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Korea, Republic of

Organic Products

Organic Certificate Requirements

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Report Highlights:

This is to provide guidance to U.S. organic exporters regarding Korean requirements for U.S. organic food imports.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Seoul [KS1]
[KS]

I. Korean Regulations for Processed Food Products with Organic Labels

In accordance with Labeling Standards for Food et al. issued by the Korea Food & Drug Administration (KFDA), the term “organic” and other similar terms may be used only if the following criteria are met.

1. Organic raw materials of imported food products shall be equal to or better than the quality standards specified in Article 16, Paragraph 2 of the Environmental Agricultural Promotion Act, and Article 7, Annex 1 of the Enforcement Regulations of the Act.
2. If organic raw materials of imported food products are not subject to the quality standards specified in the above Korean regulations, such products shall meet the relevant quality standards of the exporting country.
3. Organic and non-organic agricultural products shall not be used in mixture as one raw material.
4. Raw materials not included on the list of raw materials permitted for use in the manufacture/processing of organic food products (See section IV.) shall not be used. In accordance with the Labeling Standards for Food et al., “raw material” is defined as a material, except for purified water purposely applied to the product, that is used for manufacturing, processing, or cooking of food or food additives and that are contained in the final product.
5. Irradiated raw materials shall not be used.
6. Genetically modified foods or food additives shall not be used.
7. The container/package used for a food may be recycled or made of biodegradable material.
8. The determination as to whether an imported food meets the standards specified in (1) through (7) above may be based on a certificate issued by an organization that satisfies the qualifications to be a certifying entity under the relevant regulations of:
 - A) the exporting country, or
 - B) a reliable organization certified by a recognized international body, such as IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements).

For such determination, KFDA has completed the review of the U.S. National Organic Program and concluded that the U.S. organic standards are equivalent to Korean organic standards. As a result, KFDA recognizes USDA-accredited certifying agents as foreign organic certifiers able to issue organic certificates for imported food products. To date, KFDA has recognized 106 foreign organic certifiers to date. Of those, 54 are USDA-accredited certifying agents located in the United States.

For USDA-accredited certifying agents located outside the United States, KFDA accepts their organic certificates issued for products originating in the United States. Based upon KFDA's Labeling Standards for Food, imported organic food products must be certified by certifiers accredited by the exporting country's government. Therefore, KFDA accepts certificates issued by USDA-accredited certifying agents located outside the United States for U.S.-origin organic products but does not recognize those agents' USDA accreditation as the basis for acceptance of their certificates issued for non-U.S. origin products.

II. Labeling

Labeling may be done in the following manner depending on the content of organic agricultural ingredients in a food product.

1. 100%: when the finished food product does not contain any other food or food additive except for organic agricultural ingredients, the label "100% organic agricultural product" or similar labels may be used.
2. No less than 95%: when no less than 95 percent of raw materials contained in the finished food product are organic agricultural ingredients, the term "organic" or similar terms may be used as a part of the product name and stated on the main labeling panel of the container/package; and the name, seal and logo of the organization that certified the organic agricultural produce used in the product, as well as other certification information, may be stated. In this case, the content of the organic agricultural ingredients shall be stated in percentage in the labeling section for raw material names.
3. Less than 95% but more than 70%: when 70 percent or more but less than 95 percent of raw materials contained in the finished food product are organic agricultural ingredients, the term "organic" or similar terms may be stated on a labeling surface of the container/package other than the main labeling panel. In this case, the content of the organic agricultural ingredients shall be stated in percentage in the labeling section for raw material names.
4. Others: when a food not included in (1) through (3) above includes organic agricultural produce, the term "organic" or similar terms may be used as a part of the names of such ingredients within the labeling section for raw material names. In this case, the content of organic agricultural ingredients shall be stated in percentage in the labeling section for raw material names.

III. Documentation Requirements for Imported Organic Food Products

The following two documents should be presented to regional offices of the KFDA when submitting the import application for organic food products for import clearance.

1. A copy of an organic certificate issued by the USDA-accredited certifying agent. The certificate must include following information:
 - Name, address, and phone number of the certifying agent;
 - Types of organic food the operation is certified by the certifying agent to supply, along with the company name, address, and effective date (or renewal date) of certification.
2. An original ingredient statement (a list of all ingredient names) issued by the manufacturer (only required for organic food products made of mixed ingredients) that includes the office/department/division name, name and signature of the issuer.

Please note that a "transaction certificate" is no longer required for imported organic food products.

KFDA is currently not accepting organic certificates issued to handlers. KFDA requires organic certificates issued to the producer, processor or manufacturer of organic products. The Agricultural Affairs Office is working on this issue with KFDA. Any developments or changes with regard to this matter will be reported in voluntary Attaché reports.

IV. Ingredients allowed for use in the manufacture and handling of organic food products

1. Food additives (including auxiliary agents)

Names	Special conditions
Calcium carbonate	-
Sulfur dioxide	Wine products
Lactic acid	Fermented vegetable products
Carbon dioxide	-
Malic acid	-
Ascorbic acid	When natural materials are not available
Tocopherol, blended with natural extract	-
Lecithin	Made without using bleaching agent or organic solvent
Citric acid	Fruit and vegetable products
Sodium tartrate	For confectionery and baked products
Potassium tartrate	For grain formula, confectionery, and baked products
Calcium dihydrogen phosphate	Only for inflation of dough
Alginic acid	-
Sodium alginate	-
Potassium alginate	-
Agar	-
Carageenan	-
Locus bean gum	-
Guar gum	-
Tragacanth gum	-
Arabic gum	For milk, fat and bakery products
Xanthan gum	High fat products, fruits, vegetables, confectionery, biscuits, salads
Karaga gum	-
Pectins (not modified)	-
Sodium carbonate	For confectionery, biscuits/bakery products
Potassium carbonate	For grain formula/confectionery and biscuits/baked products
Ammonium carbonate	-
Magnesium carbonate	-
Potassium chloride	Frozen fruits & vegetables/canned fruits & vegetables, vegetable condiments/ketchup & mustard
Calcium chloride	Dairy products/fat products/fruits & vegetables/soybean milk products
Magnesium chloride	Confectionery, biscuits/soybean milk products/catalyst for yeast used during baking of bread
Calcium sulfate	Grain products
Sodium hydroxide	-
Argon	-
Nitrogen	-
Oxygen	-

2. Flavorings

Materials or products specified as natural aromatics or natural flavoring ingredients in accordance with the regulations of Section 5.7 of Codex Alimentarius 1A-1995.

3. Salts

Limited only to sodium chloride or potassium chloride which are generally used in the processing of foods as a basic ingredient.

4. Microorganism preparations

Preparations made of microorganisms, such as enzymes, etc., that do not use genetically modified microorganisms and are generally used in the processing of foods.

5. Minerals (including trace elements)

Products made by blending minerals, vitamins, fatty acids, amino acids or other nitrogenous compounds, etc. A product may be used in quantities allowed for use in a processed product.

6. Auxiliary processing agents allowed for use in the manufacture/processing of organic food products

Materials	Special conditions
Water	-
Calcium chloride	Coagulant
Calcium carbonate	-
Calcium hydroxide	-
Calcium sulfate	Coagulant
Magnesium chloride (or nigari)	Coagulant
Potassium carbonate	Drying of raisons
Carbon dioxide	-
Nitrogen	-
Ethanol	Solvent
Tannic acid	Filtering aid
Egg white albumin	-
Casein	-
Gelatin	-
Isinglass	-
Vegetable oils	Softening agent
Silicon dioxide	In gel and colloidal solution
Activated carbon	-
Talc	-
Bentonite	-
Kaolin	-
Diatomaceous earth	-
Perlite	-
Hazelnut shells	-
Beeswax	Softening agent
Carnauba wax	Softening agent
Sulfuric acid	Dehydration, pH adjustment during sugar manufacturing
Sodium hydroxide	pH adjustment during sugar manufacturing
Tartaric acid and salt	-
Sodium carbonate	Sugar manufacturing
Tree bark mixed preparations	-
Potassium hydroxide	pH adjustment during sugar processing

Citric acid	pH adjustment
Preparation of microorganism and enzyme: "Preparation of microorganism and enzyme" does not include those enhanced through biotechnology. It refers to those preparations of microorganisms and enzymes that are generally used in food processing as supplements.	

V. USDA accreditation

USDA-accredited certifying agents receive their accreditation from the USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service. Information on that process can be found at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/CertifyingAgents/CertAgenthome.html>.

VII. Contact Information

For further information, please contact the Agricultural Affairs Office of the U.S. Embassy Seoul:

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Phone: 82-2-397-4297 or 4357
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