

**Middle East  
North Africa  
Business  
Information  
Center**



**CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT FOR IMPORTING GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODSTUFFS – SAUDI ARABIA**

**CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENT FOR IMPORTED GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODSTUFFS:**

**SAUDI ARABIA GOVERNMENT CLARIFIES RULES ON GMO LABELING AND EXPORT CERTIFICATES**

On November 11, 2002, the agricultural trade officer in Riyadh met with Dr. Hamad al-Awfy to discuss the export certificate required for food containing biotech ingredients, actions to be taken against companies in violation of the GMO labeling requirement, and GMO testing. Dr. al-Awfy agreed to accept from Department of Agriculture certifications from U.S. states (see below) that foods with biotech ingredients are freely sold in the United States. He said that companies in violation of GMO labeling will have the product banned but can continue exporting other products to the Kingdom, and he also confirmed that product samples are still being sent to Europe for GMO testing. On November 23, 2002, Dr. al-Awfy gave the ministry's full concurrence to **the export certificate language for GMO (see below)** products after discussing the matter with Saudi Minister of Commerce Faquih. This meeting clarified how U.S. exporters can meet SAG requirements for 1. On November 11, 2002, ATO/Riyadh met with Dr. Hamad al-Awfy, head of Port Laboratories, Ministry of Commerce to discuss the export certificate required for genetically modified products exported to the kingdom, to clarify the ban on companies in violation of the labeling requirement, and to get an update on GMO testing.

**Export Certificate:** The export certificate from the country of origin specifying that the product has been approved for human consumption and is sold widely in that country must be issued by a government entity, preferably the federal government. However, he said that his ministry will accept export certificates issued by state departments of agriculture but made clear that his government will not accept certificates issued by the exporting company or other private organizations. He said that the following export certificate language if issued by a state department of agriculture would be accepted by Saudi port officials:

**SAMPLE LANGUAGE**

*"I, (name of state official), do hereby certify that (name of U.S. company and address) operates a food manufacturing plant which is inspected at regular intervals by full-time inspectors employed by the (name of state) Department of Agriculture. The facility's equipment and raw materials, as well as the processing and packaging procedure, meet all sanitary requirements and the operation is in good standing in every respect.*

*We certify the following listing of products as freely, and without qualification, sold and used in the United States of America (USA).*

*This product may contain genetically modified organisms.*

*(put name of product)*

*this certificate shall be good for one year from the date of issue.*

*This certificate is not to be construed as either an expression of implied warranty of any products of advertising, or other simple purposes.*

*This certificate shall not be altered after the issue date, or it will be deemed void by the (name of state) Department of Agriculture and the undersigned.*

*(The certificate should be issued with the seal of the state department of agriculture, notarized, and signed by the appropriate state department of agriculture official)."*

#### **GMO LABELING VIOLATIONS:**

If a product exported to Saudi Arabia by a company without a GMO label tests positive for GMO ingredients, the company will be banned from exporting that product to the kingdom. However, the company will be allowed to export other food products to Saudi Arabia. For example, if Jane Doe inc. Exports soy products without a GMO label, but after testing, Saudi officials find GMO ingredients in the product greater than one percent, Jane Doe inc. Will not be allowed to export soy products to Saudi Arabia but can continue exporting corn products for example. This is a departure from previous statements where Dr. al-Awfy said that the company would be banned from exporting to Saudi Arabia.

Since the GMO labeling requirement took effect on December 1, 2001, eight companies have been found in violation of the Saudi labeling requirement. Two of those companies are American. The ban on the product will remain as long as the labeling requirement remains in effect.

**GMO TESTING:** The Ministry of Commerce continues to send product samples to King Faisal hospital and that the hospital sends those samples to Europe for GMO testing. The importer pays 1800 Saudi riyals (480 USD) per sample to the Ministry of Commerce and the turnaround time for results from Europe is about three to four weeks. However, as in previous meetings, Dr. al-Awfy said that King Faisal's biotech lab will be operational in the near future and that GMO testing will be done in-country. He also funding for its own biotech lab but that the lab is still in the planning stages.

Source: Trade Information Center, U.S. Department of Commerce.