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**Report Highlights:**

This report covers food and agricultural import regulations and standards in the United Arab Emirates. U.S. agricultural suppliers are advised to consult with local importers prior to shipping to verify application of these requirements on their products. This report is intended to be used in conjunction with information provided in the 2024 Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards Export Certificate Report for the United Arab Emirates.

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## Abbreviations

<b>AMS</b>	Agricultural Marketing Service
<b>APHIS</b>	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
<b>Codex</b>	Codex Alimentarius
<b>ECAS</b>	Emirates Conformity Assessment Scheme
<b>EFSA</b>	European Food Safety Agency
<b>EQM</b>	Emirates Quality Mark
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FDA</b>	Food and Drug Administration
<b>FSIS</b>	Food Safety and Inspection Service
<b>GCC</b>	The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (Gulf Cooperation Council)
<b>GSO</b>	Gulf Cooperation Council Gulf Standardization Organization
<b>ISO</b>	International Organization for Standardization
<b>MOCCA</b>	Ministry of Climate Change and Environment
<b>MOIAT</b>	Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology
<b>NOAA</b>	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
<b>SPS</b>	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
<b>TBT</b>	Technical Barriers to Trade
<b>UAE.S GSO</b>	United Arab Emirates Standard – Gulf Standardization Organization
<b>UCL</b>	Gulf Cooperation Council Unified Customs Law and Single Customs Tariff
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization

## DISCLAIMER

USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service Office of Agricultural Affairs in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, prepared this report for U.S. exporters of domestic food and agricultural products. Although great care has been taken in preparation of the report, policies or procedures may have changed since its preparation and publishing. It is highly recommended that U.S. exporters verify the full set of import requirements with their foreign customers before goods are shipped; foreign customers are customarily best equipped to research such matters with local authorities. Final import approval of product is subject to the importing country's rules and regulations as interpreted by customs officials at the time of entry.

## Executive Summary

In 2023, global agricultural and agricultural related imports of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were valued at approximately \$23 billion compared to \$22 billion in 2022. The United States is the fourth-largest agricultural supplier to the UAE, with annual exports averaging more than \$1.2 billion over the last five years. In 2023, U.S. exports of agricultural and agricultural related products to UAE were \$1.327 billion.

In this retail-dominant market, U.S. 2023 consumer-oriented product exports totaled \$1.0 billion. Products exported to the UAE are diverse, including tree nuts (\$425.9 million); dextrin, peptones, and proteins (\$77.1 million); hay (\$67.9 million), beef and beef products (\$63.4 million); poultry meats and products (\$62.4 million); dairy products (\$57.2 million); food preparations (\$51.5 million); condiments and sauces (\$47.3 million); processed vegetables (\$37.1 million); bakery goods, cereals, and pasta (\$35.7 million); fresh fruits (\$30.6 million) and confectionary (\$30.3 million).

U.S. agricultural and agricultural-related sales to the UAE from January through July 2024 increased by 9.9 percent or \$73.8 million to reach \$815.9 million compared to \$742.1 million over the same period in the preceding year. The increase in demand has been mainly for exports of consumer-oriented and agricultural related products, while demand for U.S. bulk commodities and intermediate products slightly dropped during the first seven months of 2024.



*Dubai*

Although import duties remain low in the country, the UAE has moved forward in expanding its list of products subjects to an excise tax. Sweetened drinks containing added sugar or sweeteners, as well as product that can be converted into a sugar-sweetened beverage, are subject to a 50 percent excise tax. This action stems from a 2017 regulation levied on goods claimed as harmful to human health or the environment. The excise list now includes carbonated drinks, energy drinks, sweetened drinks, and powdered beverage mixes.

In 2024, the UAE published a new technical regulation UAE.S 5054:2023 “Technical Requirements for Multiple Use of Plastic Carrier Bags” that applies to all carrier shopping bag that is used or sold at supermarkets except the ultra-thin plastic bags that is used in fruit, vegetable, meat and fish departments or used to preserve bulk foods, grains and bread (knotted bags), bags used in pharmacies, bags used for fashion products, trash bags, bags are used to deliver letters, magazines, or mail consignments, and bags used to wrap plants.

## Section I: Food Laws

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven emirates: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Umm Al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah, and Sharjah. The UAE is a member of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, commonly referred to as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The GCC is a regional intergovernmental political and economic union consisting of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Food laws are established within the GCC Gulf Standardization Organization (GSO) and adopted by participating member countries. All GCC member states, including the UAE, have the authority to develop and institute national food legislation in addition to those formed within the GSO.

### I.1. Gulf Cooperation Council Bodies

#### I.1.1. The Standardization Organization of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf

GCC member countries created the GSO as a mechanism for developing food and non-food standards. GSO food-related technical regulations and standards serve as the main point of reference for food imports into the Gulf region. In general, regulations are formally implemented via a ministerial decree issued by each country's official government gazette. A grace period for enforcement is often granted following the publication of a decree. Codex Alimentarius, International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA), and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) serve as reference points during the development of GSO standards and technical regulations. However, in some circumstances, GCC laws are not harmonized with these standard-setting bodies.

GCC countries are also members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and bound by the agreed obligations and disciplines. Each GCC member country is required to notify the WTO of any proposed standards or regulations. GCC standards and technical regulations may be purchased in English [online](#).

#### I.1.2. GCC Unified Customs Law and Single Customs Tariff

The GCC Unified Customs Law and Single Customs Tariff (UCL) was formed January 2003. Most food products entering a GCC country (from a non-GCC country) are exempt from tariffs or have a duty rate of 5 percent. Alcoholic products are subject to a 50 percent duty and tobacco to a 100 percent duty. Additionally, the UCL has established a single-entry point policy that permits duty free transit of goods among GCC member countries. In practice, this policy is applied only to unopened containers transshipped between GCC markets. Repacked, partial, or semi-offloaded shipments may incur an additional 5 percent import duty once the produce reaches its destination in the GCC. Recently, various GCC Customs authorities have announced the adoption of [the GCC Unified Customs Tariffs](#) with the updated Harmonized System of 2022 and revoked the 2017 version.

#### I.1.3. GCC Guide for Food Import Procedures

In 2007, the GCC attempted to clarify its import procedures and released a draft "Guide for Food Import Procedures for GCC Countries." This guide aimed to unify the applied procedures for

clearing food consignments and harmonize import certificates for foods across the GCC. Although the GCC continues its internal dialogue on this issue, it has not published an official version.

## **I.2. United Arab Emirates Bodies**

Within the UAE, several ministries and municipalities share jurisdiction for ensuring food safety and regulating imports of agricultural commodities. At a federal level, the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment (MOCCA) and Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology (MOIAT) control the laws and standards for food products within the country. Other ministries, like Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of State for Food and Water Security may also be involved in the formation of certain regulations or laws. Local municipalities within each emirate serve as administrators of the federal food regulations, ensuring that imported and locally produced products comply with national laws.

### **I.2.1. Ministry of Climate Change and Environment**

MOCCA is responsible for establishing and enforcing food safety regulations and laws based on recommendations from the GSO, the UAE National Food Safety Committee for food related matters, and the Veterinary Committee for meat and poultry topics. MOCCA regulates veterinary and plant quarantine issues for domestic agriculture and manages import regulations of live animals, raw agricultural commodities, plants, seeds, and fisheries. Additionally, MOCCA is the UAE's WTO national notification and inquiry point for sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) issues.

### **I.2.2. Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology**

MOIAT is the UAE's standard setting body. MOIAT was established in July 2020 following the merger of Ministry of State for Advanced Technology, the Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology, and the Industry Sector at the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure. MOIAT works in cooperation with other GSO members to develop standards and technical regulations within the GCC, including for food products. MOIAT is the UAE's WTO national notification and inquiry point for technical barriers to trade. Exporters may access UAE food standards and regulations at no charge or with a fee from [MOIAT](#), along with official English translations.

### **I.2.3. Role of the Municipalities**

UAE municipalities—[Abu Dhabi](#), [Ajman](#), [Dubai](#), [Fujairah](#), [Ras Al Khaimah](#), and [Umm Al Quwain](#)—oversee the importation process for agricultural goods including port inspection, testing, label approval, and the release of shipments. Municipalities play an important role in the interpretation of UAE federal laws and regulations and can petition federal authorities to reconsider, postpone, or cancel a regulation under certain conditions. Municipality representatives meet regularly to discuss and coordinate on issues of mutual concern. UAE food safety officials work closely with local importers to ensure agricultural goods are compliant with the law and permit consignments to clear quickly through ports of entry.

## **Section II: Labeling Requirements**

The UAE.S GSO 9:2019 “Labeling of Prepackaged Food Stuff” and its referenced GSO standards identify the food labeling requirements for the UAE. Labeling regulations apply to all products shipped in bulk and retail packaging. To avoid customs clearance issues, it is important that U.S. exporters comply with all UAE label requirements and verify the product label is accurate and legible. Companies are strongly encouraged to review the regulations related to their specific commodity and clarify any questions prior to export.

UAE.S GSO 2333:2019 “Permitted Health and Nutrition Claims Made on Food and Conditions of Use” and UAE.S GSO CAC GL 1:2008 “General Guidelines on Claims” relate to the use of nutrition and health claims in food labeling and advertising.” This regulation supplements the Codex “General Guidelines on Claims.” Importantly, nutrition and health claims are not permitted on foods for infants and young children except where specifically provided in corresponding Codex standards or national legislation.

UAE importers are required to apply for a label assessment on food items prior to entry into the country. This process can be completed through ZAD,<sup>1</sup> the Dubai Municipality’s Food Import and Re-export Service (FIRS), or ZADI portals. The label assessment process reviews product information listed on the food label including the barcode, trade name, brand name, nutritional information, country of origin, shelf life, and storage condition, among others. Importantly:

- Different packaging of the same food item (for example, one 100-gram package and one 200-gram package) are considered different food items and must be registered separately.
- A label re-assessment should be requested for any food label that has been amended or modified after receiving initial approval. For example, changes such as with packages, weight, label, or barcodes, among others, require an updated assessment of the new details.
- In Dubai, importers are required to receive label approval for food consignments intended for local consumption and re-export.

Food items that are registering for the first time, and intended for import into Dubai, will undergo laboratory testing through Dubai Municipality. Testing is based on product safety risks and the frequency of importation. In the event an ingredient or additive is detected but not included on the label, the food item will be rejected. In general, the food label must contain:

- Product name (name of the food) in a prominent position on the label
- Ingredients in descending order of proportion
- The name of food additive shall be mentioned under more than one class (however, it is preferable to use the class that specifically and accurately reflects the function of the additive material in the food it constitutes)
- Nutritional declaration (see Section II.2.1.)
- Net weight volume (see Section VII.11.)
- Name and address of the manufacturer or the packer in case the packer is not the manufacturer

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<sup>1</sup> In 2018, the UAE introduced the “National Scheme for Food Accreditation and Registration.” Within this new scheme came the establishment of an electronic food registration portal, commonly referred to as “ZAD.”

- Country of origin
- Expiry dates
- Any special conditions for the storage of the food shall be declared on the label if the validity of the date depends thereon
- Instruction for use
- Production and expiry dates shall be declared for the products having mandatory shelf life
- Source of animal if the food item or one of the components contain animal content
- The mandatory warning and advisory statements and declarations
- Use of irradiation
- Production (batch) lot number shall be declared in a coded manner or any other indelible marks
- Labels in Arabic and, where one of more language is used besides Arabic, the information provided in another language shall be identical to that in Arabic

Stickers are permitted to translate the food label into the Arabic language. All stickers must be approved by UAE authorities prior to use and should be included during the label assessment process. Sticking on imported items must be a single sticker performed prior to export and cannot be completed upon entry. Additionally, the sticker shall not:

- Obscure any information required by this standard
- Contain any statements diverging from the original label
- Expiration dates that do not correspond to the expiration dates mentioned on the original label
- Be easy to remove once affixed to the package

Production and expiry dates must be engraved, embossed, printed, or stamped directly onto the original label or primary packaging using indelible ink. Dates printed only on the stickers are not accepted, nor are U.S. bar codes in lieu of expiration. Only a single set of production and expiration dates is permitted and must be printed on the original label in the following order:

- Day/month/year, for products with a shelf life of three (3) months or less
- Day/month/year or month/year for products with a shelf life longer than three months. When using the month/year format, the last day of the listed month is considered the expiration date. The month may be printed in numbers or letters. For example, both 3/2013 and March 2013 are acceptable.

The expiry date must be preceded by one of the following statements: “Expiration (date)”; “To be consumed up to (date)”; “consumed before (date)”; “Valid for a period of (days or months or years) as of date of production”; “Valid for (days or months or years)”; “Use by date (recommended last consumption date)”; “Sell by (date)” for food the durability of which is over three months; or “Best before (date).”

Barcodes on food items should be unique in number. Re-registering a barcode with a different item description (e.g., country, weight, brand, product name, or ingredients) is not allowed.



UAE.S 9:2019 states the following products are exempt from the expiry date requirement; however, production date or harvest year and packing date according to the nature of the product must be printed for:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables, including unpeeled or cut potatoes
- Bakery products or cakes that are consumed within 24 hours from their manufacture date
- Fresh fruits and vegetables, including unpeeled or cut potatoes
- Bakery products or cakes that are consumed within 24 hours from their manufacture date
- Vinegar packed in glass containers
- Non-fortified salt
- Solid sugar
- Chewing gum
- Honey
- Dry and dried uncooked legumes (e.g., peas, beans, or lentils)
- Dried vegetables
- Medical plants and herbs
- Loose tea
- Dry cereals (e.g., rice, oats, barley, or corn)
- Spices
- Liquid and dried glucose

## **II.2. Other Specific Labeling Requirements**

**II.2.1. Nutritional Labeling:** The UAE.S GSO 2233:2021 “Requirements of Nutritional Labeling” requires mandatory disclosure of nutritional information. The following nutritional information shall be declared on the labels of prepackaged food intended for direct consumption or after heating:

- The nutritive value of the prepackaged foodstuff to including the essential elements such as carbohydrates, fats, protein, dietary fibers, or energy.
- In case of adding vitamins, mineral salts or any other dietary elements as an ingredient, the value of each dietary element shall be declared separately on the nutritional information accompanying the prepackaged food.
- All nutritional information and/or net content shall be set forth as a percentage by weight if it is less than 100 grams or 100 ml or by food serving specified by the manufacturer.
- The information shall be declared in international units (gram, mg, ug, IU) and kilocalories for energy values.
- Health claims on packaged foods must be true and accompanied by certificates confirming the claim.

## Examples of Food Labels

# كريمة الطبخ طويلة الأجل Long Life Cooking Cream

**كاملة الدسم . FULL FAT**

قائمة المكونات: قشقة طازجة، حليب أبقار طازج، دسم الحليب، جوامد الحليب، مواد مثبتة (إي.إي.٤٠١، إي.إي.٥١٦، إي.إي.٤٥٠، إي.إي.٣٣١)، فيتامين د٣.

INGREDIENTS: Fresh Cream, Fresh Cow's Milk, Milk Fat, Milk Solids, Stabilizers (E401, E516, E450, E331), Vitamin D3.

## حقائق تغذوية Nutrition Facts

About 33 servings per container عدد الحصص في العبوة ٣٣ تقريباً  
Serving Size 30 ml مل حجم الحصة

Amount Per Serving الكمية لكل حصة  
**Calories 79** السعرات الحرارية

% Daily Value *	%	نسبة الاحتياج اليومي %
Total Fat 8g	11%	الدهون الكلية ٨ غم
Saturated Fat 5g	24%	دهون مشبعة ٥ غم
Trans Fat 0.4g		دهون متحولة ٠.٤ غم
Cholesterol 20mg	7%	كوليسترول ٢٠ ملغم
Sodium 18mg	1%	صوديوم ١٨ ملغم
Total Carbohydrate 1.1g	0%	الكربوهيدرات الكلية ١.١ غم
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%	الالياف الغذائية ٠ غم
Total Sugars 1.1g		سكريات كلية ١.١ غم
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%	يتضمن ٠ غم سكر مضاف
Protein 0.9g		بروتين ٠.٩ غم

Vitamin A 215.4 IU 8% فيتامين أ ٢١٥.٤ وحدة دولية  
Vitamin D3 36.1 IU 6% فيتامين د٣ ٣٦.١ وحدة دولية

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.  
\* تدل نسبة الاحتياج اليومي على المغذيات في الحصة الواحدة مبنية على نظام غذائي محتوي على ٢٠٠٠ سعرة حرارية.

نسبة الدسم ٢٦% كحد أدنى. معالج بالحرارة فوق العالية ومتجانس. إحتفظها مبردة (أقل من ٥°م). لا تعرضها للتجميد. تحفظ مبردة بعد الفتح (أقل من ٥°م). تستهلك خلال ٣ أيام من الفتح. يحتوي على منتجات الحليب والحليب (بما في ذلك اللاكتوز).

Fat Content Min. 26%. UHT treated and homogenized. Keep refrigerated (5°C or below). Do not freeze. Keep refrigerated below 5°C after opening. Consume within 3 days of opening. Contains Milk and Milk products (Including lactose).

# Nutrition Facts القيمة الغذائية

~ 1 serving per container / حصة لكل حاوية /  
Serving size / حجم الوحدة الغذائية /

22g

Calories السعرات الحرارية	Values Per 100g الكمية لكل 100غ	Values Per Serving الكمية لكل حصة	% Daily Value*
	512	113	
Total Fat / إجمالي الدهون g	28.2	6.2	9%
Saturated fat / الدهون المشبعة g	13.2	2.9	15%
Trans Fat / الدهون المتحولة g	0.0	0.0	
Cholesterol / كوليسترول mg	0.0	0.0	0%
Sodium / الصوديوم mg	865	190	9%
Total Carbohydrates / إجمالي الكربوهيدرات g	58.2	12.8	5%
Dietary fiber / الألياف الغذائية g	4.1	0.9	3%
Total Sugars / إجمالي السكر g	4.4	1.0	
Includes Added Sugars / شامل السكر المضاف g	3.6	0.8	2%
Protein / بروتين g	6.4	1.4	3%

\* تشير نسبة الإحتياج اليومي على المغذيات في الحصة الواحدة مبنية على نظام غذائي يحتوي على 2,000 سعرة حرارية يوميا حسب النظام الغذائي العام الموصى به.

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrition in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

## INGREDIENTS:

Fresh Potatoes, Vegetable Oil (Palmolein), Tomato Ketchup Seasoning: (Sugar, Salt, Flavourings, Wheat Flour, Maltodextrin, Tomato Powder, Corn Starch, Rice Powder, Acidity regulator: Malic Acid (E296), Spices And Condiments (Chilli), Colour: Paprika Extract (E160c), Vegetable Fat (Palm), Hydrolyzed Vegetable Protein, Flavour Enhancer: Disodium Guanylate (E627), Disodium Inosinate (E631), Antioxidant: TBHQ (E319)).

**CONTAIN WHEAT (GLUTEN), SOYA.**

**MAY CONTAIN MILK (LACTOSE), CELERY, SULPHITES.**

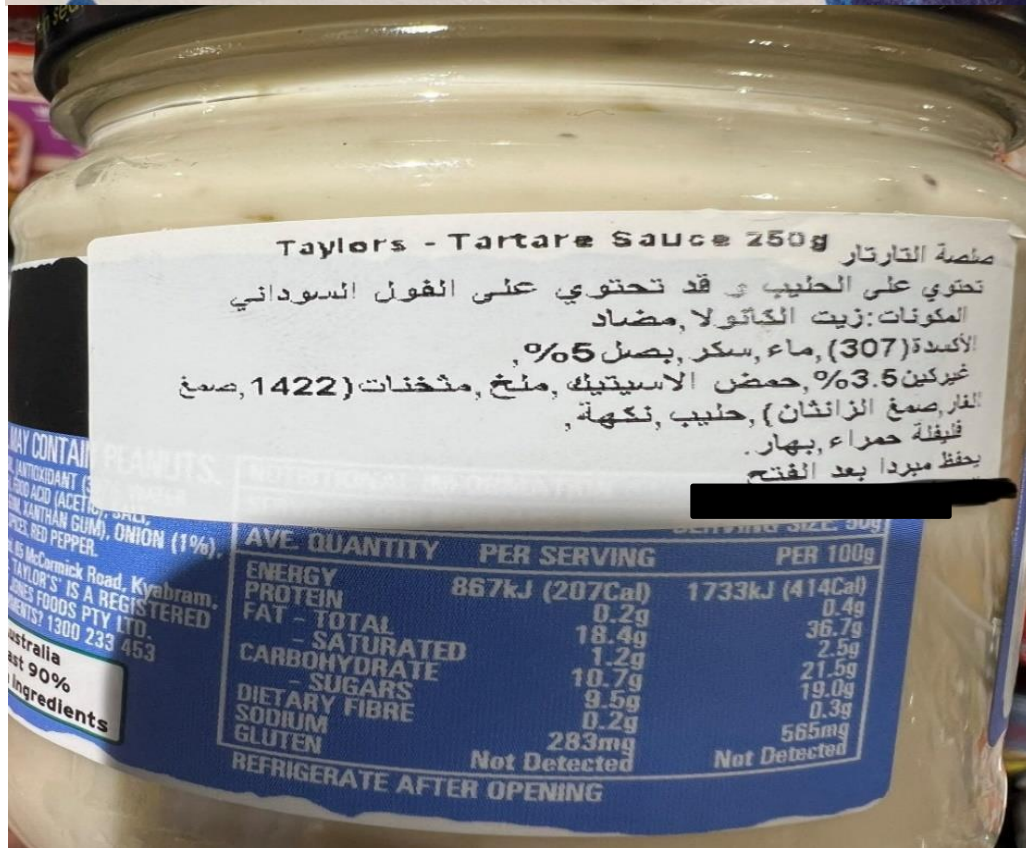
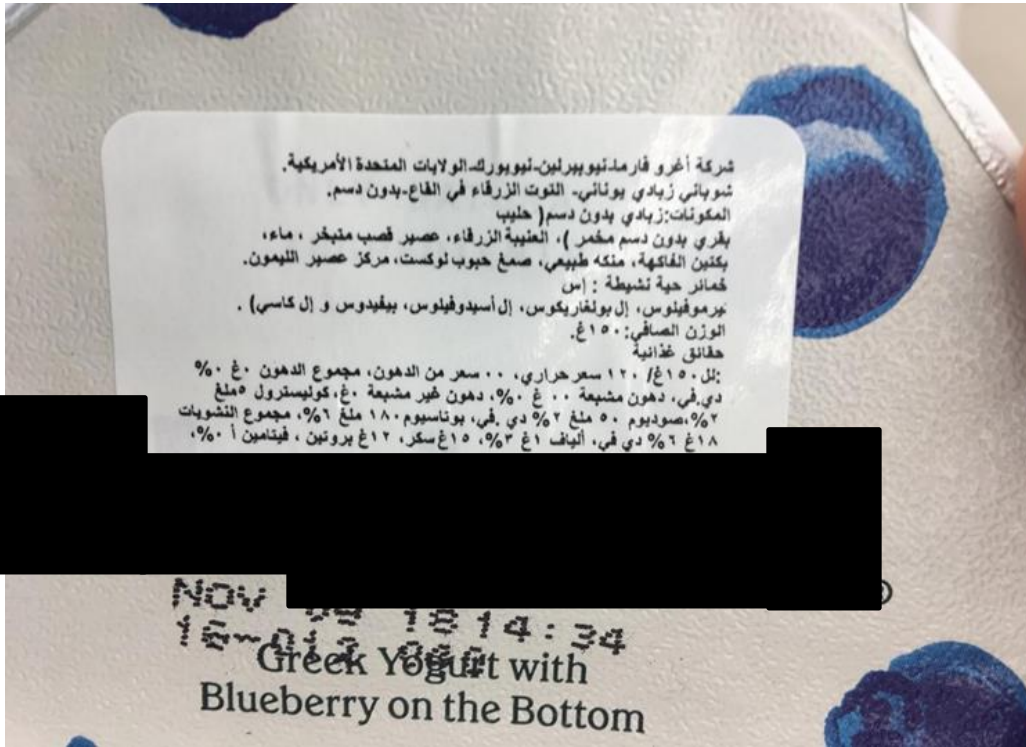
## المكونات:

البطاطس الطازجة، زيت نباتي (زيت النخيل)، بتوابل كاتشب الطماطم: (سكر، ملح، النكهات، دقيق القمح، مولتوديكسترين، مسحوق الطماطم، نشاء الذرة، مسحوق الارز، منظم الحموضة: حمض المالك (إي 296)، التوابل والبهارات (الفلفل الحار)، اللون: مستخلص الفلفل الحلو (إي 160 سي)، دهن نباتي (النخيل)، بروتين نباتي محلل، محسن النكهة: جونايت ثنائي الصوديوم (إي 627)، انثوسينات الصوديوم (إي 631)، مضاد الاكسدة: تي بي اتش كيو (إي 319)).

تحتوي على القمح (الغلوتين)، الصويا.

قد تحتوي على الحليب (اللاكتوز)، الكرفس، الكبريتات.

## Examples of Sticker Labels





**II.2.2. Labeling Irradiated food:** UAE technical regulation UAE.S GSO 9:2019 stipulates that all irradiated food and food ingredients must be identified on the package label and display the following a radiation international code logo (see left).

**II.2.3. Labeling Organic Food:** UAE.S GSO 2374:2014 “Guidelines for the production, processing, labeling, and marketing of organically produced foods” stipulates a product claimed as organic must include an organic logo and be accompanied by a governmental certificate. The USDA organic logo (see right) and certificate are accepted by UAE authorities. If a product is organic but not claimed on the package, a certificate or attestation is not required. Additional information can be found on MOCCA’s [website](#).



**II.2.4. Labeling of Genetically Engineered Products:** Labeling is required if unprocessed agricultural products, processed food products, feed products or seed contain more than 1 percent genetically engineered ingredients. Any genetically engineered product must be approved for use in the country of origin for human or animal consumption. Planting seeds must be approved in the UAE prior to export.

**II.2.5. Labeling of Products Free from Genetic Engineering:** If “GMO free” is claimed on a product label, the supplier must provide a “GMO free” certificate from a government competent authority issued in the country of origin.

**II.2.6. Labeling of Products Intended for Institutional Use:** These products are accepted without the need for Arabic translation on the product label. However, these products will be ineligible for sale in retail stores unless an Arabic label is provided.

**II.2.7. Alcoholic Beverages and Alcohol Containing Products:** The importation and sale of alcohol is permitted only through authorized establishments. No special labeling for alcoholic beverages is required beyond the provisions established within the country of origin.

**II.2.8. Labeling of Pet Food:** Pet food labels must be printed in Arabic on the package or by stickering. Arabic and English labels must contain the statement “Not fit for human consumption.” Production and expiry dates are required. Please refer to UAE.S 5031:2018 “General Requirements for Pet Food and their Labeling.” Exporters should verify labeling requirements with their importers before shipping. [MOCCA](#) provides some online services for pet food importers.

The UAE prohibits the sale of pet food containing pork.

**II.2.9. Labeling for Halal Products:** Although no specific standard or regulation for labeling halal products exists, article 8 of the UAE.S GSO 2055- 1: 2015, “HALAL FOOD - Part 1: General Requirements” is used as main reference for labeling halal products. The article stipulated that the label must contain: name and type of the product, list of ingredients and should clearly state undoubtedly that the ingredients are free from any prohibited non-halal ingredient, sources of actual ingredients shall be announced clearly and explicitly, products containing fats, oils, meat derivatives or extracts such as gelatin or rennet, shall declare its sources, If there is a willing to affix a “halal” slogan on the label, the requirements under the standard UAE.S GSO 2055-2: 2015 shall be followed, and all kinds of fish with scales, shrimp and fish egg of fish with scales including their byproducts shall be properly labelled as

“scaled fish.” All other aquatic animals including their byproducts shall be clearly labelled as “non-scaled fish” as the case may be.

### **II.3. Additional Reference Information for Product Labels**

Several GSO technical regulations serve as reference documents for the UAE:

- UAE.S/GSO CAC GL 1:2018 “General Guidelines for Misleading Food Claims”
- UAE.S/GSO 839:2021 “Food Packages – Part 1: General Requirements”
- UAE.S/GSO 1863:2021 “Food Packages – Part 2: The Plastic Packages – General Requirements”
- UAE.S/GSO OIML R 87:2007 “Quantity of Product in Packages”
- UAE.S/GSO ISO 1000:2009 “The ISO Standard Describing the International System of Units & Recommendations for the use of their Multiples and of certain other units”
- UAE.S/GSO 2142:2011 “General Requirements for Genetically Modified Processed Food and Feed”
- UAE.S/GSO 654:2021 “General Requirements for Prepackaged Foods for Special Dietary Use”
- UAE.S/GSO 1366:2021 ‘General Requirements for Trading of Food used for Special Medical Purposes’
- UAE.S/GSO/CAC 107:2007 “Labeling of Food Additives when Sold as Such”
- UAE.S/GSO 2101:2010 “Protein-Rich Concentrated Nutrient Supplementary Foods”
- UAE.S/GSO 2282:2013 “Labeling for Herbal Plants for Human Consumption”
- UAE.S/GSO 5034:2018 “Nutritional Labeling of Pre-packaged Products as Traffic Light Colors”
- UAE.S/GSO 2232:2021 “Labeling for Drinking Water”
- UAE.S GSO 2576:2021 “Requirements for the use of Terms such as “‘Fresh, Natural, Pure, and etc.’ in the Labelling of Food Products”

### **II.4. Shelf Life**

Shelf life is regulated by the UAE.S 150-1:2017 “Expiration Dates for Food Products – Part 1: Mandatory Expiration Dates.” Exporters should carefully examine this mandatory regulation and identify the allowances specified for their products. For products not covered by this technical regulation, exporters should refer to the UAE.S 150-2:2017 “Expiration Dates for Food Products – Part 2: Voluntary Expiration Dates.”

Exporters should also review issues related to labeling the expiration dates and instructions for storage use and packages, contained in the following regulations:

- UAE.S/GSO 9:2019 “Labeling of prepackaged food stuffs”
- UAE.S/GSO 839:2021 “Food Packages—Part 1: General Requirements”
- UAE.S/GSO 1863:2021 “Food Packages—Part 2: The Plastic Packages—General Requirements”
- UAE.S/GSO 2231:2012 “General Requirements for the Specifications of Materials Touching the food”

## Section III: Packaging and Container Regulations

The UAE maintains an extensive list of requirements for food packaging and containers with more than two dozen GSO regulations on food contact materials. U.S. food producers interested in exporting to the UAE should confirm with their local buyer the regulations applicable to their food package.

As an initial point of reference, exporters should be familiar with UAE.S GSO 839:2021 “Food Packages – Part 1: General Requirements.” This regulation establishes the rules for food packages, including metal, glass, plastic, paper, carton, multilayered textile, and wood packages. Likewise, UAE.S GSO 1863:2021 “Food packages - Part 2: Plastic Package – General Requirements,” identifies additional requirements for plastic packages in contact with food. As stipulated in the standard, the concentration of vinyl chloride monomer shall not exceed 1 milligram (mg) per kilogram (kg) of the plastic material, or 0.01 mg per kg of the packaged food material, in the case of packages made of polyvinyl chloride, commonly known as PVC.

In 2024, the UAE published a new technical regulation UAE.S 5054:2023 “Technical Requirements for Multiple Use of Plastic Carrier Bags.” which applies to all carrier shopping bag that is used or sold at supermarkets except the ultra-thin plastic bags that is used in fruit, vegetable, meat and fish departments or used to preserve bulk foods, grains and bread (knotted bags), bags used in pharmacies, bags used for fashion products, trash bags, bags are used to deliver letters, magazines, or mail consignments, and bags used to wrap plants. The technical regulation set up some requirements like for instance the plastic bag thickness should be less than 50 microns, the bag must be free of toxic materials stipulated in the approved lists within the country, such as: heavy metals (lead, cadmium, mercury), ink, dyes and coatings, adhesives, stabilizers) whether intentionally or Unintentionally, and the type of material used in making the bag must include the following Polyethylene or woven or non-woven polypropylene.

The concentration of the monomer of styrene in the plastic material shall not exceed 1 percent by weight in packages of non-fatty food materials and shall 0.5 percent in packages of fatty food materials. This is in the case of packages made of polystyrene or modified rubbery polystyrene. The concentration of acrylonitrile monomer shall not exceed 0.005 mg per kg of the plastic material or 0.02 mg per kg of the food material, in the case of packages made of acrylonitrile. In the case of manufacturing multilayered packages from more than one material, it is necessary to remove the remaining solvents, gluing materials, or major materials, such that the remains of all those solvents combined shall not exceed 5 mg per square meter of the package surface.

In addition, exporters of fruits and vegetables should be familiar with GSO 124:1990 “General Requirements for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Boxes.” Finally, the UAE Scheme for Control on Food Contact Materials requires compliance with UAE.S GSO 2231:2012 “General Requirements for the Materials Intended to Come into Contact with Food.”

### **Packaging Sustainability Measures**

The UAE government has been taken several steps to limit the use of plastic bags and regulate the production, distribution, and the use of single-used products, including biodegradable plastic bags. The

use of single-use bags of any material with less than or equal to 57 microns is now prohibited in the UAE but multi-use plastic bags with thickness more than 57 microns can be used with a tariff of 25 fils (approximately 7 U.S. cents).

In addition to single use plastic bags, the UAE imposes a blanket ban on the import, production, and trade of plastic cups, lids, cutlery (forks, knives, and spoons), plates, food containers, and boxes made of foam (such as Styrofoam). Exemptions from the ban include rolls of thin bags, single-use bags and products made from recycled materials within the country, as outlined in the guide issued by MOCCA. Additionally, the competent authority has the discretion to identify and exclude other products and materials in coordination with the ministry. This comes as part of Ministerial Resolution No. 380 of 2022, which regulates the use of single-use products. The decision aims to protect the environment from pollution caused by the consumption of such products.

The UAE's [Integrated Waste Management Federal Law Number 12](#) issued on December 18, 2018 regulates the process of waste management and unifies the mechanisms and methods of safe disposal thereof through the application of best practices and techniques available to protect the environment and minimize harm to human health. The law allows MOCCA, after coordination with the competent authority, to prohibit the introduction or import of single-use or short-term products in the markets that cause environmental damage and prohibit the use or import of materials that are hard to dispose or could cause hazard to the environment if disposed. The law also allows the competent authority to implement measures and procedures necessary to reduce the generation of municipal solid waste and separate them at the source, through the provision of containers with different colors.

#### Section IV: Food Additive Regulations

According to Emirates Standard UAE.S 192:2019 and Amendment 1 2023 the Codex Alimentarius standard number 192 “General Specification of Articles Food Additives” is the first reference for identifying approved food additives. Codex-approved additives with correlating food classifications are permitted within the UAE at the maximum limits identified. Additional information is available from [FAO](#). Furthermore, in the absence of a Codex reference, the UAE permits reference to European legislation with the numbers 1332, 1333, 1334, and 1129 and its amendments. The updated version can be obtained from the EURLEX [website](#) of European legislation.

If information about the food additive or the food additive is not mentioned on the lists of the Codex Alimentarius or the relevant European legislation, especially for traditional products, then the competent authorities can evaluate the use of the food additive and opine on its use according to scientific and legislative justifications provided by the requesting party. This approach to receiving a food additive authorization is seldom used due to a lengthy and indeterminate process.

Addition of Sunset Yellow (E110), Quinoline Yellow (E104), Carmoisine (E122), Allura Red (E129), Tartrazine (E102), and Ponceau 4 R (E124) coloring materials should be marked with an asterisk (\*). This must be followed by a warning in clear and readable font written below the list of ingredients: “May have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children.”



The UAE also requires the declaration of the sources of gelatin, lecithin, monoglycerides, and diglycerides in case they are used in the product. Exporters must receive UAE approval for their food additives and identify them on the product label. This process is performed online through the aforementioned websites for label assessment. The new revision of this standard is the first amendment (Amd1) to this UAE Technical regulation based on Cabinet Resolution No. (24) of 2023 amending the UAE Technical Regulations regarding additives permitted for use in foodstuffs, which was published in the Official Gazette Issue No. (748) issued on March 31, 2023. The new amendment prohibits the use of “E171 titanium dioxide” as a food additive and its components, provided that the ban enters into force as of March 31, 2023.

## Section V: Pesticides and Contaminants

The following are UAE technical regulations for pesticides, contaminants, and microbiological criteria in agricultural products. In general, these technical regulations are in accordance with Codex standards; however, some references are derived from country-specific regulations established in the EU, United States, Australia, New Zealand, or others.

- UAE.S MRL 1/2019 “Maximum Residue Limits for Pesticides in Agricultural and Food Products”
- UAE.S GSO 2481:2021 “The Maximum Residue Limits for Veterinary Drugs in Foods”
- UAE.S GSO CAC 193:2021 “General Standard for Contaminants & Toxins in Food and Feed”
- UAE.S GSO 2532:2016 “The Maximum Limits of Pesticides Residues and Contaminants in Organic Food”
- UAE.S GSO 841:1997 “Maximum Limits of Mycotoxins Permitted in Foods and Animal Feeds Aflatoxins”
- UAE.S GSO 1694:2005 “General Principles of Food Hygiene”
- UAE.S 1016:2017 “Microbiological Criteria for Food Stuffs”
- UAE.S/ GSO 998:1998 “Limits of Radioactivity Level Permitted in Food Stuffs–Part 1.” This technical regulation is concerned with limits of radioactivity levels (gamma rays, cesium 134, 137) permitted in foodstuffs, drinking water and animal feed stuffs. For instance, limits of radioactivity permitted in water shall not exceed 10 becquerel/kg or liter, 30 becquerel/kg or liter for milk and its products and baby foods, 75 becquerel/kg or liter in other food products, and 300 becquerel/kg in animal feeds.
- UAE.S/ GSO 2483:2021 “Trans Fatty Acids.” This technical regulation stipulates the maximum amount allowed for trans fatty acid and declaring it on the nutrition label per serving. Maximum trans-fat content of vegetable oils and soft spreadable margarines is 2 percent of the total fat, and the trans-fat content for all other foods is 5 percent of the total fat content including ingredients sold to restaurants. The amount of trans fatty acids in food, including dietary supplements shall be included in the nutrition facts. Label declaration of trans fat content information is not required for products that contain less than 0.5 percent gram of the total fat in 100 grams if no claims are made about cholesterol, saturated, monounsaturated, polyunsaturated or trans-fatty acids. When a claim that a food product is “trans-fat free” is made on the label or in an advertisement, the amount of trans fat shall be less than 0.5 gram of total fat in 100 grams.
- UAE.S/GSO 2359:2014 “Extraction Solvents and its Residue Limits in the Production of Foodstuffs and Food Ingredients.” This GSO technical regulation was approved by the UAE

standards authority in 2017 to apply to extraction solvents used or intended for use in the production of foodstuffs or food ingredients. Unless product specifications state the opposite, this technical regulation does not apply to extraction solvents used in the production of food additives, vitamins, and other nutritional additives unless listed in the tables attached to this technical regulation.

- UAE.S/GSO 2042:2010 “Maximum Levels of Melamine in Foods and Feeds.” This technical regulation stipulates the maximum limits of melamine permitted in food products and feeds. The limits are based on the safety limits which differentiate between unavoidable background presence of melamine and unacceptable adulteration. For example, the maximum limits of melamine in infant formula (for infants between one and 12 months) for ready to use liquid products is 0.5 ppm (mg/l), for infant formula products in powder form is 1 ppm (mg/kg), for other food is 2.5 ppm (mg/kg), and for feeds is 116.2-410 ppm (mg/kg).

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

**VI.1. Emirates Conformity Assessment Scheme (ECAS):** ECAS is a Product Certification scheme for government-regulated products as mandated by the Federal Law 28 of 2001. Under this scheme, all regulated products must meet the requirements for safety and quality specified in the technical regulations adopted by the UAE government. Suppliers must register the products and obtain a Certificate of Conformity to sell inside the UAE. ECAS was first required for non-food products, but certain food products were added recently.

In June 2018, the UAE issued two rules for regulating milk and dairy products (Cabinet Decree 29:2018) and juice and beverages (Cabinet Decree 30:2018). The decrees require companies to obtain a UAE Certificate of Conformity for their products in accordance with ECAS before introducing them into the market. The effective date was May 2019. Regulated products include energy drinks, honey, organic products, food contact materials, juices, and dairy products. For more information about ECAS certificates and associated fees, see MOIAT’s [website](#).



On June 26, 2023, MOIAT notified WTO ([G/TBT/N/ARE/577](#)) of a new draft decree regarding the adoption of updated and new national conformity logos and marks, and energy efficiency and environmental performance cards. The draft decree includes updated and new logos that include an updated UAE Standards and Metrology logo, compliance logo, ECAS biodegradable logo, and verified logo, in addition to new free range chicken and ECO labels. The decree also states the policy for the usage of ECAS mark of conformity. The decree has not yet come into effect but is expected later this year.

**VI.2. Emirates Quality Mark (EQM):** The EQM is an approved mark of quality issued for product that can demonstrate compliance to the relevant UAE technical regulations and standards, regional and/or international standards and are manufactured by an organization implementing a quality management system ensuring continuous compliance. The process of obtaining license to use the mark involves a comprehensive evaluation of the product as well as the quality system used by the manufacturer in production through testing and inspection.



علامة الجودة الإماراتية  
Emirates Quality Mark

Regulated products include energy drinks, food contact materials, organic products, bottled drinking water, juices, and dairy products. For more information about EQM and associated fees, please see MOIAT's [website](#).

ECAS and EQM are mandatory for bottled drinking water. Furthermore, not all dairy and juice products are subject to this regulation. Suppliers of these commodities should work with their importers to determine if ECAS or EQM applies.

**VI.3. Food Registration and Label Assessment through ZAD, FIRS, and ZADI Portals:** In 2018, the UAE introduced the “National Scheme for Food Accreditation and Registration.” Within this new scheme came the establishment of an electronic food registration portal, commonly referred to as “ZAD.” ZAD is a federal system that can be used for registering products destined to any of the seven emirates. This system enrolls all food items prior to sale in the UAE and verifies product compliance with the country’s food laws. The registration process requires UAE importers to apply online and provide a copy of the product’s label, packaging, and official certificate from a competent authority in the country of origin confirming the product’s health or nutritional claims. Once a registration request is approved, the importer will receive the product registration certificate through the ZAD website. Once the product is officially registered in ZAD, the importer may apply for an import permit and bring shipments through any port in the UAE. Importers should [register](#) food items.

Food product registration in ZAD, coupled with import inspection procedures, are designed to ensure goods meet the following requirements:

- UAE SPS requirements, technical regulations and standards, or any requirements established through bilateral agreements signed with the supplying country
- The exporter is not banned by the authorities of the supplying country based on SPS requirements
- The product complies with all other technical regulations like food labeling, shelf life, or microbiological standards
- All laboratory test results comply with UAE technical regulations and standards
- Animal products are sourced from an approved facility at the country of origin
- The product complies with halal labeling requirements

In addition to the ZAD portal, importers in the Emirate of Dubai can use the Dubai Municipality’s Food Imports and Re-Export System portal (FIRS) to register their products and obtain approval for the product’s label after applying for a label assessment service. For the other six emirates, a product’s label assessment can be obtained from the food control department in each municipality. Dubai has recently established the ZADI system, an integrated platform for all key services required to import food items into Dubai. Through the ZADI portal, importers can apply for a food import request, food import for re-export, food item registration, food label assessment, customs services or search food items and apply for a custom’s [declaration](#). ZADI is broad platform that importers can use to access all government services related to imports.

**VI.4. Other Documentations or Certifications:** Based on a designated food category, imported products must be accompanied by certain documentation: For certain products regulated by the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) such as

meat, fish, eggs, livestock, live poultry, grains, animal feed, and planting seeds, an original health certificate issued by the appropriate government agency is required for the exporting country. FSIS, APHIS, NOAA, and AMS certificates are accepted by the UAE authorities. Health certificates must include details of the shipment such as quantity, weight, description, airway bill number or container number, invoice number, certificate serial number, date of issuance, exporter, importer, and a statement indicating the goods are “fit for human consumption.” Other food products such as processed, or shelf-stable foods only require a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) “Certificate to a Foreign Government” or a certificate of free sale issued by the applicable U.S. state authority. A certificate of free sale must include the product name, quantity, weight, airway bill number or container number, invoice number, certificate serial number, date of issuance, exporter, importer, destination, and statement indicating the goods are “fit for human consumption.”

For meat and meat products, an original halal slaughter certificate is required. For more information about halal regulations in the UAE, please see Section VII.14 below. The UAE has pre-approved certain U.S. halal certification bodies to supervise slaughtering and issue relevant UAE halal certificates. The halal certificate must include:

- logo of the approved U.S. Islamic organization
- serial number and date
- abattoir’s name and address
- product description, brand name, total quantity, and weight
- port of loading,
- slaughtering date
- production and expiry date
- producing company and FSIS facility number
- importer and exporter name
- name, signature, and stamp of the authorized U.S. certifier

Information on the approved UAE certifiers operating in the United States may be obtained by contacting the [Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology](#).

## Section VII: Other Specific Standards or Regulations

**VII.1. Genetically Engineered Products:** There are two main regulations covering genetically engineered products. The first is UAE.S GSO 2141:2011 “General Requirements for Genetically Modified Unprocessed Agricultural Products.” This technical regulation outlines the general requirements for unprocessed agricultural products obtained through certain techniques of genetic engineering and unprocessed agricultural products that contain “genetically modified organisms” (“GMOs”) if the “GMOs” present are greater than 1 percent.

The second regulation is UAE.S GSO 2142:2011 “General Requirements for Genetically Modified Processed Agricultural Products.” This technical regulation covers general requirements for processed food and feed obtained through certain techniques of genetic engineering and processed food and feed that contain or are produced from “GMOs” if the “GMOs” present are greater than 1 percent of the

ingredients. In addition, GSO 2371:2014 specifies the typical terms and definitions of genetically engineered food.

**VII.2. Sports Drinks:** UAE.S. GSO 2522:2016 “Electrolyte Drinks (Sports Drinks)” regulates sports drinks in the UAE and contains some specific requirements. For instance, it should be free from impurities, separation, and deposition. It must contain no less than 10 mmol/L sodium and no less than 50 g/L and no more than 100 g/L total sugars (carbohydrates), sucrose and glucose syrup and fructose and dextrose and maltodextrin and no more than 100 g/L fructose. For the label, a claim that an electrolyte drink is isotonic may only be made if the electrolyte drink has an average osmolality of 250-340 milliosmole/L. A claim that an electrolyte drink is hypertonic may only be made if the electrolyte drink has an osmolality more than 340 milliosmole/L.

**VII.3. Baby Foods:** There are three standards that regulate specifications for baby food. UAE.S GSO 355:2021 “Canned Baby Foods” covers products intended for children six months and older. UAE.S GSO 354:1994 “Infant Foods Based on Milk” outlines specifications for infant foods containing milk in liquid or powdered form. The last regulation is UAE.S/GSO CAC GL 10:2010 which specifies ingredients, “Advisory Lists of Nutrient Compounds for Use in Foods for Special Dietary uses Intended for Infants and Young Children.”

**VII.4. Aquatic Products:** There are more than two dozen GSO regulations established for fish and fish products. U.S. seafood suppliers are advised to check with the local importer prior to export to verify application of these laws for their products. Farmed fish and seafood may not be fed pork protein; wild-caught products to be identified on an accompanying health certificate issued by the exporting country’s competent authority.

**VII.5. Animal Quarantine:** MOCCA’s decree number 335:2018 “The Regulation of the Importation of Live Animals, their Products and their by-products” and federal law number 6:1979 regulate the importation of live animals. To ensure safety and freedom from infectious diseases, all animals are subject to quarantine, physical inspection, and laboratory testing. In general, all live animal consignments must be accompanied by an official veterinary health certificate issued from the exporting country designating freedom of epidemic and contagious diseases. A copy of the decree and the federal law are available [online](#).

**VII.6. Plant Quarantine:** MOCCA’s Decree 824:2015 lists quarantine pests that are prohibited in the UAE and for non-quarantine pests that are permitted under certain conditions. A copy of this regulation is available [online](#).

**VII.7. Alcohol Content in Food Products:** UAE.S/GSO 2538:2021 identifies maximum residue limits for ethyl alcohol (ethanol) in food resulting from naturally occurring or natural fermentation of the ingredients. Although a voluntary standard, the UAE tests for ethanol residue in some food due to Islamic regulations and consumption of alcohol forbidden for Muslims. For instance, the maximum limits for residues of ethyl alcohol naturally occurring or due to natural fermentation in vinegar (except grape vinegar) is 0.5 percent while for chocolate, juices, and other food products, the maximum limits are 0.02 percent, 0.1 percent, and 0.02 percent, respectively. Exporters must confirm that ethyl alcohol residues in their products are consistent with this technical regulation.

**VII.8. Product Samples and Mail Order Shipments:** In general, samples are exempt from local labeling and shelf-life requirements but may require a health certificate. Halal certificate is required for meat and meat products. Product samples must be clearly labeled as sample and not for sale. These goods may require a signed undertaking at the port of entry attesting to their intended use and will not be made available for commercial sale. Product samples are subject to quantity limits based on food category. MOCCA's decree number 14 of 2016 on "[Controlling of Imported Food for Non-Trading Purposes](#)" regulated product samples for promotional activities and other including quantity limits. For example, the quantity allowed for dairy product samples should not exceed 20 kg, meat and meat products 30 kg, poultry meat 20 kg, and eggs 10 kg. Exporters should verify limits and other requirements with UAE municipalities prior to shipment. U.S. suppliers should work with the event organizer to confirm all sample requirements.

**VII.9. Foods for Special Medical Purposes:** UAE.S GSO 1366:2021 "General Requirements for Handling of Foods for Special Medical Purposes" stipulates that formulation shall be based on medical and nutritional purposes. The measure also identifies labeling requirements. Moreover, these foods must be supported by scientific evidence that they are safe and beneficial in meeting the nutritional requirements for those for whom they are intended. Only pharmacies, hospitals, medical centers, childcare centers, or others UAE authorities designated may dispense and market these products.

**VII.10. Weight and Measures:** The UAE.S/GSO ISO 1000:2009 "International System of Units and Recommendations for the Use of their Multiples of Certain Other Units" and UAE.S/GSO OIML R87:2007 "Quantities of the Products in Prepackages" are the references for weight and measure. The UAE uses the metric unit system for volume and weight based on UAE.S/GSO ISO 1000:2009 and net content at the time of packing.

**VII.11. Vitamins and Minerals Food Supplements:** The UAE.S/2539:2022 "Mandatory Addition of Vitamins and Minerals in Foodstuffs," and UAE.S/GSO CAC GL 55:2015 "Guidelines for Vitamins and Minerals Food Supplements" are the UAE references for the vitamins and minerals in food supplements. Vitamin and mineral food supplements should contain vitamins, pro-vitamins, and minerals whose nutritional value for human beings has been proven by scientific data and whose status as vitamins and minerals is recognized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO). The sources of vitamins and minerals may be natural or synthetic; their selection should be based on considerations such as safety and bioavailability. In addition, purity criteria should consider FAO/WHO standards first; if FAO or WHO standards are not available, international pharmacopoeias or other recognized international standards should be employed. In the absence of criteria from these sources, national legislation may be used.

**VII.12. Prohibited and Restricted Commodities:** The UAE maintains a [list](#) of prohibited and restricted commodities.

The [GCC Unified Customs Tariffs for 2022](#) includes a number of prohibited commodities. Imports of live swine are prohibited, and pork and pork-containing products require special permits. Animal fats and ingredients must be sourced from animals that are halal slaughtered. The use of pork fat, as with all pork related products as ingredients, is prohibited unless retailed in non-Muslim designated sections of retail stores. Labels for pork and pork-containing products must comply with general labeling

requirements and must clearly state the product contains pork. Pictures or recipes referencing pork are prohibited on labels and packaging for all non-pork food items.

Most live animals and birds, agricultural planting material, seeds and seedlings, and animal skins and hides require an import permit from MOCCA. In 2020, the UAE has officially removed its longstanding import ban on U.S. live cattle that was in place since 2003; reference [GAIN Voluntary Report - U.S. Live Cattle Gain Market Access to UAE](#).

Food products that do not comply with UAE regulations but pose no health risk may be re-exported to a third (non-GCC) country. In the event of a finding of minor non-compliance, a warning is normally issued. The violation may be rectified through a letter confirming the mistake will be avoided in the future. Frequent or major infractions such as improper labeling of products containing pork, as well as tampering with production and expiration dates, however, are often brought to the national food safety committees. These infractions may be subject to large fines, penalties, or bans depending on the severity of the violation.

**VII.13. Excise and Value Added Taxes:** In 2017, the UAE introduced a new excise tax levied on specific goods which are claimed to be harmful to human health or the environment, referred to as excise goods:

- **Carbonated drinks** include any aerated beverage except for unflavored aerated water, as well as concentrations, powder, gel, or extracts intended to be made into an aerated beverage. The excise tax is 50 percent.
- **Energy drinks:** Any beverage marketed as an energy drink and contains substances known to provide mental and physical stimulation, including caffeine, taurine, ginseng, guarana, or any substance that has an identical or similar effect. The excise tax of 100 percent also applies to energy drinks as concentrations, powder, gel, liquids, and extracts.
- **Sweetened Drinks:** In August 2019, the Ministry of Finance’s Federal Tax Authority added sweetened drinks to the list of products subject to a UAE duty in Cabinet Decision 52. Sweetened drinks containing added sugar or sweeteners—and any product that can be converted into a sugar sweetened beverage—are subject to the new excise tax of 50 percent effective December 1, 2019. Sugar and sweeteners are defined under UAE.S/GSO 148:2008 “Sugar” and UAE.S/GSO 995:2021 “Sweeteners Permitted for Foodstuffs, General Requirements.”

Excluded from the tax are ready-to-drink beverages containing at least 75 percent milk; ready-to-drink beverages containing at least 75 percent milk substitutes; baby formula and follow up formulas; beverages consumed for special dietary needs under UAE.S/GSO 654:2021, “General Requirements for Prepackaged Foods for Special Dietary Use”; and beverages consumed for medical uses under UAE.S/GSO 1366:2021 “General Requirements for Handling of Foods for Special Medical Purposes.”

More information on excise tax is available from the [UAE](#) and [USDA](#).

Although most agricultural products are exempt from UAE customs duties, the UAE introduced a [5 percent valued added tax](#) in January 2018 applicable to most goods, services, and food products.

## VII.14. Halal and Kosher

**Halal:** There are many UAE technical regulations that govern halal requirements in food. In 2021 and 2022, the UAE published the updated versions of these major halal standards and technical regulations. These regulations outline the requirements and process by which food should be certified halal. The process includes accreditation of conformity assessment bodies (halal certification bodies) and the use of the UAE national halal mark for marketing purposes. See:

- UAE: S/ 993:2022 “Animal Slaughtering Requirements According to Islamic Rules”
- UAE.S 2055-1:2015 Part I “Halal Products – General Requirements for Halal Food”
- UAE.S 2055-2: 2021 Part II “Halal Products - General Requirements for Halal Certification Bodies”
- UAE.S 2055-3: 2021 Part III: 2016 “Halal Products – General Requirements for Halal Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Halal Certification Bodies”

The UAE’s national halal mark or logo (see right) is voluntary but no other halal marks are permitted in the UAE. If suppliers claim halal, they are required to provide a halal certificate from an approved halal certifier. If suppliers need to include a halal mark or logo, they are required to use the UAE’s halal logo. No other logos or marks are accepted. Information on the approved UAE certifiers operating in the United States can be obtained by contacting [MOIAT](#).



UAE Halal Logo

**Kosher:** The U.S.-based kosher certification body, Orthodox Union, carries out the certification and implementation of kosher dietary regulations in Abu Dhabi in partnership with the UAE’s local Jewish community. The Orthodox Union is responsible for kosher food at hotels and events. The Orthodox Union was recognized as the kosher certification body after the signing of the UAE-Israel Normalization Agreement (officially the Abraham Accords Peace Agreement) on September 15, 2020. Kosher certificates issued by the Orthodox Union accompanying any imported food item is approved in the emirate of Abu Dhabi.

In September 2020, Abu Dhabi’s Department of Culture and Tourism instructed all hotels to seek kosher certification for handling kosher meals to include kosher food options on room menus and at all food and beverage outlets. In 2021, Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority released “A Guideline Concerning the Requirements and Conditions for the Production and Handling of kosher Foods in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.” This guide clarifies the requirements and conditions related to the handling of kosher foods in Abu Dhabi, which any kosher facility must comply with. The guide includes requirements and conditions for import, requirements and conditions for displaying kosher products in sales outlets. The requirements and conditions for importing include:

- Food products shall be registered in the ZAD system for accreditation and registration
- Health certificate issued by a governmental health authority in the country of origin
- Packing list



- A kosher certificate issued by a kosher certification body registered with the Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology, with the list of kosher certification bodies approved by the ministry
- Any additional certificates for specific cases that require health or nutritional claims or other claims, when necessary, on the food label (e.g., genetically engineered foods or organic foods)
- Customs declaration or delivery order issued by the carrier
- Trade license (import or general trading activity)
- The lists issued by MOIAT to the kosher certification bodies and the facilities that have the kosher mark are the reference for the regulatory authorities to allow the entry and handling of the kosher products to the country's markets
- The product complies with other UAE's technical regulations

**VII.15. Flavoring Permitted for Use in Foodstuffs:** The UAE adopted a GSO technical regulation in 2015 (UAE.S/GSO 707:2021 “Flavoring Permitted for Use in Foodstuffs”) to cover natural flavoring, artificial flavoring, and flavoring enhancers permitted for use in food products intended for human consumption.

**VII.16. Plant-Based Meat or Dairy Alternatives:** There is no specific standards for plant-based meats or dairy alternatives. However, the UAE's standard 5048/2021 “General Requirements for Novel Foods” should be used as reference for these types of products. In addition, exporters of these commodities should comply with all related technical regulations, especially labeling and halal requirements, if the product is to be claimed as halal product. Exporters are required to provide evidence from government authority at country of origin for any claims mentioned in their package.

**VII.17. Novel Foods:** The UAE.S 5048/2021 “General Requirements for Novel Foods” sets out general requirements for importing, manufacturing, or marketing a novel food. The standard defines *novel foods* as foods that has been developed by new manufacturing methods, because of innovative mixtures or formulations, or produced from new edible sources. This includes any food that has not, to a large extent, been used for human consumption within the markets of the UAE before the standard came into effect. The standard delineates categories for these foods in addition to other food categories covered by different standards.

According to the standard, products are deemed approved in the UAE if they are also on the U.S. FDA's [list](#) of generally safe food substances or on the European Union's [list](#) of novel foods.

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

Geographical indications, trademarks and brand names are protected under UAE's domestic laws and regulations. Any geographical indications and trademarks should be registered through the E-service portal of UAE's Ministry of Economy [here](#). The UAE also protects other intellectual property rights such as patents and copyright.

- Ministerial Resolution No. 411 of 1993 on Control over the Intellectual Works Protected Under Law No. 40 of 1992 on Copyrights and Author's Rights
- Federal Law No. 7 of 2002 on Copyrights and Related Rights

- Federal Law No (11) of 2021 on the Regulation and Protection of Industrial Property Rights
- Federal Decree-Law no. (36) of 2021 on Trademarks
- Federal Decree Law no. (38) of 2021 On Copyrights and Neighboring Rights
- Cabinet Decision No. 6/2022 On the Implementing Regulation of Federal Law No. 11/2021 on the Regulation and Protection of Industrial Property Rights
- Cabinet Decision No. 47/2022 On the Implementing Regulation of Federal Decree-Law No. 38/2021 on Copyrights and Neighboring Rights
- Cabinet Decision No. 57/2022 On Executive Regulations of the Federal Decree- Law No. 36/2021 on Trademarks (beta)

[Copies](#) of this legislation are available.

UAE defines trademark as every object that has a distinctive form, including names, words, signatures, letters, symbols, figures, addresses, stamps, drawings, photos, inscriptions, packaging, figurative elements, shapes, color, set of colors or a combination of such elements, or a sign or a set of signs, including 3D marks, hologram marks or any other mark used or intended to be used to distinguish the commodities or services of a particular organization from the commodities or services of any other organizations, to indicate that a particular service is performed, or to conduct monitoring or inspection of the commodities or services, shall constitute a trademark. Objects related to sound and smell may also be classified as a trademark.

The duration of protection resulting from the registration of a trademark shall be 10 years commencing from the date of submitting the application. If the right holder wishes to renew the protection for similar periods, he shall submit for renewal of the trademark registration to the ministry during the periods, conditions and procedures specified by the executive regulations of this decree-law. The trademark shall be renewed without any new examination. Such renewal shall be announced in the Ministry’s bulletin.

The registration of the geographical indications as a trademark shall conform to the provisions of Federal Decree-Law no. (36) of 2021 on Trademarks and its Executive Regulations. A geographical indication may be a sign or a group of signs in any form whatsoever, such as words, including geographical or personal names, letters, numbers, holographic elements, color or colors. Geographical indications shall enjoy the protection stipulated in the law if these indications are protected in the country of origin.

The Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property is one of the most important references on the protection of names and trademarks. The UAE is a signatory to this convention, and it became national law by the accession of the United Arab Emirates, Decree No. 20 of 1996.

On September 28, 2021, the UAE joined the International Trademark Registration Treaty, known as “Madrid Protocol” with the World Intellectual Property Organization making it the 109th member of the Madrid System, which now covers 125 countries. This also makes it the third GCC country, alongside Bahrain and Oman, to join the Madrid Protocol. The protocol is a convenient and efficient way for trademark owners worldwide to file one application to register their trademark in multiple countries. The owners can file for and manage their trademark’s protection in more than 120 countries and regional intellectual property offices using a single streamlined application and payment process.

More information on UAE regulations on geographical indications, trademarks, and intellectual property rights is [available](#).

In addition, [UAE Federal Law No. 17](#) issued on December 31, 2009, on the Protection of New Botanical Species aims at regulating the rights and obligations pertaining to the invention of new botanical species.

## Section IX: Import Procedures

Before importing food products to the UAE, the product first needs to be registered by an importer. Registration can be done through the ZAD, ZADI, or FIRS portals. Please refer to Food Registration and Label Assessment Section for more information on each portal. Please note that certain products require prior import permit as indicated in the prohibited and restricted commodities section of this report.

To obtain access to the FIRS system, which is used to register food products and approve product's label in the Emirate of Dubai, the importer will need to complete an online application form, provide company details, upload their trade license, and then visit the Dubai Municipality to make a payment. Once the importer receives its username and password, the importer can access and use the FIRS system for food import or re-export requests, follow up on any fines and fees, register food items, conduct label assessments, and more. To apply for an import request, the importer will need to register the food item and complete the label assessment.

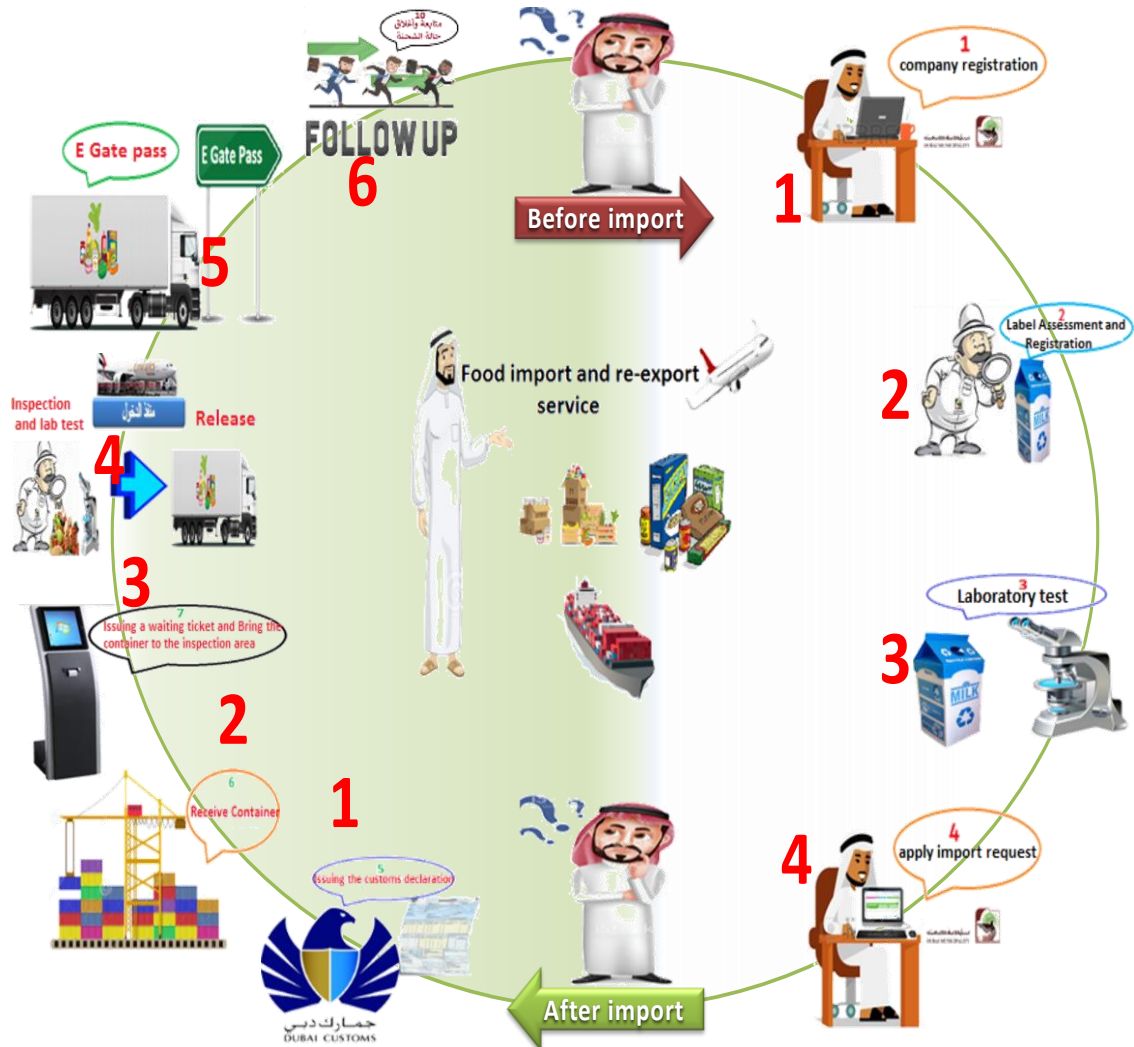
For product registration in FIRS, the importer needs to provide details of the product and upload health and laboratory certificates. Registering new product requires lab testing at the Dubai Municipality's Central Laboratory. Importers will need to submit samples directly to the Food and Environment section at the lab. The quantity of the samples depends on the type of the tests requested by the Dubai Municipality. It may take up to five working days to receive test results depending on the type of test.

After registering the product, importers should apply for a label assessment on FIRS, which requires uploading a copy of the product's label and providing other detailed information (mainly on ingredients). If the product registration and label assessment were successful, the importer may then apply for an import request. Import requests will be submitted through FIRS and the importer will need to provide information related to the port of entry, airway bill number, arrival date, country of origin, and other required details.

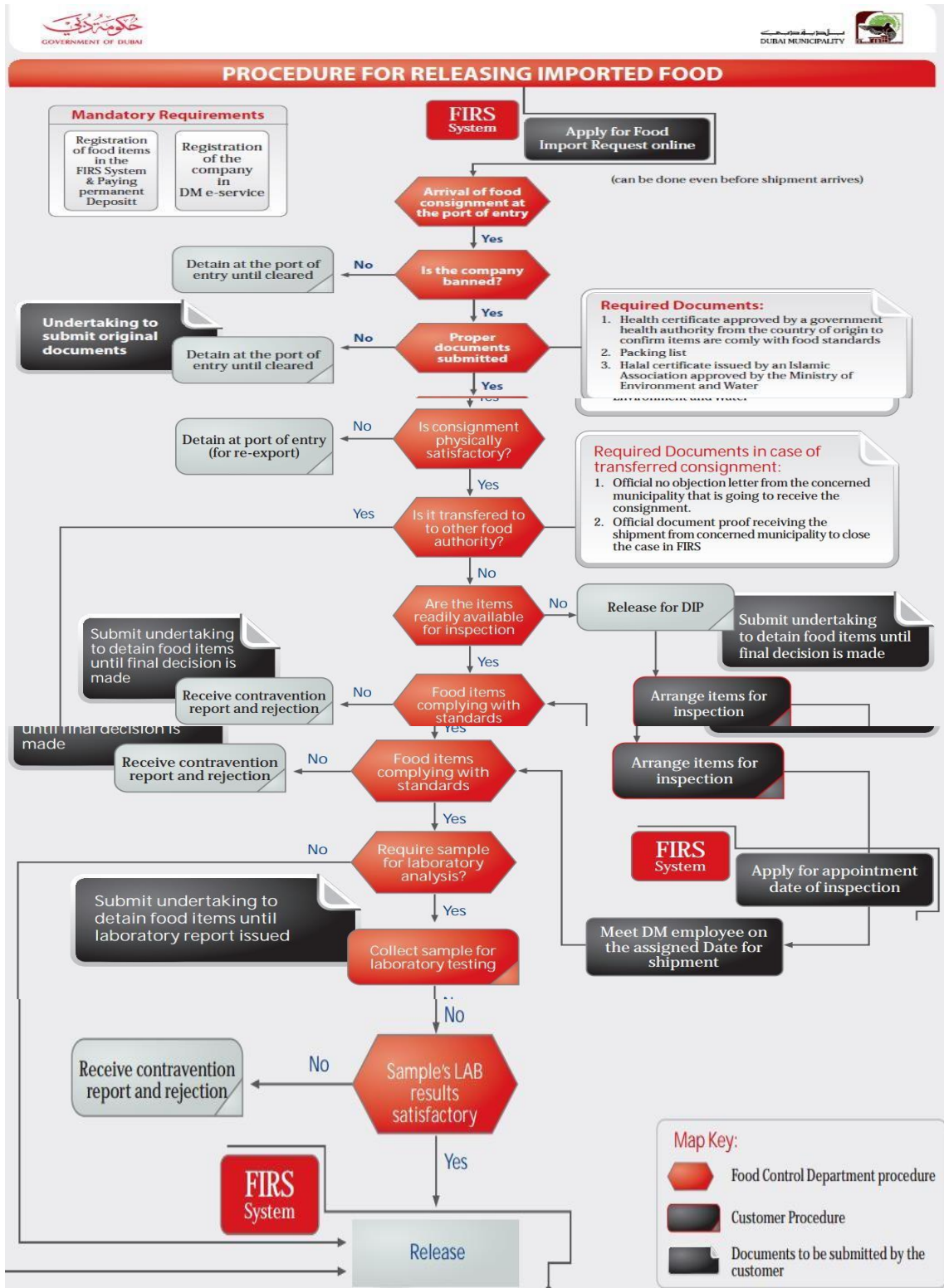
Once goods arrive, they may be inspected to ensure compliance with standards and that all information matches what is reported in FIRS. Once the inspection is complete and the cargo clears quarantine, the importer is required to pay the customs duty and release the shipment. Please see the attached graphs for details on import procedures. FIRS will notify the importer in case the shipment is detained and/or rejected. The importer can use the same portal to appeal this decision.

Import documents in English language are accepted; translating these documents to the local language is not necessary to expedite customs clearance. See below for schematics from the Dubai Municipality that shed light on the entire process.

## Schematic of Food Import and Re-Export Service



# Dubai's Procedure for Releasing Imported Food



## Section X: Trade Facilitation

The UAE became the first country among members of the League of Arab States to ratify the new WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) on April 18, 2016.

The UAE submitted four WTO notifications under the agreement. Most recently notification number (G/TFA/N/ARE/2) notified on November 15, 2022, based on Articles 1.4, 10.4.3, 10.6.2 and 12.2.2 of the TFA. The notification provides web links for obtaining information on procedures for importation, exportation, and transit (including port, airport, and other entry point procedures), and required forms and documents; applied rates of duties and taxes of any kind imposed on, or in connection with, importation or exportation; fees and charges imposed by or for governmental agencies on or in connection with importation, exportation or transit; rules for the classification or valuation of products for customs purposes; laws, regulations, and administrative rulings of general application relating to rules of origin; import, export or transit restrictions or prohibitions; penalty provisions for breaches of import, export, or transit formalities; procedures for appeal or review; agreements or parts thereof with any country or countries relating to importation, exportation, or transit; and procedures relating to the administration of tariff quotas.

The notification also provides information on the operation of the single window, available through Abu Dhabi and Dubai customs. Links to this information and services can be access through the UAE's WTO [notification](#) (G/TFA/N/ARE/2) submitted on November 15, 2022.

The UAE does not use the International Plant Protection Convention's global E-Phyto hub. Although e-certificates are also not used, Dubai Municipality is involved in discussions with some trading partners to agree on mutual e-certification systems which will help reduce the use of paper documents and facilitate bilateral trade.

## Appendix I: Government Regulatory Agency Contacts

### Ministry of Climate Change and Environment

Old Airport Road, Behind Carrefour, Opposite Abu Dhabi Retirement Pensions & Benefits Fund  
P.O. Box 213  
Abu Dhabi  
Phone: 971 02 4444747  
Fax: 971 02 4490444  
[info@moccae.gov.ae](mailto:info@moccae.gov.ae)  
Website: [www.moccae.gov.ae](http://www.moccae.gov.ae)

Al Ruwayyah 2 Area, beside Zayed University, Al-Ain Road  
P.O. Box 1509  
Dubai  
Phone: 971 04 2148424  
Fax: 971 04 2655822  
[info@moccae.gov.ae](mailto:info@moccae.gov.ae)

## Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology

Old Airport Road Building  
Ministry of Environment and Water  
Abu Dhabi  
Phone: +971 600565554  
Fax: +971 (4) 2944428  
Email: [customercare@moiat.gov.ae](mailto:customercare@moiat.gov.ae)  
Website: <http://www.moiat.gov.ae/>

Business Avenue Building  
Sheikh Rashid Rd  
Dubai  
Phone: + 971 600565554  
Fax: + 971 (4) 2944428  
Email: [customercare@moiat.gov.ae](mailto:customercare@moiat.gov.ae)

## Dubai Municipality

Head Office:  
Building 20, Baniyas Road, Al Rigga area, Deira  
P.O. Box 67  
Dubai  
Phone: +971 4 2215555  
Fax: +971 4 2246666  
Inquiry hotline: +971 4 2064201 / +971 4 2064232  
Email: [foodcontrol@dm.gov.ae](mailto:foodcontrol@dm.gov.ae)  
Website: [www.dm.gov.ae](http://www.dm.gov.ae)

Al-Garhoud Office:  
Securities and Commodities Authority Building, 5th Street, Al-Garhoud area,  
Dubai

#### Abu Dhabi Municipality

Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority  
P.O. Box 52150  
Abu Dhabi  
Phone: +971 2 495 4112  
Fax: +971 2 446 3811  
Website: <https://www.dmt.gov.ae/en/adm/ContactUs>

#### Sharjah Municipality

Food Control Department  
Sheikh Sultan Bin Saqr Al Qasimi Street, near City Center, Al-Nasria  
P.O. Box 22  
Sharjah  
Phone: +971 6 565 6000  
Hot Line: 993  
Fax: +971 6 565 2707  
E-mail: [info@shjmun.gov.ae](mailto:info@shjmun.gov.ae)  
Website: <https://portal.shjmun.gov.ae/en/Pages/ContactUs.aspx>

#### Ajman Municipality

Masfoot Road, Al Bustan, near Lulu Center  
Ajman  
Phone: +971 6 7012534  
Fax: + 971 6 7438558  
Email: [80070@am.gov.ae](mailto:80070@am.gov.ae)  
Website: <https://www.am.gov.ae/contact>

### Appendix II: Other Import Specialist Technical Contacts

#### Dubai Central Laboratory

Food and Environment Laboratory Section  
Address: Umm Hurair Road, Al-Karama  
Dubai  
Phone: +971 4 302 7126 / +971 4 302 7373 / +971 4 302 7007  
Fax: +971 4 335 8448  
Email: [mahmusa@dm.gov.ae](mailto:mahmusa@dm.gov.ae)  
Website: <https://www.dm.gov.ae/municipality-business/about-laboratory/>



## Appendix III: USDA Contacts

### Foreign Agricultural Service

Office of Agricultural Affairs  
American Consulate General  
Dubai  
Phone: +971 4 309 4000  
Email: [AgDubai@USDA.gov](mailto:AgDubai@USDA.gov)  
Website: [www.fas.usda.gov](http://www.fas.usda.gov)

#### **Attachments:**

No Attachments