

proposed/initiated by a representing body in a member State, and are prepared by the technical committees of the GSO. In general, GSO standards are based on international standards. Once a GSO standard is approved, each GCC member State may transpose it into a national standard through domestic legal procedures. According to the authorities, Saudi Arabia develops standards and technical regulations at its national level only when there is a pressing need. At end-2015, 55% of Saudi standards in force were adopted from GCC standards.

3.61. With regard to medical devices/products, the Medical Device Interim Regulation is applied to manufacturers, authorized representatives of overseas manufacturers, importers and distributors. It covers all medical devices, and their accessories, contact lenses and laser surgical equipment for cosmetic rather than medical purposes, and their accessories. Distributors, importers and authorized representatives of medical devices must obtain a licence issued by the SFDA; and medical devices must obtain SFDA authorization before entering Saudi Arabia's market.

3.62. Products subject to technical regulations must comply with the relevant regulations before they are placed on the market. SASO may grant a certificate of conformity, or, for products that comply with standards and technical requirements, a licence to use the quality mark. The quality mark scheme is voluntary, and available for goods either domestically produced or imported.

3.63. All consignments of imported consumer goods must be accompanied by a "Certificate of Conformity for commodities and products to be exported to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia", or the consignment may be subject to random sampling in the port for laboratory testing to verify conformity before clearing customs. The certificate of conformity may be issued by an accredited certification body, or an accredited laboratory as a third party. Saudi Arabia recognizes the certification bodies accredited by the accreditation body in the exporting country as long as the accreditation body is a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), and accepts the certificates issued by these certification bodies.

3.64. Saudi Arabia has signed mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) with: Argentina; China; Egypt; Germany; Indonesia; Jordan; the Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Pakistan; the Philippines; Singapore; South Africa; Tunisia; and Turkey.

3.65. Labels must be in Arabic in addition to any other language. A small number of products with labels only in English may be approved, on a case-by-case basis, for marketing test purposes. As an Islamic country, Saudi Arabia has strict marking and labelling requirements for meat and poultry products, including that the product was slaughtered in accordance with Islamic halal procedures.

3.1.9 Sanitary and phytosanitary measures

3.66. During the review period, the institutional framework for sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirement remained largely unchanged. The Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) is the national notification authority and enquiry point for SPS matters in the WTO.²³ The SFDA is the competent authority for food and feedstuffs (including animal products for human consumption, e.g. meat and poultry meat), medicine, as well as for medical devices; and the Ministry of Agriculture for live animals, animal products, plants, and plant products.

3.67. Between 1 January 2012 and 31 December 2015, Saudi Arabia notified 134 regular and 33 emergency SPS measures to the WTO. Saudi Arabia considered that for 55 notified measures there was a relevant international standard and they conformed to that international standard. Apart from the emergency notifications, almost all notifications specified a 60-day period for public comment; for the rest, the authorities considered that a comment period was not applicable or practical. In addition, the authorities submitted a number of addenda during the period under review, providing additional information on previously notified SPS measures. Since the last review, concerns relating to import conditions for poultry have been discussed in the SPS Committee.²⁴

²³ WTO documents G/SPS/NNA/16 and G/SPS/ENQ/26, 11 March 2011.

²⁴ WTO document G/SPS/R/73, 15 January 2014.

3.68. During the review period, Saudi Arabia maintained import bans on bovine meat, sheep and goat meat, poultry meat, and their products from a number of trading partners for a number of reasons (Table A3.3).

3.69. Saudi Arabia is a member of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the Codex Alimentarius Commission, and a contracting party to the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). With regard to animals, plants, and their products, SPS measures are harmonized at the GCC level under the Veterinary Quarantine Law and the Plant Quarantine Law, and the corresponding Executive Regulations provide details of their implementation in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia maintains bilateral arrangements on SPS matters with Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Djibouti, Ethiopia, France, India, Ireland, the Netherlands, Kenya, Pakistan, Sudan, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi), and the United States.

3.70. All food, including imported food, must comply with the general requirement laid down in the Food Law²⁵ and specific standard requirements depending on the product.²⁶

3.71. All imports of live animals and products of animal origin (including animal products²⁷, animal offal, animal fodder, and animal biological preparations) from anywhere outside the GCC require import permits from the Ministry of Agriculture.

3.72. All imports of live animals and products of animal origin from non-GCC member States must be quarantined at the point of entry for a period of 21 to 30 days depending on the diseases and exporting countries in question. Imported animals for slaughter or breeding may be transported to their final destinations if all documentation conditions are met, and there is no suspicion of an epizootic or contagious disease.²⁸ Imported sperm for industrial insemination and foetuses, and hen eggs for hatching are also allowed, subject to sampling and testing.

3.73. In addition to obtaining a commercial registration (Section 3.1.1), food importers must register with the SFDA and specify the food items that they import. All imports of food and animal products for human consumption are subject to import permits issued by the SFDA. For imports of meat and poultry meat, a Halal Certificate²⁹ and an Islamic slaughter certificate are required for each consignment, in addition to other documentation generally required for customs clearance.³⁰

3.74. Imports of meat and poultry meat must only be sourced from the establishments on the list maintained by the SFDA.³¹ This list can be consulted by sector or by country.³² Establishments that wish to supply meat and poultry meat to Saudi Arabia must apply for approval from the SFDA; the approval process involves an evaluation including an on-site audit by the SFDA. If the evaluation outcome is satisfactory, the SFDA grants an approval certificate to the establishment in question; the approval certificate is valid for five years, and renewable. The inspection and approval fees are borne by the individual establishment. Since 9 March 2014, the SFDA has begun to delegate to the competent authority of the exporting country to approve establishments on the list, provided that the competent authority of the exporting country signs bilateral minutes with the SFDA and

²⁵ Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) online information (in Arabic). Viewed at: <http://www.sfda.gov.sa/ar/Documents/ssfda.pdf>.

²⁶ SFDA online information, "General Standards for Food". Viewed at: http://www.sfda.gov.sa/en/food/about/administration/mangement_food/Pages/EDOIFC-GeneralSpecificationForFood.aspx.

²⁷ Under the GCC Veterinary Quarantine Law, the term "animal products" covers fresh, dried, chilled and frozen processed, smoked, powdered red and white meat and fish powder; fresh, dried and concentrated dairy and its products; eggs whether for consumption, hatching, or scientific purposes; spermatozoa; foetuses; and animal gelatin.

²⁸ Under this scenario, the supervising veterinarian of the nearest veterinary centre must be notified prior to the arrival of animals for observation.

²⁹ SFDA online information, "Islamic Centers". Viewed at: http://www.sfda.gov.sa/en/food/about/administration/mangement_food/Pages/EDOIFC-IslamicCenter.aspx.

³⁰ SFDA online information, "Food Import Requirements". Viewed at: http://www.sfda.gov.sa/en/food/about/administration/mangement_food/Pages/EDOIFC-FoodImportReq.aspx.

³¹ SFDA online information, "Meat Imported from Approved Establishments". Viewed at: http://www.sfda.gov.sa/en/food/about/administration/mangement_food/Pages/Imported-Meat-from-Approved-Establishments.aspx.

³² SFDA online information, "Meat and Importing Countries". Viewed at: http://www.sfda.gov.sa/en/food/about/administration/mangement_food/Documents/0134_001.pdf.

assures compliance with the GSO standards. The authorities indicated that the delegation to the competent authority of the exporting country is a trade facilitating measure, and the measure has been notified to the WTO.³³

3.75. With regard to the maximum residues levels (MRLs) of pesticides, Saudi Arabia adopts the Saudi and GCC standards of MRLs. If an MRL does not exist, a reference must be made to the *Codex Alimentarius* standard; if an MRL is not indicated in the Saudi/GCC/Codex standards, a reference may be made to the EU or the US standard, whichever is lower.³⁴

3.76. All imports of food are subject to inspection at the border inspection posts (BIPs). The inspection involves documentary, identity, and physical checks. If needed, the imported food may be referred to an authorized laboratory for additional tests; under this scenario, the import will be held indefinitely until the final decision is taken. The authorities indicated that in the case of compliance, imported food is usually cleared by customs within one day.

3.77. The GCC rapid alert system for food (GRASF) operates to allow food and feed authorities of GCC member countries to exchange information on existing direct or indirect risks to consumers' health.³⁵ According to the authorities, GRASF functions in a similar way to the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed of the European Union.

3.78. Under the GCC Plant Quarantine Law and its Executive Regulations in Saudi Arabia, phytosanitary requirements are applied to: plants, plant products, beneficial organisms, and regulated articles. All plants or plant products contaminated with pests listed in the "approved united pest list of the GCC" are prohibited from importation. The list is published on the Ministry of Agriculture portal³⁶; the Ministry of Agriculture has the authority to amend the list. In addition, all types of palm trees and their derivatives (except dates), plants, and products of anaesthetic types, or poisonous types³⁷ are prohibited from importation. Furthermore, natural soil and natural organic fertilizers may not be imported into Saudi Arabia.³⁸

3.79. Importers of plants and plant products are required to apply for import permits issued by the Ministry of Agriculture.³⁹ In order to apply for an import permit, importers must provide a phytosanitary certificate as well as a country of origin certificate issued by the exporting country. Usually, it can take up to three working days to process the request and issue an import permit. The authorities indicated that no applications for import permits were rejected during the review period.

3.80. All imports of plants and their products must be inspected at the point of entry into Saudi Arabia.⁴⁰ There are no inspection fees or other treatment fees imposed on imports of plants and plant products, although the Executive Regulation of the GCC Quarantine Law provides for the possibility of such fees. Samples may be taken from suspected consignments and delivered to a laboratory for further testing. In practice, it takes two to seven days to complete a lab testing; the lab test cost is borne by the authorities, or by the importer, dependent on the imported plant species. Depending on the test result, the imports may be subject to quarantine treatments, re-export, or destruction.

3.81. During the period under review, the Organic Agriculture Act was issued.⁴¹ The Department for Organic Agriculture, under the Ministry of Agriculture, maintains and updates regularly a

³³ WTO document G/SPS/N/SAU/93, 28 January 2014.

³⁴ SFDA online information, "Circulars". Viewed at: <http://www.sfda.gov.sa/en/food/circulations/Pages/circulations.aspx>.

³⁵ Gulf Rapid Alert System for Food. Viewed at: <http://grasf.sfda.gov.sa/>.

³⁶ Ministry of Agriculture online portal. Viewed at: www.moa.gov.sa.

³⁷ For example, khat, marijuana, milkweed, castor bean, oleander, field poppy, and jimson weed were banned from being imported into Saudi Arabia.

³⁸ Article 20, the GCC Plant Quarantine Law; Article 6(2), the Executive Regulations of the GCC Plant Quarantine Law in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

³⁹ Article 15, the GCC Plant Quarantine Law.

⁴⁰ For some perishable products or products packaged in a special condition, inspection and sampling may be carried out at the final destination. See Articles 16 and 17, the Executive Regulations of the GCC Plant Quarantine Law in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

⁴¹ Royal Decree No. M/5 of 1435H - 2014G.

positive list of inputs and their characteristics (including fertilizers, soil conditioner, plant protection materials, food additives, etc.) which are in compliance with the Act. Agricultural products (including fresh and processed products and agricultural production inputs for organic farming activities) that comply with the Saudi organic farming law may be marketed as "organic", using a Saudi national logo for organic agricultural products or for organic production inputs. Producers of organic products are subject to compliance checks, at least once a year; the compliance checks are carried out by private bodies designated by the Department. Organic producers may face removal from the authorization list if severe infringement is found during the compliance check. According to the authorities, imported products may also be marketed as "organic" only when they meet the requirements of the law and are approved by the Department.

3.82. Imports of GM food must be accompanied by a certificate issued from the competent authority of the exporting country, confirming that the GM food in question is allowed to be consumed in the country of origin. Labelling of GM food follows a positive labelling approach, i.e. all ingredients must be indicated in the labels. Under the Council of Ministers Cable No. 7/5/2911 (dated 16/1/1425H - 7 March 2004), genetically modified dates, seeds, seedlings, and ornamental plants are banned from importation to Saudi Arabia.

3.2 Measures Directly Affecting Exports

3.2.1 Export procedures and requirements

3.83. Registration and documentation requirements for exports, in general, are similar to those for imports. Exporters must be registered with the MCI and food exporters must register with the SFDA. Pre-departure declarations for exports must be submitted to Saudi Customs. According to the authorities, all exports are subject to inspection or X-ray scanning.

3.84. Exporters must obtain certificates of origin from the MCI for all their exports. In addition, some products under export control are subject to export licensing (Section 3.2.3). For exports of food, certificates issued by the SFDA are required.

3.2.2 Export taxes and duties

3.85. On 10 September 2013, Saudi Arabia eliminated export duties on hides and skins. According to the authorities there are no export taxes.

3.2.3 Export control

3.2.3.1 Export prohibitions

3.86. According to Saudi Customs, Saudi Arabia does not maintain any export prohibitions/restrictions on any trading partners.

3.87. Saudi Arabia maintains export bans on seven categories of products (Table 3.6). Compared to the list of export prohibitions in the previous TPR, it appears that exports of wood and of antiques items are no longer prohibited.

Table 3.6 Export prohibitions, 2015

Product
Livestock and horses of all kinds (male and female)
Baby milk of all kinds
Animal feeds such as barley and Sudanese sorghum
Poultry feeds such as yellow corn and soya beans
Natural sand and sand containing minerals
Gas cylinders with the specifications of the National Gas & Industrial Company (GASCO)
Zamzam water

Source: Information provided by the authorities.