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## **Egypt**

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### **Egypt, Establishment of the National Food Safety Authority**

**Report Categories:**

Agricultural Situation, Agriculture in the Economy, Agriculture in the News, National Plan Policy and Program Announcements, SP1 - Expand International Marketing Opportunities  
SP3 - Build Demand in Developing Countries through Trade Capacity Building

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**Report Highlights:**

The Egyptian Parliament established the new National Food Safety Authority (NFSA) in January 2017. The new authority is an independent organization under the Office of the Egyptian Prime Minister. Its mission is to protect consumer health, by ensuring that food products consumed, distributed, marketed or produced in Egypt meet the highest standards of food safety and hygiene. The agency is responsible for food safety regulation for domestic production, import and export through undertaking inspection, licensing and certification.

## **OVERVIEW**

The Egyptian Parliament established the new National Food Safety Authority (NFSA) in January 2017. The new authority is an independent organization under the Office of the Egyptian Prime Minister. Its mission is to protect consumer health, by ensuring that food products consumed, distributed, marketed or produced in Egypt meet the highest standards of food safety and hygiene. The agency is responsible for food safety regulation for domestic production, import and export through undertaking inspection, licensing and certification.

## **INTRODUCTION**

On January 2, 2017, the Egyptian Parliament approved the [law number 1/2017](#) establishing the National Food Safety Authority (NFSA). The government issued the new organization's executive regulations (412/2019) on February 18, 2019. The National Food Safety Authority will remake the country's regulatory framework for food safety.

Before the establishment of the NFSA, Egypt lacked a unified regulatory authority to supervise food safety. More than 15 different government agencies regulated food safety, in a patchwork system that often created overlapping regulation or critical gaps in consumer protections. The establishment of the NFSA was fundamental for unifying the multiple supervisory agencies overseeing food safety regulation. Under the previous system, there was no clear mechanism for managing food safety crises and recalls, traceability, and risk assessment procedures.

When the National Food Safety Authority is fully operational, it will be responsible of all facets of food safety. The new agency is an independent authority, reporting directly to the Prime Minister's office. The Egyptian NFSA is composed of a board of trustees, a board of directors, and an executive director. The majority the NFSA's current employees came from other ministries working in food safety.

## **MANDATE OF THE NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY**

The new agency will not regulate farmers; however, it will regulate food from the farm-gate to the end consumer. Similarly, it will also be responsible for testing imports and granting their access to the supply chain. The National Food Safety Authority will oversee registration of all food handlers, including packing houses. Any food handler must comply with regulations identified by the NFSA in order to produce food products in Egypt.

Currently, the National Food Safety Authority is creating a white list that will include food handlers assumed compliant for export. While the list is being first developed for exports to Saudi Arabia, it will likely be expanded for use with other trading partners in the future.

The National Food Safety Authority is headquartered in Cairo, but the agency will establish other branches nationwide. The statute authorizing the creation of the NFSA mandates that the agency "achieve the requirements of food safety in a way as to preserve human health and safety."

To this end, the new law grants the NFSA the following powers and functions:

- Supervising the handling of food, while ensuring compliance with legislation requirements.
- Inspecting, supervising and licensing food handling, as well as workers at different food handling facilities.
- Establishing the necessary procedures for risk assessment, analysis, management, communication and awareness
- Controlling, developing, and implementing mandatory systems that ensure food safety, including the development of traceability systems.
- Raising community awareness about food safety.
- Conducting studies and research related to food safety and collecting relevant scientific data.
- Issuing export certificates of locally produced food, as well as supervising the facilities that require these certificates to ensure that they comply with the relevant rules and conditions.
- Testing imports and supervising locally produced food.
- Prohibiting the handling of non-safe food for human consumption and preventing fraud and deception in food labeling.
- Setting the regulations and rules for food advertising and the mandatory labeling criteria.
- Establishing procedures and rules for registration, licensing and labelling of:
  - o Food for Special Dietary Uses (FSDU)
  - o Genetically modified foods
  - o Irradiated food

The National Food Safety Authority is taking steps to harmonize the food safety regulations and implementation through signing protocols between multiple national regulatory bodies. So far, the NFSA signed protocols with the following five organizations:

- Egyptian Organization for Standardization (EOS)
- Central Administration of Plant Quarantine (CAPQ)
- Horticultural Export Improvement Association (HEIA)
- General Organization for Export and Import Control (GOEIC)
- Port Said Chamber of Trade

The protocols specify means of cooperation and mechanisms to allow each organization to implement its scope of work. The protocols also specify means of licensing and issuing certificate according to the organization mandate.

#### **OUTSIDE THE NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY'S MANDATE**

Any issues related to plant or animal health is beyond the scope of the National Food Safety Authority. In the circumstances that a single consignment requires two different certification including food safety, the NFSA will coordinate with the relevant agency. For example, phytosanitary certificates required for export of plants or plant products will be issued from the competent authority, which is the Egyptian Plant Quarantine. However, if a pesticide residues certificate is required by the importing country the NFSA will be responsible for verification and certification of the consignment.

In the example of citrus, the Ministry of Agriculture and Land reclamation (MALR) would oversee pre-chilling requirements for exporting countries. For the same product, the NFSA would issue certificates for pesticide residue or pathogens. A packinghouse that wishes to export should be registered with both agencies: Egyptian plant quarantine and, NFSA and comply with the importing country requirements.

Another example is the export of eggs. The veterinary service issues a sanitary certificate that ensures that the egg shipment is free from zoonotic diseases while the NFSA would certify that the egg shipment is safe for human consumption. The current debate is how this process will be handled, which organization will issue a final certificate, and who will be responsible for signature. There is still some ambiguity on how these procedures will be managed.

## **COOPERATION PROGRAMS WITH NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY**

**United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO):** The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in partnership with multiple international organizations are implementing the Arab Food Safety Initiative for Trade Facilitation, known as the SAFE project. Since its inception in 2017, SAFE has been providing technical assistance to the NFSA under the Country Support Program in Egypt, a SAFE-led initiative, with the aim to build its capacity and support its mandate to advance the food safety agenda in Egypt.

The initiative will allow an improved ability of the NFSA and its partners to contribute to regional efforts of enhanced coordination and harmonization of food safety interventions. The initiative will contribute to improved consumer protection, and a more efficient implementation of a national food control system in Egypt.

**World Food Program (WFP):** In June 2018, the World Food Program (WFP) and the NFSA signed a five-year agreement to raise public awareness on food safety and hygiene, support the government's efforts to ensure access to safe nutritious food. Through the signed agreement, the WFP will work on developing an online training platform for food safety inspectors on key issues related to food safety such as: good manufacturing practices (GMP) for food, food handling, and supply chains efficiency. Furthermore, the two agencies will launch several public awareness campaigns in hypermarkets, public parks and public transportation. The World Food Program will further develop the current NFSA website to be used as a platform for sharing public awareness messages on food safety measures.

**Land O'Lakes International Development /U.S. Department of Agriculture:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) is currently supporting a Food for Progress (FFP) program in Egypt. The total award amount is ~\$12.8 million over five years.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture/FAS selected Land O' Lakes International Development as the implementing partner for the project. Land O' Lakes will use the proceeds to support the newly-formed Egyptian National Food Safety Authority. Specifically, the implementer will work to build the organization's management capacity, train food safety inspectors, and assist the agency to create food regulations/standards that align with international norms. Additionally, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), through its implementing partner Department of Commerce's Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP), is supporting Egypt's NFSA to implement World Trade Organization (WTO)-compliant food safety policies.

