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Saudi Arabia Extends the Grace Period for Implementing Nutritional Labeling Regulations

Report Categories:

FAIRS Subject Report

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Report Highlights:

On November 4, 2013, the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) announced an extension of the grace period to implement the GSO 2233/2012 nutritional labeling requirements for six months, until the end of April 2014. This extension came as a big relief for food exporters who have been facing difficulties meeting the deadline that was initially set for November 8, 2013. In addition to extending the grace period to implement the nutritional labeling regulations, the SFDA exempted nine food product categories from the mandatory nutritional labeling requirements. The exempted products include, among other products, fresh and chilled meat, poultry and fish, food additives as well as food products intended for further packaging or processing.

On November 4, 2013, the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) announced that it will extend the grace period to implement the Gulf Cooperation Council's nutritional labeling regulations number GSO 2233/2012 for another six months until the end of April 2014. It should be noted that on May 15, the SFDA stated its intention to fully implement the nutritional labeling requirement by November 8, 2013. The SFDA took the decision to extend the grace period after repeated complaints from food importers and following to requests for extension by OAA/Riyadh and several U.S. food exporters. The GSO 2233/2012 requires the disclosure of nutritional information such as the amounts of calories, carbohydrates, proteins, fats and other components on the product's label, for both imported as well as domestic food products. The SFDA announcement to extend the grace period included also a decision to exempt nine food product categories from the nutritional labeling requirements that include the following:

1. Food products that contain negligible amounts of calories, protein, carbohydrates, fat, saturated fat, salt or sodium, very low total sugar level as well as products with almost zero amounts such as spices and seasonings.
2. Fresh fruit and vegetables.
3. Fresh and chilled fish, livestock and poultry meat.
4. Products that are sold directly to customers at production sites such as salad, bakery products and sweets.
5. Food products that are made from one food element like rice, tea, coffee and sugar.
6. Bottled and mineral water.
7. Packed food product with container size less than 10 centimeters.
8. Food additives.
9. Food products that require further packaging or processing and are not sold directly to consumers.

In the case that food processors or exporters are interested in including nutritional information for on the above mentioned products, it is mandatory that they abide by the requirements stipulated in the nutritional labeling regulation number GSO 2233/2012.