

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Belize

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards - Narrative

FAIRS Country Report

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Report Highlights:

Sections Updated: All sections are updated.

Section I. Food Laws:

In Belize, there are several government agencies involved with food-laws. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) (<http://www.agriculture.gov.bz/>) has the legal responsibility of food safety and quarantine. The Ministry of Economic Development, Commerce, Industry and Consumer Protection has the responsibility in terms of local production and import quotas. Finally, the Belize Bureau of Standards (BOS) is responsible for all food standards and labeling laws.

In April 2000, under accordance with Section 86 of the Belize Agricultural Health Act, No. 47 of 1999, the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) was created. The purpose of this agency is to incorporate and modernize the plant and animal health, and quarantine services of Belize. Although this agency is under the MAF, the board of directors consists of members from the four ministries that represent agriculture, trade, health, and economic development, and five members from private sector associations representing the agriculture and fishing sectors (details of BAHA and its board can be found at www.baha.bz).

For the purpose of shipping U.S. food and agricultural products, exporters must deal directly with BAHA for all sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) issues. BAHA is responsible for approving the import procedure, and when needed, it will process import applications with other agencies for approvals.

The documentation needed to import food and agricultural products into Belize is an import permit from BAHA, an SPS certificate, a certificate of origin, a commercial invoice, and a bill of lading. Most plant products will also need a certificate of treatment and inspection by quarantine officials.

Belize does not have a product registration law; therefore the sanitary permit number of the product issued by the country of origin is automatically accepted in Belize.

Section II. Labeling Requirements:

A. General Requirements

Belize law requires the labeling of all processed food products. Since English is the official language, U.S. product labels are accepted. However, U.S. firms should verify that for product labels, all of the following requirements are met:

- The name of the food
- List of ingredients, in descending order
- Net contents and weight/volume
- Name and address of the manufacturer
- Country of origin
- Batch/Lot identification
- Expiration Date
- Storage instructions
- Instructions for use

General Exemption: A processed food product that is prepackaged and labeled in English in accordance with the laws and standards in force in the United States, Canada, the Caribbean Community, or the European Union shall be deemed to comply with this standard.

B. Requirements Specific to Nutritional Labeling

The Belize Bureau of Standards has standard requirements for the labeling and marking of locally manufactured and imported products sold in Belize. The standard requires that the label affixed to a product gives detailed information on the good, such as the ingredients used and nutritional facts.

Section III. Packaging and Container Regulations:

There are no known limitations or requirements on containers or packaging.

Section IV. Food Additives Regulations:

Food additives also fall under the responsibility of the BOS. This agency uses Codex Alimentarius standards as a reference. The United States Food and Drug Administration additives standards are also approved. The law, per Article 4.3.2.3, states that food additives which appear in the list of food additives permitted for use in foods generally are allowed. The following class titles shall be identified with the specific name or recognized numerical identification as required by national legislation.

- Acidity Regulators
- Anti-caking agents
- Anti-Foaming agents
- Antioxidants
- Artificial Sweeteners
- Colors
- Emulsifiers
- Emulsifying Salts
- Flavor Enhancers
- Flour Treatment agents
- Gelling Agents
- Glazing Agents
- Preservatives
- Propellants
- Raising Agents/ Baking Powder
- Stabilizers
- Thickeners

Section V. Pesticides and Other Contaminants:

The Pesticide Control Board, an agency within the MAF, regulates pesticides. Belize uses internationally accepted standards, and pesticides which enter the country must be registered at the Pesticide Control Board (PCB) located in Central Farm, Cayo District, Belize. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.pcbbelize.com/> or by email: pcbinfo@btl.net.

Section VI. Other Regulations and Requirements:

In addition to the sanitary rules and regulations for imports of food and agricultural products, an import license must be obtained from the Ministry of Economic Development, Commerce, Industry and Consumer Protection for certain products that are considered by the government to compete with local production. The license is issued when there is a shortfall between local production and demand; importers are concerned about the discretionary nature of approvals.

Importers must request this license at least one week in advance prior to shipment. The license is specific in terms of the quantity to be imported and for the duration of its validity. The application for the license is done at BAHA and the officer assigned to the case will internally request approval from the Ministry of Economic Development, Commerce, Industry and Consumer Protection. FAS/Guatemala has observed that, in some cases, the licenses are approved but the quantities permitted are so small as to not be economically feasible to import. There are many products that require this import license. Controlled products are listed below:

- Rice
- Beans
- Bleaching Agents
- Eggs
- Flour
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Furniture of wood, cane, osier, bamboo, rattan or similar material
- Maize
- Fuels (petroleum products)
- Milk
- Gases
- Poultry: Live fresh chilled or frozen (excluding baby chicks)
- Citrus and beverages containing citrus products

- Lumber and articles of wood
- Meats and meat preparations
- Molasses and sugar (excluding icing sugar)
- Wearing apparel: T-Shirts (all types) for commercial purposes
- Beer and beverages (excluding dietetic beverages)
- Jams, jellies and pepper sauce
- Dry Pasta products
- Matches
- Animal feed
- Toilet paper
- Peanuts
- Yachts and other Vessels
- Brooms
- Soaps

To view updates to this list, see this website:

<http://www.mof.gov.bz/faqresults.asp?category=SUPPLIES+CONTROL&question=24>

In the case that you cannot find the appropriate answer to your question please email info@mof.gov.bz

To view the law, search for “Supplies Control” at this website: <http://www.belizelaw.org/>

Section VII. Other Specific Standards:

None.

Section VIII. Copyright and/or Trademark Laws:

Although product registration is not required in Belize, trademarks are protected. Belize is a member of the World Trade Organization and a signatory of Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), which was set up to protect intellectual property. Copyright violations have not been a problem in Belize. Property rights are well understood in this country, which was a British Colony for many centuries, and is part of the British Commonwealth. The Belize Intellectual Property Office (BELIPO), can be contacted through their web-site www.belipo.bz where detailed information can be found regarding legislation, regulation, customs consults, enforcement manuals, fees, links to lawyers and others.

Section IX. Import Procedures:

The import procedure begins at the nearest BAHA office. For a list of the offices please refer to Appendix II or go to web-site www.baha.bz. Documents must be in English, the official language of Belize. For routine items, it is recommended that importers begin the process (at least) one week before the actual import is to occur.

First, the applicant files an application at the BAHA office and pays an application fee. The Belize dollar (BLZ\$) is pegged to the US\$ at BLZ\$2 = U.S. \$1. In this application, the importer must specify the products and quantities for importation. If any of the products are on the list of controlled products, approval is required from the Ministry of Economic Development, Commerce, Industry and Consumer Protection. The officer in charge of the application will meet with the appropriate officer at the Ministry of Economic Development, Commerce, Industry and Consumer Protection and establish whether there is a supply deficit as well as the maximum amount to be imported.

The documents needed for this stage are both the sanitary or phytosanitary certificate, and the certificate of origin (these can be faxed copies). This part of the procedure can take up to a week, but generally is accomplished in three working days. Once the import permit has been issued, the importer must send it to his supplier. The permit will specify the documents which must accompany the shipment. It is important to remember that the import permit must accompany the shipment from the point of origin to Belize.

Once the shipment has arrived, the importer must go to the customs office with the import permit. There the importer must fill out a Customs Declaration Form C-100 (www.customs.gov.bz) and must present the following documents:

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

- Bill of Lading
- Commercial Invoice
- Phytosanitary Certificate or Sanitary Certificate (depending on product)
- Certificate of Origin
- BAHA Import Permit
- Customs Declaration Form C-100 (SAD- Single Administrative Document)
- Other certificates might be needed depending on the product (*see below)

Once the importer submits the foregoing documents, they are checked and verified by a customs official. If all is in order, the documentation is sent to the customs cashier, where the importer must pay all relevant duties, after which he will receive documentation with the appropriate signatures. This part can take as from one day to one week. In general, it is accomplished in the first 48 hours.

Lastly, the importer takes all these documents to the port of entry and hands them over to the customs official in charge. At this point, the official will verify that all the amounts in the shipment are consistent with those specified in the documents. The paperwork then goes to a BAHA inspector who will also verify that all the SPS conditions have been met. After that, the importer will be allowed to exit the port with his merchandise.

*It is important that the U.S. exporter have a good relationship with their Belizean importer, and get feedback on updated requirements for the SPS certificates. Unfortunately, specific SPS requirements (the attestations section on the certificates) change often.

Procedures for import permits can be found at: http://baha.bz/import_permits.html

Guidelines for importation of live animals can be found at: http://baha.bz/animal_health.html

Appendix I. Government Regulatory Agency Contacts:

Government of Belize: <http://www.governmentofbelize.gov.bz/index.php>

Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF): <http://www.agriculture.gov.bz/>

Name: Rene Montero

Title: Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries

Address: 2nd Floor West Block Building, Belmopan City, Belize

Phone: (501) 822-2241/42

Fax: (501) 822-2409

Email: minaf@btl.net

Pesticide Control Board (PCB): <http://www.pcbbelize.com/>

Members of the Pesticides Control Board are appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and serve for a period of two years, representing all major sectors interested in the issue of pesticides and pesticides control, such as the Ministries of Agriculture, Health and the Environment, agricultural producers, Non-governmental organizations, and the pesticide industry.

Phone: (501) 824-2640

Fax: (501) 824-3486

Email: pcbinfo@btl.net

Belize Intellectual Property Office (BELIPO): www.belipo.bz

Address: 2nd Floor Habet Building, PO Box 593,
Constitution Drive, Belmopan City, Belize
Phone: (501) 822-1380, (501) 822-2073
Fax: (501) 822-1382

Belize Customs Office: www.customs.gov.bz

Name: Mr. Gregory Gibson
Title: Comptroller of Customs
Address: Customs House, Port Loyola, P.O. Box 146, Belize, City
Phone: (501) 227-7092 ext. 201
Fax: (501) 227-7091
Email: cusnet@btl.net

Ministry of Economic Development, Commerce, Industry, and Consumer Protection:

www.belize.gov.bz/ct.asp

Name: Ms. Yvonne Hyde
Title: Chief Executive Officer
Address: Ground Floor, Right Wing, Sir Edney Cain Building, Belmopan City, Belize
Phone: (501) 822-2526/822-2527/822-1495
Fax: (501) 822-3673
Email: econdev@btl.net

Belize Bureau of Standards (BOS): www.bbs.gov.bz

Name: José E. Trejo
Title: Director
Address: Power Lane Ministry of Works Compound, Belmopan City
Tel: (501) 822-0446, (501) 822-0447
Fax: (501) 822-2571

Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA): www.baha.bz

Address: Central Farm, Cayo District, Belize
Tel: (501) 824-4899 or (501) 824-4872
Fax: (501) 824-3773 or (501) 824-4889
E-mail: bahasps@btl.net

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Michael Thomas
Managing Director
Belize Agricultural Health Authority
Corner of Hummingbird Highway and Forest
Drive, P. O. Box 169,
Belmopan, Belize, Central America
Tel: 501-822-0197; 501-822-0818/1378
Tel: 501-822-0271
E-mail: baha@btl.net

QUARANTINE DEPARTMENT

Margarito Garcia
Director of Quarantine
Belize Agricultural Health Authority
Central Farm, Cayo District, Belize, C.A.
Tel: 501-824-4899; 501-824-4872
Fax: 501-824-3773; 501-824-4889
E-mail: quarantine@baha.bz or baha@btl.net

PLANT HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Francisco Gutierrez M.Sc.
Director of Plant Health
Belize Agricultural Health Authority
Central Farm, Cayo District, Belize, C.A.
Tel: 501-824-4899; 501-824-4872
Fax: 501-824-3773; 501-824-4889

FOOD SAFETY DEPARTMENT

Michael W. De Shield B.VSc. M.Sc.
Director of Food Safety
Belize Agricultural Health Authority
P. O. Box 181
St. Joseph Street, Belize City, Belize, C.A.
Tel: 501-224-4794

E-mail: baha@btl.net or planthealth@baha.bz

Fax: 501-224-5230

E-mail: foodsafety@btl.net or vdrcu@baha.bz

ANIMAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Dr. Miguel DePaz

Director of Animal Health

Belize Agricultural Health Authority

Central Farm, Cayo District, Belize, C.A.

Tel: 501-824-4899; 501-824-4872

Fax: 501-824-3773; 501-824-4889

E-mail: animalhealth@baha.bz or baha@btl.net

SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY ENQUIRY POINT

Delilah A. Cabb B.Sc. M.Sc.

Coordinator

Sanitary and Phytosanitary Enquiry Point

Belize Agricultural Health Authority

Central Farm, Cayo District, Belize, C.A.

Tel: 501-824-4899; 501-824-4872

Fax: 501-824-3773; 501-824-4889

E-mail: bahasps@btl.net or DelilahCabb@gmail.com

VETERINARY DRUGS REGISTRATION AND CONTROL UNIT

Miguel Figueroa D.V.M.

Veterinary Drugs Registrar

Veterinary Drugs Registration and Control

Unit, P. O. Box 181,

St. Joseph Street, Belize City, Belize, C.A.

Tel: 501-224-4794

Fax: 501-224-5230

E-mail: mikefigbz@yahoo.com or

baha@btl.net

MEDFLY SURVEILLANCE AND PINK HIBISCUS MEALY BUG (PHMB) CONTROL PROGRAMMES

Hernan Zetina

Coordinator

Medfly Surveillance and PHMB Control Programmes, Plant Health Department

Belize Agricultural Health Authority

Agricultural Show Grounds, P. O. Box 169,

Belmopan, Belize, Central America

Tel: 501-822-3753

Fax: 501-822-3753

E-mail: ernzetina69@hotmail.com

Appendix II. Other Import Specialist Contacts:

If you have questions regarding this report or need assistance exporting to Belize, please contact the U.S. Agricultural Affairs Office at the following address.

Foreign Agricultural Service, Office of Agricultural Affairs, United States Embassy Guatemala

Avenida Reforma 7-01, Zona 10

Guatemala, Ciudad 01010

(502) 2326-4030

(502) 2331-8293

Email: AgGuatemala@fas.usda.gov

You may also wish to contact:

Foreign Commercial Service, United States Embassy Belize

U.S. Embassy Belmopan

Floral Park Road

Belmopan, Belize

Tel: (501) 822-4011

Fax: (501) 822-4012

Email: BelmopanCommercialInquiries@state.gov

Their Country Commercial Guide can be found at: <http://belize.usembassy.gov/>

American Chamber of Commerce of Belize

11/2 Miles Northern Highway

Belize City

Send correspondence to:

P.O. Box 911

Belize City, Belize
Tel/Fax: (501) 223-2924/25

For further information on exporting U.S. agricultural products to Belize and other countries, please visit the Foreign Agriculture Service home page: www.fas.usda.gov.