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Venezuela

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards - Certification

FAIRS Export Certificate Report

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Report Highlights:

This report identifies the different export certification requirements currently in place by product. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is responsible, through its different Ministries, for issuing import permits, import licenses and conducting processed food product registrations. Post updates only minor changes in this report.

DISCLAIMER: This report was prepared by the Office of the Agricultural Affairs of the USDA/Foreign Agricultural Service in Caracas, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for U.S. exporters of domestic food and agricultural products. While all possible care was taken in the preparation of this report, information provided may not be complete either because policies change with little or no notification, or because clear and consistent information about new policies was not available. In addition, due to the current critical food supply situation in Venezuela, it has been reported that import requirements and certifications can be waived for shipments on a case-by-case basis. It is highly recommended that U.S. exporters verify the full set of import requirements and registration requisites

with their foreign customers, who are normally best equipped to research such matters with local authorities, before any product is shipped. FINAL IMPORT APPROVAL OF ANY PRODUCT IS SUBJECT TO THE IMPORTING COUNTRY'S RULES AND REGULATIONS AS INTERPRETED BY BORDER OFFICIALS AT THE TIME OF PRODUCT ENTRY.

Section I. List of All Export Certificates Required By Government (Matrix) :

This report is intended for the exporter and focuses on export documentation required for products entering Venezuela.

Summary:

According to current animal and plant health and food safety standards and regulations, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (BRV) requires three basic export certificates depending on the product to be imported. These documents are sanitary and/or phytosanitary health certificates, food health certificates from the country of origin and certificate of free sale. The Venezuelan importer is responsible for submitting these documents to the appropriate Customs and government inspection authorities when a shipment arrives at the port of entry. Failure to present the required documents will lead to delays in releasing the shipment for entry into the country and in some cases rejection of the shipment altogether.

There were no changes to Venezuelan regulations for export certification in the past year, but exporters should be aware that obtaining the necessary import permits and import approvals have become more tedious and complicated, especially regarding requests for foreign exchange. These import requirements have significantly delayed import transactions from weeks to several months.

Imports of food and agricultural products are subject to a list of import requirements provided in the Venezuelan Harmonized Tariff Schedule (Spanish: Arancel de Aduanas), by a product's tariff schedule (Spanish: regimen legal). These requirements include sanitary import permits, import licenses, and product registration certification.

There are multiple government Ministries responsible for the issuance of the required import documents. The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (Spanish: Ministerio del Poder Popular para Agricultura y Tierras, MAT) issues animal and plant health import permits; the Ministry of Food (Spanish: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Alimentación, MINAL) issues import licenses based on need for imports and the Ministry of Health (Spanish: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Salud, MINSALUD) issues food registration certification for all domestic and imported processed food products. Food products not registered in the country of origin cannot be registered in Venezuela. The import permit outlines which export certificates are needed and what they should say. In addition to the import permits and licenses, Venezuelan importers must also submit a report contesting to the need for imports, for which the government will provide a certificate of no-production. Then, the importer must request from the government U.S. dollars at the official rate or what is known as AAD or Authorization for the Acquisition of Exchange through the government agency CENCOEX. The process from the time the no-production certificate is requested to the time the exporter receives payment, takes on average 4-5 months for products eligible for preferential processing. It can take up to nine months or longer if the product is not on the preferential product list. Table 1 shows the required export certificate by product type.

Table: 1. U.S. Export Certificates Required by Product Categories

Product(s)	Title of	Attestation Required on	Purpose	Requesting
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	Certificate	Certificate		Ministry
All Processed foods and beverages	Country of Origin and/or Free Sale Certificate	The products exported are produced and marketed in the United States in general conformity with US requirements	Food safety/ Fulfill health requirements according to local sanitary authorities.	MINSALUD (Ministry of Health)
Plants and plant products	Phytosanitary Export Certificate	Fulfill health requirements according to import permit and sanitary inspection.	Plant health and food safety	INSAI (regulatory agency of the Ministry of Agriculture)
Animals and animal products	Health Certificate/ Sanitary Certificate	Fulfill health requirements according to import permit and sanitary inspection.	Animal health and food safety	INSAI (regulatory agency of the Ministry of Agriculture)
Meat Products	Meat Inspection Certificate	Export Certificate of Wholesomeness for meat	Food safety/ Animal Health Protection	MINSALUD and INSAI (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture)

Source: Compiled by the Office of Agricultural Affairs, Caracas

1. Animal Products and Unprocessed Plant Products

The Venezuelan Agricultural Health Service or INSAI (Spanish: Instituto Nacional de Salud Agrícola Integral) the animal and plant health regulatory agency within the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for quality control and inspection of everything related to the manufacture, processing, importation, exportation, storage, distribution, and marketing of food, biological products, medications and animal feed, as well as for the laboratories that control the quality of these products. INSAI has responsibilities equivalent to those of APHIS, FSIS and FDA in the United States.

INSAI is in charge of issuing phytosanitary or sanitary import permits for imported products and sub-products of plant or animal origin, and animals and plant breeding material. The following guidelines are provided by INSAI:

- Prior to importing animal products and/or unprocessed plant products, importers should request and obtain a sanitary health (SPS) import permit from INSAI.
- Required SPS statements (treatment and other conditions) for each type of product are decided by INSAI on a case-by-case basis.
- Required SPS statements are written on the import permit issued by INSAI.
- The “remarks” section of the export certificate on the FSIS or APHIS letterhead certificate should include the required SPS statements requested in the import permit, and should be written both in English and Spanish.
- An APHIS veterinarian or equivalent FSIS official must sign the export certificate.
- No product should be loaded in a vessel before the import permit is received and the sanitary statements required are written and verified on the USDA export certificate.
- INSAI’s import permits have a non-renewable period of validity of between 60 and 90 days, depending on the product:
- Sanitary import permits are issued for animal products and livestock-farming inputs (valid for 60 days).
- Phytosanitary import permits are issued for plant products (valid for 90 days).
- Import permits are only valid for one shipment.

- Every shipment must be accompanied by an import permit and its corresponding APHIS or FSIS export certificate.

2. Processed Animal Products

An FSIS certificate must accompany each shipment of meat and poultry and/or products. Below are the certificate requirements of the Venezuelan Government currently included in the FSIS export certificate library. Importers are required to have an import permit before importing meat and poultry products. All FSIS inspected meat and poultry plants are eligible to export to Venezuela.

Eligible/Ineligible Products (Most recent revision on Jan 31, 2013)

A. Eligible:

1. Pork is eligible to export to Venezuela.
2. Cooked poultry products.
3. Natural pork casings.

B. Ineligible:

1. Ruminant meat and ruminant meat products.

Plants Eligible to Export:

All Federally inspected meat and poultry plants are eligible to export to Venezuela.

Information on documentation requirements at:

<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/international-affairs/exporting-products/export-library-requirements-by-country/Venezuela>

3. Processed Food Products

All domestic and imported processed food products must be registered with the Government of Venezuela, through its Ministry of Health (MINSALUD) before it can be sold to Venezuelan consumers. With the exception of special cases, such as Government or military sales, as determined by MINSALUD, all new-to-market foreign food products must be submitted for registration before being imported. MINSALUD, through its Sanitary Control Service (Spanish: Servicio Autónomo de Contraloría Sanitaria) and its Food Hygiene Division (Spanish: División de Higiene de los Alimentos), implements food safety regulations and standards.

The registration of processed food products is valid for five years. After five years, a new application should be made to MINSALUD for renewing the registration. *(Although Venezuelan law does not prohibit foreign exporters registering food products, a local consultant or agent may prove to be the best resource to complete the food registration process.)* There are no exporter documents required to prove or certify that a product is registered with MINSALUD.

Required documents for Registering Imported Food Products in Venezuela:

The fulfilling of the following procedures and requirements is the responsibility of the importer. However, to fully comply with the product registration requirement, the exporter may have to provide documents or assist in obtaining documents and certifications from the manufacturer.

1. Complete the form (SIE-5-197) from the Sanitary Food Registry Division of (Spanish: Registro

Sanitario de Alimentos, RSA) MINSALUD and attach a stamp duty.

2. Certificate of Free Sale and Consumption in force, issued by the competent authorities of the country of origin. This should be apostilled or sealed by a Public Notary in the country of origin.
3. Notarized Power of Attorney from the Manufacturer to the Importer.
4. Certificate of the Physicochemical and Microbiological Analysis from the country of origin issued by the official laboratory.
5. Authorization from the Importer to the representative or advisor to do the Sanitary Registration (Notarized Power of Attorney).
6. Three (3) Originals Labels of the product as it is sold in the country of origin.
7. Proposed Draft labels.
8. Copy of the Importer Mercantile Registry (Company Registry).
9. A control sample of the product.
10. Physicochemical and microbiological analyses of the product made in Venezuela, as specified by the Venezuelan COVENIN norms. The food products listed below should go to the labs of "Instituto Nacional de Higiene Rafael Rangel" or to other official laboratories:

Meat products, wheat flour, fish products, dairy products (except ice-cream), poultry products and their derivatives, corn flour, food supplements of vitamins and minerals, dietary supplements, food products that declare nutrition properties, special dietary, infant formula, natural products qualifying to be registered within RSA, fortified foods, liquors, and those which are outside the above list can go to private laboratories accredited by SENCAMER.

NOTE: In order to register a product, all documents issued abroad must be authenticated by the Venezuelan Consular officials accredited in the country of origin and are valid for one (1) year, counted from the date of issuance, and if written in a language other than Spanish, must be translated into Spanish by a certified public interpreter.

Free Sale Certificate

Venezuela requires "sanitary/health export certificates" for processed or semi-processed food products issued by competent authorities in the country of origin. The certificate must state that the food is for human consumption, processing, or for use as an input in food for human consumption in the country of origin, with a period of validity of 12 months from the date of application. Since the Venezuelan Harmonized Tariff Schedule does not mention "Free Sales Certificates" but "Sanitary Export Certificates" (Spanish: Permiso Sanitario de Exportación) the Venezuelan custom authorities are stricter with these documents. Venezuela do not accept sanitary/health export certificates issued by local or states authorities; in that sense they must be endorsed by FDA and/or USDA-APHIS, depending on the product.

In case that the Free Sale Certificates do not satisfy the certification requirements of the Venezuelan Custom Authorities (SENIAT) they may ask for additional information or testing. If this is the case, after a scientific evaluation, the Venezuelan APHIS equivalent, INSAI, will decide whether or not to

accept the Free Sale Certificate. INSAI has the authority to recommend the acceptance of the Certificate. However, INSAI has a long history of accepting “Free Sale Certificates” from third countries, based on common sense and its scientific knowledge.

Sometimes there may be situations where customs officials may not accept certain semi-processed and processed food products that are normally exempt from “sanitary certificates” issued by third countries. In these cases it is necessary to obtain an explanatory letter from USDA stating that the said product was processed or manufactured to the extent that there is negligible risk of harboring quarantine plant pests. As a processed product it is not eligible for Federal Phytosanitary certification.

The Certificate of Free Sale and Consumption issued by competent authorities in the country of origin **must always be “apostilled” or stamped by a Public Notary** as per The Hague Convention on Foreign Public Documents.

4. Wood Packing Material

All wood packaging materials arriving into Venezuela must carry the agreed international seals certifying that the wood has been treated as recommended by the International Plant Protection Convention ‘s “Guidelines for Regulating Wood Packaging Material in International Trade” , effective August 1, 2005.

Section II. Purpose of Specific Export Certificate(s)

1. Country of Origin/Free Sale Certificate

The Food Hygiene Division within the Ministry of Health (MINSALUD) requires the Health Certificate from the country of Origin (Spanish: Certificado Sanitario del país de Origen) to ensure that the food or beverage imported into Venezuela is also commercialized in the country of origin. In other countries they are also known by other names, such as Certificate of Free Sale.

2. Phytosanitary Health Certificate

INSAI, Intituto Nacional de Salud Agrícola Integral, the Venezuelan Animal and Plant Health agency within the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, requires a Phytosanitary Certificate (Spanish: Certificado Fitosanitario) to ensure that import requirements are met in order to control the risk of pest and diseases entering into Venezuela. Certificates are issued by the sanitary authority of the exporting country.

3. Sanitary Import Certificate – Export Certificate

INSAI requires a Sanitary Import Certificate (Spanish: Permiso Sanitario de Importación) to prevent the importation of animals, or their by-products, with sanitary problems in order to protect the domestic animal health and to ensure food safety. The sanitary certificate, submitted by the sanitary authority of the exporting country, must comply with local import requirements.

Section III. Specific Attestations Required on Export Certificate(s)

Specific sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) statements (treatment and other conditions) are required for each type of product and are determined by INSAI’s authorities on a case-by-case basis. They are provided by INSAI authorities when an application for an import permit is submitted by an importer.

Section IV. Government Certificate’s Legal Entry Requirements

- Original Sanitary Certificates from the country of origin need to accompany the product at the time of entry.
- Sanitary Certificates from the country of origin are only accepted for one shipment and one specified port of entry.
- The Venezuelan Government does not accept “Suppliers or Manufacturers Export Declaration” as proof of compliance.
- For processed food products no specific certificate from the exporting country is required at the time of entering Venezuelan ports, if the product has been already registered within MINSALUD.
- The Venezuelan Government does not accept sanitary export certificates by US state-level authorities.

Section V. Other Certification/Accreditation Requirements

The Venezuelan Government provides information about import requirements through its Harmonized Tariff Schedule (Spanish: Arancel de Aduanas). The following table lists the different import requirements:

Table: 2. Import Requirements

Legal Regime	Description
Note 1	Prohibited Import
Note 2	Imports reserved to the Government
Note 3	Permit from the Ministry of Health
Note 4	Permit from the Ministry of Science, Technology & Innovation
Note 5	Sanitary Certificate from the Country of Origin
Note 6	Sanitary Permit from the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
Note 7	Permit from the Ministry of Defense
Note 8	Import License administered through the Ministry of Food
Note 9	Import License administered through the Ministry of Commerce
Note 10	Permit from the Ministry for the Environment
Note 11	Permit from the Ministry of Petroleum and Mining
Note 12	Sanitary Registry issued by the Ministry of Health
Note 13	Sanitary Registry issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
Note 14	Permit from the Ministry of Food
Note 15	Permit from the Ministry of Industries
Note 16	Import License administered by the Ministry of Science, Technology & Innovation
Note 17	Permit from the Ministry of Electric Power

Source: SENIAT/ Extraordinary Official Gazette No. 6.097 March 25, 2013

Import Licenses for Basic Agricultural Products

Under its World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments, Venezuela is entitled to administer tariff rate quotas for up to 62 HS code headings. The tariff rate quotas are administered through an import license regime. MINAL is responsible for issuing import licenses, but approval is subject to the concurrence of the “Inter Ministerial Commission,” which consists of the following ministries: Ministry of Finance (MINFINANZAS), Ministry of Commerce (MINCOMERCIO), Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (MAT), Ministry of Food (MINAL), and Ministry of Health (MINSALUD).

The latest guidelines and requirements for applying for an import license were published in the Official

Gazette No. 38,452 from June 06, 2006 and more recently the Government has made other changes. The validity of import licenses for a certain group of food products considered essential, defined by the government, is valid for six-month to one-year periods. Products that will benefit from an “extended import license” are milk and cream, cheese, sorghum, soybean oil, palm oil, and coconut oil. Import licenses are valid for three to four months, for non-essential products.

The basic guidelines are:

- Import licenses are valid for four, six or twelve month periods, and can only be renewed if, on expiry, they have not been used for reasons outside the importer’s control.
- When applying for a license, local importers are required to submit a monthly list of imports actually realized, indicating volume and value, together with the invoice of the most recent import, also indicating the volume and value of the merchandise in question.
- The importer must indicate the amount of the allocated quota that remains unused.
- Local importers are required to obtain a “certificate of non-domestically produced food product” (Certificado de NO-Producción) and a “certificate of not-sufficient domestically produced food product” (Certificado de Insuficiencia) from the MINCOMERCIO, in order to obtain import licenses.

Table 3. List of products that are subject to import licenses

HS CODE	PRODUCT
1005	Yellow corn
1007	Sorghum
1201	Soya beans
1207	Palm nuts and kernels
1507	Soya bean oil
1510	Other oils
1511	Palm oil
1512	Sunflower seed oil
1513	Coconut oil
1515	Other vegetable fats and oils
1518	Animal and vegetable fats
1522	Yellow grease
1701	Sugar cane
2304	Soya bean cake
0401	Milk and cream, not concentrated
0402.10	Milk in powder, not exceeding 1.5% fat
0402.21	Whole milk 26%
0406	Cheese

Source: SENIAT – Venezuelan HS Schedule / Note 2.

For those products where the licensing system has not yet been implemented such as beef, pork and poultry, the Government of Venezuela restricts the issuance of SPS permits.

Author Defined:

APPENDIX I

A. Services and Agencies under the MINISTRY OF HEALTH (Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Salud –MINSALUD)

Servicio Autónomo de Contraloría Sanitaria

Dirección de Higiene de Alimentos (equivalent to the FDA)

Address:

Edificio Sur, Piso 3, Of. 313

Centro Simón Bolívar, Caracas

Tel: (58-212) 408-0502 / 408-0474 / 408-0482

Fax: (58-212) 483-1533

Web-page: <http://sacs.mpps.gob.ve/siacs/index.php>

Instituto Nacional de Higiene Rafael Rangel

Gerencia de Control y Registro de Alimentos

Ciudad Universitaria UCV, Los Chaguaramos, Caracas

Tel: (58-212) 219-1670 / 219-1663

Web-page: <http://www.inhrr.gob.ve/pa/index.html>

B. Services and Agencies under the MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND LANDS (MAT)

Ministerio del Poder Popular para Agricultura y Tierras-MAT (equivalent to USDA)

Address:

Av. Urdaneta, Esquina de Platanal a Candilito, Edificio MAT

La Candelaria

Caracas 1010, Venezuela

Tel: (58-212) 509-0188/0121/0111

Tel: (58-243) 672-6880

Fax: (58-212) 574-2432

Web-page: <http://www.mat.gob.ve>

Instituto Nacional de Salud Agrícola Integral -INSAI

(Equivalent to the US Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-APHIS)

Address:

Ave. Francisco de Miranda con 3ra Ave. Los Palos Grandes,

Parque Cristal, Torre Oeste, piso 2, oficina 2-3

Caracas, Venezuela

Tel. (58-416) 618-7796/ (58-416) 643-6288

E-mail: presidencianuevoinsai@gmail.com

And/or direcciongeneralinsai@gmail.com

Web-page: <http://www.insai.gob.ve>

C. MINISTRY OF FOOD

Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Alimentación - MINAL

Address:

Av. Andrés Bello, Edif. Las Fundaciones

Caracas 1010, Venezuela

Tel: (58-212) 507-2649/ 507-2647 / 395-7474

E-mail: minpalexportaciones@minpal.gob.ve

Web-page: <http://www.minpal.gob.ve>

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