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Jordan

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards – Narrative

FAIRS Country Report

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Report Highlights:

Jordan has implemented a new food law that will consolidate inspection to the Jordan Food and Drug Administration. The regulation updates are expected to be finalized within two years.

Section I. Food Laws:

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Its accession to the WTO (April 11, 2000) coincided with economic and legislative structural reforms bringing it in line with international standards and requirements. Jordan's food control regime is governed by two laws:

- The Agriculture Law 44 (2002)
- Jordan Food Law 30 (2015), replacing the Jordanian Food Control Law 32 (2003)

The new food law was enacted in May 2015 by the King and his Cabinet after passing through the upper and lower houses of Parliament and entered into force within 30 days after being published in the official journal, i.e., at the end of June, 2015.

The new law has given Jordan Food and Drug Administration (JFDA) the upper hand on all food safety issues and over food quality. The new law supposedly will ease the processed food importation process and eliminate the deleterious effect of multi-agency territorial disputes. The impact of the unification of the authority will be positive but will need some time to function properly. Under the new food law, pertinent regulations will be revised, updated, and drafted by JFDA.

According to the aforementioned Agriculture Law 44, importation of raw food items is also subject to an advance approval of an import license from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). The reasons for the up-front approval are to ensure compliance on SPS grounds and for record or statistical tracking. Preliminary approval may be denied to protect domestic producer interests.

Prior to the new food law, the [Jordan Institute for Standards and Metrology Organization](#) (JISMO) had delegated to the JFDA food and agricultural product testing responsibilities by a ministerial decree. The former however retains responsibility for the development of standards (including for food) and ensuring conformity with standards. It also supervises the national meteorology system in addition to granting Jordanian Quality Marks (voluntary) and accrediting testing and calibration laboratories.

American exporters are strongly advised to ask their importers to get the standards of any item they intend to ship to Jordan in advance. The importer can source standards from JISMO for a nominal fee. JFDA and other GoJ authorities have very low tolerance for food standard violations; consignments are rejected and either destroyed or re-exported at the expense of the importer.

Jordanian drug and pharmaceutical product importers, including of vaccines for human use, must comply with Ministry of Health (MoH) regulations. However, the MoA regulates the import of veterinary drugs and animal vaccines, pesticides, meat and meat products, animal feed, and seedlings.

Food processing and processed food is under the sole mandate of JFDA; this role has been strengthened by the new food law. MoA officials claim responsibility for food control sporadically, based on unfounded or historical traditions. Any food or feed including grains may appear to be within the jurisdiction of MoA, but JFDA has the final say.

In the absence of a local standard, Jordan applies internationally recognized standards.

Section II. Food Additives Regulations:

Food additives are jointly regulated by the JISMO and JFDA; the latter, however, has ultimate responsibility for regulatory enforcement. Jordan maintains a list of approved additives and permissible concentration levels largely conforming to [Codex alimentarius](#) (Codex). Jordan refers primarily to Codex standard 192 for food additive issues. It will refer to European Union (EU) regulations in the absence of a Codex standard.

The USG is working closely with GoJ to adopt U.S. regulations whenever there is a contradiction between the US and EU standards, but this is unfinished business.

Section III. Pesticides and Other Contaminants:

The Ministry of Agriculture's Plant Protection Directorate (PPD)/ Pesticides Division regulates pesticides. Imported agricultural pesticides must conform with the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization's (FAO) specifications (<http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/core-themes/theme/pests/jmps/ps-new/en/#A>).

Pesticides for ensuring public health are required to conform with World Health Organization (WHO) standards (<http://www.who.int/whopes/quality/newspecif/en/>).

Pesticides are analyzed according to the CIPAC- handbook issued by Collaborative International Pesticides Analytical Council.

Food samples are sent to food safety laboratories where pesticide residues and contaminants are analyzed by the official method of analysis of the Association of Official Analytical Chemists, EU pesticides database of the European Commission.

Jordan has one laboratory capable of testing for pesticide residues in fresh fruits and vegetables. The testing laboratory's normal turnaround time is two weeks, making it difficult to test perishables prior to consumption. Jordan tests non-perishables to a far greater extent, requiring that residue levels not exceed Codex maximum and European standards residue levels (MRL) (<http://www.codexalimentarius.org/standards/pestres/pesticides/en>).

USDA is working closely with MoA and JFDA to establish and widen the scope and capability of JFDA and MoA laboratories to improve testing methodology for pesticide MRLs.

Section IV. Packaging and Container Regulations:

Packaging requirements are being used as a barrier to trade in poultry parts. The maximum package size for poultry parts is set to 2.5 kg in an attempt to protect local producers from U.S. poultry part

suppliers. Additionally, a 2 kg maximum weight limit on honey packaging is imposed on imports, which is also used to protect the local industry by preventing wholesale imports used for repackaging.

Section V. Labeling Requirements:

a) Labeling Requirements: The Jordan Institute for Standards and Meteorology Organization sets labeling requirements. Requirements are fairly standard. A statement of ingredients in order of preponderance is not required. All labels must be in Arabic; alternatively, an Arabic language stick-on label is acceptable. A label at minimum must contain:

- Product name
- The manufacturer's name and address
- Net weight
- Fortifying matter (e.g., added vitamins and minerals to powdered milk)
- Lot number and a "use before" or "best by" date

Jordan's labeling requirements do not include Recommended Daily Intake (RDIs) levels. Nutritional labeling nevertheless is mandatory for certain food categories (e.g., infant formula and food for dietary use). Shelf-life labeling has been replaced by the "best before" standard. Nonetheless, JISMO interprets "best before" as a product's expiry date; no product is authorized for sale beyond this date.

Jordan will scrutinize product labels at border crossing points. Current legislation holds the importer accountable for a product's content as specified on the label. Jordanian officials are known for rejecting shipments due to labeling ambiguities and printing errors.

b) Nutritional Labeling Requirements: This labeling is mandatory for infant formula and food for dietary use.

Section VI. Other Specific Standards:

Being the country's standard setting body, JISMO: 1) prepares, approves, revises, and amends mandatory and voluntary standards and monitors their application; 2) adopts and approves other countries, regional and international organizations' (Arabic or English language) standards, and; 3) cooperates and coordinates standardization and metrology issues with regional and international institutions. It is also the Codex enquiry point, as well as a corresponding member of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Organization for Legal Metrology (IOLM).

Since 2003, JISMO has maintained a voluntary pre-shipment inspection program for food and agricultural product imports. Jordan does not require import licenses for all food and agricultural products; however, the MoA does require import licenses for beef, fruits, fish, and vegetables and a number of other food and agricultural products such as powdered milk. Imported food and agriculture products are required to conform with JISMO's Codex-based standards. Alcoholic beverage imports are permissible, but high duty tariffs (50-200 percent) limit imports.

Section VIII. Other Regulations and Requirements:

Halal: Jordanian authorities stipulate that all meat products are halal as defined by the Jordanian government. Basically, the requirements are that:

- The animal has been slaughtered in observance of the Islamic traditions in the presence of a Muslim male accredited by “any” Islamic association” within that country.
- The product is free of pork products
- The product is free from alcohol. This is also applicable to non-animal food.

GMOs: No food item with a GMO label is allowed to enter Jordan.

Radiation: Whenever there is a radiation leak reported internationally, Jordan imposes a mandatory radiation level inspection on food from countries which notify said leak, as was true with Japanese products in the wake of the disaster at Fukushima.

Section IX. Import Procedures:

Jordan maintains a three-tier inspection rate system for imported food products based on the product’s health risk. A document review is mandatory regardless of the level of inspection.

- High risk products, 80-100 percent inspection rate.
- Medium risk products, 25-50 percent inspection rate.
- Low risk products, 5-10 percent inspection rate.

Jordanian importers are required to ensure that imported food and agricultural products do not pose a potential threat to public health (i.e., must be free of microbial, parasite, and fungal contamination). At the same time, the Government of Jordan (GoJ) routinely tests inbound consignments for radiation levels and chemical contaminants, as well as for heavy metals, food additives, animal growth promotants (hormones), and veterinary drug residues. Jordan tests less frequently for pesticides residues. For cheese, if the facility is exporting for the first time, a certificate of free sale is required.

Tariffs: As part of its WTO accession agreement, Jordan has set a reduced tariff rate ceiling of 0-30 percent for most imported products. Nonetheless, it maintains tariff rates of 180-200 percent for certain alcohol and alcoholic products, as well as a 150-200 percent tariff rate for tobacco and tobacco products. Under the terms of the U.S.-Jordan Free Trade Agreement (FTA), import duties and other trade barriers were phased out in 2010 except for alcoholic beverages and tobacco products.

Jordan launched its [Customs Integrated Tariff System](#) (CITS) in August 2005. The system allows importers to access import requirements, as well as evaluate tariff and trade agreement information. Data is provided in both Arabic and English.

Customs Law 114, article 4) (2004): Jordanian and foreign trading companies must obtain a Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT) importer card for customs clearance purposes. Foreign companies not domiciled in Jordan are exempt from this requirement. Bonded goods, temporary imports, and imports entering under the provisions of [Jordan's Investment Promotion Law](#) do not require import licenses. Banks and other non-trading entities such as hospitals, hotels, and GoJ ministries must obtain a more limited MoIT importer card that authorizes the import of goods specific to the entity's activities.

Import / Export Documentation: As per article 31) of the Customs Law of 1998 and its amendments, all customs declarations must include the following (note, Jordan's Customs reserves the right to request additional documentation):

- A maritime or airway bill of lading.
- A commercial invoice indicating the value, weight, and freight and insurance charges. All invoices require Jordanian diplomatic/consular intervention. In the absence of Jordanian diplomatic/consular intervention, Jordan's Customs Director is empowered to accept the country of export's chamber of commerce certification.
- Commercial invoices are required to describe the product in Arabic.
- A notarized certificate of origin issued by the competent authority in the export country.
- A value declaration form for shipments exceeding JD 2,000 (1JD= \$1.4).

Customs Valuation: Jordan's Custom Law (1999) as amended in March 2000 now includes GATT-compliant criteria for customs valuation (based on certified commercial invoices). Increased transparency restricts the recourse to arbitrary valuation but does favor undervaluation.

Customs utilizes cost-insurance-freight (CIF) prices for valuation purposes. Commercial invoice values are converted into Jordanian dinars at the official rate. In some cases, Jordan's Customs will factor into its valuation calculations exporter discounts. Imported products, as well as locally produced goods are subject to a 16 percent value-added tax (VAT).

Imported products are subject to a VAT based on the CIF value. Agricultural and pharmaceutical products are exempt from the 16 percent sales tax. [Jordan's General Sales Tax Department](#) levies a special sales tax on specific items such as tobacco products and alcoholic beverage. These are subject to a 13 percent general sales tax in addition to the special sales tax. Non-basic foodstuffs are subject to a 4 percent general sales tax.

Special Import Provisions: Pre-import clearance is required for certain commodities. The clearance, once obtained, acts as an import license. The Ministries of Agriculture, Industry and Trade, and Health are the three import license issuing entities. Rejected shipments may be appealed.

The Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for issuing pre-import clearances for live animals, fresh/chilled/frozen beef and beef products, frozen animal semen and milk products. The Ministry of Industry and Trade oversees the issuing of pre-import clearances for barley, rice, wheat, flour, sugar, and corn. The Ministry of Health issues pre-import clearances for medications and antibiotics, athletic food supplements, potassium bromide, food dyes, ice cream, and baby food.

Inspection and Clearance:

Jordan maintains the ASYCUDA computerized customs clearance system. This platform has been implemented at border crossings with the intent of simplifying customs clearance procedures. The [Ministry of Agriculture](#) (MoA) along with the [Jordan Food and Drug Administration](#) (JFDA) and the [Jordan Customs Authority](#) form the border committee that inspects inbound food and agricultural product shipments.

Section X. Copyright and Trademark Laws

Jordan's legal system protects the acquisition and disposition of intellectual property rights. Prior to its WTO accession, Jordan passed a series of laws strengthening the protection of intellectual property rights for patents, copyrights, and trademarks. Jordan in the past has enforced foreign copyrights and trademarks despite it not requiring prior registration.

Jordan has now enacted Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) consistent legislation, requiring that patents, copyrights, and trademarks be registered. Patents and trademarks are registered with the Ministry of Industry and Trade's (MoIT) Registrar of Patents and Trademarks; while copyrights are registered with the Ministry of Culture's National Library.

Jordan is seeking to become a contracting state to the Patent Cooperation Treaty and the protocol relating to the Madrid Agreement (registration of marks). It is a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV).

Appendix I – Government Regulatory Key Contacts and Further Information

Ministry of Agriculture

Veterinary Services Directorate and Plant Protection Directorate

Tel: (962-6) 568-6151 · Fax: (962-6) 568-6310 · Web-site: www.moa.gov.jo

Ministry of Environment

Tel: (962-6) 556-0113 · Fax: (962-6) 556-0288 · Web-site: www.moenv.gov.jo

Ministry of Industry and Trade

Tel: (962-6) 560-7191/566-3774 · Fax: (962-6) 560-4691 · Web-site: www.mit.gov.jo

Jordan Institute of Standards and Metrology

Tel: (962-6) 568-0139 · Fax: (962-6) 568-1099 · Web-site: www.jismo.gov.jo

Jordan Food and Drug Directorate

Tel: (962-6) 461-2663 · Fax: (962-6) 461-2663 · Web-site: www.jfda.jo

Jordan Customs Authority

P.O. Box 90, Amman, Jordan

Tel: (962-6) 462-3186/8; 462-4394/6 · Fax: (962-6) 464-7791 · E-mail: Customs@Customs.gov.jo

Web-site: www.customs.gov.jo

Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority

P.O. Box 2565, Aqaba 77110, Jordan

Tel: (962-6) 3 203 5757/8 · Fax: (962-6) 3 203-0912 · Web-site: www.aqabazone.com

Appendix II – Other Import Specialist Technical Contacts

USDA\FAS - Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy Amman

P.O. Box 354, Amman, Jordan

Tel: (962-6) 590-6056 · Fax: (962-6) 592-0146 · E-mail: Mohamed.khraishy@usda.gov