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Executive Summary

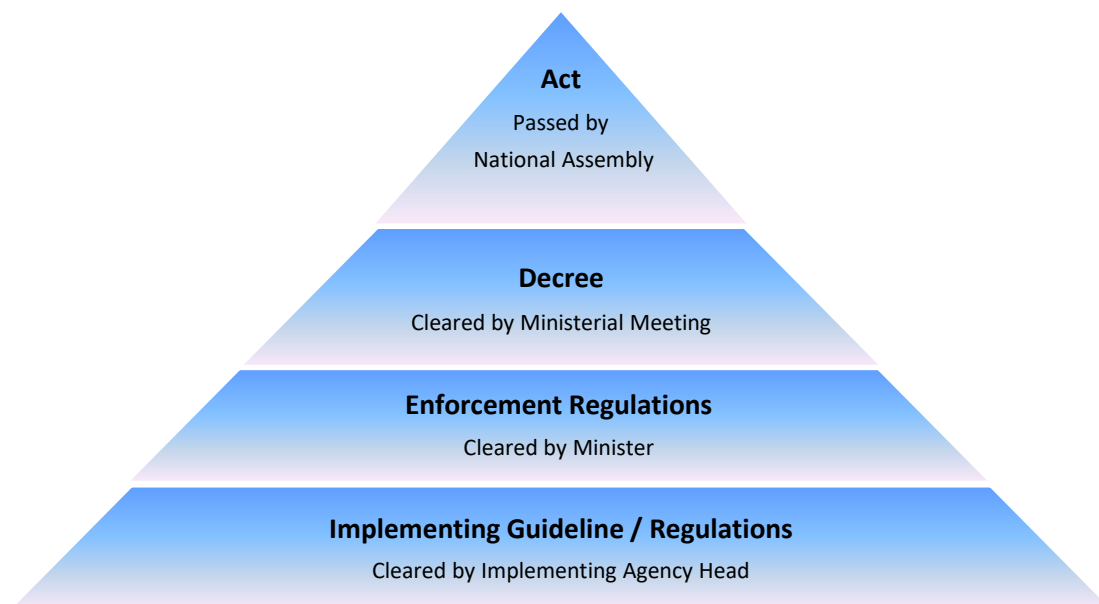
The United States is the leading supplier of agricultural products to Korea, the fifth largest country export market for U.S. agricultural and related products. Korea relies heavily on agricultural imports and recognizes the United States as a trusted source for high-quality and affordable agricultural products. Now in its 14th year, the Korea-United States Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) has increased export opportunities for U.S. products by reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade. In general, Korea maintains a science-based regulatory system and strictly adheres to the rules governing the importation of agricultural products, although there are sensitive items with political implications. The primary ministries with oversight of the Korean food safety system are the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety (MFDS) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA).

Section I. Food Laws

Korea maintains a modern legal system based on a fixed hierarchy. Under this framework, an act or law legislated by the National Assembly provides the legal basis for government regulations. National Assembly members or a competent government ministry may submit a draft bill for National Assembly consideration.

Under each act, enforcement decrees and regulations are drawn up by the responsible ministry to implement the law. Accordingly, the competent ministry or agency also promulgates notices and guidelines to the public as well as provides detailed guidance and clarification when needed. The simplified chart below highlights Korea's legislative hierarchy.

Legal System



Proposed new and/or revised acts, enforcement decrees, enforcement regulations, and the implementing guidelines are published in the government gazette for public comment. These changes are also notified to the WTO for international comments. Additionally, the [Korean Law Information Center](#) has

translated many of these acts and some enforcement decrees into English to strengthen cooperation with trading partners and multinational firms doing business in Korea.

Over the past decade, Korea has adopted a more science-based approach towards food regulations. However, at times, Korean regulations are ambiguous and may cause confusion and misinterpretation among relevant stakeholders. Also, Korea's regulatory process is influenced by vocal industry and consumer groups, as well as politicians. In some cases, regulators show deference to protectionist-driven views when drafting regulations. Historically, Korea modeled its regulatory approach on the system established in the United States; however, due to NGO influence, Korea's current regulatory posture emulates more of a European precautionary approach to food safety. Occasionally, Korean regulators cite consumer rights as the basis for introducing new food regulations without considering its scientific merit.

The major ministries and agencies regulating the Korean food system are MFDS, MAFRA, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (MOTIE), and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). In 2013, all food safety-related authority, including import inspection of livestock products, was transferred to MFDS (formerly known as the Korea Food & Drug Administration), and MFDS was upgraded to ministry status. The purpose behind this consolidation of food safety-related authority was to enable MFDS greater oversight in managing Korea's food sector. MFDS has a three-stage food safety process for imported foods consisting of pre-import, import clearance, and post-market steps. Prior to import, MFDS requires foreign food and livestock facilities to register. During the import clearance step, MFDS applies different import inspection programs depending on risk assessments. Finally, MFDS conducts market surveillance of imported products.

The following is a brief description of each organization's role and the relevant acts and regulations that govern their respective operations.

A. Ministry of Food & Drug Safety (MFDS):

MFDS's role is to protect public health and safety, including the safety of food and livestock products. MFDS, with its six regional offices and the National Institute of Food & Drug Safety Evaluation, is responsible for establishing and enforcing food regulations as well as setting standards and specifications for domestic and imported foods to include livestock products (including eggs and dairy products), functional foods, food additives, and food packaging, containers, and equipment. MFDS establishes the guidelines for implementing the Hazard Analysis of Critical Control Point (HACCP) programs and labeling of food and livestock products. In addition, MFDS sets and implements regulations governing safety evaluations of agricultural products that have been enhanced through biotechnology and labeling requirements for both agricultural products and processed food products using genetically engineered (GE) ingredients. Several key MFDS regulations are listed below.

- The Food Sanitation Act is the legal basis for the food safety-related work conducted by MFDS. Among other things, pesticide and veterinary drug standards are governed under this act.
- The Functional Food Act provides the legal basis for MFDS's oversight of functional foods, such as health foods and nutritional supplements.

- The Special Act on Children’s Dietary Life Safety Management provides the legal basis for MFDS's determination and oversight of food products consumed by children. This act restricts the sales and advertisement of high-calorie, low-nutrient food products and high caffeine food, and introduces a voluntary color-coded labeling system.
- The Special Act on Imported Food Safety Management provides a framework for imported food policies. This act was implemented on February 4, 2016 and consolidated all regulations for imported food. Some provisions introduced in the Special Act were designed to improve management of imported food, such as pre-registration of foreign facilities. For details on the Special Act, See Section VI.
- The Food Labeling and Advertisement Act is the legal basis for labeling of food and livestock products. With the establishment of this Act in 2018, MFDS merged labeling standards for food and livestock products into “Labeling Standards for Food.”
- The Food Code stipulates standards and specifications for manufacturing, processing, usage, cooking, and storage of food, equipment containers and packaging. It establishes testing methods and specifies maximum residue levels for agricultural chemicals and veterinary drugs, radioactive standards, and contaminants. To unify the management system of food and livestock products, MFDS merged the Livestock Code into the Food Code in 2017 and implemented the unified management system in 2018. The English translation of the Food Code provided by MFDS can be found on the following website: [Food Code](#)
- The Food Additive Code defines specifications for individual food additives and usage standards. See Section IV for more details on additive requirements.
- The Labeling Standards for Food provides guidance on how to comply with MFDS’s Korean language labeling requirements for food products including livestock products and imported food. See Section II for details on labeling requirements.
- The Labeling Standards for Genetically Modified Food combines three labeling standards: Labeling Standards for Recombinant Food, Guidelines for Labeling of Genetically Modified Agricultural Products, and Labeling Standards in the LMO Act. The combined standard outlines requirements for the labeling of biotech crops and food, including processed food products. In 2017, MFDS implemented a new biotech labeling requirement to expand mandatory labeling for all detectable products.
- The Functional Food Code contains general standards and specifications governing functional foods, and individual standards and specifications for functional food categories.
- The Inspection Guidelines for Imported Food is a checklist for imported food products including livestock and fishery products detailing testing, sampling, and other pertinent inspection standards. In 2023, MFDS merged three separate inspection guidelines and implemented the unified inspection guideline covering all imported products.

- The Livestock Product Sanitary Management Act specifies requirements for the slaughter and handling of livestock as well as the processing, distribution, and inspection of livestock products. The act is the legal basis for sanitary standards for livestock products.

B. Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA):

MAFRA establishes and enforces regulations pertaining to overall agricultural policy and quarantine inspection of agricultural products, including livestock, dairy, and forestry products. There are several agencies under MAFRA, including the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency (APQA), the National Agricultural Product Quality Management Service (NAQS), and the Rural Development Administration (RDA).

APQA is responsible for quarantine and sanitary control of animal and plant products with the goal of “Enhancing Public Health & Protecting Agriculture and Livestock Industry by Preventing Introduction of Contagious Animal Disease and Plant Pest.” APQA is responsible for preventing the introduction of harmful pests and diseases originating from imported plant and plant products. The agency’s [organization chart](#) (English) shows the various subdivisions and their respective areas of responsibility.

NAQS overseas quality standards and grades for agricultural products, enforcing country of origin marks, and enforcing organic labeling for fresh fruits, vegetables, grains, and processed food products in the marketplace. They also provide organic certifier accreditation for both non-processed organic produce and processed organic products. In addition, NAQS determines organic equivalency with foreign countries.

Several key MAFRA/APQA/NAQS regulations are listed below.

- The Act on Prevention of Contagious Animal Disease Animal is to maintain animal health and improve public health by preventing the outbreak or spread of contagious animal disease. In accordance with the Act, MAFRA’s Quarantine Policy Division (QPD) sets import health requirements for live animals and animal products. The certification requirements for U.S. livestock products are available on USDA’s [Food Safety & Inspection Service](#) (FSIS) website.
- The [Plant Protection Act](#) (excerpts in English) safeguards agricultural and forestry production by establishing quarantine regulations for imported and domestic plants.
- The Import Plant Inspection Guideline defines inspection procedures for imported plants and plant materials and establishes specific principles for the inspection and disposition of imported plants.
- The Agricultural Products Quality Management Act includes provisions governing country of origin marks, geographical indication (GI), traceability, etc., for agricultural products.
- The Act on the Management and Support for the Promotion of Eco-Friendly Agriculture/Fisheries and Organic Foods seeks to promote a sustainable eco-friendly agriculture/fishery industry. This consolidated act is the legal basis for MAFRA’s organic certification program for both fresh produce and processed food products and equivalency for processed organic products.

- The Guideline for Country of Origin (COO) for Agricultural Products provides Korea's COO labeling requirements for domestic agricultural products and raw materials used in domestically processed agricultural products. COO labeling of imported agricultural products is required under Article 33 of the Foreign Trade Act.

C. Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy

Korea's Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (MOTIE) has authority for implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB). Korea ratified the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) in 2007. In 2008, Korea implemented the Act on Living Modified Organisms, or LMO Act, which is the implementing legislation for the CPB and the overarching law governing the country's biotechnology-related rules and regulations. For more information on Korea's biotech regulatory system, please refer to the Biotech Annual Report [KS2024-0023](#) in the [FAS GAIN system](#). The LMO Act and associated regulations are identified below.

- The LMO Act implements the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to ensure the safe development, production, importation, exportation, and commercialization of living modified organisms. This act provides guidance on import approval, mandatory risk assessment, and labeling of living modified organisms (LMO) or genetically engineered commodities. In September 2024, two members of the National Assembly proposed competing revisions to the LMO Act to establish a regulatory process for genome edited products.
- The Enforcement Decree of the LMO Act establishes the responsibilities of relevant government agencies, procedures for the importation, production, export notification, and transit report of LMOs, procedures for designating the agencies responsible for risk assessments and specialized review agencies, labeling and handling requirements, and procedures for the creation and operation of a bio-safety clearing house.
- The Enforcement Regulations of the LMO Act stipulates the provisions delegated by the LMO Act and its Enforcement Decree and the provisions deemed necessary to implement the Act and Decree. The Enforcement Regulations include document requirements for import approval of LMOs, safety assessments, environmental risk assessments, and production approval.
- The Consolidated Notice provides guidelines for the export and import of LMOs for agricultural use, environmental release, and food/feed processing and other uses. It also identifies data requirements for risk assessments.

D. Prime Minister's Office

Under the Framework Act on Food Safety the Prime Minister's Office coordinates overall food safety controls across various ministries and agencies.

In accordance with the act, each relevant agency is tasked with developing a comprehensive five-year food safety plan. To facilitate integration of these various plans, the Act calls for the establishment of a food safety committee with the Prime Minister serving as the chairperson. Committee members include: the Minister of Planning and Finance, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Minister of Health and Welfare, the Minister of Environment,

the Minister of Oceans and Fisheries, the Minister of Food & Drug Safety, Minister of the Prime Minister's Office and experts appointed by the Prime Minister.

Established in 2021, the current five-year plan focuses on 1) systematic safety management in response to risk, 2) precautionary measure and fast response to food borne disease, 3) proactive measure to future climate changes, and 4) aligning the crisis response system and setting up a government-wide cooperation system.

Section II. Labeling Requirements

A. MFDS Labeling Standards for Food

MFDS's Food Labeling and Advertising Policy Division develops labeling standards for food including livestock products, while regional offices inspect imported foods and enforce labeling requirements upon arrival. Provincial authorities also have the authority to verify labeling of domestic and imported goods in the marketplace.

All imported food products are required to carry legible, Korean language labels. Stickers or tags are permitted but cannot be easily removable nor cover the original label. Labels must contain the following information:

- Product name- The product name should be identical to the product name declared to the licensing/inspection authority.
- Product type- This is the minimum unit of food product categories according to the Standards & Specifications for Food.
- Importer's name and address, and the address where products may be returned or exchanged in the event of defects.
- Name of manufacturer- The foreign manufacturer name shall be stated. If it is written in a foreign language (e.g. English), no Korean translation is necessary.
- Manufacture date (year, month and day)- This is mandatory for specially designated products, such as boxed lunches, rice roll in seaweed, hamburgers, sandwiches, sushi, sugar, edible salts, ice cream, edible ice, frozen dessert (ice candies) and alcoholic beverages (excluding beer and Korean traditional rice liquor since they are required to indicate shelf-life or best before date). For alcoholic beverages, a manufacture number (lot number) or bottling date may substitute for the manufacture date.
- Use-by-date or best-before date¹- In August 2021, Korea revised its Labeling Act to replace shelf-life language with "use-by date." This revision went into effect on January 1, 2023, with a one-year grace period for full enforcement. Food product labels should indicate the

¹ Note- While Korea maintains recommended use-by-date guidelines, there are no mandatory use-by-date requirements established by the Korean government. Food manufactures are permitted to set use-by-dates for their products but may be required to provide Korean authorities with the scientific evidence supporting their claims.

manufacturer-determined use-by-date. Products that are subject to a manufacturer date may be excluded from the use-by-date labeling requirements. Products including jams, saccharide products (e.g. dextrin, oligosaccharide, fructose, and sugar syrup), sterilized liquid teas and coffee, sterilized beverages, bean based sauce and paste, sterilized curry products, vinegar, kimchi, salted and fermented seafood (*jutgal*), pickled products, sterilized hard boiled products, beer, starch, honey, wheat flour, products with long shelf-life such as retort packaged or canned products may use either a best-before or a use-by-date. If various products are packaged together, the product with the shortest use-by-date must be noted on the label.

- **Contents (Calories)-** Weight, volume or number of pieces should be indicated. If the number of pieces is shown, the weight or volume must be indicated in parentheses. Calories are only required for food products subject to nutritional labeling. When the content of a certain product in the same size package is reduced, information regarding changes of content shall be stated on a label, e.g. “Content XX gram (contents changed from YY gram to ZZ gram or AA% reduced)” for three months from the date of change. This content change information provision requirement does not apply if the reduced content change is less than 5% of the total content or the product unit price does not change. It also does not apply to non-processed agriculture, livestock and fishery products.
- **Ingredient names and content-** The names of all ingredients are required on the Korean language label. However, for those products with a principal display panel smaller than 30 cm², only the top five ingredients are required.
- **Ingredient names used in making composite ingredients-** Artificially added purified water and names of ingredients used to make a composite raw ingredient amounting to less than five percent of the product in weight will be excluded from the requirement. In the case of a composite raw ingredient amounting to less than five percent of the product by weight, only the name of the composite raw ingredient must be listed on the Korean language label. In the case of a composite raw ingredient amounting to over five percent of the product by weight, the names of all ingredients contained in the composite raw ingredient must be listed on the Korean language label. Ingredients must be listed in order of predominance by weight, that is, the ingredient that weighs the most is listed first, and the ingredient that weighs the least is listed last. As for ingredients amounting to less than two percent of the product in weight, they may be listed without following order by weight. Terms for food additives that are not listed in the Korean Food Additive Code such as MSG are not permitted for use on the label. (“No MSG” is prohibited on the product). For ethanol and distilled spirits, the raw material labeling requirement for composite ingredients can be omitted. It can be labeled as “Whisky”, “Vodka” or “Brandy” without providing the names of the raw materials used in making ethanol or distilled spirits.
- **Additives-** Food additives must also be listed by full name, abbreviated name, or purpose as they are listed in the Korean Food Additive Code or Labeling Standards for Foods (e.g. Sodium Saccharin (Sweetener)).
- **Allergens-** Food items known to be food allergens must be indicated on the label even if they are added at minimal levels as part of a mix. Food items considered as food allergens include

poultry eggs, milk, buckwheat, peanuts, soybeans, wheat, mackerel, crab, shrimp, pork, peaches, tomatoes, sulfite-added products (limited to a case where 10mg/g or more of SO₂ is present in the finished product), walnuts, beef, chicken, squid, shell fish (including oyster, abalone, and mussel), and pine nut. Food containing one or more of these allergens as a raw ingredient(s) or containing raw ingredients made by extracting the above listed allergen items must be indicated on the Korean language label. (e.g. cookies containing egg yolk: “yolk (egg)”). Foods that do not use or contain the above listed items may carry a claim indicating the product does not use or contain food allergens.

- Products that are made of raw materials that do not cause any food allergies but are produced in the same processing line, a statement such as “This product is manufactured in the same manufacturing facility as products known to be food allergens” shall be indicated.
- Nutrients- Only designated products are subject to nutritional labeling. Please see nutritional labeling section for more details.
- Other items designated by the detailed labeling standards for food- This includes cautions and standards for use or preservation (e.g., drained weight for canned products, radiation-processed products, etc.), packaging materials, etc. The use of photos or pictures of fruit is prohibited unless the product contains the corresponding natural flavor or ingredient.
- Photos or pictures of cooked food on the principal display panel- If such picture or photo is displayed on the principal display panel of the package, “Cooking Image” or a similar term shall be stated in a font size larger than 10-point along with the image.
- Juice from concentrate- A claim of “100%” is allowed for juice made of concentrates even if it contains food additives. In this case, a name or a purpose of additive shall be indicated below the “100%” marking. (e.g. 100% Orange Juice (including citric acid) or 100% Orange Juice (including acid controlling agent))
- Marketing claims such as HACCP, ISO 22000, Kosher, Halal, GMP, Vegan, etc.- While these claims are permitted, exporters and importers must retain supporting documents validating these statements. MFDS does not check supporting documents when products arrive in Korea but may request supporting documents as needed. Supporting documents should be issued by reliable and credible organizations.
- Gluten free claim- allowed for products that do not use wheat, rye, barley, oat or crossbreed of such grains and whose total gluten content in the finished product is not more than 20mg/kg. It is also allowed for products with ingredients that are made by removing gluten from the aforementioned grains, such that the total gluten content in the finished product is not more than 20mg/kg.
- Products containing flaxseed (excluding flaxseed oil) are required to carry the following statement: “Be cautious in taking flaxseed as total daily intake amount shall not exceed 16 grams and one serving size shall not exceed 4 grams.”

- “Non-alcoholic”, “alcohol free” and “no alcohol added” may be stated on a label for food products other than alcoholic beverages. In this case, a “for adults only” claim in brackets next to or below “non-alcoholic”, “alcohol free” or “no alcohol added” claims shall be made. Also, when a claim of “non-alcoholic” is made, a claim of “less than 1% of ethanol (or alcohol) is contained” shall be stated in the same font size of the “non-alcoholic” claim., e.g. “Non-alcoholic (contains less than 1% of ethanol, for adults only)”, “Alcohol free” (for adults only), “No alcohol added” (for adults only)
- For chilled or frozen livestock products, labels must match the condition of the product, stating either “Chilled” or “Frozen” on the principal display panel. However, if chilled or frozen is used as part of product name this labeling requirement may be exempt.
- For chilled livestock products that have transformed into a frozen product, it shall provide following labeling information: 1) a statement “this product is made by freezing chilled product”, 2) a frozen date, and 3) a use-by-date of frozen product and a storage temperature.
- “Decaffeinated” may be stated on a label for tea and coffee products when 90% or more of caffeine contained in the product is removed.
- The term “Natural” is not allowed for sugar.
- “Diet” may be stated on a label for carbonated drinks when calories per 400mL are 2kcal or below.
- “Light” may be stated on a beer label when calories per 100mL are 30kcal or below.
- Products containing aspartame are required to carry the following statement: “Containing phenylalanine.”
- “No sugar added” or “No addition of sugar” may be stated on a label for food products when all of the following conditions are met: 1) No sugar is added, 2) do not use an ingredient that can functionally replace sugar such as honey, sugar syrups, processed saccharide products, etc., 3) do not use an ingredient that contains sugar such as jam and jelly, 4) do not use an ingredient whose sugar contents has been increased by a concentration or drying process such as dried fruit paste or concentrated fruit juice, and 5) whose sugar content has not been increased through zymolysis.
- “No sodium added” or “No addition of sodium” may be stated on a label for food products when all of the following conditions are met: 1) No sodium salt, such as sodium chloride, is added, 2) does not use an ingredient that sodium salts are added, such as salted seafood, etc., and 3) does not use an ingredient that can functionally replace sodium salts such as dried seaweeds, dried seafood, etc.
- “Reduced sodium” may be stated for fried noodles, dried noodles, dumplings, pizza, hamburger, sandwiches, etc. if it meets Korea’s reduction criteria (10% reduction compared to the median

value of similar products sold in the market or 25% reduction compared to similar products of a given manufacturer)

- For products with a claim of “No sugar” or “No sugar added”, if a sweetener or a food product containing a sweetener is used as an ingredient, it shall carry a claim “Containing Sweetener” in a font size larger than 14 points nearby a “No sugar” or “No sugar added” claim. If sugar alcohols are used as a sweetener, it shall carry a claim “Containing Sugar Alcohols.”
- Products containing sugar alcohols (including lactitol, mannitol, D-maltitol, D-sorbitol, erythritol, isomalt, xylitol, polyglycol solution, etc.) in amount exceeding 10 percent must be labeled as “sugar alcohol” and the type and content of sugar alcohols shall be indicated in parenthesis, e.g. “Sugar Alcohols (10% of D-maltitol and 4% of Sorbitol).” It also must carry a claim “This product contains sugar alcohols and may cause diarrhea if consumed in excess.”
- Lactic acid bacteria added products shall state the name and contents of lactic acid bacteria on a label, e.g. “Lactobacillus acidophilus 100 million CFU/g.”
- Tea products that do not naturally contain caffeine and have no presence of caffeine in the finished product may carry a following claim “No Natural Caffeine Contained.”
- A product that does not use or contain a food additive that is permitted in accordance with Korea’s Food Additive Code may carry a claim that the product does not use or contain a particular food additive.
- When frozen processed foods (excluding processed livestock products), frozen processed meat products, frozen processed egg products and frozen dairy products are defrosted/stored/distributed by the legitimate business operator, it must carry defrosting labeling information such as dates manufactured/defrosted and a use by date in a defrosted condition, storage methods after defrosting, a name and address of the defrosting operation, and a cautionary statement “This product has been defrosted from the frozen condition and do not freeze again.”
- Processed milk products, fermented milk products, cakes, muffins, pies, ice cream, ice milk, sherbet, frozen dessert, liquid coffee containing dairy ingredients, and fermented beverages with reduced sugar may carry a claim such as “Low or Reduced Sugar” if it meets Korea’s reduction criteria (10% reduction compared to the median value of similar products sold in the market or 25% reduction compared to similar products of a given manufacturer).
- A name and contents of compounds that may be naturally present in a trace amount in a food product such as “Tetrahydro Cannabinol” or “Cannabinol” is not permitted to be stated on a label.

The following categories are exempt from the abovementioned labeling requirements:

- Agricultural products such as grains, fishery items such as whole frozen fish, and fruits that are not in a container or package, etc.

- Carcasses
- Bulk livestock products which a label cannot be placed (such as tallow, lard)
- Foods to be used for manufacturing for a company's own use in Korea. Appropriate documentation must be provided to verify end-use. In this case, the name of the product, the name of the manufacturer, and manufacture date or use-by-date or best before date shall be indicated on the original package either in English or in the language of the exporting country.
- Products imported for the purpose of acquisition of foreign currency, under the provisions of Article 2, Paragraph 6 and 8 of the Enforcement Decree to the Foreign Trade Act.
- Agricultural products in a container or packages (e.g. a box of oranges)- In this case, the product name, the business name (producer or producer group, importer for imported products), the manufacture date (a packing date or a production year), contents, storage condition or handling methods are only required to be indicated on the package. A sign board may be used for agricultural products in a transparent container sold in the marketplace instead of an individual label on the container.
- Inner package labeling is voluntary- Product name, net content, calories corresponding to net contents, use-by-date or the best before date, and nutrients may be included on the inner package label.

Nutritional Labeling Requirements

In accordance with Article 6 of the Enforcement Regulations of the Act on Labeling and Advertisement of Food, nutritional labeling (example below) is required for the food categories listed below. In addition, nutritional labels must be in Korean and use the nutrient reference values provided.

- Special nutrition food products
- Special medical purpose food products
- Health functional foods
- Bread (cake, doughnuts, bread loaf, other bakery goods), noodles, retort foods, edible oil and fats (excluding animal origin oil and fat, imitation cheese, and other processed oil and fat products), dumplings, and rice cakes
- Candy, chocolate, confectionary goods such as cookies, biscuits, and snacks, jam, teas (excluding leached tea and solid tea), coffee (excluding roasted coffee and instant coffee), fruit and vegetable beverages, carbonated beverages, soy milk, fermented beverages, ginseng and red ginseng beverages, and other beverages
- Fermented soybean cube, Korean soy sauce (excluding Korean soy sauce made of Korean fermented soybean cube), soy sauce, acid hydrolyzed soy sauce, enzyme hydrolyzed soy sauce, mixed soy sauce, soy paste, hot pepper soy paste, black bean paste, mixed paste and other soy sauces and pastes
- Frozen desserts
- Milk, processed milk, fermented milk, milk powder, cheese, hams, sausages, ice cream, goat milk

- Processed cocoa products, cereal (breakfast cereal), and instant food (pre-packaged food for ready to cook and ready to eat)
- Processed saccharide products
- Tofu and grain starch jelly
- Vinegar (limited to fermented vinegar), sauces, curry (excluding curry powder), processed spices products (limited to formulated spices)
- Kimchi, pickled products (excluding pickled Korean cabbage), hard boiled food
- Processed agricultural products: starches, wheat flour, peanut and processed tree nut products, and other processed agricultural products (this category includes processed fruit/vegetable products, processed grain products, processed bean products, processed potato products, and other processed agricultural products)
- Processed meat products: bacons, dried preserved meat products, seasoned meat products (limited to seasoned meat products and ground meat products), processed meat extract products, and processed products containing edible meat
- Processed egg products (excluding products with 100% egg)
- Processed fishery products (excluding 100% fishery products): processed fish meat products, salted and fermented seafood products, dried fish fillet, seasoned laver, and other processed fishery products.

Beginning January 1, 2026, Korea will begin a phased implementation for nutritional labeling on the following products based on annual sales value.

- Butter
- Sugars
- Animal origin processed food products: other edible meat products, other egg products, processed insect products, processed soft turtle products, and processed extract products
- Honey and processed pollen products
- All edible oil and fat products
- All processed agricultural products
- All processed egg products
- All processed fishery products
- Other food products

Individual labelling requirements shall be indicated on the containers and packages of the products in the minimum sales unit sold to consumers. The above products are exempt from labeling if used as an ingredient or have principal display panel smaller than 30 cm².

Products not included in the above categories are not subject to mandatory nutritional labeling and are allowed to keep the standard U.S. nutritional fact panel if it is part of the original product label. In addition, if a specific nutrient is emphasized, the exact content must be labeled. For example, if a yogurt product is labeled as “calcium enriched,” the exact content of calcium must be identified on the label. The information required to be stated on nutritional labeling includes: 1) Calories, 2) Sodium, 3) Carbohydrates, 4) All sugar types, 5) Fat (trans fat, saturated fat), 6) Cholesterol, 7) Protein and 8) Any nutrient that is emphasized for marketing purposes.

Nutrient Reference Daily Values*

Nutrients	Values	Nutrients	Values
Carbohydrate (g)	324	Vitamin B ₂ (mg)	1.4
Sugar (g)	100	Niacin (mg NE)	15
Dietary fiber (g)	25	Vitamin B ₆ (mg)	1.5
Protein (g)	55	Folic acid (µg DFE)	400
Fat (g)	54	Molybdenum (µg)	25
Saturated fat (g)	15	Vitamin B ₁₂ (µg)	2.4
Cholesterol (mg)	300	Biotin (µg)	30
Sodium (mg)	2,000	Pantothenic acid (mg)	5
Potassium (mg)	3,500	Phosphorus (mg)	700
Vitamin A (µg RE)	700	Iodine (µg)	150
Vitamin C (mg)	100	Magnesium (mg)	315
Chrome (µg)	30	Zinc (mg)	8.5
Calcium (mg)	700	Selenium (µg)	55
Iron (mg)	12	Copper (mg)	0.8
Vitamin D (µg)	10	Manganese (mg)	3.0
Vitamin E (mga – TE)	11	Vitamin B ₁ (mg)	1.2
Vitamin K (µg)	70	Linoleic acid (g)	10
α-Linolenic acid (g)	1.3	Sum of EPA and DHA (mg)	330

*Vitamin A, Vitamin D, and Vitamin E must be expressed in the units specified above, but the values in International Units (IU) may be stated in parentheses.

The MFDS English website for information on food labeling and nutritional labeling is as follows:
[MFDS Food Label](#)

Voluntary Color-Coded Labeling System

The Special Act on Children’s Dietary Life Safety Management maintains a voluntary color-coded labeling system, also referred to as a traffic light label for children’s preferred food products. Food products may be labeled with the total fat, saturated fat, sugar, sodium, and caffeine using a yellow, green and red color.

Labeling Requirements for Products with High Caffeine

High caffeine labeling requirements apply to all liquid products where caffeine levels exceed 0.15 mg/ml. For these products the label must contain the following two statements: “High caffeine content” and “Children, pregnant women, and people sensitive to caffeine shall be cautious in taking this product.” Additionally, total caffeine content (“XX mg”) must appear on the principal display panel. Korea will expand high caffeine labeling requirements to solid products made of guarana and that contains 0.15 mg/g or more of caffeine from January 1, 2026.

Functional Food Labeling Requirements

The latest version of Labeling Standards for Functional Food was published in February 2023. In accordance with these standards, a manufacturer’s printed Korean language label must be on the product. It should have the following information, in addition to those required for general food

products listed above: (1) functional food to be indicated (symbol), (2) nutrition fact, (3) information on the efficacy claim, (4) intake directions and cautions, (5) a statement that the product is not a pharmaceutical product that prevents or heals disease and, (6) other points as required in the detailed labeling guidelines for functional food. As for a minor error on the printed label such as a typo, a sticker can be affixed to correct the error. In case of an error in the “use by date”, a sticker correction is not permitted.

GM Labeling Standards for Unprocessed Agricultural Products and Processed Food (Administered by MFDS)

In 2017 MFDS implemented new biotech labeling requirements that expanded mandatory labeling to all detectable products. Soy, corn, cotton, canola, sugar beet, alfalfa, and any newly approved GM crops or food products containing these crops are subject to the biotech labeling requirement. If detectable biotech DNA is present in the final product, biotech labeling is required. Examples of labels are as follows:

Cases	Example Label	
GM grains or oilseeds	“GM Corn” or “GM Soy”	
Products containing GM grains or oilseeds	“Containing GM Corn or GM Soy”	
Vegetables grown from GM grains or oilseeds	“Beansprout grown from GM Soy”	
Products containing vegetable from GM grains or oilseeds	“Containing beansprout grown from GM soy”	
May contain GM Grains	“May contain GM Corn or GM Soy	
May contain vegetable from GM grains or oilseeds	“May contain beansprout grown from GM soy”	
Food Products with detectable GM component (labeled on either principal display panel or ingredient panel)	Principal Display Panel	“GM Food”, “GM Food Additive”, “GM Health Functional Food”, “Food product containing GM Soy”, “Food additives containing GM corn”, or “Health functional food containing GM corn”
	Ingredient Panel	“GM” or “GM Soy” or “GM Corn” in parenthesis next to a name of raw ingredient on the ingredient panel
Food products containing GM raw ingredients from multiple sources	Principal Display Panel	“May contain GM Corn and Soy”
Food products where a detectable GM component is uncertain	Principal Display Panel	“May contain GM Soy” or “May contain GM Corn”
	Ingredient Panel	“May contain GM Soy” or “May contain GM Corn” in parenthesis next to a name of raw ingredient on the ingredient panel

- "Non-GMO" and "GMO Free" claims are permitted when the contents of raw ingredients subject to biotech labeling are 50 percent or higher or when such ingredient is the primary component by volume. In this case, it should not contain any trace of a biotech component (zero tolerance).

Please note that such marketing claims are not permitted for products that do not have biotech counterparts (i.e. wheat, rice, etc.)

- Highly-processed products with undetectable recombinant DNA, such as cooking oil, sugar, soy sauce, modified starch, and alcoholic beverages, are exempt from biotech labeling without supporting documents. Any product other than those listed have non-detectable GM product content, processors may submit a document confirming the product or a raw ingredient does not contain a foreign DNA or protein. The supporting document can be made based upon a test result or substance purification documents.
- A test certificate issued by a MFDS-accredited domestic or foreign laboratory is acceptable if it confirms the absence of recombinant DNA or foreign protein in the final product. Please refer to KS 6064 [in the FAS GAIN system](#) for details about testing methods. A list of approved laboratories is found in Appendix I of this report.
- MFDS allows up to three percent unintentional presence of approved biotech components in unprocessed non-biotech products (e.g. conventional food grade soybeans or corn) which carry an IP or government certificate. This three percent tolerance is the default threshold for processed food products that are subject to biotech labeling requirements. If a finished product is made of raw ingredients originating from non-biotech grain within the three percent tolerance, it is exempt from biotech labeling if a supporting document such as IP document or a government issued certificate is submitted. Please note that this three percent tolerance is not the tolerance for the finished processed product.
- Processing agents, carriers, diluents, and stabilizers including emulsifiers are exempt from biotech labeling. Korea does not consider these items as raw ingredients for food as they are used in very small quantities.
- If an imported product arrives without appropriate supporting documents or test certificate, it can be either labeled as GM food or tested by MFDS accredited laboratories in Korea prior to customs clearance. If the product tests negative, it may be exempt from biotech labeling.

In October 2022, MFDS announced plans to expand mandatory biotech labeling to any product made from ingredients originating from GM crops, regardless of the presence of biotech components in the finished product. MFDS's goal was to revise current regulations in 2024 to set a legal basis for full biotech labeling and begin product-by-product implementation by 2026. However, to date, MFDS has not issued a draft revision to initiate the rule making process.

In 2025, lawmakers submitted three draft bills to expand mandatory biotech labeling to any product made of GM crops and lower the current adventitious presence level to 0.9 percent from 3 percent. Domestic industry has expressed concerns with the draft bills as such expanded labeling may lead unnecessary implementation and compliance cost for the food industry.

For more information on biotech labeling, please see Post's latest Voluntary Report on Biotech Labeling [and the Biotech Annual Report KS2024-0023](#) in the [FAS GAIN](#) system .

B. Liquor Labeling (Administered by Korea Tax Administration)

The Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) mandates the following warning statement or graphics be labeled on alcohol products:

- Alcohol is a carcinogen and excessive drinking causes liver cancer, stomach cancer, etc. Drinking in pregnancy raises the risk of birth with a congenital anomaly.
- Excessive drinking is the cause of cancer development. Drinking in youth hinders physical growth and brain development and drinking in pregnancy raises the risk of congenital anomaly or miscarriage.
- Excessive drinking causes stroke, memory impairment, or dementia. Drinking in pregnancy raises the risk of birth of congenital anomaly.

Certain alcoholic beverages require their usage type to be displayed on the main or supplementary label. Home consumption use of diluted soju, beer, and alcoholic beverages such as whisky that require a radio frequency identification tag (so called RFID tag) should state “For home use” and “Not to be sold in restaurants and bars.” Additionally, alcoholic beverages exempt from Korea’s liquor tax should state “Liquor tax free.”

As noted in the section on MFDS’s labeling standards, the use of a photo or picture of fruit or ingredients on a product label that contains only synthetic flavors is prohibited. This restriction also applies to liquor products.

C. Country of Origin Labeling (COOL)

According to COOL guidelines, many agricultural products, including most imported products, must carry country of origin markings. As for imported products, the Korea Customs Service (KCS) enforces COOL requirements at customs clearance. NAQS enforces COOL requirements in the marketplace.

COOL for meat products requires inner package labeling. The following statements are acceptable: “Made in U.S.A.”, “Made in U.S.”, or the U.S.D.A. mark of inspection – “U.S. inspected and passed”. In 2008, KCS agreed that imported fruit such as oranges and bananas did not require COOL on the individual pieces of fruit.

Complex country of origin (COO) requirements in the KORUS FTA and KCS investigations to verify COO have affected certain U.S. agricultural exports. The KORUS FTA permits both parties’ customs services to undertake investigations to verify the origin of goods for which preferential tariff treatment was claimed to prevent transshipment or false claims.

Korean customs authorities have conducted origin verification investigations on a number of U.S. exports, including food and agricultural products. Examples include frozen concentrated juices, meat products, dietary supplements, dry edible beans, and corn.

Please refer to the following website provided by the U.S. Agricultural Trade Office in Seoul for details about COOL requirements under the U.S. and Korea Free Trade Agreement: [KORUS COOL FAQ](#)

D. Other Labeling Requirements

The Korean government requires beef retailers and distributors to keep track of all transactions from the importing stage to the final retail level. Imported beef must be traceable via a distribution identification number up to the retail store level. See GAIN Report KS1033 in the [FAS GAIN system](#) for further details.

MFDS requires a traceability system for infant/baby food, health functional food, milk formula, food for pregnant/lactating women, special medical purpose food, and weight control food. Importers are required to establish a traceability system from when imported products arrive into Korea throughout the distribution chain.

Section III. Packaging and Container Regulations

MFDS's "Standards & Specifications for Equipment and Container/Packaging" (so called "Packaging and Container Code") provides general standards for equipment, containers, and packaging for food products and specifications for individual packaging materials. Please see the following link for an English translation of MFDS's [Packaging and Container Code](#).

Containers or packages that can be recycled must carry a "separation and discharge" marking. In accordance with the Act on the Promotion of Saving and Recycling of Resources and its corresponding decree, containers or packages made with paper, carton pack, metal, glass, PET, plastic materials, and vinyl must be marked with a "separation and discharge" sign. The mark is to facilitate the recycling of waste. The sign should indicate the type of material of which the package is composed. For example, PVC, PP, PS, HDPE, LDPE, and Other should be indicated for containers or packaging made of plastic and vinyl materials. For metals, either iron or aluminum should be indicated. Either a printed label or a sticker label is acceptable.

In 2019, Korea's Ministry of Environment (ME) published partial amendments to the "Enforcement Decree and the Rule of the Act on the Promotion of Saving and Recycling of Resources" and to the "Enforcement Rule of the Act on Standards for Packing Materials and Packing Methods of Products" to promote recycling and reduce waste. These amendments require packages to be evaluated, graded, and labeled for the recyclability of packaging materials. Industry must receive classification of packaging materials, based on recyclability, and apply the corresponding packaging claim to the label. With this new requirement, Korean importers may request exporters to provide packaging material information for their products. This requirement applies to all packaged products. Details are as follows:

Requirements	Remarks
Grade of recycling material	Classification of materials depending on recyclability shall be evaluated.
Labeling of grades	Recycling material grades shall be labeled on a package. Bottles of wines and whiskey are exempt from grade labeling due to functional/technical difficulties of recycling. Industry may seek additional exemptions for other products if necessary. MOE forms a committee to discuss details on recycling requirements including exemptions.

Ban of PVC and colored PET bottle for water and beverages	<p>Use of PVC packaging material is banned.</p> <p>Use of colored PET bottles for water and non-alcoholic beverages is banned.</p> <p>For imported alcoholic beverages, colored PET bottle is permitted with applicable recycling grades and labeling.</p>
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Section IV. Food Additive Regulations

MFDS's Food Additive Code stipulates how additives may be used in foods. As of March 2025, Korea has a positive list of 638 approved food additives. In addition to individual additives, MFDS allows nine types of mixed additive substances. Also, the Code defines 13 sanitizers permitted for use in food equipment.

Most additives and/or preservatives are approved, and tolerance levels are established on a product-by-product basis. This sometimes creates difficulties as tolerances can vary from product to product. Even though there may be an established CODEX standard for a given food additive, if that food additive is not registered in the Korean Food Additive Code, or even if it is registered but usage in a certain food product is not specified, then use of that food additive in the given food product is prohibited.

New additive approval can take up to a year. The “Guidelines for Designation of Food Additives” explain the detailed information required for the approval of a new additive.

English translation of Korea's food additive standards is available from the following link: [Food Additive Standards](#)

However, for the most up to date information, please refer to the following Korean link: [Korean Food Additive Code](#)

Section V. Pesticides and Contaminants

Three government agencies –MFDS, MAFRA, and ME – handle pesticide-related matters. MFDS regulates pesticide residues in foodstuffs. MAFRA is responsible for pesticide registration and ME is responsible for testing pesticide levels in the environment including drinking water and soil.

MFDS is responsible for regulating pesticide residues in foodstuffs, in accordance with the maximum residue levels (MRLs) set in the Food Code. As of March 2025, MFDS has set MRLs for 446 pesticides in agricultural products, meat, fish, eggs and milk products. The Food Code also lists MRLs for 194 veterinary drugs in meat, fish, eggs, and milk products. In addition to the Food Code, MFDS has set-up an MRL database for pesticides and veterinary drugs in English: [MRL Database](#)

MFDS began full implementation of its pesticide Positive List System (PLS) on January 1, 2022, removing nearly all previously set temporary MRLs. As such, a 0.01ppm default tolerance applies when there is no established MRL in the Korean Food Code. MRLs established in the Food Code for a pesticide on a particular agricultural product apply to both domestic and imported products. For details on Korea's PLS implementation, please refer to GAIN report KS 1843 in the [FAS GAIN system](#).

On January 1, 2024, Korea removed its policy of recognizing veterinary drug residues for same tissue/similar species and no longer accepts Codex Alimentarius (CODEX) maximum residue levels (MRLs) for veterinary drugs used in beef, pork, chicken, eggs, milk, and fishery products. Instead, Korea began implements its Positive List System (PLS), referencing only domestic MRLs or import tolerances (IT) set for veterinary drugs in aforementioned products. In the absence of a Korean MRL or IT, 0.01ppm default tolerance applies. For growth supplements such as β -agonist and steroid type anti-inflammatory drugs, “non-detection” applies. For products other than beef, pork, chicken, milk, eggs and fishery products, Korea’s acceptance of CODEX MRLs and lowest MRLs set for the same tissue/similar species still applies. For details on a PLS for veterinary drugs, please refer to GAIN report KS2023-0015 in the [FAS GAIN system](#). MFDS plans to announce its draft revision of the Food Code in December 2025 that will expand the current scope of the veterinary drug PLS to meat of sheep, goat, horse, deer, duck, and crustacea, soft shelled turtle, etc. Post will publish a GAIN report once MFDS publishes the draft revision.

Pesticide Registration

The Rural Development Administration (RDA) under MAFRA is responsible for the registration of pesticides, safety usage standards, and notification of pesticides. All pesticides used in Korea should be registered with RDA. The registration process can take several years to complete. A list of all registered agrochemical items can be obtained from the Korea Crop Protection Agency (KCPA). Details on pesticide registration can be accessed from the KCPA website: [KCPA](#)

Maximum Allowable Aflatoxin

MFDS sets the maximum residue limits (MRLs) for aflatoxin, ochratoxin, fumonisin, deoxynivalenol, zearalenone, and other contaminants. Some of the MRLs for contaminants are as below:

Total Aflatoxin (Sum of B1, B2, G1 & G2)

Target Foods	Standards (µg/kg)
Plant based raw ingredients (excluding algae)	Not more than 15.0 (however, B1 shall be not more than 10.0)
Processed food products	
Infant formula, follow up formula, weaning food for infant and young children	B1 shall be not more than 0.10
All other processed food products	Not more than 15.0 (however, B1 shall be not more than 10.0)

Fumonisin

Target Foods	Standards (as sum of B1 and B2)
Corn and sorghum	Not more than 4 mg/kg
Sorghum that is simply processed (such as grinding, cutting, etc.)	
Corn that is simply processed (such as grinding, cutting, etc.)	Not more than 2 mg/kg
Processed grain products that contain 50% or more of simply processed corn or sorghum	Not more than 1 mg/kg
Cereal (breakfast cereal)	Not more than 2 mg/kg for 100% processed corn products

Corn products for popcorn use	Not more than 4 mg/kg for 100% processed sorghum products
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Ochratoxin A

Target Foods	Standards (µg/kg)
Grains and their products that have undergone simple processing (such as grinding, cutting, etc.)	Not more than 5.0
Coffee beans, roasted coffee	Not more than 5.0
Instant coffee	Not more than 10.0
Fermented dry cooked soybean cube	Not more than 20
Red pepper powder	Not more than 7.0
Grape juice, Grape juice concentrate (including raw materials), wine	Not more than 2.0
Dried fruit	Not more than 10.0
Nutmeg, Turmeric, and black pepper and seasoning products containing nutmeg, turmeric and black pepper	Not more than 15.0
Infant formula, follow-up formula, weaning food for infant and young children	Not more than 0.50

Deoxynivalenol

Target Foods	Standards (mg/kg)
Grains and their products that have undergone simple processing (such as grinding, cutting, etc.)	Not more than 1
Corn and simple processed corn (such as grinding, cutting, etc.)	Not more than 2
Cereals (breakfast cereal)	Not more than 0.5
Infant formula, follow-up formula weaning food for infant and young children	Not more than 0.2
Noodles	Not more than 0.75

Zearalenone

Target Foods	Standards (µg/kg)
Grains and their products that have undergone simple processing (such as grinding, cutting, etc.)	Not more than 100 Not more than 200 for corn to make starch or syrup)
Confectioneries	Not more than 50
Infant formula, follow-up formula, weaning food for infant and young children	Not more than 20
Cereals (breakfast cereal)	Not more than 50

Heavy Metals in Agricultural Products

Target Foods	Lead (mg/kg)	Cadmium (mg/kg)	Arsenic, inorganic (mg/kg)
Grains	Not more than 0.2 (excluding brown rice)	Not more than 0.1 (0.2 for wheat and rice (excluding brown rice))	Not more than 0.2 (limited to rice excluding brown rice) Not more than 0.35 (limited to brown rice)
Potatoes	Not more than 0.1	Not more than 0.1	
Pulses	Not more than 0.2	Not more than 0.1 (0.2 for soybean)	
Peanuts and tree nuts	Not more than 0.1	Not more than 0.3	
Oilseeds	Not more than 0.3 (limited to sesame seed and perilla seed)	Not more than 0.2 (limited to sesame seed)	
Fruits	Not more than 0.1	Not more than 0.05	
Leafy vegetables (including flower-head brassica)	Not more than 0.3	Not more than 0.2	
Stalk and stem vegetables	Not more than 0.1	Not more than 0.05	
Root and tuber vegetables	Not more than 0.1 (2.0 for ginseng including wood cultivated ginseng and 0.2 for balloon flower, and bonnet bellflower)	Not more than 0.1 (0.05 for onions, 0.2 for ginseng including wood cultivated ginseng)	
Fruiting vegetables	Not more than 0.1 (0.2 for pepper and squash)	Not more than 0.05 (0.1 for pepper and squash)	
Mushrooms	Not more than 0.3	Not more than 0.3	

Heavy Metals in Livestock Products

Target Food	Lead (mg/kg)	Cadmium (mg/kg)
Poultry meat	Not more than 0.1	-
Swine liver	Not more than 0.5	Not more than 0.5
Pork	Not more than 0.1	Not more than 0.05
Swine kidney	Not more than 0.5	Not more than 1.0
Cattle liver	Not more than 0.5	Not more than 0.5
Beef	Not more than 0.1	Not more than 0.05

Cattle kidney	Not more than 0.5	Not more than 1.0
Raw milk and milk	Not more than 0.02	

Heavy Metals in Fishery Products

Target Food	Lead (mg/kg)	Cadmium (mg/kg)	Mercury (mg/kg)	Methyl mercury (mg/kg)
Fish	Not more than 0.5	Not more than 0.1 (limited to fresh water fish and pelagic fish) Not more than 0.2 (limited to marine fish)	Not more than 0.5 (excluding products listed below)	Not more than 1.0 (limited to products below)
Mollusks	Not more than 2.0 (1.0 for squid, 2.0 for octopus with intestines)	Not more than 2.0 (1.5 for squid, 3.0 for octopus with intestines)	Not more than 0.5	
Crustaceans	Not more than 0.5 (2.0 for swimming crabs with intestines)	Not more than 1.0 (5.0 for swimming crabs with intestines)		
Seaweeds	Not more than 0.5 (limited to sea mustard)	Not more than 0.3 (limited to laver including seasoned laver and sea mustard)		
Frozen fish head	Not more than 0.5		Not more than 0.5 (excluding products listed below)	Not more than 1.0 (limited to products listed below)
Frozen fish intestines	Not more than 0.5 (2.0 for cephalopoda)	Not more than 3.0 (1.0 for fish eggs and 2.0 for cephalopoda)	Not more than 0.5 (excluding products listed below)	Not more than 1.0 (limited to products listed below)

*Aquatic products subject to methyl mercury: marbled rock fish, alfonsino, broad-nose seven-gill hark, white spotted bamboo shark, salmon shark, shortfin mako, piked dogfish, smooth hammerhead, ghost shark, blue shark, blacktip reef shark, saw-edged perch, ling, black oreo, smooth oreo dory, orange roughy, opah, hagfish (excluding inshore hagfish), silver warehou, Patagonian toothfish, southern hake (limited to New Zealand sub-population), sable fish, tunas, Indo-pacific sailfish, striped marlin, Indo-pacific blue marlin, Indian spearfish, sword fish, bullet tuna, frigate tuna

Heavy Metal Standards for Processed Food Products

Target Food	Lead (mg/kg)	Arsenic (mg/kg)	Inorganic Arsenic (mg/kg)
Vegetable oil, fish oil, other animal oil & fat, mixed edible oil, flavored oil, processed oil & fat, shortening, margarine	Not more than 0.1	Not more than 0.1	
Fish oil	Not more than 0.1	-	Not more than 0.1*
Infant milk formula, follow-up milk formula, formula for infant/young children, follow up formula, weaning food for infant and young children, and special formula food for infant and young children	Not more than 0.01		Not more than 0.1 (limited to food made with brown rice, rice bran, rice germ, fusiformis, or gulfweed)
Special medical purpose food (excluding special formula for infant and young children), snacks, breakfast cereals, noodles	-	-	Not more than 0.1 (limited to food made with brown rice, rice bran, rice germ, fusiformis, or gulfweed)
Other food	-	-	Not more than 1 (limited to food made with brown rice, rice bran, rice germ, fusiformis, or gulfweed)

For any other standards & specifications set for food products including livestock products, please refer to Standards & Specifications for Food (so called the Korean Food Code).

English translation of Korean Food Code is available from the following link: [Food Code](#)

Section VI. Other Requirements, Regulations and Registration Measures

A. Product Registration & Import Inspection & Certificate of Free Sale

No product registration is required to import food products into Korea. However, all new-to-market products are subject to mandatory laboratory testing conducted by the relevant inspection agency. Subsequent shipments of products that have passed their first laboratory testing will be exempt from additional arrival testing for five years except for random testing. If random testing is conducted, no mandatory arrival testing will be conducted for a five-year period. For more details about import inspection, see Section IX. Korea does not require a Certificate of Free Sale for food imports.

B. Facility and Livestock Establishment Registration

MFDS implemented the Special Act on Imported Food Safety Management (hereinafter referred to as the Special Act) in 2016. In accordance with the Special Act, MFDS requires the pre-registration of foreign facilities wishing to export food products to Korea. Food products include processed food, agricultural products such as grains, fruits, etc., health functional food, fishery products, food additives, and food packages/containers/equipment. Foreign facilities shall be registered with MFDS prior to import declaration. MFDS set up an electronic registration system at [Food Facility Registration](#) for foreign manufacturers or their local importers to register electronically. MFDS requires a copy of a business license or permit for registration in order to verify the name and address of the facility. Registration can also be done by postal mail. MFDS completes facility registration within three working days. Once the foreign manufacturer is registered by MFDS, it is valid for two years. Application for renewal can only be made 30 days from the expiration date. Renewal of registration shall be completed at least seven days before the registration expires.

As for establishments of livestock products, MFDS recognizes meat and poultry establishments listed in the USDA FSIS Meat and Poultry Inspection Directory. As for establishments of dairy products and egg products, MFDS recognized establishments that have a record of export to Korea prior to the implementation of the Special Act in 2016 as registered establishments. For any new establishment of dairy or egg products that wishes to export products to Korea, registration shall be made through the exporting government. For this registration, the following documents shall be submitted to FAS/Seoul via email (agseoul@usda.gov).

- MFDS Application
- Recent inspection report issued by the exporting government (State or Federal government) and a corrective action report prepared by an establishment for any identified issues in the inspection report
- HACCP plan summary that contains information on critical control point (CCP) or Control Point (CP) monitoring plan (that includes critical limits, monitoring frequency and plan, preventive measures, etc.) and a process flowchart indicating CCP
- A copy of a dairy, eggs, or processed food business permit or license
- For establishments that do not have HACCP, a summary of Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP) and work process chart

A list of livestock plants including dairy plants approved by MFDS can be found on the following link: [MFDS Approved List](#). If a plant produces both livestock products and food products and exports such products to Korea, the plant is required to be registered not only as a livestock establishment through FAS/Seoul but also as a foreign food facility by either an exporter or an importer following the registration process described above.

For details on foreign facility registration and livestock establishments, please check FAS Seoul's [voluntary](#) GAIN report in the [FAS GAIN system](#).

Under a 2023 revision to the Special Act on Imported Food Safety Management, MFDS began requiring foreign governments to register food facilities with products containing high amounts of animal origin ingredients from June 2024. Previously, facility registration of food products other than livestock products, was completed by a commercial importer or exporter. However, to strengthen the oversight of

food products that contain a large amount of animal origin ingredients, such as meat and eggs, but are not classified as livestock products by the Korean Food Code, registration must be done through the exporting government. For U.S. processed meat containing products, no separate registration will be required if the processing plant is listed in FSIS MPI Directory. For processed products containing egg, a separate registration is required through FAS Seoul. For details on registration, please contact agseoul@usda.gov

C. Sanitary and Phytosanitary Certification Requirements – Animals, Meat, Plants, etc.

In accordance with the Livestock Epidemics Prevention & Control Act and the Plant Protection Act, sanitary and phyto-sanitary certificates issued by the exporting country's inspection authority are required for plants, live animals, and meat products, such as beef, pork, poultry, etc.

MFDS requires an original health and sanitary certificate for livestock products in accordance with the Special Act.

For the United States, the USDA Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) issues sanitary and phytosanitary certificates for live animals and plants, while the Food Safety & Inspection Service (FSIS), issues health certificates for meat products; and liquid, frozen, and dried egg products. U.S. dairy and table (shell) egg certificates are completed by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). Details on certification requirements are found in the annual FAIRS Export Certificate Report in the [FAS GAIN system](#).

D. Monitoring at Retail and Wholesale Levels

MFDS conducts monitoring at retail and wholesale levels for agriculture, livestock and fishery products, and processed food products including processed meat products such as canned meat, and non-processed meat products. In addition to MFDS, the municipal government also monitors for residues of food products distributed at the retail and wholesale levels.

Section VII. Other Specific Standards/Laws

Korea's Fair Trade Commission (FTC) maintains advertising requirements for foods containing a biotech-enhanced ingredient. Under the "Notification of Principle Information on Labeling & Advertisement" guideline, anyone who produces and/or sells biotech-enhanced foods, and advertises such products in one of the identified forms below, needs to indicate the presence of the biotech component:

- Newspapers or magazines
- TV commercials (when its running time is greater than two minutes)

Information must be noted as:

- "Contains biotech-enhanced food" when the presence of a biotech-enhanced component is certain;
- "May contain biotech-enhanced food" when the presence of a biotech-enhanced component is uncertain.

MFDS has the discretion to limit or prohibit TV advertisements of high calorie, low nutrient food products, and highly caffeinated products. According to the Enforcement Decree of the Special Act on Children's Dietary Life Safety Management, TV and internet multi-media advertisements of the designated products are prohibited between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Also, commercials during children's programs may be restricted. MFDS' website maintains information where industry can verify product classification. For more details on children's preferred food products and high calorie-low nutrient food products, please refer to GAIN report KS 9020 in the [FAS GAIN system](#).

Organic Food

The Act on the Management and Support for the Promotion of Eco-Friendly Agriculture/Fisheries and Organic Foods (New Organic Act) requires that all domestic and imported organic produce and processed products be certified by a MAFRA/NAQS-accredited certifying agent. However, in lieu of certification by accredited certifying agents, the act allowed MAFRA to have an equivalency agreement on processed organic products with foreign trade partners.

U.S.-Korea Organic Equivalency Arrangement

The United States and Korea reached an equivalency arrangement on processed organic food products in 2014. Under the arrangement, certified organic products in the U.S. may be sold as organic in the Korean market and display the Korean organic logo, and vice versa for Korean products. The arrangement covers products which:

- Are certified according to USDA or Korean organic regulations
- Are "processed products" as defined by the Korean Food Code
- Contain at least 95% organic ingredients
- Have their final processing (as defined in the Korean Food Code) occur in the U.S. or Korea

U.S. processed organic products exported to Korea must be accompanied by the NAQS Import Certificate of Organic Processed Foods that includes the statement "Certified in compliance with the terms of the U.S. – Korea Organic Equivalency Arrangement." Starting January 1, 2022, U.S. certifying agents are required to issue the NAQS Import Certificate through the electronic certification system after they complete registration with NAQS. A printed copy of the NAQS Import Certificate issued through an electronic system will be sent to U.S. operations or Korean importers for submission of import inspection in Korea. Also, a copy of USDA/NOP organic certificate shall be submitted for importation. Korea does not allow organic certification logos from a third country to appear on a label (e.g., Canadian organic logo on a label of US organic products) unless it has been certified to Korean organic standards. Details about the organic certificate and labeling are available on the following link: [U.S.-Korea Organic Equivalency](#)

MAFRA's Certification and Labeling Requirements for Processed Organic Foods Not Covered by Equivalency

The Act on the Management and Support for the Promotion of Eco-Friendly Agriculture/Fisheries and Organic Foods (New Organic Act) requires all domestic and imported organic processed products other than those covered by the equivalency to be certified by a NAQS-accredited certifying agent. Each product is required to obtain organic certification to be sold as organic in Korea. Details are available from the following link: [Organic Certification](#).

Certification Procedures for Organic Producers



To date, 31 certifying agencies in Korea and two foreign certifiers have been accredited by NAQS for organic processed food products. There are no U.S. certifiers accredited by Korean authorities.

MAFRA's Labeling Regulations for Organic Agricultural Products

Under the Act on the Management and Support for the Promotion of Eco-Friendly Agriculture/Fisheries and Organic Foods (New Organic Act) an organic certification issued by Korea's accredited certifying agents is required for both fresh (unprocessed) produce and livestock products. The certification for organic produce is classified into two categories: organic and no-pesticide. For livestock products, two categories of certification are available: organic livestock and antibiotic-free livestock.

Organic agricultural produce and livestock products complying with the U.S. organic standards or international standards still require certification from a NAQS-accredited certification agency. The overall certification process is the same as shown above for processed organic products.

Plant Based Meat and Dairy Alternatives

In August 2023, Korea set a definition of plant based alternative food products along with processing criteria and specifications. Korea defines "alternative food" as foods sold, as labeled, that are manufactured from plant-based ingredients, microorganism, edible insects, cell cultures, etc. as primary ingredients instead of animal ingredients to deliver in a form, taste, texture, etc. similar to those of existing food products. Standards & specifications for alternative food is available in the Korean Food Code.

Section VIII. Geographical Indicators, Trademark, Brand Names and Intellectual Property Rights

Geographical indications (GI) for domestic products are protected in accordance with the Agriculture and Fishery Product Quality Management Act. As part of Korea's free trade agreement with the European Union, both parties agreed on a list of agriculture and food products whose GI are protected. A number of GI protections apply to products with compound terms. There is no restriction on the use of a portion of the compound term or a generic word within a compound term. A full list of the GI protected terms is available in Annex 10-A to the Korea-EU Free Trade Agreement.

The Korea Industrial Property Office is responsible for registration of trademarks and for review of petitions related to trademark registration. In accordance with the Trademark Law, the trademark registration system in Korea is based on a "first-to-file" principle. A company that registers a trademark first has a preferential right to that trademark and is protected under Korean law. To prevent trademark

disputes, U.S. companies considering business in Korea are encouraged to register their trademarks prior to commencing operations.

Section IX. Import Procedures

A. Korea Customs Clearance

Imports of agricultural products must undergo clearance from several agencies and are more likely to encounter port delays than other imported goods. KCS, MFDS, the National Quarantine Office (for ports that do not have MFDS regional offices), and APQA are the agencies involved in the import clearance process.

KCS is responsible for ensuring that all necessary documentation is in place before the product is released from a bonded area. The respective import and quarantine inspection authorities must clear products subject to plant or animal quarantine inspection before KCS will discharge the goods. Importers must complete the import inspection application in Korean and submit it to the relevant agency.

KCS import clearance procedures and additional details are available at the following website: [KCS Import Procedures](#)

B. MFDS Import Inspection Procedures

MFDS carries out the safety inspection upon arrival of imported agricultural products including livestock products, processed foods, health functional foods, food additives, food packaging, containers and equipment. Details on MFDS's import procedures are available at the following MFDS website: [MFDS Food Inspection](#)

C. APQA Quarantine Inspection Procedures for Animal & Livestock Products

In addition to MFDS food safety inspection process, imported meat, dairy, and egg products are subject to quarantine inspection by the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency (APQA). Clean quarantine inspection results from APQA are required for customs clearance. APQA and MFDS inspection can occur simultaneously. Korea's APQA quarantine inspection procedures for livestock products are available on the following website: [Animal & Livestock Product Inspection](#)

D. APQA Inspection Procedures for Plant Products

In addition to MFDS residue testing for agricultural chemical, aflatoxin, and other contaminants, plant products, including fresh vegetables, fruits, and grains are subject to quarantine inspection. APQA is required to confirm that the products have passed their inspection prior to customs clearance. APQA and MFDS inspection can occur simultaneously. Unless subject to further testing, APQA laboratory inspection generally requires 10 days to complete. The APQA quarantine inspection procedures and additional details are available from the following APQA website (English): [Plant Quarantine](#).

E. Samples

In general, sample-designated food products are not subject to Korean food import requirements. For sample shipments, the invoice should be marked as having no commercial value. A phytosanitary certificate and a meat export health certificate are required for products subject to quarantine inspection even if they are shipped as samples.

Section X. Trade Facilitation

A. Electronic Certificate

MFDS maintains an electronic certificate system for meat products including beef, pork, chicken, lamb, etc. originated from Australia, Chile, Thailand, Brazil and New Zealand. MFDS also maintains an electronic certification system for fishery products originated from Chile, Philippine, Norway, and Russia. Korea plans to launch an electronic certificate system for fishery products with Peru in April 2025. MFDS has been working on electronic certificate arrangements with the United States (livestock), Thailand (fishery products), Vietnam (fishery products), and the EU (livestock). In 2021, NAQS launched an e-certificate system for processed organic products covered under the organic equivalence arrangement. NAQS accepts a printed copy of electronically issued NAQS Import Certificate and no longer recognizes the paper-based NAQS Import Certificate.

B. Inspection Fees

There is no fee applied for document and visual inspections. Fees will vary for laboratory testing conducted by Korean government accredited laboratories. Accredited laboratories post their fee schedules on their websites. For random inspection, testing is conducted by the Korean government laboratory at free of charge. However, if applicants choose to use accredited private laboratories for expedited service, they are required to pay testing fees to the private laboratories.

C. Import Inspection Timeline

MFDS Inspection Duration for Food Products, including functional health food:

Document Inspection	2 days
Visual Inspection	3 days
Laboratory Inspection	10 days
Irradiated Food Test	14 days
Incubation Test	15 days
Random Inspection	5 days

MFDS Inspection Duration for Livestock Products, including egg and dairy:

Document Inspection	2 days
Visual Inspection	3 days
Laboratory Inspection	14 days
Random Inspection	14 days
Random Inspection for Chilled Products (excluding milk formula)	7 days
Incubation Test	15 days

APQA Quarantine Inspection Duration for Livestock Products, including egg and dairy:

Document & Visual Inspection	3 days
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Appendix I. Government Regulatory Key Agency Contacts

A. Primary Korean Food Agencies

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: Overall agricultural policy

General Division of International Cooperation

MAFRA

94 Dasom 2-ro, Sejong-si, Korea 30110

Phone: 82-44-201-2034; Fax: 82-44-868-0431

<http://www.mafra.go.kr>

Ministry of Food & Drug Safety: Overall safety policy and inspection of food and livestock products

International Cooperation Office

MFDS

#187 Osongsaengmyung 2-ro, Osong-eup, Cheongwon-gun

Chungcheongbukdo, Korea 28159

Phone: 82-43-719-1551~1553; Fax: 82-43-719-1550

E-mail: intmfds@korea.kr

<http://www.mfds.go.kr>

Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency (Headquarters): Overall quarantine measures

177 Hyuksin 8-ro, Kimcheon-si

Kyungsangbuk-do, Korea 39660

Phone: 82-54-912-0416 for animal quarantine issues and 82-54-912-0601 for plant quarantine issues

<http://www.qia.go.kr>

B. WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (WTO) Enquiry Point

Names of the SPS Enquiry Points are as follows:

Animal or Plant Health or Zoonosis

Quarantine Policy Division, International Cooperation Bureau

MAFRA

94 Dasom 2-ro, Sejong-si, Korea 30110

Phone: 82-44-201-2080; Fax: 82-44-868-0449

Website: www.mafra.go.kr

Food Safety and Food Labeling

International Cooperation Office

Ministry of Food & Drug Safety

#187 Osongsaengmyung 2-ro, Osong-eup, Cheongwon-gun

Chungcheongbukdo, Korea 28159

Phone: 82-43-719-1551~1553; Fax: 82-43-719-1550

E-mail: intmfds@korea.kr

Website: www.mfds.go.kr

Aquatic Animal Health and Sanitation

International Commerce and Trade Division

Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries

94 Dasom 2 -ro, Sejong-si, Korea 30110

Phone: 82-44-200-5383; Fax: 82-44-200-5399

Website: www.mof.go.kr

C. Websites for other Important Agencies

Ministry of Environment: <http://www.me.go.kr>

Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy: <http://www.motie.go.kr>

Rural Development Administration: <http://www.rda.go.kr>

National Agricultural Product Quality Management Service: <http://www.naqs.go.kr>

Korea Forestry Administration: <http://www.forest.go.kr>

Korea Rural Economic Institute: <http://www.krei.re.kr>

Korea Industrial Property Office: <http://www.kipo.go.kr>

D. Useful Acronyms

AMS: Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA)

APHIS: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA)

COO: Country of Origin

COOL: Country of Origin Labeling

FSIS: Food Safety & Inspection Service (USDA)

FTC: Korea Fair Trade Commission

GI: Geographical Indications

GMO: Genetically Modified Organism

KCPA: Korea Crop Protection Agency

KCS: Korea Customs Service

MFDS: Ministry of Food & Drug Safety

KTA: Korea Tax Administration

LMO: Living Modified Organisms

ME: Ministry of Environment

MHW: Ministry of Health & Welfare

MAFRA: Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs

MOTIE: Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy

NAQS: National Agricultural Product Quality Management Service

NOP: National Organics Program (USDA)

APQA: Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency

RDA: Rural Development Administration

USDA: U.S. Department of Agriculture

WTO: World Trade Organization

Appendix II. Other Import Specialist Technical Contacts

Accredited Laboratories

A. U.S. Laboratories Accredited by MFDS

MFDS authorizes foreign laboratories the ability to conduct inspection and testing and to issue some types of certifications. This enhances the efficiency of conducting inspection of imported foods and reduces the likelihood of rejection. There are currently five accredited laboratories operating in the United States: OMIC USA, FoodChain ID Testing, Eurofins Analytical Laboratories, SGS North America Inc., and EnviroLogix Inc.

For GMO testing, MFDS only accepts test certificates issued from MFDS-accredited laboratories. To date, all five U.S. laboratories accredited by MFDS are authorized for GMO qualitative testing.

OMIC, USA Inc.

3344 N.W. Industrial Street Portland, Oregon 97210

Tel: 503-223-1497; Fax: 503-223-9436

Email) info.usa@omicusa.com

Authorized for agriculture and processed food and health functional food-related testing, such as physical/chemical testing, residue and microbiological testing on food, beverages, and health functional food and GMO testing

FoodChain ID Testing

4150 Lafayette Center Drive, Suite 600

Chantilly, Virginia 20515

Tel: 641-472-9979; Fax: 641-472-9198

Email) jbolster@genetic-id.com

Authorized for GMO testing of agriculture, forestry and processed food products

Eurofins Analytical Laboratories

(Eurofins Central Analytical Laboratories & Eurofins GeneScan)

2219 Lakeshore Drive, Suite 500

New Orleans, Louisiana 70122

Tel: 504-297-3000/4300; Fax: 504-297-4335

Email) ecalquality@eurofins.com

Authorized for agriculture and forestry products related testing (physical/chemical testing, ag. chemical residues, and GMO testing)

SGS North America Inc.

1405 N. 32nd Avenue, Brookings, South Dakota 57006

Tel: 605-692-7677; Fax: 605-692-7617

Email) derick.govender@sgs.com / amanda.verhelst@sgs.com

Authorized for agriculture and forestry products related testing (heavy metal, mycotoxins, ag. chemical residues and GMO testing)

EnviroLogix Inc.

3 Research Park Dr., St. Charles, Missouri, 63304

Tel: 866-408-4597

Email) labservices@envirollogix.com

Authorized for GMO testing of agriculture and processed food products

B. Korean Laboratories Accredited by MFDS

There are 16 Korean laboratories accredited by MFDS for testing of imported food products.

No.	Name	Web Address	Accredited Testing
1	Korea Advanced Food Research Institute	KAFRI HQ	Food*, Health functional food, Additives, Packages, Qualitative GMO testing, Irradiated food testing and Radioactivity testing
2	Korea Advanced Food Research Institute – Pusan Branch	KAFRI Busan	Food, Health functional food, Additives, Packages, Qualitative GMO testing
3	Korea Analytical Technique Research Institute	http://katri.co.kr	Food, Health functional food, Additives, Packages, Qualitative GMO testing
4	Korea Health Supplement Institute	www.khsi.re.kr	Food, Health functional food, Additives, Packages, Irradiated food testing, Radioactivity testing, Qualitative GMO testing
5	Kogene Biotech	www.kogene.co.kr	Qualitative GMO testing in Food and Health functional Food
6	SGS Testing Korea	https://www.sgs.com/en-kr/service-groups/nutritional-and-composition-analysis	Food, Health functional food, Additives, Packages, Qualitative GMO testing, and Radioactivity testing in food
7	JPNC	http://www.jpnc.co.kr/	Qualitative GMO testing
8	CESCO Testing	https://www.cesco.co.kr	Food, Health functional food, Additives, and Packages
9	Radioactivity Testing Center, Hana Nuclear Power Engineering Co., Ltd.	http://www.hanarad.com	Radioactivity testing in Food, Health functional food, Additive and Packages
10	Radioactivity	https://ricenter.kr/	Radioactivity testing in

	Analysis Center		food, Health functional food, Additives, and Packages
11	Pinucle CALS Branch	http://pinucle.com/	Qualitative GMO testing for food, Health functional food and Additives
12	Chem Bio	http://www.chembiolab.co.kr	Food, Health functional food, Additives, and Packages
13	RM Tec	www.rmtec.co.kr	Radioactivity testing in Food
14	Eurofins Korea Analytic Service Co.	https://www.eurofins.co.kr/kr/	Dioxin testing in Food, Health functional food, Additives and Packages
15	KOTITI Testing & Research Institute	KOTITI (kotiti-global.com)	Radioactivity testing and Qualitative GMO testing in Food, Health functional food and Additives
16	Fishery Lab, National Federation of Fisheries Cooperative	Suhyup (www.suhyup.co.kr)	Radioactivity testing in Food

**Food testing may include physical/chemical, microorganisms, chemical residues, and veterinary drug residues testing.*

Attachments:

No Attachments