links to Customs laws, complete tariff schedule, rates on frequently imported items, Processing & Environmental Levy Fees, newly implemented VAT fees, and more.
- c. [Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality](#) – This site contains a list of compulsory and voluntary standards. Electronic copies of the standards are available for a fee.
- d. [The Registrar General's Department](#) – For purposes of registering trademarks and other intellectual property issues.
- e. [Bahamas Laws On-Line](#) -- This is a database of statutes and subsidiary legislation of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, including the laws specified in Section I.

**Attachments:**

No Attachments