

KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN  
Ministry of Health



مملكة البحرين  
وزارة الصحة

Public Health Directorate ادارة الصحة العامة



# Food Importers Guide to the Kingdom of Bahrain

FOOD CONTROL SECTION

2022



# Food Importers Guide to the Kingdom of Bahrain

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# Introduction:

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Since God created human and gave him the ability to seek and spread, he has been working diligently to obtain the food with which he can live and maintain himself, which has made the quest to satisfy the body's desires and meet its food needs innate and instinctive and the availability of food has become a prerequisite for the stability of human life everywhere.

As human life develops and population numbers increase and food production is required to reduce the food gap, which is being tried to be filled by imports of food commodities, food-borne diseases have increased, so the Food Control Section of the Department of Public Health has been established, which plays an active role in implementing health policies in all matters of food safety under [public health law No. 34 of 2018](#) which covers all public health services for individuals, precautionary measures to safeguard infrastructure, water monitoring, and waste management. It also includes precautionary measures for communicable and non-communicable diseases and food control.

Due to the kingdom of Bahrain's reliance on importing a high percentage of food from outside the Kingdom, the role of the imported food safety group has emerged to inspect all food received through land, sea and air ports in order to ensure its safety, validity and conformity to specifications and standards by applying risk based systems and global best practices.



**Aim:**

This guide was prepared to educate food importers of all the requirements and specifications required in imported foods within the risk management framework of the Kingdom of Bahrain on all incoming food shipments, with the aim of facilitating procedures and avoiding the rejection or delay of shipments that may result from lack of knowledge of these requirements and procedures. This guide is divided into two phases, addressing the pre-import phase and the second post-import phase.

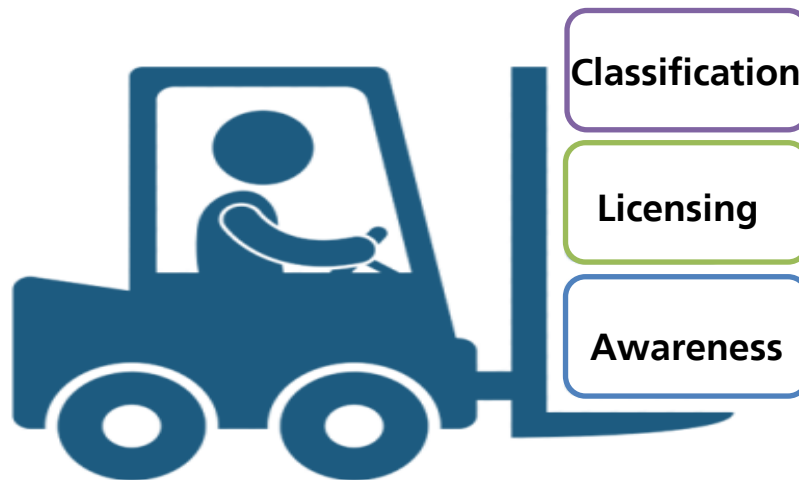


## PHASE 1: Pre- import

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This stage deals with the most important items of specifications and standards for food labelling, shelf life and food additives, in order to achieve the concept of food safety from farm to fork.

Therefore, before you import any food item, you must make sure to fulfill the following:



## ❖ Classification:

As an importer, it's crucial to specify what food commodity you will import in order to help you know the procedures required for each product before importing it in terms of:

### 1. Determining the HS-code of the product:

It is a number that includes names of Goods, their description and distinction, and the categories of customs duties to which they are subject. It is used to classify goods and determine their customs tariffs. For more information, [click here](#) to access the website of the Customs Affairs in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

### 2. Determining the accurate type of activity required in :

- a. commercial registration certificate( CR)
- b. certificate to practice commercial activities under health surveillance.

### 3. Some products need prior registration or other procedures from different regulatory authorities such as:

- a. In the event that you import functional foods such as baby food, energy drinks and athletes food, it is necessary to register your products before importing them. You can view the guideline for special foods Licensing [from here.](#)
- b. Other food ( regular) , does not require prior registration or authorization before importing, but it is required to be in accordance with Gulf specifications and standards. However, if you wish to have any advice from our specialists prior to import please don't hesitate to contact us and you



can fill out the form for pre-approval of food products which can be found through this [link](#).

### ❖ **Licensing:**

1. Obtaining a license from the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism by submitting an application to issue a commercial registration certificate with the required activities (sale/trade of food and beverages, or sale/trade of food and beverages-health food). You can apply through electronic system ([Sijilat](#)) website.
2. Obtaining a certificate to practice commercial activities under health surveillance, with the required activities such as (food stores, import, export and sale of foodstuffs) through the Public Health directorate, Licensing Department, by filling the form available [here](#).

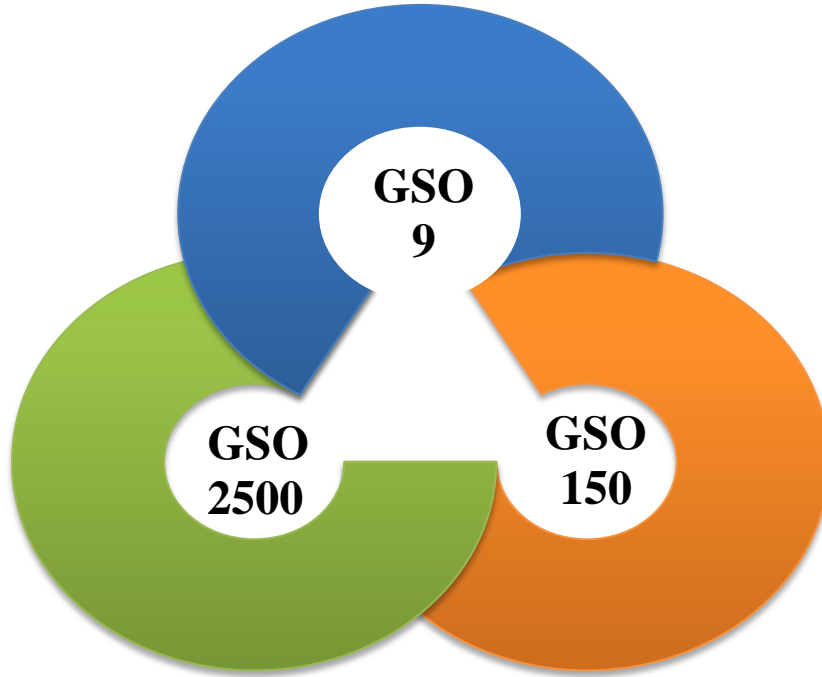
### ❖ **Awareness :**

As an importer, you are encouraged to familiarize yourself and your suppliers with any applicable requirements related to GSO standards and regulations used in the Kingdom of Bahrain before importing to avoid rejection of shipments. In this section we will address the most important GSO standards for foodstuffs. Where the GSO standards are divided into two parts, one is concerned with general requirements and the other for each food products separately.



❖ The specifications for general requirements are as follows:

**Labeling of prepackaged food stuff**



**Additives permitted for use  
in food stuff**

**GSO 150 :  
Expiration dates  
for food products:**

**Part 1: Mandatory  
expiration dates**

**Part 2: voluntary  
expiration dates**





standards	Main clauses
GSO 9	<p><b>MANDATORY LABELLING OF PREPACKAGED FOODS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Name of the Food</li> <li>2. List of Ingredients <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Artificial sweeteners or nutritive are not allowed in all baby foods.</li> <li>b. To declare the source of animal if the food item or one of its components contain animal component.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. <b>Nutritional Information</b></li> <li>4. <b>NET CONTENTS</b></li> <li>5. <b>NAME AND ADDRESS</b></li> <li>6. <b>COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:</b></li> <li>7. <b>DATE MARKING AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR STORAGE AND USE:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>(2.4) the production date : and expiration date shall be declared as follows:-</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. For food products with a minimum durability less than three months (i.e. Day -Month -Year) .</li> <li>II. For food products with a minimum durability of more than three months (i.e. Month –Year). Shelf life period calculated until the end of month recorded its expiration.</li> </ol> </li> <li>b. <b>Dates shall be engraved or in relief, printed or stamped by irremovable ink directly on all packages or on their original label by the producer only.</b></li> <li>c. <b>Statements intended to appear on the label shall be marked in a clearly visible and easily legible manner to the consumer, it shall not obscure any information required on the label.</b></li> <li>d. <b>Adding stickers for production and expiry dates is not permissible. There shall be not more than one date of production or of expiry on the same package, both dates shall not be subject to deletion, change or deceit.</b></li> </ol> </li> </ol>



8. **LANGUAGE** : Labelling and adjoining explanatory statements shall be in Arabic and, where another language is used, it shall be alongside the Arabic. All the information provided in another language shall be identical with those written in Arabic.

With regard to GSO 2500, the most important items of this description are:

Unpermitted Food Additives in all foodstuffs	
E.number	Name
<b>E 104</b>	<b>Quinoline Yellow (yellow no.1) C.I 47005</b>
<b>E105</b>	<b>Fast Yellow A B (C.I 13015)</b>
<b>E107</b>	<b>Yellow 2 G (Food Yellow 5) C.I 18965</b>
<b>E123</b>	<b>Amaranth (C.I. 16185. FD and C Red 2)</b>
<b>E124</b>	<b>Ponceau 4 R (Red 2) (CI. 16255)</b>
<b>E131</b>	<b>Patent Blue V (C.I. 42051)</b>
<b>E142</b>	<b>Green S ( Acid Brilliant Green, Food Green S, Lissamine Green, C.I 44090)</b>



<b>Additives Permitted for Use in Food in General, Unless Otherwise Specified, in Accordance with GMP</b>		
<b>INS</b>	<b>COLOR</b>	<b>FOOD STUFF</b>
<b>E173</b>	Aluminum	<b>External coating of sugar confectionery for the decoration of cakes and pastries</b>
<b>E174</b>	Silver	<b>External coating of confectionery</b>
<b>E175</b>	Gold	<b>External coating of confectionery</b>
<b>E180</b>	Lithotrubine BK	<b>Edible cheese surface</b>
<b>In case of below colors added write the following statement "This material may be having a negative effect on activity and concentration in children "under contents)</b>		
<b>INS</b>	<b>COLOR</b>	
<b>E102</b>	<b>tartrazine</b>	
<b>E110</b>	<b>Sunset yellow</b>	
<b>E129</b>	<b>Allura red</b>	
<b>E122</b>	<b>Azorubine (Carmoisine)</b>	

<b>Permitted food sweeteners except in infant and children foods as prescribed by GSO 995</b>		
<b>INS</b>	<b>sweeteners</b>	<b>Warning should be mention on the label</b>
E954	Saccharin and its salts	-
E951	Aspartame	Not to be used by persons who have phenylketonuria
E950	Acesulfam potassium	-
E955	Sucralose	Temperature should not exceed 25C
E957	Thaumatococin	-
E420	Sorbitol and sorbitol syrup	Excess of consumed quantity 40 g per day could be cause laxative effects
E421	mannitol	Excess of consumed quantity 20 g per day could be cause



		laxative effects
E953	Isomaltitol(isomalt)	-
E965	Maltitol and maltitol syrup	-
E966	lactitol	Excess of consumed quantity could be cause laxative effects
E967	xylitol	Excess of consumed quantity 40 g per day could be cause laxative effects
E968	erythritol	Excess of consumed quantity could be cause laxative effects
E961	neotame	-
E956	alitame	-
E960	Steviol glycosides	-
E962	Aspartame-acesulfame salt	-

With regard to validity periods, the validity of food products is divided into two parts according to Gulf standards: Part 1: Mandatory expiration dates (GSO 150-1 ) and Part 2: voluntary expiration dates (GSO 150-2).

Mandatory periods of validity include perishable foods that contain, in whole or in part, milk or milk products, eggs, meat, chicken, fish, crustaceans or ingredients that help growing of micro- organisms and cause food spoilage , poisoning or food disease and that keep chilled at a temperature of (0 - 5) °C, in addition to children's food, also food products that by their nature require a certain temperature for preservation such as fresh eggs (table eggs), fresh food and ready-to-eat foods.

Voluntary validity periods include frozen food products that are kept at a temperature not exceeding -18 °C, some non-perishable chilled food products that are kept at a



temperature from 0 °C to 5 °C, and also food products that are kept at an appropriate temperature in well-ventilated stores (not greater than 25 °C).

It should be noted that products which are not included among this standard "expiration dates of food products - Part II: voluntary expiration dates" shall be specified by consultation with the authority side depending on scientific bases for determining the expiry periods and obtaining its permission, So that the manufacturer guarantees the validity and safety of the product for consumption during the prescribed period.

Moreover, the expiry period for processed or repackaged products from materials of limited expiry period without being subjected to any thermal procession shall not exceed the remaining expiry period of the materials from which they are prepared.



**Additional explanatory notes for labelling of food products:**

- ❖ You should declare common name or E number for food additives.
- ❖ In case of gelatin , lecithin's and mono- di- glycerides the source shall be mentioned.
- ❖ All food items accompanied by children's toys must have the **Gulf Conformity mark**. Further to the [Ministerial Resolution issued by the Ministry of Industry, commerce and Tourism No. 1 of 2014 regarding the adoption of the Gulf Regulations for Children's toys.](#)

- ❖ Please refer to the specifications of each food product where these are just general items and You can obtain specifications and regulations through the [link of the standards store](#) at the **Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism**.

**Resolution No. (99) for 2015**

**On the import and trading of gelatin candy for children**

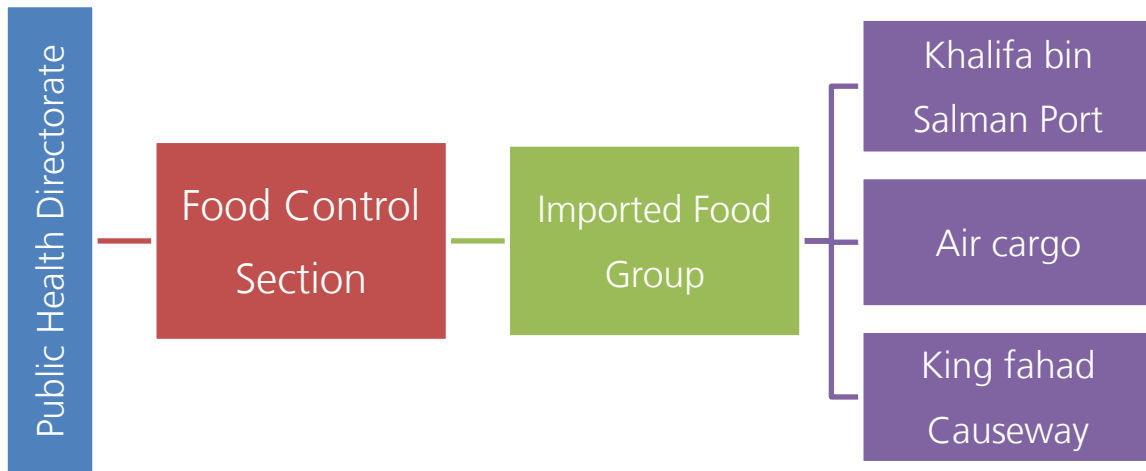


- The import of gelatin candy for children is required to be at least 45 mm high and 45 mm wide.
- It is prohibited to import and trade gelatin candy for children containing conjak (E425) or other names such as (Klakumanan, Konyako, Konjonak, tarot powder, yam flour) or any other names that may exist.



## PHASE 2: After import

The Imported Food Safety Group follow the Food Control section, which falls under the umbrella of the Public Health Directorate. There are three ports of entry in the kingdom of Bahrain ( sea port, air cargo , and causeway ) . Public health specialists are distributed over 3 ports of entry and work 24 hours a day, except for Khalifa Bin Salman Port. The responsibility of this group is to inspect all the food received through the ports and to ensure its safety and compliance with specifications and standards.



## 1. Required Documents:

When the food shipment arrives at the port of entry , the importing company's representative fills in the imported food inspection form and attaches all the required documents. You can obtain the form from [here](#) or through our offices in the ports.

- Fees for food inspection as follow depends on total weight of shipment /each delivery order or bill of lading.

From 1-1000 kg	From 1000 -5000 kg	>5000 Kg
8	9	10

- A copy of the customs declaration
- Packing list /a list of all types of foodstuffs and details of the size, number and weight of the packages for each item separately, in addition to the total weight of each item.
- A copy of the delivery order or bill of lading
- Health certificates, and for their acceptance, the following requirements are required:
  - All consignments must be accompanied by an original health certificate issued by the competent authority in the country of origin or an officially recognized body .The health certificate should attest to compliance with the GCC requirements countries and , where relevant, animal and plant health requirements.





- The name and address of the exporting company
- Brief description of the exported foodstuffs, their quantity and origin.
- An attached list, authorized by the officially recognized body, of the types of exported foods and the details of the package size of each item separately (in the case of multiple items).
- Container number or bill of lading.
- The date of issuance of the certificate.
- stamp and signature of the health authority issuing the certificate.
- Halal slaughtering certificate for meat and poultry /halal certificate for food items that contain ingredients of animal origin Issued by any Islamic association accredited in the Kingdom of Bahrain.
- Any additional documentation as requested by the competent authorities , in case of incidents and emergency management.

## 2. **Inspection procedures:**

- ❖ Checking the suitability of the Conveyance / Vehicle / container / Packs and make sure it's free from chemical pollutants, insects, rodents or other substances that have an impact on the safety of the food in the container.
- ❖ Physical check includes:
  - **Labeling of food products:**
    - Ensure that it comply with their specifications and regulations, particularly with the prepackaged food labeling , including:
      - Brand name
      - Name of the food



- List of ingredients in descending order of ingoing weight.
  - Net contents
  - Production and expiry dates
  - Name and address of manufacturer
  - Country of origin
  - Instruction for storage and use
- 
- ❖ Sensory attributes, such as appearance, odor, flavor, taste, and texture of foods detectable by human senses, are often used to evaluate food quality.
  - ❖ Make sure there is no rust, corrosion, dents or leak in the cans.
  - ❖ check for abnormal changes and any defrosting signs for frozen and chilled foods as well as the container temperature recording statement during the flight.

If a physical examination shows the safety of the food shipment alongside its compliance with GSO standards , and samples are not required for laboratory analysis, the shipment is released.

If laboratory samples are required to be withdrawn according to our sampling policy which is based on risk , the shipment will be under detention until the results reveals according to following:

- ❖ release note will be issue if the laboratory results is satisfactory
- ❖ rejection note for unsatisfactory results.

The importer can raise a dispute regarding its unsatisfactory results by submitting an official letter to the head of the group or to the supervisor of the port of entry in order to



raise the matter to the re- test committee ,please provide any evidence from the company if its available.

### **3. Food imported for non-commercial purposes ( personal use):**

- ❖ The person must assure in writing to use them for personal purposes only and not to be sold, distributed or advertised to the general public .
- ❖ The amount should be within the allowance .
- ❖ Labelling and adjoining explanatory statements shall be either in Arabic or English , if another language is used, sticker must be attached from the person concerned from an approved translation office.
- ❖ They are not prohibited locally or internationally or contain components that are prohibited domestically or internationally. These foods may be sampled for laboratory examination to confirm fitness for purpose if deemed necessary by the competent authority.



## HANDLING OF REJECTED FOOD SHIPMENTS:

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After rejection of the shipment the importer in this case has to take decision either to re-export the shipment to country of origin or to destroy it under food control supervision based on the [Public Health Law No. 34 of 2018](#).

### Re-export procedure:

- submit a request letter to the health office at the concerned port of entry with the following attachments ( custom declaration port from which the shipment was submitted with the following attached (copy of customs declaration of re-export, copy of rejection notice)
- Once the application received , you will be contacted by the food control specialist before re-export.
- To get an official certificate for re-export , importer must fill the form ([here](#)).

### Destruction procedures:

- Submit a request letter to the health office at the concerned port of entry.
- Food control specialist will coordinate with you regarding destruction as soon as you determine the date for destruction .
- Asker landfill for waste management procedures from ([here](#))
- To get an official certificate for destruction , importer must fill the form ([here](#)).



**FINALLY:**

We hope that we have succeeded in clarifying all the necessary information to facilitate import procedures to the Kingdom of Bahrain.

For more information, please do not hesitate to contact us through the following communication numbers for each port of entry:

Port: المنفذ	office no. رقم الهاتف	Fax no الفاكس	Email البريد الالكتروني
Khalifa port منفذ ميناء خليفة	17162217	17162040	MK@health.gov.bh
Air cargo منفذ الشحن الجوي	17324547	17339164	AC@health.gov.bh
King Fahad causeway منفذ جسر الملك فهد	17699876	17697841	CW@health.gov.bh

