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Saudi Arabia Enforces GCC Nutritional Labeling Requirement

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FAIRS Subject Report

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Report Highlights:

Saudi Arabia announced on May 15 that it will enforce the Gulf Cooperation Council's regulations concerning nutritional information on food labels. The Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) stated that it will enforce the Gulf Standards Organization's regulation GSO 2233/2012 which requires the disclosure of the food product's nutritional information such as calories, carbohydrates, proteins, fats and other components that may affect the product's nutritional value, and consumers' health or safety. The SFDA has advised the Saudi Chambers of Commerce to inform the food importers and domestic producers to comply with the nutritional labeling regulations to avoid rejection of the products or preventing their sale in the Saudi market. The SFDA has given the importers and local producers a grace period of six months until November 2013 to comply with the GSO labeling regulations.

The Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) announced on May 15, 2013 its intention to enforce the implementation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) regulations concerning disclosing nutritional information on food product labels that was issued in 2012. The SFDA announcement stated that Saudi Arabia will enforce the Gulf Standards Organization's (GSO) regulation GSO 2233/2012 which requires the disclosure of nutritional information on the labels of imported as well as domestically produced food products. The nutritional information required to be on food product label will include information on the amount of calories, carbohydrates, proteins, fats and other components that may affect the product's nutritional value or consumers' health or safety.

The SFDA has advised the Saudi Chambers of Commerce to inform their members of food importers and domestic producers of to strictly follow pertinent regulations GSO 9/2007 "Labeling of Prepackaged Food Products and GSO 2233/2012 "Requirements of Nutritional Labeling ." The SFDA has given the Saudi food importers and local producers a grace period of six months to comply with the new GSO regulations in order to avoid the product's rejection or preventing its sale in the market. The SFDA indicated that the reason for enforcing the GSO nutritional labeling requirements is to provide the Saudi consumers with the needed nutritional information to make an informed buying decision and to protect the commercial interest of Saudi food industry.

SFDA officials have indicated to us that they have already informed domestic food producers, distributors and food importers, through the Regional Chambers of Commerce and industry, about the GSO labeling regulations and the SFDA's intention to fully implement them. However, several Saudi food importers we contacted for this issue have indicated that they were not aware of the SFDA's announcement concerning the nutritional labeling and its intention to enforce them in six months. It should be noted that all GSO regulations concerning food labeling are mandatory for all GCC member states. However, the GCC states differ concerning the timing of implementing and the strictness in their enforcement of these regulations.