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Executive Summary

The report highlights the results and analysis of the best practices applied by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in relation to import and export inspection procedures and certification systems. It aims to document the approach implemented by the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) to control the safety of food products imported while facilitating the procedure and reducing the overall timing required for the registration of food products and their clearance through customs procedures. The report also documents processes developed to manage exported food products.

Saudi Arabia has food import control systems and custom clearance procedures that are proportionate to the level of potential risks from imported food and new or emerging risks that may arise in the global food supply. The regulatory framework for the control of imported food products “Conditions and requirements for importing food to the Kingdom” highlights the procedure implemented to control imported food products and the risk assessment criteria applied by the SFDA to verify the safety of imported food products based on the regulations and control system in place in the exporting countries, the history of the importer, the nature of food products imported, the results of the inspections carried out by the SFDA, and the available information on food disease outbreaks at the international level.

Several measures were introduced, such as the electronic registration system of food companies and food products, which allows the SFDA to develop a database, listing all the food companies that operate in Saudi Arabia, whether local producers or foreign companies that export their food products to Saudi Arabia, to ensure that they are compliant with the SFDA and regional GCC regulations. The KSA has also implemented an electronic certification and audit system for exports, which has, in addition to facilitating export procedures, allowed to ensure the safety of food products exported and for the importing country the verify authenticity of the SFDA certificate provided.

By implementing such registration processes, the system aims to support the assurance that food products that are both imported and introduced into the Saudi market, as well as products exported to another country are safe for human consumption.

The GCC Guide for the Control of Imported Foods is currently being implemented in the GCC countries and could serve as a basis for the modernization and harmonization of food inspection systems in the Arab region, especially in relation to the requirements of the development and issuance of health certificates, the latter procedures being very well in line with the procedures and requirements for issuing health certificates applied by several countries and recommended by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Objective

This report is developed as part of the Arab Food Safety Initiative for Trade Facilitation (SAFE), and specifically as part of the sub-initiative calling for a common Arab food import/export certificate.

The objective of this report is to examine and document best practices, developments and modernization efforts related to food inspection and certification procedures associated with imported/exported products implemented by Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Morocco. Emphasis will be made on risk-based approaches, and on practices that can be further extended to other parts of the Arab region with the intent to stimulate intra-regional trade.

The ultimate objective is to enable the development of guidance supporting the adoption of common food import/export procedures and a common Arab official food import/export certificate in line with relevant Codex standards and guidelines, in particular Codex standard CAC/GL38-2001.

The current report focuses on food import/export control programs developed in the KSA, along with the relevant supporting legislation, regulations, systems and tools and their operationalization.

II. Background and Country Profile

Saudi Arabia Market Overview

Saudi Arabia is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), along with Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The GCC as a whole has limited local agriculture production due to the weather conditions and scarcity of water resources amongst other natural characteristics.

Saudi Arabia is the single-largest market for agri-food and seafood products in the GGC. The country has witnessed a growing demand for agricultural products, food and beverage products.

Agricultural Products (2015) ¹			
Top imported products	Value (Million US\$)	Top exported products	Value (Million US\$)
Meat and edible offal of poultry	1 921	Fruit juices and vegetable juices	446
Rice	1 505	Bread, pastry, other bakers' wares	355
Barley	1 470	Cheese and curd	352
Other food preparations	1 115	Buttermilk, curdled milk and cream	291

The agricultural sector has played an important role in the overall development of the Kingdom's economy and has achieved important growth rates for many years. Agriculture in Saudi Arabia is focused on the export of dates (17% of the world's export), dairy products, eggs, fish, poultry, fruits and vegetables to markets around the world.

¹<http://stat.wto.org/CountryProfile/WSDBCountryPFView.aspx?Language=E&Country=SA>

Food Trade Policy

Saudi Arabia has been a Member of the World Trade Organisation since December, 2005 and is also a member of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC).

Reforms of the agricultural policy in Saudi Arabia are based on two main concerns: the scarcity of water resources and ensuring food security. The country has recently made a strong policy shift towards enhancing sustainable water use and the development of the agricultural sector including reforming domestic support policies. The restructuring of crop cultivation patterns has resulted in reduced areas of high-water consuming crops, such as wheat, barley and fodder crops. Farmers are being encouraged to engage in alternative sustainable agricultural activities such as greenhouse farming and organic farming and to adopt modern cultivation techniques such as advanced drip irrigation.

Saudi Arabia has fully endorsed the G20 Leaders' commitment to refrain from imposing protectionist measures on trade in goods and services in order to support global economic recovery and the restoration of sustainable growth.

Food Trade

The KSA is a net importer of agri-food and seafood products.

The five main exporters of agri-food and seafood products to Saudi Arabia in 2015 were Brazil (US\$ 2.2 billion), India (US\$ 2.1 billion), the US (US\$ 1.4 billion), Germany (US\$ 1.6 billion), and the UAE (US\$ 1.4 billion), accounting for 38% of Saudi Arabia's imports. Products included barley, rice, frozen fowls and food preparations. Agri-food and seafood imports from Canada amounted to US\$166.3 million and included wheat, frozen boneless meat, groundnuts, food preparations, and cheese ².

The EU is a major exporter of food and beverages to Saudi Arabia. The top EU Agri-food exports to the KSA in 2016 included cereals other than wheat and rice (457 million euros; 10%), food preparations – not specified (290 million euros; 6%), Preparations of vegetables, fruits, nuts (295 millions; 6%), wheat (582 million euros; 13%), infant food and other cereals, flour, starch, or milk preparations (520 million euros; 11%), and remaining agri-food products (1,882 million euros; 41%)³.

² *Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada market access global analysis report (march 2017)*

³ *The European Commission Food and Beverage Market Entry Handbook Saudi Arabia*

Saudi Arabia's Top Agri-food and Seafood Imports from the World (2015)⁴

Commodity	Import value (in US\$ millions)	Top suppliers & market share
Barley	1,470	Russia (38.7%), Ukraine (24.3%), Germany (12.6%)
Rice	1,452.1	India (78.7%), Pakistan (6.1%), United States (6%)
Frozen fowls	1,179.2	Brazil (74.5%), France (23.4%), Argentina (2.1%)
Food preparations	1,085	Ireland (41.2%), Bahrain (7.7%), Denmark (6.0%)
Live sheep	791.1	Sudan (66.7%), Somalia (17.3%), Jordan (12.4%)
Food preparations for infant use	652.8	Ireland (32.6%), France (25.7%), Spain (13.3%)
Frozen cuts and edible offal of fowls	559.6	Brazil (94.5%), United States (2.5%), UAE (2.2%)
Maize	531.2	United States (44.0%), Argentina (32.8%), Brazil (20.0%)
Solid form milk and cream	408	UAE (47.1%), New Zealand (20.3%), Oman (14.4%)

Saudi Arabia is a leading producer of fresh fruits (e.g. dates, watermelon, grapes, citrus fruits) and vegetables (e.g. potatoes, onions, squash and tomatoes) in the GCC, as well as wheat and sorghum. The domestic production also includes seafood, meat indigenous (chicken, sheep, cattle, camel, goat), livestock (chicken, sheep, birds, goats, cattle), dairy products and bakeries.

Saudi Arabian Exports of Food and Agricultural Products

Country	Total Value of exports (in thousands of USD) in 2015
United Arab Emirates	298,8
Jordan	234
Kuwait	181,7
Qatar	150,2
Yemen	138,4
Bahrain	108,6
Lebanon	47
Egypt	42,8
Sudan	13

⁴ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada market access global analysis report (march 2017)

Saudi Arabia Trade Facilitation Agreements

- The KSA is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The objectives of the GCC are the coordination and economic integration between member states. This includes the objective to harmonize regulations in various fields (e.g. economy, finance, trade, customs, tourism). The GCC implemented a Customs Union in January 2003 that stipulates free movement of local goods among Member States.
- Saudi Arabia is a member of the League of Arab States and a member of the Greater Arab Free-Trade Area (GAFTA) which entered into force on 1 January 2005 and aims to enable full trade liberalization of goods through the full exemption of customs duties and charges having equivalent effect between Arab country members of the GAFTA.
- In 2003, the KSA signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the United States (US). A TIFA is typically an umbrella agreement for ongoing structured dialogue between the United States and other governments on economic reform and trade liberalization.
- Saudi Arabia is also part of the Partnership Instrument (PI) which covers the bilateral relations between the GCC and the EU and which addresses specific aspects of the EU's economic diplomacy with a view to improving access to third country markets by boosting trade, investment and business opportunities for European companies.
- Saudi Arabia grants preferential treatment to the EFTA group (Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein) within the framework of the EFTA-GCC Free Trade Agreement signed in June 2009.
- Saudi Arabia also grants preferential treatment to the goods of national origin imported from Singapore within the framework of the free trade agreement between the GCC states and Singapore (GSFTA) signed in December 2008.
- Saudi Arabia has signed Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) such as Mutual Recognition Program of Quality Marks and Conformity Certificates with, among others, Argentina, China, Egypt, Germany, Indonesia, Jordan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Tunisia, and Turkey.

III. Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification System: Framework and Involved Parties

Food Legislative Framework

All food products, including imported food products, must comply with the general requirements of the Saudi Food Law which aims at, “among others, providing the framework for import and export control procedures, ensuring food safety and quality; protecting consumers from harmful, adulterated, or misleading foodstuff; and preventing any barriers to food trade”. The Saudi Food Law also gives the SFDA the sole competence to regulate the food sector and to perform inspections and controls on the market and apply sanctions in case of violations or fraud.

In addition, Saudi Arabia applies the standards and technical regulations issued by the GCC Standardisation Organisation (GSO) which is the umbrella organisation setting food and beverage standards in GCC countries.

As a group, the GSO’s main role is to create a common set of food regulations and standards which facilitate trade and import inspection procedures among GCC countries. The GSO standards are mainly based on the standards of the Codex Alimentarius and to some extent on the regulations of the European Union (EU) and of the United States Food and Drug Authority (USFDA) as well as other international references.

The GSO issues two types of regulations that govern food and agricultural products:

- GSO Technical Regulations: approved unanimously by all GCC countries. They replace existing national standards and their implementation is mandatory in all member counties;
- GSO Standards: adopted by majority vote and their implementation is voluntary in member countries

When GSO regulations and standards are not available, the SFDA applies its own regulations and standards.

The GCC Guide for the Control on Imported Foods (2017) which aims to enhance the co-operation between exporting countries and GCC countries will result in facilitated food trade and the enhancement of food safety. Saudi Arabia and the other GCC Member States are

Food Laboratory Support Services

The control and/or analysis of food samples can be conducted at the laboratories of the SFDA or at any other agency’s laboratories. The Executive Department of laboratories in the SFDA aims at developing an integrated system of accredited laboratories for the analysis of food and feed as one of the important sources of food control. The department also tests food samples of local or imported food products received from other executive departments in the sector, in addition to the samples referred by different government laboratories (Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam, Jazan, Ammar, Haditha).

Involved Authorities in Food Import Control

Ministry of Commerce and Investment (MOCI)

All enterprises, including importers and exporters, must register with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MCI) before engaging in any business. The commercial registration is required when applying for import licences and when clearing customs for imported goods. The commercial registration is valid for five years, renewable for additional periods of five years. Using a Saudi commercial agent is required only when importing/exporting agricultural machinery.

Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA)

The SFDA is an independent body with a Board of Directors chaired by the Minister of Health. It is responsible for regulating, overseeing, and controlling food products, drugs, medical devices, as well for setting mandatory standard specifications, whether for imported or locally manufactured food products.

The SFDA is the sole government agency responsible for the inspection of locally produced and imported food products. The control and/or test analysis can be conducted at any of the SFDA’s approved laboratories. The SFDA ascertains that the products meet all the standards and regulation requirements established by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

All food, drinks and agricultural products, including food ingredients and processed animal feed whether locally manufactured or imported to Saudi Arabia are required to comply with regulations and standards set by the SFDA or the GCC Standardization Organization (GSO).

implementing import control and food clearance systems that are based on potential risks to consumers and which address new or emerging risks that may arise in the global food supply. The provisions and procedures stipulated in the guide are in line with international requirements such as the ones of the WTO, FAO, and OIE.

Since the implementation of the GCC customs union in 2003, the customs procedures and documentation requirements are, in principle, the same among the GCC member States. However, implementation of the Common Customs Law and application of the Unified Guide for Customs Procedures is the responsibility of each GCC member State's customs agency. In 2015, the Unified Guide for Customs Procedures at First Points of Entry was adopted to facilitate and simplify customs procedures across the GCC. This Guide highlights the aim to ensure, under the "single port of entry" principle, that the customs procedures and documentation requirements are the same among the GCC member states.

- The SFDA Risk Assessment Department, now part of the Executive Department of Monitoring and Risk Assessment: EDMRA (role is described in section V. Food Import Risk Analysis)
- The SFDA Notification Center for Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) (part of the EDMRA)

The SPS notification center at the SFDA notifies the Secretariat of the World Trade Organization (WTO) SPS Committee the safeguards and precautions issued by Saudi Arabia relating to human, animal and plant health. It also issues and receives the WTO notifications on sanitary and phytosanitary measures and shares such notifications with members of the Standing SPS Committee of the KSA (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, Ministry of Trade and Investment). It also responds to queries from WTO members.

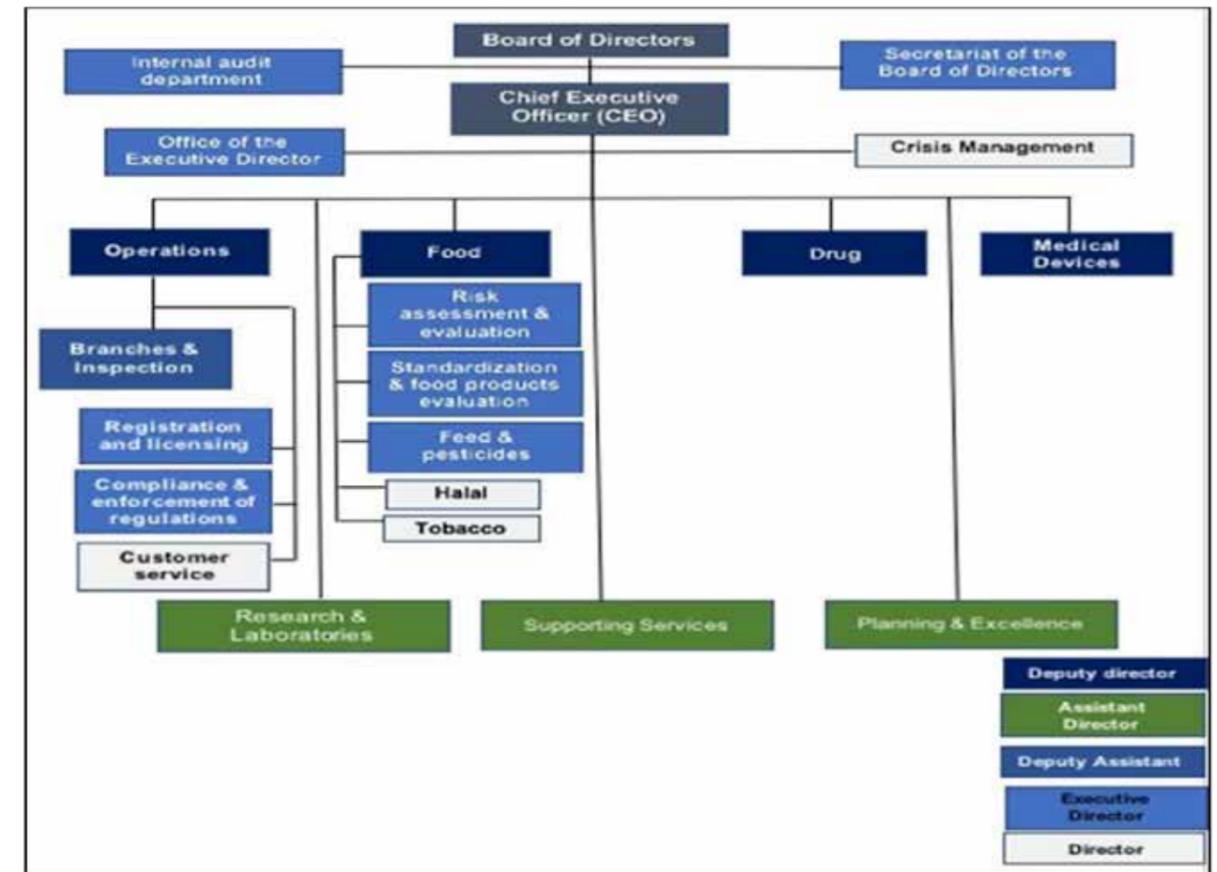


Figure 1: Organizational Structure of the SFDA and Executive Department of Food Import Control*

*This structure has been and continue to be amended as the SFDA reviews its organizational structure

Saudi Arabia Customs Authority Department

The majority of Saudi food imports enter the country via the Jeddah port (around 70 %) on the Red Sea or the Dammam port on the Arabian Gulf. Imports from Jordan, Syria, and other nearby countries enter the Kingdom by truck. The King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh and the King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah also receive significant quantities of food items, particularly fresh fruits, vegetables and chilled meat.

The Saudi Customs Department applies a fully automated system in most cases, and the submission and processing of import declarations is done electronically. On average, provided relevant requirements including documentation are met, customs clearance can take one or two days regardless of the mode of transport.

The inspection includes document, identity, and physical checks. The product may be referred to an authorized laboratory for additional tests and in this case the product imported will be held until the final decision is taken.

The Border Food Inspection centres include the following:

- Riyadh Dry port
- King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh
- Jeddah Islamic Port Center (North)
- Jeddah Islamic Port (Middle Centre)
- Jeddah Islamic Port (South Centre)
- King Abdulaziz International Airport at Jeddah
- King Abdul Aziz Port in Dammam (Refrigerator)
- King Abdul Aziz Port in Dammam
- King Fahd International Airport in Dammam
- Khafji Port
- King Fahd Causeway
- Halat Ammar Port
- Duba Port
- Haditha Port
- Batha Port
- Salwa Port
- Al-Ghadra
- Twal Port
- Jazan Port



IV. Food Import Risk Analysis

The food import protocol applies in the KSA follows a risk profiling evaluation system as well as physical inspection, which may be carried out for goods on a random basis.

Risk profile classification of foods is based upon:

- Likelihood of contamination with biological, chemical and/or physical hazards
- Likelihood of significant levels of contamination persisting throughout the food chain
- Potential risks to human health for the general population

Food are to be classified into three general categories: high, medium or low potential risk to human health. The number of risk categories may be increased on the basis of risk assessments conducted. The food classifications may also change on the basis of new scientific evidence of potential food borne risks to human health. This risk profiling approach is still being tested on a pilot basis by the SFDA.

The SFDA Risk Assessment Department (now part of the Executive Department of Monitoring and Risk Assessment) is the organization within the SFDA that was tasked to assist in the development of this risk profiling. The Department performs scientific assessments of physical, chemical and microbiological hazards associated with food and assists Border posts, through the Operations Sector of the SFDA with such assessments, as required. More efforts are currently being devoted to develop a documented and fully tried system of risk-based inspection of imports, based on the criteria listed above.

V. Food Import Procedure

Imported products should be compliant with the KSA requirements, regulations and standards applied in (e.g. GSO standard for labelling of pre-packaged foodstuffs, GSO standards on non-alcoholic carbonated beverages, GSO standards on food additives). As a general requirement, the product must be free from alcohol, alcohol traces, pork, or any ingredient that is not permitted in the KSA.

In addition, the importer must have a Commercial Register that includes food trade.

Since January 1st, 2014 the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) started applying a mandatory electronic customs clearance system (E-Clearance) for all food and drink products, including pre-packaged food products as well as raw materials, imported into the Kingdom. The SFDA has asked all importers of food and drink products to be registered in its E-Service system.

Each importer is required to open an electronic account and set up individual user name and password. The registration of imported products is the responsibility of the local importers.

This procedure provides a database for all importers, establishments, and products, and improves communication between SFDA and food importers as well as with food establishment. The following paragraphs outline the various requirements of importer registration and the associated tools and administrative steps that may be needed.

Electronic Registration of Establishments and Food Products

Registration in the SFDA E-Service System

The registration process encompasses

- Creating a new account⁶
- Setting up a user name and a password and sign in;
- Selecting the type of establishment⁷
- Inserting the required information about the food establishment and its authorized Person.

- For the Saudi Local Importer
 - A commercial Certificate
 - An authorization letter

- For the Saudi Custom Broker
 - A custom broker license
 - An authentication letter



نموذج التسجيل للمستهلكين المحليين (Local Importer Registration Form)

الاسم: _____
 رقم الهوية / الإقامة: _____
 رقم الهاتف / الترخيص: _____
 المدينة: _____
 الرمز البريدي: _____
 البريد الإلكتروني: _____

معلومات إضافية: _____

التوقيع: _____
 التاريخ: _____

نموذج التسجيل للمستهلكين المحليين (Local Importer Registration Form)

الاسم: _____
 رقم الهوية / الإقامة: _____
 رقم الهاتف / الترخيص: _____
 المدينة: _____
 الرمز البريدي: _____
 البريد الإلكتروني: _____

معلومات إضافية: _____

التوقيع: _____
 التاريخ: _____

- For Foreign Establishments

The registration is made by an authorized person that should have the technical and administrative capacities in order to complete the registration form. The documents required are the following:

- A health certificate of the establishment (issued by the Health Authority of the country);
- An Industrial register (issued by Ministry of Industry or Commerce)
- Certificates of compliance from the regulatory authorities in the country where the foreign establishment is based;
- Quality certificates: ISO 22000 and / or ISO 9001 and / or GMP and / or HACCP

It is essential that the food establishment is registered in the SFDA system even if it is registered with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs. Once the application is electronically submitted, the e-account is created, and the applicant can complete the registration of the food establishment and of the food products imported.

Registration of the Food Establishment

The importer or the customs broker agent representing him has to fill the requested information about the food establishment, the importer or the customs broker and other type of information:

- Establishment Information: Name, both in Arabic and English, including establishment's short name and approval number; address and contact information; authorized persons: full names in Arabic and English, responsibilities and contact information;
- Headquarters address and contact information: Importers are required to register coordinates of their warehouses, names of authorized contact persons to deal with the SFDA, including customs brokers contracted in each Saudi port of entry.
- Official inspectors or competent authority name, address and contact information;
- Business Activities: primary products, manufacturing, wholesales, storage, transportation,



⁶ <http://frcs.sfda.gov.sa>

⁷ <https://frcs.sfda.gov.sa/Account/RegisterAccount.aspx>

Once the application submitted, the SFDA will analyse the certificates presented and the application will be either:

- Rejected: the SFDA provides a justification and reasons for which the application was not accepted.
- Incomplete: the applicant is requested to complete the missing information within a week to avoid cancellation.
- Accepted: the applicant will receive an email with an activation code

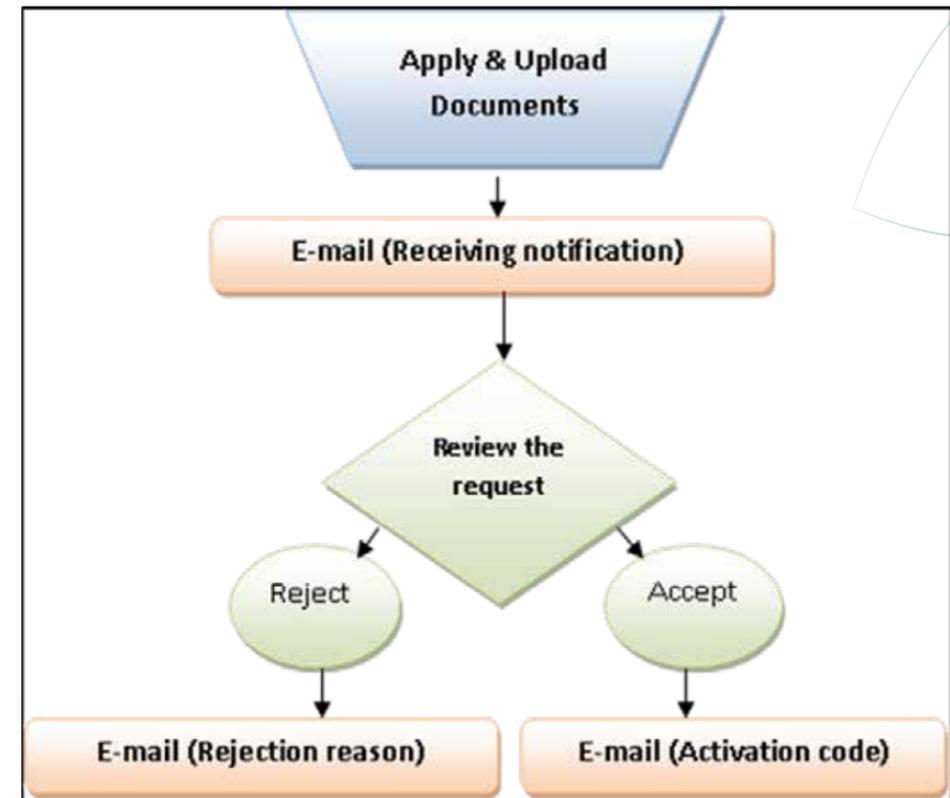


Figure 2: Flowchart Representing the Application Process to Register a Food Establishment

Registration of Food Products in the SFDA System

The Importers are required to register all food products they intend to import in the SFDA Electronic system.



The applicant (importer) will complete all fields as follows:

- The name of the product: in Arabic, as it is written on the product label. The brand name should not be indicated here (unless the product name and brand are the same);
- Bar code (0 if the product does not have a bar code). The applicant should not leave space, or writing (-) between the barcode numbers;
- Trade Mark: If the company is not Arabic, the Trade Mark can be written in English. The product name should not appear in the field of Trade Mark;
- Brand: If the company is not Arabic, the Brand name can be written in English. The product name should not be written in the brand field;
- Harmonized code (HS Code) that matches the product to be registered;
- Drain weight;
- Type of packaging;
- Producer or manufacturing company details;
- Approval number for the producer or manufacturing company (for meat products, poultry, fish);
- Ingredients list (in English and Arabic);
- Warnings statement: any warning statements written on the label of the product (e.g. allergic reactions- or not to use for children less than a certain age – contains traces of..., etc.).
- Food Label Image: a picture of the whole product data label before printing (artwork) must show the main data (name of the product, the country of origin, manufacturing, packaging, weight, ingredients list, etc.). There should be a clear link between the Image on the product label and the product image as well as with the product data, which is recorded in all the fields (weight- type of packaging, etc.). The fullest extent of the images is 1 MB.
- The SFDA indicates not to download the product label in the field allocated for the product image. The product label must contain all information required by the Gulf Standard regulation GSO 9/2007 “Labeling of Prepackaged Food Stuffs”.
- Image of the product after packaging (snap shot)

The SFDA requires importers to re-register their products when there are changes in product formulations or labels.

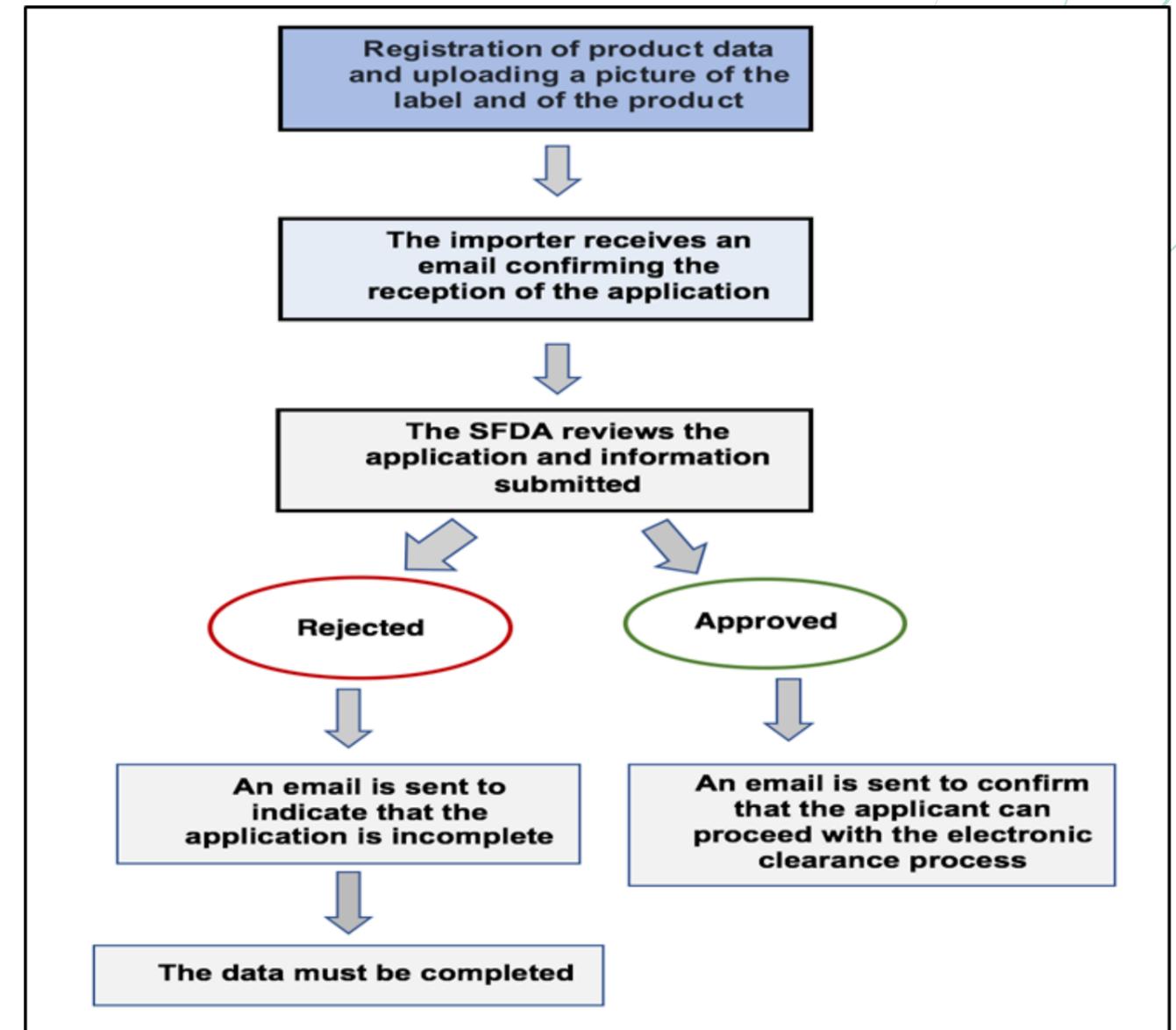


Figure 3: Flowchart Representing the Food Product Registration Process

Border Inspection Procedures and Customs Clearance

Border Inspection Ports (BIPs) modernized inspection systems

- **Wi-Fi Devices:** the Riyadh Dry Port has implemented NAVIS N4 2.3 which can process and display scanned images for each gate lane, improving visibility and efficiency overall and the Psilog Altai Wi-Fi Devices wireless devices, namely radio data terminals, vehicle mounted terminals and mobile computers among others. Consignee trucks at Riyadh Dry Port only take 11-12 minutes to carry their delivery containers out after passing through X-ray machines.
- **The Single Window system:** There is no country-wide single window for customs procedures operating in Saudi Arabia, but a pilot programme is operating in Jeddah's Islamic Seaport Customs Office. The government is currently building a space for the implementation of the single windows system which will facilitate the sharing of information and speed customs clearance procedures.

The Customs Department uses an electronic data interchange (EDI) system, which allows electronic submission and processing of import declarations.

- **A CCTV system:** such system provides, through TV cameras, a live monitoring for customs operations and the movement of goods and shipments. Such system also aims at controlling smuggling incidents.

- **Advanced X-ray cargo inspection systems:** Saudi Arabia's Customs has installed American Science and Engineering's OmniView (TM) Gantry cargo and vehicle X-ray inspection system at the King Abdul Aziz Seaport in Dammam. The system provides high penetration into inspected objects as it moves along rails over stationary vehicles and cargo.



As part of the Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 road map for economic development and the associated action plans, the Government of the KSA planned on the development and further modernization of the Riyadh Dry Port, which holds a strategic position being connected by rail link to the Eastern Province of Dammam and is well positioned to handle GCC rail traffic. Other improvement plans include the implementation of a smart solution program to optimize container movements, the commissioning of new equipment such as rubber-tired gantry crane (RTG's) for maximum utilization of space, the installation of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and upgrading the container terminal operating system for a better performance.

Food import clearance system and documents required

Control of imported food in Saudi Arabia is carried out at the border inspection posts (BIPs) under direct control of the SFDA. Inspection procedures are in accordance with International Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) and national standards.

Testing and inspection at the border is conducted by the Customs, the SFDA and/or the Ministry of Agriculture depending on the nature of the product.

The importer appoints one of the customs clearance agents registered in the SFDA database to complete the data for the consignment clearance and notifies the SFDA in advance.

An electronic message is sent to the customs clearance agent with a number of the inspection request and the name of the imported food inspection office that is required to perform the inspection.

عزيزي العميل
تم استلام الطلب التالي: رقم الإخطار: (#####) رقم طلب التفتيش: (201301130100) في (جمرك _____).
مع تحياتي،،
الإدارة التنفيذية للرقابة على الغذاء المستورد

Inspection at the port of entry

All imports are subject to inspections upon arrival at the Border Inspection Posts (BIP).

Saudi Arabia applies a risk profiling evaluation system and physical inspection may be carried out for goods on a random basis. At this point however, the risk-based inspection is only implemented on a pilot program-basis.

About 90% of imported consignments are subject to X-ray scanning while the remaining 10% are inspected physically according to the authorities.

The clearance of food products, provided all the documents are in order, takes an average of one day regardless of the mode of transport.

Introduction of the information in the electronic system:

With the exception of live animals, plants, seeds and grains (inspected by the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture), all imported foodstuffs are inspected by the SFDA's Executive Department for Imported Food Control (EDIFC) at the Saudi ports of entry or Border Inspection Posts (BIPs).

The importer can submit an application for the clearance of the food products imported through sea, land and/or air border inspection ports.

Primary inspection by Customs officials

Following the registration of the customs declaration, the customs official physically inspects the goods. The inspection is carried out in the presence of the person who presented the declaration or his representative. Inspection of the goods is usually conducted at the customs zone.



The customs supervisor verifies that the consignment documents are complete and refers them to the SFDA customs inspector for examination.

Certificates and documents required with the customs declaration include:

- a legalized Country of Origin Certificate;
- a legalized Health certificate;
- a legalized certificate of conformity.
- For the moment, halal certificates are only requested for products such as meat and poultry products, cheese products when they contain rennet of animal origin, gelatin of animal origin.

Shipments of food products must be accompanied by duly legalized:

- Original Invoice,
- Translation of the invoice into Arabic
- Bill of Entry or Airway Bill,
- Packing List or Certificate of Weight
- Other documents that may be requested in addition.

*Saudi Arabia uses the model of health certificates as in the GCC Guide for Control on Imported Foods which contains different types of certificates:

- Health certificate for processed foods
- Health Certificate for Export of Meat and Meat Products
- Health Certificate for Export of (milk, and Milk Products)
- Health Certificate for Export of Table Eggs and Egg Products
- Health Certificate for Export of Table Eggs and Egg Products
- Health Certificate for Export of Products of Aquatic Animal Origin

The Health certificates for export of processed foods to GCC countries must provide the following information:

- Name and address of the consigner (exporter)
- Certificate Reference number, Place of issue, Date of issue
- Competent/ Certifying Authority and address
- Name and address of the consignee (importer)
- Country of origin; ISO code
- Country of destination; ISO code

- Producer name and address
- Packing establishment (if applicable); name and address
- Border entry / country of destination
- Border of loading / country of dispatch
- Means of transport / conveyance
- Conveyance Identification number
- Temperature of the food product
- Commodities certified for: human consumption directly / other
- Identification of the food product
- Health attestation and General attestations, which should attest to one or more of the following statements:
 - “ The food products are safe and fit for human consumption”;
 - “ The food product was handled at an establishment that has been subjected to inspections by the competent authority and/or officially recognized body and implements a food safety management system based on HACCP principles or an equivalent system.”;
 - Additional health attestations (declarations) if deemed necessary.”
 - Authorised officer name and position
- Name of the responsible department; official stamp; date

Health Certificate For Export Of Processed Food Products To Gcc Countries				الشهادة الصحية لتصدير الأغذية المصنعة إلى دول مجلس التعاون لدول الخليج العربية					
I.1	Consignor (Exporter) Name Address	المرسل (المصدر) الاسم العنوان	I.2	Certificate Reference No. Place of Issue Date of Issue	الرقم المرجعي للشهادة الصحية مكان الإصدار تاريخ الإصدار				
I.4	Consignee (importer) Name Address	المرسل إليه (المستورد) الاسم العنوان	I.3	Competent/Certifying Authority Address	الجهة الرقابية المختصة العنوان				
			I.5	Country of origin ISO code	بلد المنشأ رمز الأيزو				
			I.6	Country of Destination ISO code	بلد الوصول رمز الأيزو				
I.7	Producer. Name Address	الشركة الصانعة الاسم العنوان	I.8	Packing Est. (if applicable) Name Address	الشركة التعبئة (إن وجد) الاسم العنوان				
I.9	Border of Entry/Country of Destination	بلد الوصول /منفذ الدخول	I.10	Border of Loading/Country of Dispatch	بلد المغادرة/موقع التحميل				
I.11	Means of transport/conveyance By Air By Sea By Road	وسيلة النقل <input type="checkbox"/> جوي <input type="checkbox"/> بحري <input type="checkbox"/> بري	I.12	Conveyance Identification No.	الرقم التعريفي/هوية وسيلة النقل				
			I.13	Temperature of Food product Ambient Chilled Frozen	درجة حرارة حفظ المادة الغذائية درجة حرارة الغرفة مبرد مجعد				
I.14 Commodities Certified for: تم ترخيص البضائع لاستخدامها في: <input type="checkbox"/> Human Consumption Directly: <input type="checkbox"/> الاستهلاك الأدمي مباشرة: <input type="checkbox"/>									
Other <input type="checkbox"/> أخرى After Further Process <input type="checkbox"/> بعد معالجة إضافية <input type="checkbox"/>									
I.15 Identification of the Food Products توصيف وتصنيف الأغذية									
Name & Description of Food		HS-Code	Treatment Type	Brand Name	Production Date	Expiry Date	No Packages	Batch/Lot No.	Total Weight
إسم ووصف المادة الغذائية		بند التعريف الجمركية	نوع المعالجة	العلامة التجارية	تاريخ الإنتاج	تاريخ الانتهاء	عدد الطرود	رقم التشغيل/الدفعة	الوزن الكلي
I.16 Health Attestations الإفادات الصحية									
General Attestations إفادات عامة									
The Food product are safe and fit for human consumption. إن الغذاء سليم (آمن) وصالح للاستهلاك الأدمي									
The Food product(s) was handled at an establishment that has been subjected to inspections by the competent authority and/or officially recognized body and implements a food safety management system based on HACCP principles or an equivalent system									
تم إجراء عمليات تناول للمنتجات الغذائية في منشأة غذائية خاضعة للرقابة من قبل الجهة الرقابية المختصة و / أو الجهة المخولة رسمياً وتطبق نظام إدارة سلامة الغذاء استناداً إلى مبادئ نظام الهاسب أو مايمثله									
Additional Health Attestations (Declarations) if deemed necessary إفادات صحية إضافية خاصة. إذا تطلب الأمر ذلك									
Name of the Responsible Department Official Stamp Date: إسم ووظيفة الشخص المختص إسم الإدارة التي يتبع لها الختم الرسمي التاريخ:									

Figure 4: Model of a GCC Health Certificate

Inspection by SFDA officials

Following the inspection and clearance by customs officials, the SFDA receives a notification to begin its inspection procedure. Food inspectors are responsible for performing the following tasks when food consignments arrive at the border of inspection posts (BIPs):

- Documentary check to verify certificates and documents accompanying the consignment;
- Identity check and physical examination to examine the consignment, match the imported goods against the attached documents, and verify that it is free from prohibited items and in conformity with standards and regulations. The inner temperature level of the container is

checked to ensure it meets the safety requirements as prescribed in regulations and standards. The inspection is carried out in the presence of the person who presented the declaration or his representative. The Department authorities may open the packages for inspection upon suspicion of the existence of prohibited goods or goods which are not conform to what is listed in the customs declaration.

- Laboratory testing in an authorized laboratory on the basis of criteria established by the SFDA and highlighted in the “conditions and requirements for the import of food products” framework such as the nature of the product (e.g. cheese), the history of the imported food products, compliance (or non-compliance) history, the country of origin. A random sample is sent for analysis.

If there are no doubts regarding the safety of the consignment, the customs inspector signs the permit form and the preparation and examination request and refers them to the customs supervisor. The customs authority supervisor reviews the consignment documents. If there are no remarks, he electronically transmits it to the bank for collection of the customs duties. The customs broker pays the customs duties to the bank. The consignment is then transmitted electronically from the bank to the release unit. Figure 5 presents a schematic representation of the inspection procedure. Figures 6 and 7 offer a general representation of the import procedure.

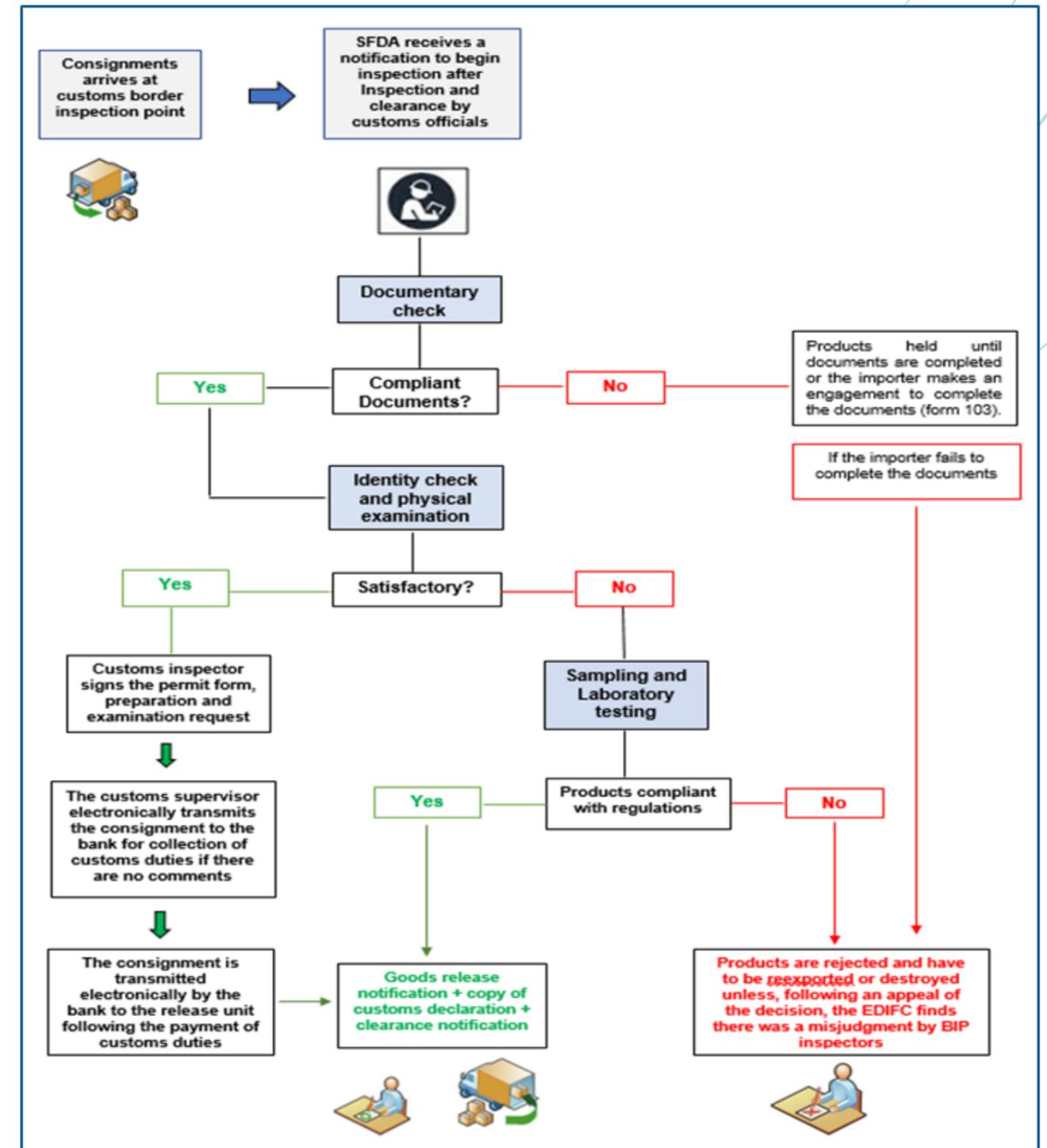


Figure 5: schematic representation of the inspection procedure of the SFDA.

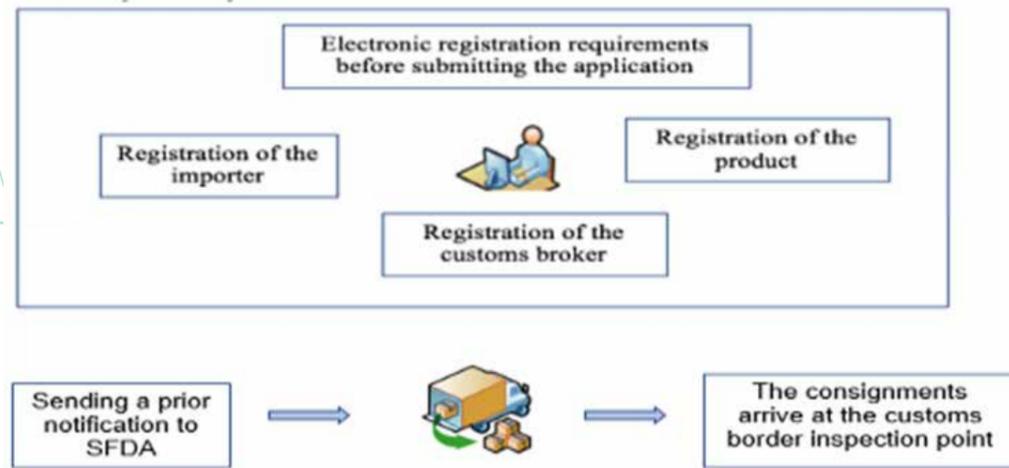


Figure 6: First stages of the overall import procedure.

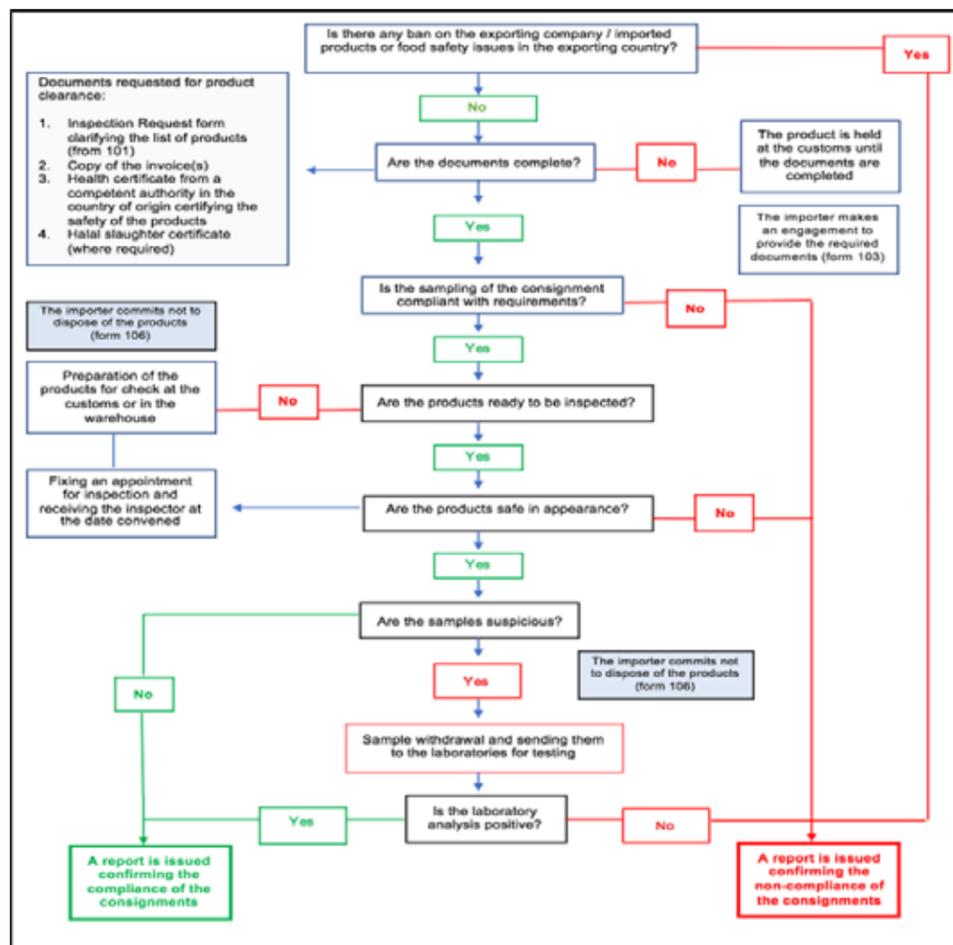


Figure 7: Decision-tree associated with the overall Import procedure

Specific Import restrictions and requirements on certain food products

Special requirements are in place for certain type of products, such genetically modified foods, irradiated or organic foods and have to be met above and beyond the general requirements.

- Genetically Modified (GM) Foods:

Specific requirements must be met prior to the importation of GM foods.

The label on GM foods resulting from modern biotechnology shall indicate that these foods or some of their ingredients are genetically modified. All necessary information shall be written on the food label in a clear and easy to read manner in both Arabic and English, with a color distinct from the one of the label. In addition, an official certificate issued by the competent authority confirming that GM foods intended for exportation to KSA, are allowed to be used and consumed in the country of origin.

- Irradiated Foods:

The Council of Ministers No. 263 of 23/10/1422 permits the import of irradiated food products if they are compliant with the general requirements and specifications. The GSO standard on food labelling GSO 9/2013 contains provisions regarding irradiated food and it should be mentioned next to the name of the product that it is irradiated and the RADURA logo (internationally accepted according the Codex standard) should be included on the label of the packaged food products treated with irradiation.

- Organic Foods

Organic food products must meet the requirements of technical regulations and Saudi / GSO standard specifications, including:

- Saudi Arabia Organic Agricultural Law
- GSO 9 “ Labelling of Prepackaged Food Stuffs”
- GSO 2532 “Maximum Limits of Pesticide Residues and Contaminants in Organic Foods”
- GSO 2374 “Guide to the production, Processing, Labelling and Marketing of Organically Produced Foods”

Warning statements are required on certain food products:

- Products Containing Certain Sweeteners:
 - Aspartame (E951): Not to be used by persons who have phenyl ketonuria



- Saccharine (E954): This product contains the sugars that may be hazardous to your health;
 - Manitol (E421): Increasing the amount consumed on 20 g per day may cause laxative effects;
 - Sorbitol (E420) Increasing the amount consumed on 40 g per day may cause diarrhea;
 - Zilitol (E967) Increasing the amount consumed on 40 g per day may cause diarrhea.

Some of these requirements and in particular the requirement associated with Saccharine are outdated, and related to animal studies that identified some potential health effects associated with the consumption of such a sweetener, which are now known to be irrelevant to humans.

- Products Containing Certain Food Additives:

A warning statement must be indicated on the label when Southampton colours such as Sunset Yellow FCF (E110), Quinoline yellow (E104), Carmoisine (E122), Allura Red (E129), Tartrazine (E102), Ponceau 4R (E124) are used in the product as follows: "May have a negative impact on activity and concentration in children".

- Products Containing Allergens:

Cereals containing gluten (wheat, barley, oatmeal, rye, etc.), Crustaceans and their products, Fish and fish products, Eggs and its products, Peanuts, soybeans and their products, Walnut and its products, Milk and milk products (including lactose, Sulfur at a concentration of 10 ppm or more must be highlighted on the label or package (GSO 9 labelling of pre-packaged foodstuffs)

Prohibition to import certain types of food products:

Import prohibitions are maintained based on security, public safety, moral, and religious considerations. These prohibitions include:

- Meat of pigs and food products containing pig or pig derivatives (e.g. pig fat);
- Pig fat, free of lean meat, and poultry fat, not rendered or otherwise extracted, fresh, chilled frozen, salted, in brine, dried or smoked;
- Meat of horses, donkeys, mules and chicks fresh, frozen or chilled;
- Edible intestines and limbs of cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, horses, donkeys, mules whether fresh, chilled or frozen;
- Other oil seeds and oleaginous fruits;
- Poppy seeds, Hemp seeds;
- Food preparations containing animal blood;
- Alcoholic beverages and food and drink products containing alcohol.

The Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) may also issue temporary bans on imports from specific countries due to sanitary and phytosanitary considerations and foodborne disease issues or following an outbreak. For example, the SFDA had temporarily banned the importation of poultry meat and eggs from Belgium following an outbreak of avian influenza in July 2017. The agency also issued bans associated with the import of meat bovine products from certain countries such as Sweden, Bahrain, Estonia.

VI. Food Export Control in the KSA

Involved Authorities in Food Export

Ministry of Commerce and Investment (MOCI)

Enterprises (both local and foreign) must be registered at the MOCI and obtain a registration licence in order to be able to export their products.

Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA)

The SFDA grants export validity certificates for food establishments and food product certificates for the purposes of exporting locally produced food, in accordance with the technical regulations and food safety requirements in Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi Customs must be notified in advance of the export. According to the authorities, exports can be subject to inspection and go through X-ray scanning.

Food Export Procedure

The General requirements to export food products include the following provisions:

- The company must have a valid license to carry out its activities;
- A valid export permit;
- No prohibition or temporary prohibition for the food products that will be exported;
- No existing restrictions or bans on the products to be exported in the local Saudi market;

The applicant requests a certificate of validity for his food facility and a certificate for his food products. The SFDA applies an electronic system (Figure 8) for the application and issuance of export certificates.

The main objectives of the electronic export certification system include:

- A Faster procedure to issue export compliance certificates and certificate for the consignments.

- Providing a system that is easy to use by all the food establishments inside the KSA including the ability to manage the request to issue an export certificate electronically with an expedited process that would not involve the review of the various branches of the SFDA.
- Building an electronic database that includes the data of the different establishments and food products within the KSA and the types and varieties of their products that are exported abroad.
- Enabling the control and follow-up of the issuance of certificates of export validity based on the registration number of the food establishment in the system and thus avoiding errors in duplicating the issuance of certificates for the same products.

Figure 5: schematic representation of the inspection procedure of the SFDA.

Requirement for an Export Validity Certificate for Food Facilities

The food facilities and the food products destined to export must also be registered in the SFDA system, like any other establishment, if this was not done at a previous stage.

The applicant must attach the commercial register and the valid industrial license of the factory. Export companies or trademark owners who have an agreement with the licensed factories for the purpose of exporting food products are required to attach various items of documentation, which include:

- A copy of the commercial register of the enterprise or the owner of the trademark mentioned

in the activity to export food products;

- A copy of the commercial register of the factory;
- A copy of the industrial license of the factory
- The agreements and contracts in case the institutions and owners of trademarks wish to export products

The process applied by the SFDA involves the examination of the request/application for a new export validity certificate (along with a notification of the applicant electronically if there are any observations regarding the application) and the relevant inspection measures.

If all the information and documents related with the application are deemed acceptable, the SFDA schedules a visit to the facility for field inspection and sampling. The samples are sent through the company / factory to the private laboratories (as determined by the inspectors of the SFDA) to conduct the necessary laboratory tests and to attest to the compliance with the SFDA regulatory provisions.

The SFDA ensures that the results of the field inspection on the food facility and the results of laboratory analysis of the samples are examined by the competent department in the SFDA and provides electronic comments and observations about the food facility based on the results of the inspection or the results of the laboratory analysis.

Once the inspection of the premises and laboratory analysis is completed, the SFDA notifies the food facility of the acceptance of the application for issuing / renewing the certificate of export validity or of the decision to reject the application (in case there are any comments or doubts regarding the safety of the products). At each stage of the process, there is an opportunity for the applicant to check the status of their request, including the conformity of their product. Reasons of possible non-compliance are also communicated electronically, via the same web-enabled electronic approach (Figure 9)

رقم الطلب	الحالة	الطلب بانتظار قرار صاحب المنشأة
99	تفاصيل	الطلب بانتظار قرار صاحب المنشأة
98	تفاصيل	الطلب مكتمل ويانتظر السداد لإصدار الشهادة
94	تفاصيل	طلب تحت المراجعة - موظف ادارة التسجيل
90	تفاصيل	طلب بانتظار إصدار الشهادة

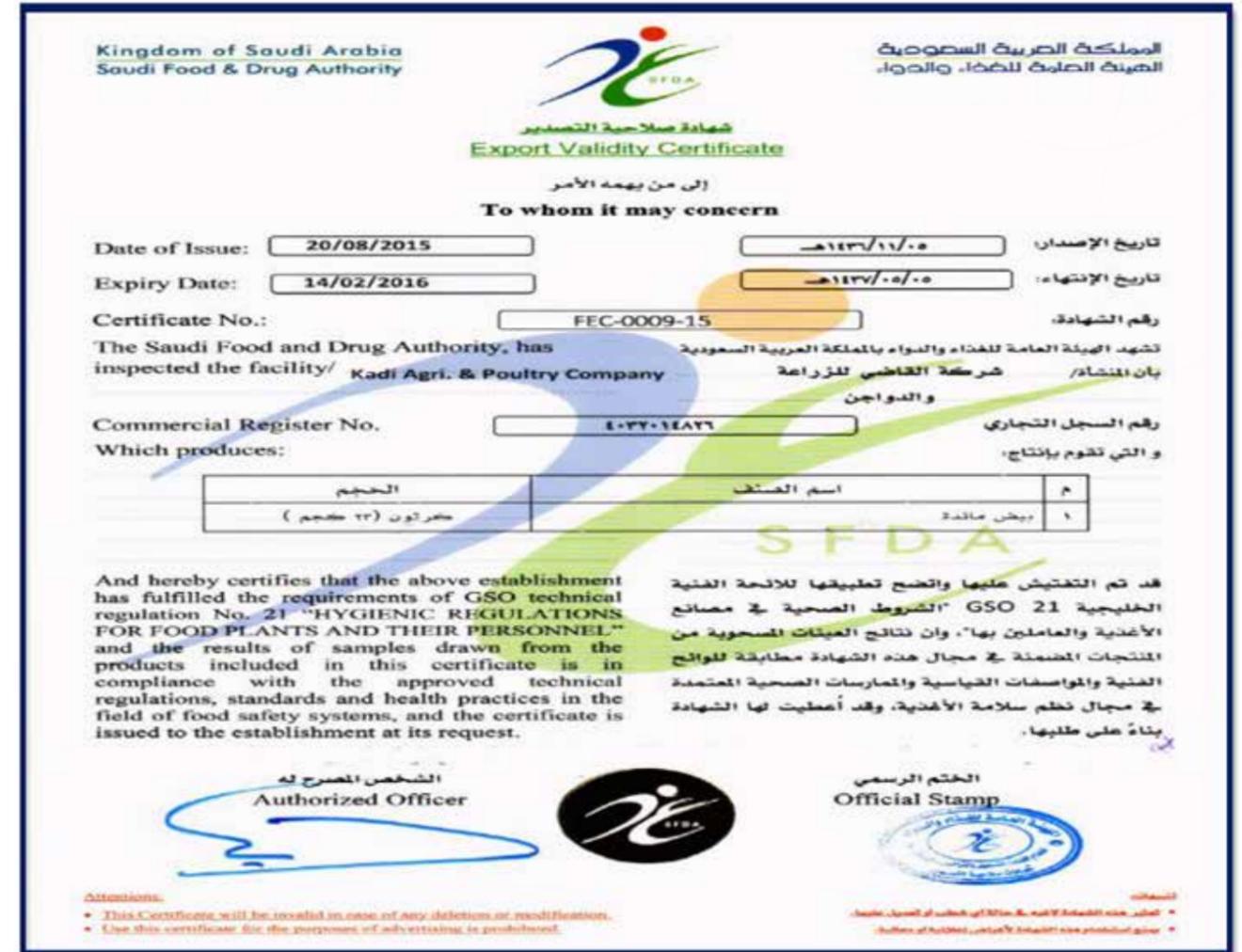


Figure 9: Electronic System enabling to check the status of an application related to an export validity certificate for food premises

In the case where the application is accepted and the payment of the export validity certificate is made, the SFDA issues a new / renewal of the export validity certificate for the food facility (for 6 months or one year depending on the selection made by the applicant).

The company must apply for renewal of the export validity certificate electronically 45 days before the end of a valid certificate.

The Export validity certificate for food facilities includes information indicating



- The date of issue
- The expiry date
- The certificate number
- The mention " The Saudi Food and Drug Authority has inspected the facility" and the name of the company
- Commercial register number
- The type of Production
- A Statement from the SFDA certifying that the establishment has fulfilled the GSO technical regulations requirements
- Name of the authorized officer and official stamp

Figure 10 offers a summary of the overall process leading up to the issuance of the export certificate from the request and up to the issuance of certificate of conformity.

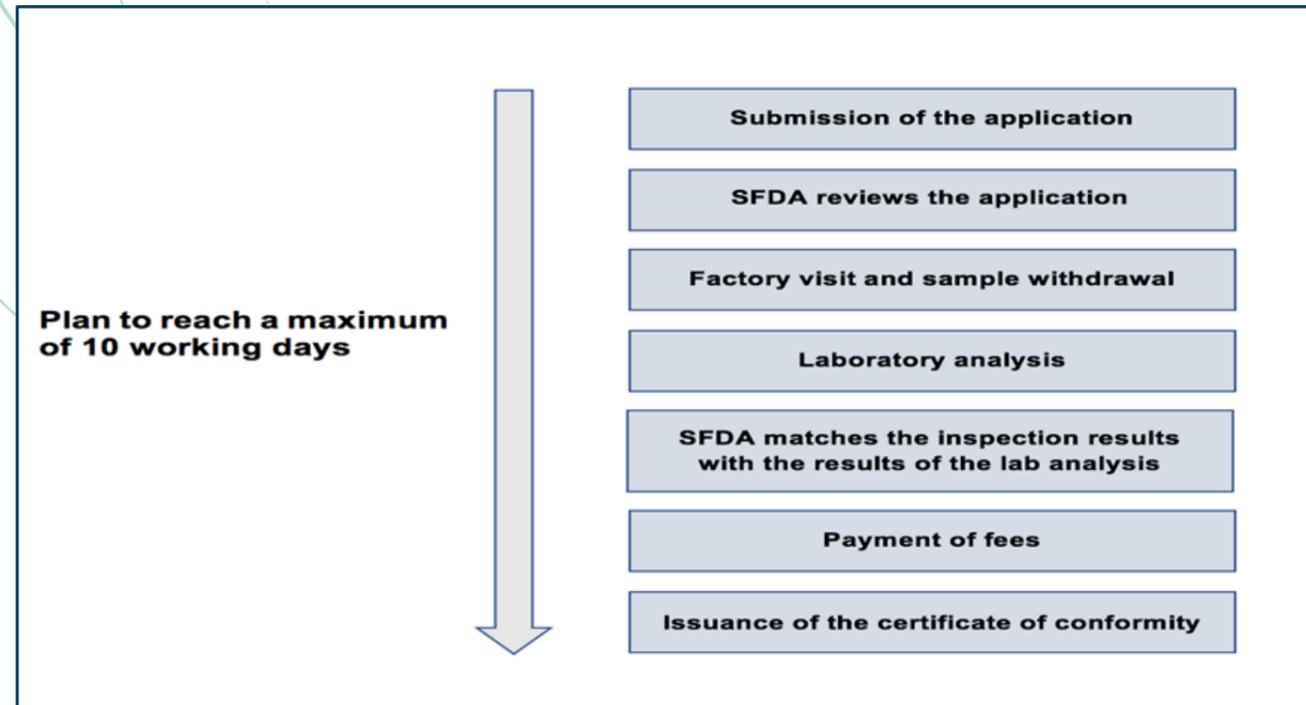


Figure 10: Overview Schematic Summarizing the Process for the Issuance of Export Certificates for Food Facilities

Certificate for Food Products (Daily Consignments)

Beyond the overall registration requirements for a facility meant to produce food exports, the SFDA also manages a process that enables to identify consignments destined for export to foreign markets.

Only foodstuffs that are registered in the SFDA electronic system can be exported and should also be covered by a consignment certificate for export. This is also managed electronically, where food facilities (already registered with the SFDA) indicate in the system **the food products** for which they wish to issue a **consignment certificate**.

In such application, it is important for the applicant to indicate in the system the country (ies) to which the product(s) is / are destined to be exported, whether to the GCC or the rest of the world, as well as the ports from which the shipment will originate, in addition to the name and address of the importer that will receive the consignment, as well as information about the product such as the quantity of the product, means of transport, transport temperature, production date, product end date.

The existence of a previous application is considered in the process, and may facilitate procedure. The SFDA continues to automate its system and is contemplating the objective to have the entire application process, managed through the electronic system in a period not exceeding 3 minutes for complete applications (Figure 11).

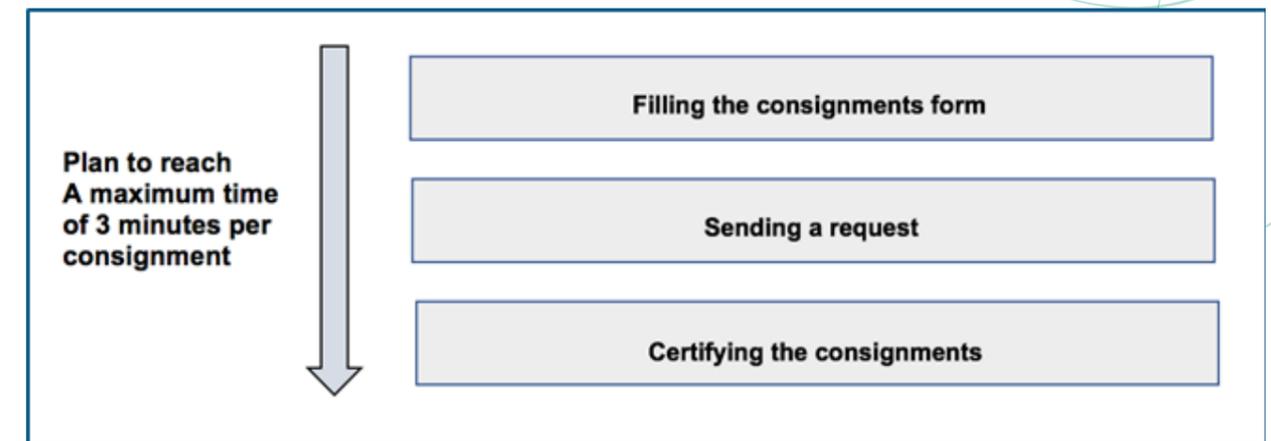


Figure 11: Overview of the Registration Procedure for Food Products Certification

Similarly, it is possible for applicants to follow the progress of their application through the electronic system.

Once the export foodstuffs certificate is granted by the SFDA, the applicant can print it in PDF format. The consignments certificate is signed by the authorised SFDA officer and stamped with an electronic stamp.

The export consignment certificate provides the following information:

- Certification number
- Certification date
- Importer name
- Importer address
- Exporter name
- Exporter address
- Country of origin
- Invoice number
- Lot number

- Expiration date
- Production date
- Transportation temperature
- Transportation method
- Total weight
- Packaging method
- Quantity
- Brand
- Item

رقم الشهادة Lot No.	تاريخ الانتهاء Exp. Date	تاريخ الإنتاج Pro. Date	درجة حرارة النقل Trans. Temp.	وسيلة النقل Trans. Method	الوزن الكلي Total Weight	طريقة التغليف PKG Method	الكمية Quantity	العلامة التجارية Brand	الصفة Item	م
88	11/11/2016	11/11/2014	مبردة 5+ درجة مئوية	نقل بحري	1	برميل	5	بزر	عز	1

The certificate also contains the name, position, and signature of the authorized officer, the official stamp, and a statement indicating “The Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) certifies that the above-mentioned products are subject to periodic inspection according to appropriate procedure and is /are fit for human consumption.”

There is also an opportunity for the import control authority to check the authenticity of an export certificate issued by the SFDA, in the form of an electronic link. Through this link, it is possible for the import competent authority of a given country, to have access to a model export certificate issued by the SFDA or to check the validity of a given certificate through introducing the certificate number to ascertain its authenticity.

VII. Conclusion

Saudi Arabia has developed a centralized food import/export control system which has improved the effectiveness and efficiency of import and export procedures under the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA).

Several reforms were introduced in the past few years in order to facilitate food trade procedures. The KSA has taken several steps to simplify customs procedures, including the introduction of the Electronic Data Interchange system allowing electronic submission and processing of import declarations.

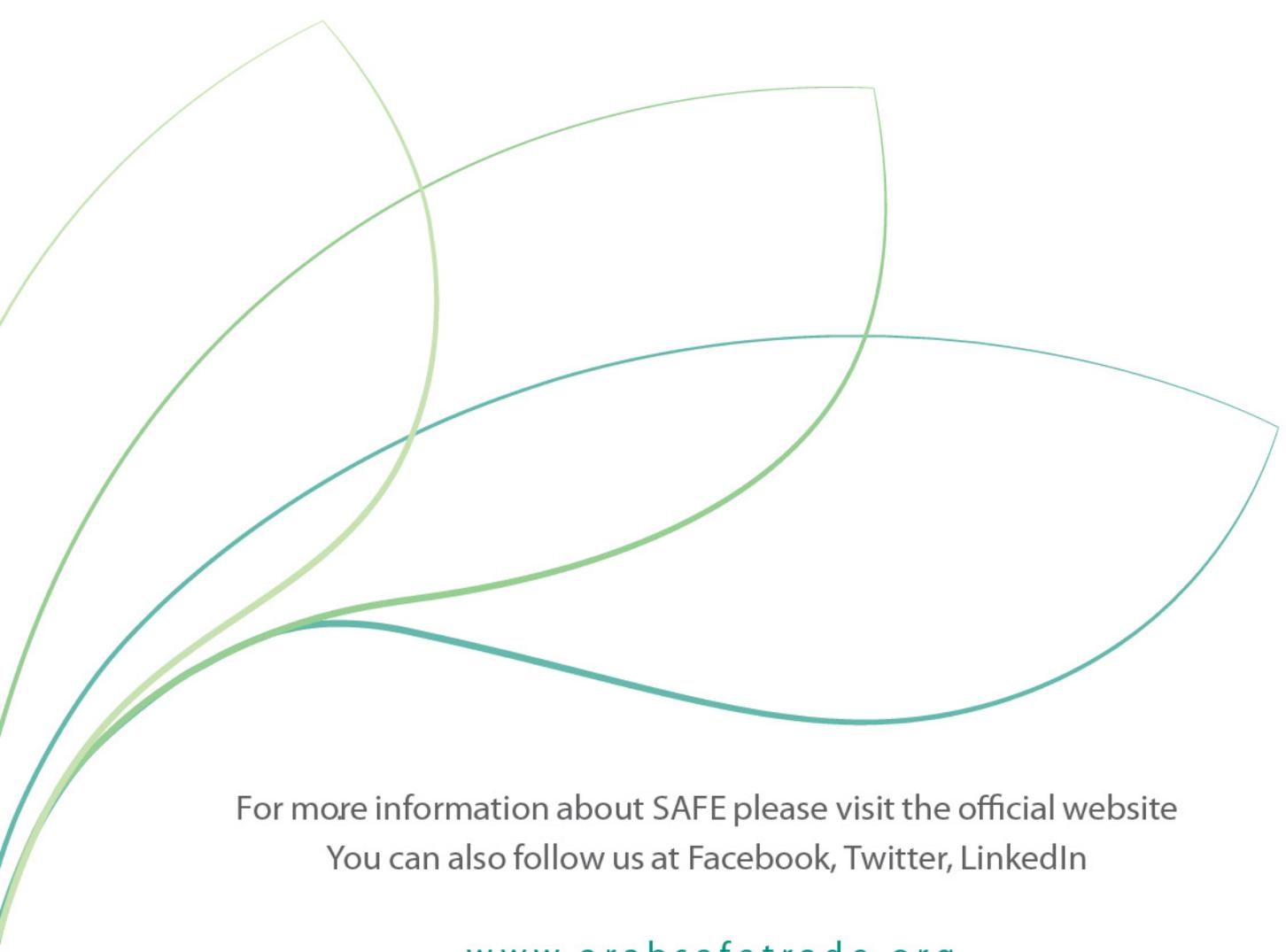
Further major steps are also being implemented such as the establishment of a single window for customs procedures which will be operating in the Jeddah Islamic Seaport Customs Office, which is expected to reduce considerably the length of import procedures.

In addition, the reliance on the GCC Guide for the Control of Imported Food (2017) contributes to further harmonization among GCC countries and with the rest of the world especially on requirements of issuance health certificates, which are in line with Codex provisions and the practices of various other countries.

The Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) e-system to issue Export Certificates as well as the electronic system (database) for the registration of all food establishments and products in the Kingdom has also simplified the export procedure and has contributed to a better control in the process of issuance of export certificates.

The possibility for the importing country to check the validity of the certificate issued by the SFDA on the SFDA website is an important tool that provides countries with a direct data exchange system, including the ability to prevent fraud in presentation and use of certificates. The introduction of a system of “Risk Classification Criteria” for food products destined to be imported is being considered through a pilot approach and should be continued.

This risk-based approach is allowing to dedicate the relevant resource for physical inspection and sampling, at the point of entry, in a manner that is commensurate with the level of risk. It is important for this approach to be subjected to regular evaluation for its performance and to continue to evolve based on best practices applied in the KSA and in other countries. This approach will result in the continuous reduction of the time and resources associated with food import procedures, with a focus of such resources on areas warranting attention, based on the potential health risks that may be associated with such food products. In pursuing this modernization approach, the SFDA joins other countries and food competent authorities around the world looking to streamline their control processes and to focus their investments in the areas that would serve best the protection of consumers’ health and the integrity of the food supply.



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