

ACCESSION OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Communication from Saudi Arabia

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has transmitted the following background paper on Saudi Arabia's sanitary and phytosanitary measures with the request that it be transmitted to members of the Working Party.

BACKGROUND PAPER ON SAUDI ARABIA'S  
SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

Introduction

This Paper aims at explaining Saudi Arabia's regime on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and how it complies with the requirements of the WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. The Paper has the following sections:

- I. Regulations of Saudi Arabia pertaining to SPS measures
- II. Classification of the SPS measures of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- III. Procedural Formalities
- IV. Transparency of Saudi Arabia's SPS measures.

I. Regulations of Saudi Arabia pertaining to SPS measures

A. The approved standards issued pursuant to the Royal Decree number M/10 on 3/3/1392 H developed by the competent standardization body (i.e. Saudi Arabian Standards Organization, SASO). Among these requirements Saudi standards cover the sanitary measures of food products and the following sanitary elements:

- (i) measures following the standards and guidelines of Codex Alimentarius;
- (ii) measures not covered by the standards and guidelines of Codex alimentarius are based upon scientific studies or the most appropriate measures of other WTO members states.

B. Veterinary quarantine bylaw issued by the Decree of the Council of Ministers number 208 dated 26/1/1396 H. This bylaw covers sanitary and veterinary requirements and measures pertaining to animals and animal products conforming to the ruling of the International Zoo-sanitary code specifying the regulations recommended for international trade with regard to animals and animal products issued by the Office International des Epizootics.

C. Agricultural quarantine bylaw issued by the Decree of the Council of Ministers number 207 dated 26/1/1396 H covering the requirements and measures of phytosanitary conforming to the rules issued from IPPC initially based on FAO publications.

D. The periodic preventive health circulars issued by the Ministry of Health pursuant basically to the weekly epidemiological circular issued by the WHO.

## II. Classification of the SPS measures of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

A. Sanitary and quarantine measures for animal health, living plants and seeds, besides measures for the prevention of epidemic diseases spread and the control on the use of veterinary medicines and pesticides. The Ministry of Agriculture and Water is mainly concerned with these measures in addition to the Ministries of Commerce and Municipalities through coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and water.

B. Sanitary measures for fresh vegetables and fruits. In this regard, Saudi Arabian Standards Organization (SASO) has laid relevant standards to be applied by the Ministry of Agriculture and Water. When there is no approved international standards for these products, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia approves the standards applied in EC states and members of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Thus, the Kingdom's abidance by the Agreement is through its application of articles 7 and 5 thereof.

C. Sanitary measures for food commodities (meat, meat products and processed foods). SASO says unified standards for those products but their application is through the Ministries of Industry and Commerce on the locally made products. The Ministry of Commerce fully controls the imported products. The Ministry of Municipalities participates in the internal control on products in the markets which are mainly controlled by the Ministry of Commerce.

D. Measures relating to effects on the human health and its relation with the animal sanitary and phytosanitary and food safety are assumed to be by the Ministry of Health through issuing the periodic preventative circulars to inform and caution the other concerned bodies about the relevant risks.

## III. Procedural Formalities

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's sanitary measures for food products, commodities and related consumer products cover the following elements:

A. Measures that abide by the Codex standards and guidelines are:

- (i) Health Certificate;
- (ii) hygienic rules applied on all plants, stages of production and their personnel;
- (iii) permissible food additives and their maximum limits, besides the mandatory information on the product label;
- (v) requirements for maximum limits of toxins;
- (v) requirements for pesticides and veterinary medicine residues and their maximum levels.;
- (vi) requirements for hormones and antibiotic levels;
- (vii) regulations for the transportation and storage of chilled and frozen food;
- (viii) packaging.

B. Measures not covered by Codex international standards and guidelines. In this case, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia prescribes its measures on a scientific basis, or follows the guidelines of other specialized international bodies or measures adopted by other countries who are members of the WTO. It chooses and adopts guidelines that provide the most appropriated levels of protection such as:

- (i) maximum limits of requirements of microbiological contamination e.g. for Salmonella in chicken and fresh meat (frozen or chilled), the maximum limit permitted according to the measures adopted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is zero. These specifications are taken from the International Commission on Microbiological Specifications for foods. This limit is also adopted by New Zealand, Canada and France.
- (ii) expiry periods: To determine expiry periods we depend on the recognized references and the international standards with the execution of scientific studies on expiry periods of such products, taking into consideration the conditions of storage and transportation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As for other food products, SASO uses the international references such as International Refrigeration Institute (in France) and the American Military Corporation. As for the requirement that the remaining expiry period be more than half of the valid period on entry of imported products into the Kingdom, this aims at allowing sufficient time for distribution and marketing of the product within the Kingdom. This is also prescribed as by Gulf Standards.

C. Issuing phytosanitary and animal sanitary certificates for Saudi exports.

D. Applying quarantine procedures on plants and animals and their products whether imported or exported without discrimination between them, applying standard criteria during quarantine procedures with regard to hygiene, phytosanitary, animal sanitary and food safety measures.

E. Sanitary measures of Saudi Arabia agree with the SPS Agreement and also with the recommendations and guidelines issued by the international and regional organizations.

F. Saudi Arabia is a permanent and active member in the international organizations on plant and animal regulations, including FAO and the International Office des Epizootics (IOE).

G. Saudi Arabia's SPS measures do not arbitrarily or unjustifiably discriminate between different countries where identical or similar conditions prevail. Also they do not discriminate between the territory of Saudi Arabia and other countries where identical or similar conditions prevail.

Saudi Arabia's SPS measures are not applied in a manner which constitutes a disguised restriction on international trade.

#### IV. Transparency of Saudi Arabia's SPS Measures

Saudi Arabia's SPS measures are published in advance. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has an established system for information governments and Standards Organizations of changes, and the concerned parties have full sets of guidelines detailing all requirements and they are freely available to any party.

Saudi Arabia's SPS measures and requirements are notified to the Embassies in the Kingdom and to Chambers of Commerce.