

Rules and regulations to importing meat

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Rules and requirements to be followed when importing meat and its products into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

First: General requirements

1. It is banned to import sheep, goats, cows, calves and poultry of all types, whether chilled, frozen and canned, and all products and equipment from any country with epidemic diseases stipulated in Veterinary Quarantine Law implemented in Saudi Arabia or from an establishment or a slaughterhouse that is not approved by SFDA.

2. All meat shipments of sheep, goats, cows, calves and poultry of all types whether chilled, frozen and canned, also their products and preparations shall be in full conformity with the following approved Gulf Standards:

- Gulf technical regulation (GSO 996\2016) “Fresh meat of beef, buffalo, lamb and goat”.
- Gulf technical regulation (GSO 997\2016) “Chilled and frozen beef, buffalo, lamb and goat”.
- Gulf technical regulation (GSO 322\2015) “Chilled chicken”.
- Gulf technical regulation (GSO 986\2015) “Frozen chicken”.
- Gulf technical regulation (GSO 815\1997) “Guidance of Good Hygienic Practices for preparing, transporting, handling and storing fresh meat”.
- Gulf technical regulation (GSO 993\2015) “Requirements of animal slaughter according to Islamic provisions”.
- Gulf technical regulation (GSO 523\1994) “Additives guidance for livestock and poultry feed according to their safety of use”.
- Gulf technical regulation (GSO 713\1997) “Health conditions in poultry slaughterhouses and their workers”.
- Gulf technical regulation (GSO 9\2013) “Labels of packed foodstuffs”.

3. The imported shipment of meat and poultry shall be accompanied by a Halal certificate proving that the slaughter took place in a licensed slaughterhouse according to Islamic Law provisions, and specify the slaughtering date, animal type and its average age, and ensure that the carcass was checked before slaughtering promptly by no more than 12 hours and after by a licensed veterinarian, and ensure that the meat is healthy, disease-free and fit for human consumption.
4. Slaughterhouse in which the slaughter took place shall meet all health requirements mentioned in Gulf Standards (GSO 21\1984) “Health conditions in food factories and their workers”.
5. Slaughterhouse in which the slaughter took place shall not be used previously in slaughtering pigs.
6. A health certificate approved by the competent authority shall be attached, indicating the type of meat and samples names, and confirming that animals or poultry and birds were not fed with feed regulated from animal protein substances, fat or animal wastes, also animals and poultry shall not be treated with any substances that has any hormonal activity as growth stimuli.
7. Carcasses and meat shipments shall be free from internal viscera, parts and kidneys fat, and the head and limbs shall be removed while allowing part of the tail to be left to identify the type of animal.
8. All types of meat shall preserve their features and distinctive qualities and be free from rancidity, rottenness and from any other harmful substance.
9. If the shipment contains frozen meat, the period that has elapsed from the date of slaughter until the arrival of the shipment to Saudi Arabia shall not exceed four months, provided that it remains frozen at a temperature not exceeding -18 C until it reaches the consumer.
10. Packaging materials shall not leave any toxic or harmful wastes on meat or contaminate it with undesirable materials, and the carcass or its parts shall be wrapped with a light, porous and clean fabric, also kraft paper or polyethene in case of frozen meat.
11. If the frozen meat is in the form of small portions, it shall be packed in waxed cardboard or polyethylene with full details on label.

12. In all slaughterhouses where livestock and poultry are slaughtered and prepared for exportation shall meet all the health requirements mentioned in Gulf Standard (GSO 21\1984) “Health conditions in food factories and their workers”, and implement Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) system at all production stages in the slaughterhouses and factories of preparing meat and foodstuffs of all types.

Second: Regulated rules for the placement of seals on chilled and frozen carcasses and parts thereof

1. The whole chilled or frozen carcass or the chilled quarters shall be sealed after ensuring their quality and that they are safe and fit for human consumption by the competent veterinary authority, with an official mark using certified non-harmful inks that can be attached easily on the external surface of the carcass.
2. A seal shall have proper space and a diameter ranging between (6-10 cm).
3. A seal data shall include the following information:
 - a. Country of origin.
 - b. Inspected and passed.
 - c. Abattoir number or registration number.
 - d. Date of slaughtering.
4. The primary data specified in the Gulf Standards shall be clarified by a label affixed to a wire to one end of the carcass that is hard to take off where the label and information are not affected by humidity or dislocation.

Third: Means of transporting meat

1. Chilled, frozen and canned meat of all types shall be shipped from the country of origin directly to Saudi Arabia according to the transshipment rules only, and without stopping at a third port whenever possible.
2. If the meat could not be shipped from the exporting country to Saudi Arabia directly due to the distance, and lack of a direct shipping line, then chilled, frozen and canned meat shall be shipped from the exporting country ports to Saudi ports in closed containers, the shortest way through the ports or airports of a third country by way of transit or transshipment only, and that shall be met according to the following requirements:

- a. All documents shall be addressed in the name of the Saudi importer only.
- b. All equipment shall be available at the sea, air or land transit port at a high level, and the meat containers should not be exposed to harsh weather conditions and should never be opened at a transit station.
- c. The shipment shall be encrusted with red wax and sealed with official seal of the competent authority by issuing the health certificate, and to arrive to Saudi Arabia in good condition.
- d. The seal placed on the shipment shall be carefully designed according to the e-authentication system, whenever possible to make it difficult to tamper with (non-tampered seal), and to be very clear where it indicates the origin country and the destination country, the Saudi importer name, the slaughterhouse number and to be examined and accepted.
- e. If the chilled, frozen and canned meat is shipped from the country of origin to Saudi Arabia by aircraft, then it shall be shipped in (LD3-AKE) containers by the name of the Saudi importer only.

3. The meat is shipped in tightly closed containers, waxed after stacking and sealed with the competent authority seal by issuing the health certificate in the country of origin, and any operations on the shipment in a third country shall not be conducted, such as repacking, cutting, or canning and packaging.

4. The meat shipments exported to Saudi Arabia shall be shipped in transshipment containers only, and should be waxed, sealed with official seals and should not be opened and examined except in Saudi Arabia ports.

5. Meat shipments are permitted to be transited through the port of a third country (transit station), provided that the shipments are in sealed containers, waxed with red wax or lead, sealed with official seals and that they are accompanied by health certificates and official documents that prove their origin and fit for human consumption.

Fourth: Importing viscera

Animal viscera (sheep, goats, cows, camels, buffaloes) is imported from non-affected countries, and that the health rules and requirements mentioned above shall be applied, also the approved Gulf Standards, especially the Gulf technical regulation (GSO 835\1997) “Chilled and frozen organs and viscera of sheep, goats, cows, camels and buffaloes”. Provided that they are shipped separately from meat containers and that the shipments are accompanied by a health certificate issued by competent authorities in the exporting countries confirming that these viscera are from healthy animals and were subjected to veterinary inspection in the slaughterhouses before and after their slaughter.

Fifth: Genetically manipulated products

Food made from genetically manipulated animal products by modern biotechnology shall not be imported to Saudi Arabia.

Sixth: Health certificate contents

The approved health certificate for each exporting country shall be determined by SFDA.

Seventh: Halal certificate

Halal certificate mentioned in Paragraph (4) of the general requirements is issued from the Islamic centers that are approved by the Muslim World League only.