

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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POLICY

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Saudi Arabia

Post: Riyadh

Saudi Arabia to Start Electronic Customs Clearance

Report Categories:

FAIRS Subject Report

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Report Highlights:

In November 2013, the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) posted on its webpage that it will fully implement a mandatory electronic customs clearance system (E-Clearance) for all food products, including prepackaged food products as well as raw materials, imported into the Kingdom starting on January 1, 2014. The SFDA has indicated that it will not process any customs clearance requests after January 1st unless it is submitted through the E-Clearance system. Saudi Arabia has not formally notified its trading partners of the new E-Clearance requirements of food imports.

In November 2013, the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) posted on its webpage that it will fully implement a mandatory electronic customs clearance system (E-Clearance) for all food products imported into the Kingdom starting on January 1, 2014. It is our understanding that the mandatory E-Clearance will cover all food imports, including packaged as well as raw materials for food processing. The SFDA has stated that it will not process any requests for customs clearance of imported products after January 1st unless it is submitted through the E-Clearance system. The SFDA has asked all food products importers and customs brokers in Saudi Arabia to complete an online registration process of their products and contact information at the website of the SFDA Imported Food Control Department before the end of 2013. The SFDA has indicated that it will not allow the importation of food products that are not registered on its E-Clearance system. It should be noted that Saudi Arabia has not formally notified its trading partners of the new customs clearance requirements.

The SFDA has been working on the preparation of the new E-Clearance system since June 2011, and has asked all importers of food products to register in its E-Service website. The registration of imported food items is the responsibility of the local importers. Each importer is required to open an E-Account and set up individual user name and password. Once the E-Account is created, the importers can upload their food products information, including harmonized code (HS Code), bar code, item code, and listed ingredients in English and Arabic as well as copy of the product labels. The product label must contain all information required by the Gulf Standard regulation # GSO 9 “Labeling of Prepackaged Food Stuffs”. Importer are also required to register coordinates of their warehouses, name of authorized contact persons to deal with SFDA, including customs brokers contracted in each Saudi port of entry. Importers are required to register all food products they intend to import, even if the products they bring have been already registered by another importer. The electronic registration with the SFDA is free of charge and there is no expiry date for the registration. Importers, however, are required to re-register their products when there are changes in products formulations or labels. According to our trade contacts, the registration process seems to be simple and can be quickly completed if needed information is readily available and required documents are uploaded.