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**Prepared By:** FAS

**Approved By:** Mark Rosmann

### **Report Highlights:**

This report is an annual update of Venezuela's agricultural product import standards and enforcement mechanisms for U.S. exporters of agricultural commodities, foods, and beverages. Despite political uncertainty, Venezuela remains a promising market for U.S. agricultural exports. In 2023, exports of U.S. agricultural products to Venezuela totaled \$675 million, and the United States was the second largest supplier of agricultural and food products by volume with a 29 percent market share. U.S. sanctions exempt transactions related to the export of agricultural and food products and do not prevent export certificate issuance by the USDA.

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**DISCLAIMER:** This report was prepared by the Office of Agricultural Affairs of the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service. While every possible care was taken in the preparation of this report, the information provided may not be completely accurate either because policies have changed since its preparation, or because clear and consistent information about these policies were not available. It is highly recommended that U.S. exporters verify all import requirements with their foreign customers, who are typically best equipped to research such matters with local authorities, before any goods are 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.**

Some links to websites in this document may not function depending on the physical location of the accessing device or network.

The USDA is unable to officially verify information provided with the host country due to the 2019 suspension of U.S. embassy operations in Caracas. Exporters are strongly advised to work closely with Venezuelan importers to confirm the information contained here.

**Note for Exporters:** The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) administers economic sanctions related to Venezuela. Exporters should review the [OFAC U.S. Department of the Treasury](#) website for further details. These sanctions exempt transactions related to the export of agricultural and food products and do not prevent the issuance of export certificates by the USDA.

## Executive Summary

From 2011-2020, Venezuela's economy lost 87 percent of its gross domestic product through a prolonged recession. Since 2021, the Venezuelan economy has stabilized due to tacit economic liberalization, informal dollarization, and gradually lower inflation, and domestic agricultural production, imports, and consumption have risen. After growing by 8 percent in 2022, the Venezuelan economy shrank 1.2 percent in 2023, in part owing to increased inflation in the first half of the year. In 2024, the economy is expected to grow at a moderate rate of 3-4 percent due to lower inflation and a more stable exchange rate.

Total agricultural imports fell to an all-time low of \$1.33 billion in 2019, but have grown significantly since then, reaching \$3 billion in 2022. In calendar year (CY) 2023, Venezuela's agricultural imports declined 8 percent year-on-year to \$2.77 billion; nevertheless, the volume of agricultural imports increased by 3.7 percent.

Comparing market share by volume, the United States was the second largest supplier of agricultural and food products in 2023 (29 percent market share), following Brazil (33 percent). From 2019, when they reached their all-time low of \$176 million, U.S. exports have recovered despite the fragile economic situation. In 2023, U.S. agricultural product exports totaled \$675 million, dropping 8.8 percent year-on-year. Top U.S. exports included soybean meal<sup>1</sup> (\$335 million), corn (\$74 million), wheat (\$62 million), soybeans (\$50 million), and prepared foods (\$37 million).

Venezuela's food and agricultural regulatory system is complex as the authorities inconsistently apply laws, conventions, and rules to trade. Although certain agencies that enforce import regulations and procedures have online processing systems available, these systems have sporadic failures and might be difficult to access outside Venezuela. Most exporters rely on reliable, local partners to navigate importing and registering products.

## Section I - General Food Laws

### Food Laws

The Official Gazette (Spanish: Gaceta Oficial) is Venezuela's principal legal publication that announces updates, changes, and new norms and regulations. The Gazette is found online at: <http://www.imprentanacional.gob.ve>.

#### **1. Food Laws**

Venezuelan legislation governing domestically produced and imported processed food products, beverages, additives, and coloring agents for foods destined for human consumption are contained in its General Food Norms regulation. This food safety directive outlines all requirements, including labeling, which processed food products must fulfill prior to commercial sales. The norms also require registration for locally produced and imported processed food products. Complementary norms were established on March 3, 1996 (Official Gazette N° 35,921). The Food Law and the Complementary Norms are [available here](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Venezuela was the sixth largest market for U.S. soybean meal in 2023.

Venezuela's food laws were established in 1959 (Official Gazette N° 25,864), and the regulation originally stated that the Ministry of Health (MINSALUD<sup>2</sup>), along with the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (MAT), were responsible for controlling food product quality (for human consumption). However, the Ministry of Food (MINPAL) now administers this specific task, as MINSALUD now enforces food recalls and advises MINPAL on whether to issue bans on locally produced and imported processed food products deemed harmful to human health.

## **2. Law on Animal and Plant Health Defense/Comprehensive Agricultural Health Law**

The Law on Animal and Plant Health Defense establishes regulations, conditions, and prohibitions for imports and exports of animal and plant products. Published in the Official Gazette N°20,566 on August 15, 1941, the law intends to control plant and animal disease and pest outbreaks that may affect the production of animal and plant products and relate to the study and prevention of diseases, pests, and all other harmful agents to animal and horticulture (and products). The National Institute of Integral Agriculture and Animal Health (INSAI) is the regulatory enforcement agency for these laws. The 2008 Comprehensive Agricultural Health Law, published in the Official Gazette N° 5.890, replaced the Law on Animal and Plant Health Defense (Ley sobre Defensas Sanitarias Vegetal y Animal). The Comprehensive Agricultural Health Law is available at [http://www.insai.gob.ve/?page\\_id=145](http://www.insai.gob.ve/?page_id=145).

## **3. Seed Law**

On December 28, 2015, the Maduro authorities published its Seed Law (Gaceta Oficial 6.207) that banned the use of modern agricultural biotechnology, application, and research in Venezuela. The law prohibits the following practices:

- In vitro nucleic acid techniques, including the recombinant DNA technique and the direct injection of nucleic acids into cells or organelles.
- The fusion of cells of species beyond the taxonomic family, which exceeds the natural barriers of reproduction or recombination and are not techniques used in traditional reproduction and selection.

This law also prohibits the production, import, use, release, and multiplication of transgenic or genetically engineered seeds and the granting of copyright protection and patents on any type of seed. Violators of this law can be subject to sanctions ranging from fines to imprisonment. The 2016 Seed Law is available at: <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC151761>.

## **4. Good Manufacturing Practices**

Venezuelan Good Manufacturing Practices regulations established the rules for manufacturing, storage, and transportation practices of foods for human consumption, published in the Official Gazette N° 36,081, dated July 11, 1996. MINSALUD and the National Superintendence for the Protection of Socioeconomic Rights are the regulatory enforcement entities for these regulations.

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<sup>2</sup> Acronyms for Venezuelan authorities and institutions are herein provided by their Spanish names/titles.

## **5. Law for the Defense of the People in the Access to Goods and Services**

Enacted by presidential decree, the 2008 “Law for the Defense of the People in the Access to Goods and Services” (SUNDDE) is one of the more intrusive agriculture and food sector regulations. The decree’s objective is for the “The defense, protection, and safeguard of individual and collective rights and interests in the access of people to goods and services for the satisfaction of their needs...and to establish penalties, sanctions and compensation for injury; as well as to regulate its application...with the active participation of communities.” Venezuela amended the law in 2010, published under Official Gazette No. 39,358. The SUNDDE enforces this law and has the authority to inspect and, if necessary, shutdown points of sales, manufacturing and processing facilities, and warehouses.

## **6. Law on Fair Costs and Prices**

The 2011 Venezuelan Law of Profits, Costs, and Fair Prices (amended January 2014) aims to stabilize prices, guarantee goods access, and attack inflation. The SUNDDE is the primary regulatory authority enforcing the law and establishes the standards for the National Registry of Prices of Goods and Services and regulates prices. Under this law, SUNDDE has the authority to set maximum retail prices or price ranges for goods and services. The Law of Profits, Costs, and Fair Prices is available at: <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/es/c/LEX-FAOC130875/>.

## **Section II - Labeling Requirements**

There are three directives governing labeling requirements in Venezuela. These include:

- The General Food Norm
- The Law for the Defense of People in the Access to Goods and Services
- The General Standards for Labeling of Packaged Foods (Venezuelan Commission for Industrial Norms, COVENIN No. 2952:2001)

The General Standards for Labeling of Packaged Foods is available at: <https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/en/node/25410>.

The MINSALUD oversees processed food labeling in Venezuela. Labeling is mandatory for both domestically produced and imported food products. The MINSALUD authorities may require the elimination or modification of any paragraph or phrase concerning a particular product and recommend the addition of any paragraph or phrase they deem necessary. An informal summary of the relevant labeling information is detailed below.

### **Language**

All labels must be in Spanish. The MINSALUD must authorize a Spanish translation of the original/foreign label, and once approved, the label must be affixed, stamped, sealed, or printed with indelible ink to the product prior to export. The exported product must enter Venezuela with its final label, and the product label information must be stamped, sealed, or printed with indelible ink. The use of computer technology for labeling is allowed. Suppliers must inform the importer about the characteristics of the product and must indicate as percentages the components and ingredients of the product. Labels must be submitted for approval through the MINSALUD Sanitary Health Service system (Sistema de Información Automatizado de Contraloría Sanitaria), available at <http://www.sacs.gob.ve/site/sistemas-en-lineas>.

The product label must include the following:

- Brand name or trademark
- Descriptive name of the product
- Net weight or net content (only metric measurements are accepted)
- List of ingredients, in decreasing order of importance
- “Manufactured by” (name of company) in (name of city, state, country)
- “Imported by” (name of importer/importing company)
- Special handling and storage requirements to keep the product safe, if any
- Cooking and oven temperatures, to be indicated both in Celsius and Fahrenheit
- Detailed instructions for preparation or use
- Expiration date and/or minimum shelf life, in a legible, visible, and indelible form
- The MINSALUD registration number
- The SENCAMER (metrology) registration number

### **Other Specific Labeling Requirements**

Nutritional Labeling: Only foods for special dietary use must include nutrient information on the label (according to the Official Gazette No. 31.106, dated November 1976).<sup>3</sup> Nutritional information must be expressed as a percentage of the recommended daily requirement set by the National Nutrition Institute (INN). The “Recommended Daily Nutritional Intake” levels may be different from U.S. levels. The complete list is available at the INN.<sup>4</sup> The following additional information must appear on labels for processed foods that are marketed for specific dietary use:

- Energy value, protein, digestible carbohydrate, and fat contents (expressed in grams)
- Amounts of any nutrients claimed to have special nutritional value.
- For Vitamins A and D, nutrient content must be expressed in international units. For all other vitamins and minerals, nutrient content must be expressed in milligrams or micrograms.
- Energy values must be expressed in calories.

Labeling of Foods for Human Consumption Containing High Sodium, Sugar, Saturated Fat, and Trans Fat Levels: According to resolutions No. 011 ([Official Gazette No. 41,804](#) of January 21, 2020) and 137 ([Official Gazette No. 42,271](#) of December 7, 2021), the MINSALUD set new guidelines for the labeling of foods for human consumption containing sodium (Resolution No. 001), sugar, saturated fats, and trans fats (Resolution No. 137). The new labeling requirements are mandatory for foods containing high sodium levels as of January 21, 2022. For foods containing high levels of sugar, saturated fats, and trans fats, the new labeling requirements will become mandatory on December 7, 2024.

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<sup>3</sup> “Special dietary foods” refer to specific, processed, or prepared food products designed to meet particular dietary needs determined by particular physical or physiological conditions and/or specific diseases (e.g., foods for diabetics, foods for infants).

<sup>4</sup> Presently, the information is not available online.

## Sodium

Manufactured foods must comply with the labeling regulation whenever salt or any food additive or ingredient containing sodium is added in the manufacturing process, and in which the final composition, the sodium content is equal to or greater than 600 milligrams of sodium per 100 grams of solid food, and 300 milligrams of sodium per 100 milliliters of liquid food or beverages. Manufactured foods with sodium content equal to or higher than these parameters must have a black octagon-shaped figure with a white border on the front of the label or container label, with Spanish text inside that reads: “ALTO EN SODIO” (High in Sodium) (Figure 1). The label to be used is similar to the following:

**Figure 1. Food Warning Label for Products Deemed High in Sodium<sup>5</sup>**



Edible salt and sodium-based food additives are excluded from the regulation. Details of this regulation is found in the Official Gazette No. 41,804 (2020), available at <http://www.imprentanacional.gob.ve>.

## Sugar, Saturated Fats, and Trans Fats

Manufactured foods must follow the labeling regulation if they contain any nutrients listed in their final composition the amount established below (Table 1).

**Table 1. Label Requirements for Food Products Based on Nutrient/Fat Content**

Nutrients	If 100 grams of solid food contains...	If 100 mL of liquid food contains...
Added Sugars	Equal or higher than 11 grams	Equal or higher than 5.5 grams
Saturated Fats	Equal or higher than 5 grams	Equal or higher than 3 grams
Trans Fats	Equal or higher than 0 grams	Equal or higher than 0 grams

Manufactured foods with sugar, saturated fat, or trans-fat content equal to or higher than these parameters must have a black octagon-shaped figure with a white border on the front of the label or container label, with Spanish text inside that reads: “ALTO EN” followed by “AZUCAR,” “GRASAS SATURADAS,” or “GRASAS TRANS,” as appropriate (Figure 2).

<sup>5</sup> These labels mirror similar food warning labels found Latin America and the Caribbean, including Colombia.



**Figure 2. Food Warning Label for Products Deemed High in Sugar, Fat Content**



The following foods are excluded from the regulation:

- Foods to which sugar, saturated fats, or trans fats have not been added in their manufacturing process.
- Unprocessed or minimally processed foods. For example, fruits, vegetables, grains, seeds, cereals, cereals, meats, vegetable oils, sugars, and raw materials for the food industry.

Details of this regulation are published in the Official Gazette No. 42,271 of December 2021, available at <http://www.imprentanacional.gob.ve>.

Labeling for Baby Food: There are no special labeling requirements for baby foods, although MINSALUD remains concerned about the use of modified food starches. Mentioning processes used in modified food starches is strongly recommended at the time of product registration.

Seasonings, Colorings, and Flavorings: Locally produced and imported ingredients that could be used in the formulation or further processing of food products must be registered with MINSALUD. The names of spices used as seasoning, colorings, and flavorings of processed food products must be specified on the label.

Health Claims: Information about health claims is subject to the Ministry of Health's consideration and is subject to case-by-case approval.

Products That May Cause Allergies: If a product contains any potential allergens, they must be enumerated on the label with the specific name as follows:

- Processed food products containing grain gluten (wheat, rye, oats, barley, spelt or any grain hybrid or product)
- Crustacean and by-products
- Eggs and by-products
- Fish and fishery products
- Soybeans and products
- Milk and dairy products, including products containing lactose
- Nuts and derived products

### **Section III - Packaging and Container Regulations**

The National Autonomous Standardization, Quality, Metrology, and Technical Regulations Service (SENCAMER) enforces packaging and container regulations. The SENCAMER adheres to COVENIN's established standards and norms, but the Codex Alimentarius guidelines also apply in some cases. The MINSALUD established new manufacturing, storage, and transportation practices for foods for human consumption through Official Gazette N° 38,739, dated August 2007 (which replaced Official Gazette N° 36,081, dated November 1996). Containers, vessels, canning, bottling, and packing materials used to handle inputs or finished products should meet the following general requirements:

- Manufactured with materials suitable for that kind of food, such as glass, tin, plastic, paper, cardboard, or another material approved by MINSALUD authorities.
- Must not transmit substances to the food beyond the allowed limits under the standards in force.
- Shall not be used for any different purpose that might contaminate the food.

All COVENIN standards related to food product packaging are available in the containers and packaging section at <https://sigbs.sencamer.gob.ve/>.

### **Packaging Sustainability Measures**

Venezuela does not have regulations addressing packaging sustainability measures.

### **Section IV - Food Additives Regulations**

General definitions concerning food additives and contaminants are in COVENIN Norm No. 910. Note that some food additives authorized by the Food and Drug Administration in the United States are not authorized in Venezuela.

General guidelines concerning food additives include:

- COVENIN food standards specify food additives and contaminant tolerance levels.
- MINSALUD, using COVENIN standards, approves food additives during registration.
- In the absence of a COVENIN standard for specific food additives, MINSALUD will use guidelines from the Codex Alimentarius to approve additives on a case-by-case basis.
- For sausages, ham, meat, and meat products in combination with other foods, the total level of nitrite and nitrate must be indicated.
- "Maximum Level of Chemical Residues" is based on the Codex Alimentarius guidelines.
- When using monosodium glutamate (MSG), it is useful to specify the level used for MINSALUD's health registration purposes.

### **Section V - Pesticides and Other Contaminants**

INSAI is the government agency with the authority to monitor pesticide residues found in agricultural and processed food products arriving to Venezuelan ports. If INSAI suspects an agricultural or processed food product is contaminated with pesticides or similar products, they can recommend detaining the consignment until further analysis is performed. INSAI can

recommend specific lab analyses to confirm contamination. However, MAT, MINAL and MINSALUD are responsible for enforcing product retention. If a lab's test results confirm pesticide contamination, INSAI will destroy the product without compensation.

All domestically produced and imported pesticides require INSAI registration. Venezuela does not have Maximum Residue Level (MRL) national standards for pesticides. However, regulations and guidelines concerning the manufacturing, marketing, and use of pesticides fall under the "General Pesticide Regulations" (Reglamento General de Pesticidas), first published in 1968 (updated in 1991) as per Official Gazette No. 34877, [available here](#). INSAI generally observes the Codex Alimentarius "Pesticide Residue Tolerances Guidelines." Information about approved pesticides is available through INSAI, which maintains the list of prohibited or restricted pesticides and severely hazardous pesticide formulations.

## **Section VI - Other Requirements, Regulations, and Registration Measures**

### **Processed Food Products/Health Registration**

Prior to commercialization to Venezuelan consumers, all domestically produced and imported processed food products must be registered with MINSALUD's Sanitary Control Service ([www.sacs.gob.ve](http://www.sacs.gob.ve)), through the Food Hygiene Division. Although Venezuelan law does not prohibit a foreign exporter from registering food products, a local consultant or agent may be a helpful resource to navigate the food registration process. Alcoholic beverage products must be registered with MINSALUD.

The Venezuelan Food Industry Chamber (CAVIDEA) provides a suggested list of experts for food product registry (See Appendix I). The Norms Committee represents CAVIDEA members. For additional information, see <http://www.cavidea.org>.

General guidelines for registering a processed food product:

- All consumer-ready food products under the following Venezuelan Harmonized Schedule headings HS codes, 03, 04, 05, 16, 19, 20, 21, and 22 are subject to registration.
- Prior to importing consumer-ready food products, importers should obtain a registration number from MINSALUD.
- Processed foods unregistered in the country of origin cannot be registered in Venezuela.
- All new-to-market local or foreign processed food products must be submitted for registration before being imported. This new product will be subject to approval for registration by MINSALUD after several lab tests to prove that it is suitable for human consumption.
- The foreign exporter/seller is the owner of the product registration, although authorized importers can proceed with the registration process.
- The processed food product health registration is valid for five years; however, renewals are permitted.
- MINSALUD can consider exceptions to the registration process for food imported by government entities in Venezuela.
- If an imported product does not meet the minimum quality standards or does not have a health registration number, it could be confiscated and/or destroyed by MINSALUD authorities.

- Inspection at the point of sale occurs by MINSALUD and SUNDDE authorities on a regular basis to determine if imported products are fit for human consumption, have sufficient shelf life, or are thought to have been adulterated.

### **Obtaining Health Registration Number for Processed Foods, a Step-by-Step**

In general, it takes 45 to 60 business days to register processed food goods with MINSALUD, but often takes longer due to the high number of applications. Exporters must apply for the Health or Sanitary Registration for Food (Form SIE 5 197) from MINSALUD. Documents accompanying the application, including the certificate of free sale, and the authorization or a power of attorney to a representative or a local consultant or agent must be issued by foreign authorities, translated into Spanish, and authenticated or stamped (as per the Hague Convention on Foreign Public Documents). Documents required as part of this process include:

- A certificate of free sale and consumption issued by competent authorities in the country of origin, which states that the food has been authorized for human consumption, for further processing, or for use as an input in food for human consumption in the country of origin, with a validity period of 12 months from the date of application (authenticated).
- Certificate of chemical, physical, and microbiological test conducted by an accredited lab in the country of origin.
- A power of attorney authorizing the Venezuelan representative to apply for health registration of the product in Venezuela (authenticated).
- A letter of authorization from the Venezuelan representative, if a third party is requesting the health registration on their behalf.
- One sample of the food product.
- Three copies of the original labels from the country of origin, and three examples of the label for marketing the product in Venezuela (in Spanish).
  - Labels should include the following information:
    - Descriptive name of the product
    - Trademark
    - Net weight
    - Net contents
    - List of ingredients in the manufacture of the product, in descending order
    - “Manufactured by” [company name], in [plant location]
    - “Imported by” [local importer/distributor]
    - MINSALUD registration number [#]
    - For food products that involve special storage conditions, these requirements should be clearly indicated
    - Any other requirement listed by SENCAMER (COVENIN) standards, the General Food Norms, or specifications of MINSALUD
    - List of ingredients, including additives, colors, and preservatives

After submitting all required documents, MINSALUD will give authorization to conduct the corresponding laboratory testing for each food product to be registered. Lab tests for meat, poultry, and dairy products must be completed in the Rafael Rangel National Institute of Hygiene, MINSALUD’s primary laboratory. MINSALUD designates (on case-by-case basis) an accredited private lab to conduct food testing for all other processed food products. Lab results are submitted directly to MINSALUD, which will then assign a health registration number if the

lab results are considered satisfactory. Health registration numbers are published in the Official Gazette.

### **Registration Process Samples**

Through the health registration process, the U.S. exporter or Venezuelan importer must submit samples (no more than three) of each product or model for which registration is being sought to MINSALUD's previously designated and accredited Venezuelan laboratory. Samples without commercial value should meet the following requirements to obtain an exemption from the payment of import duties and value-added tax:

- The sender must be the product's manufacturer, representative, or authorized exporter.
- The addressee shall be a company or an importer with experience in this activity.
- All documentation (commercial invoices, transportation invoices, or others) shall contain annotations demonstrating that the products are samples without commercial value.
- Samples should be identified as having no commercial value. It is advisable to mark the package with the following wording: "Muestras sin valor comercial para su registro en el Ministerio de Salud" (English: "Samples without commercial value for registration with the Ministry of Health").

Fees applied by the Venezuelan authorities for the sanitary registration of food products are [available here](#).

### **Facility and Product Registration Requirements**

#### **Animal Products and Unprocessed Plant Products**

Imported products and sub-products of plant or animal origin, breeding animals, and plant breeding materials are subject to SPS permit issuance from INSAI, which is authorized to restrict or prohibit the importation, marketing, or use of animal and plant products. For these cases, INSAI's "Standing Technical Advisory Body" recommends the appropriate course of action based on a risk analysis.

The general guidelines for importing animal and plant products include:

- The importer, exporter, or producer must register with INSAI. The validity of this registration is indefinite, can be canceled due to non-compliance with dispositions stated by pre-established laws and regulations.
- Importers should request and obtain an SPS import permit from INSAI prior to importing animal products and/or unprocessed plant products.
- Specific SPS statements (treatment and other conditions) for each type of product are determined by INSAI on a case-by-case basis.
- The import permit issued by INSAI requires specific SPS statements.
- INSAI's SPS import permits have a non-renewable validity period between 60 and 90 days, depending on the product.
- Sanitary health import permits are issued for animal products and livestock-farming inputs (60-day validity).
- Phytosanitary import permits are issued for plant products (90-day validity).
- Import permits are only for one shipment and one pre-designated port of entry.

- Every shipment must have an import permit issued by INSAI and its corresponding U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) or U.S. Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) export certificate.
- The “Remarks” section of the APHIS or FSIS export certificate should include the specific SPS statements in both English and Spanish.
- No product should be loaded in a vessel before the import permit is received, and the corresponding sanitary statements from a competent authority are included in the export documentation.

### **Seeds**

INSAI issues seed import permits after conducting the pest risk analysis and assessing the corresponding results. INSAI provides requirements for the pest risk analysis on a case-by-case basis. Both locally produced and imported seeds require registration through the National Institute of Agricultural Research at the Division of the National Seed Service.

### **Processed Animal Products**

A USDA FSIS certificate must accompany each shipment of meat and poultry and/or processed animal products. Venezuela accepts imports from all FSIS-approved plants for meat products with existing market access to Venezuela. All federally inspected meat and poultry plants are eligible to export to Venezuela. Importers must have an import permit before shipping unprocessed meat and poultry products.

### **Other Certification and Testing Requirements**

#### **Inspections**

Jurisdiction on inspected products is based on the type of imported product. The MINSALUD inspects processed products, while INSAI inspects all non-processed animal and plant-origin products. INSAI handles phytosanitary inspections which address plant pests and diseases. Sanitary inspections address human health concerns associated with hazardous pathogens and are handled by MINSALUD. No matter the type of agricultural and processed food products, all imports are subject to inspection by the National Integrated Tax Administration Service (SENIAT), the National Guard (Guardia Nacional), and the Anti-Drug Command. There are no inspection fees.

#### **Control of Products at Ports of Entry**

The General Food Law authorizes MINSALUD, INSAI, the National Guard, and SENIAT authorities to reject, confiscate, or destroy imported food and agricultural products if any of the following conditions are met:

- Incomplete documentation
- Invalid permits
- If the product is deemed unfit for human consumption
- If the product is determined to have an insufficient shelf life
- Products considered adulterated

Rejected cargo can be temporarily stored at the port of entry at the importer's expense until the appeals procedures are completed. In cases where imports are confiscated or destroyed because competent authorities have judged them unfit for consumption, importers are not eligible for compensation.

## **Section VII - Other Specific Standards and Laws**

No available information.

## **Section VIII – Geographical Indicators, Trademarks, Brand Names, and Intellectual Property Rights**

Venezuela's Intellectual Property Registration Service (SAPI) is responsible for intellectual property rights administration in Venezuela, including geographical indicators, trademarks, and brand names. While Venezuela is a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization and remains a signatory to various international intellectual property agreements, until recently, it applied Andean Community regulations. Through Andean Community Decision 486, Venezuela ratified the provisions of the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. While Venezuela is no longer a member of the Andean Community, Andean Community regulations for trademark protection remain valid in Venezuela.

### **Brand Name and Trademark Registration Process**

All geographical indicators, trademarks, and brand names of local and imported processed food products to be sold in Venezuela must be registered with SAPI. Typically, brand name and trademark registrations are among services provided by specialized Venezuelan law firms. The procedures for the registry of brands are found at: <https://sapi.gob.ve>. Procedures for the registry of geographic indicators can be found at: <https://sapi.gob.ve/indicaciones-geograficas/>.

Essential guidelines for brand names and trademark registration include:

- A name search should be conducted prior to registering.
- Approval or rejection of a brand name is based on phonetics and spelling matches of brands for similar products.
- Approved and registered brand names are published quarterly in SAPI bulletins.
- All documents relating to patents, designs, trademarks, etc., are published in the Industrial Property Bulletin.
- The process typically takes three to six months to be completed.

## **Section IX - Import Procedures**

The Venezuelan authorities implemented the United Nations Customs Computerized System in most Venezuelan ports of entry. By law, only nationals and private customs agencies with Venezuelan local staff can conduct customs procedures. A customs agent assesses customs fees, port charges, and taxes and fills out paperwork. The customs agent's fee is one percent of the cost, insurance, and freight (CIF) value, plus any other charges accrued during offloading. Clearing customs normally requires five to eight working days.

All imported goods presented at the ports of entry must be officially declared to SENIAT authorities within five days of arrival. Fines may be levied and applied to any shipment when the customs entry is made later than five days after the arrival date. When an importer either delays or refuses to claim a product arriving in Venezuelan ports, SENIAT will impound the goods not claimed, and, if steep fines and storage fees are not promptly paid, sell the goods at an auction.

All shipments must be made on a direct consignment basis. Customs regulations stipulate that the consignee is the shipment owner and is responsible for all customs payments. Importers must register all products with the MINSALUD Comptroller prior to the product entering the Venezuelan market.

### **Import Duties**

Import duties are calculated using the WTO Harmonized Scheduled Tariff classification system on the CIF value of the products (using the commercial invoice as basis). They are assessed, due, and payable at the time of arrival, in local currency (Bolivars), regardless of the currency listed on the commercial invoice. A value added tax (VAT) rate of sixteen percent is calculated based on the CIF value (See Section IX, Value Added Tax).

### **Customs Fees**

SENIAT charges one percent of the CIF value for processing shipments and for the use of the port of entry. In some cases, an additional stamp fee is added to offset the cost of processing these imports. Both the SENIAT Customs and Port Fee and Customs Stamp Fee are calculated using the CIF value.

Procedures at the port of entry may include:

- A SENIAT agent inspects incoming shipments. The SENIAT agent compares the contents of the load to the import documentation such that it conforms to the invoices, packing lists, and other paperwork.
- Following the SENIAT inspection, MINSALUD (or INSAI) inspects the goods.
- A SENIAT appraiser compares the declared invoice price with international prices to monitor for evidence of dumping or tax evasion.
- A customs agent assesses customs fees, port charges, and taxes, and completes a liquidation form.
- SENIAT and port authorities stamp the liquidation form, accompanied by the required MINSALUD import permits.
- The customs agency deposits the amount due in a SENIAT account in a local bank and presents the deposit slip to SENIAT and port authorities to obtain final clearance.
- Once all aforementioned procedures occur and obligations are satisfied by Venezuelan authorities, Customs releases the merchandise.

### **Document Requirements**

According to Venezuelan customs regulations, all imports must be warehoused at the port of entry while customs clearance is being completed. All shippers are urged to provide all documents tendered for customs purposes (in Spanish) to avoid processing delays. The documents needed for customs clearance may include, but are not limited to:



- Customs declaration of value
- Commercial invoice (original invoice, no photocopies accepted). Insurance and freight must be listed separately on the commercial invoice.
- Bill of Landing
- Certificate of Origin
- Shipment manifest
- SPS certificate, if required
- Import license, if required

### **Import Tax Exoneration for Some Agricultural and Food Products**

Since 2018, the Venezuelan public authorities have issued temporary tariff exemption decrees for food products, agricultural products, and raw materials. The list of products included in the exoneration decrees has been constantly modified without prior notice or public comment period (Table 2). The exoneration decrees and regulations are published in the Official Gazette.

**Table 2. Products Subject to Potential Import Tax Exemption**

Live bovine animals	Meat of bovine animals, fresh, chilled, frozen, including boneless	Powdered milk, infant formula, and soy-based infant formula
Durum and other wheat	Potato seeds	Sugar cane seed for sowing
Oilseeds (soybean, sunflower, cottonseed and palm nuts, and kernels) for sowing	White and yellow corn seed for sowing	Vegetables, for sowing: onion, broccoli, carrot, lettuce, and tomato
Dry beans, peas, and lentils for sowing	Dry beans, peas, and lentils	Protein concentrates and textured protein substances

**Data Source:** Official Gazettes of The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

### **Value Added Tax**

Venezuela, through the SENIAT, applies a flat 16 percent VAT on sales of both domestically produced and imported food products. The applied VAT on imports is based on the total customs value. Certain food products from the basic food basket are VAT exempted (Table 3).

**Table 3. Products Exempted from VAT**

Rice	Coffee, beans or grounded	Milk, soy-bases
All flours of vegetable origin	Tuna, canned, natural	Cheese, white, hard
Bread and pasta	Sardines, canned	Margarine and butter
Eggs	Milk, crude or pasteurized	Poultry, fresh or frozen
Salt	Milk, powdered	Certified seeds
Sugar	Milk, infant formulas	Vegetables

**Data Source:** Official Gazettes of The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

### **Section X – Trade Facilitation**

Some Venezuelan public agencies involved in importing food and agricultural products have made online systems available to manage import procedures, certifications, and registrations. However, to date, these systems have sporadic failures and are generally difficult to access outside Venezuela. As of March 2024, Venezuela has not ratified the World Trade Organization’s Trade Facilitation Agreement.

## **APPENDIX I: Venezuelan Regulatory Key Agency Contacts**

### **Foreign Agricultural Service in Caracas**

Operations through the Office of Agriculture Affairs and the U.S. Embassy in Caracas remain suspended. Contact the Office of Agriculture Affairs at U.S. Embassy Bogota, Colombia at [AgBogota@usda.gov](mailto:AgBogota@usda.gov) for any Venezuela-related questions.

### **Ministry of Food**

Av. Andrés Bello - Edificio “Las Fundaciones”

Municipio Libertador, Caracas

Tel: (58-212) 577-0257 / 395-7474

Fax: (58-212) 578-2647

Website: <http://www.minpal.gob.ve>

Email: [oirp@minal.gob.ve](mailto:oirp@minal.gob.ve)

The Ministry of Food (MINPAL) is responsible for ensuring food safety. Imports and exports of food for human consumption are also under the authority of MINPAL through the issuance of import permits, licenses, and any other document needed for agricultural and processed food products. MINPAL supervises almost every aspect related to the production, distribution, and storage of food for human consumption.

### **Ministry of Agriculture and Lands**

Av. Urdaneta, Edificio “MAT”

Esquina de Platanal a Candilito

La Candelaria, Caracas

Tel: (58-212) 509-0347/ 0348/ 0359/ 0360/ 0361

Website: <http://prensamat.blogspot.com>

Email: [RelacionesPublicasMAT@gmail.com](mailto:RelacionesPublicasMAT@gmail.com)

The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (MAT) is responsible for promoting sustainable development of the Venezuelan agricultural and livestock sectors through the support, direction, and evaluation of agricultural activities.

### **National Institute of Integral Agriculture and Animal Health**

Av. Principal Las Delicias

Edif. INIA, Maracay, Edo. Aragua

Tel. (58-243) 242-8062

Website: <http://www.insai.gob.ve>

Email: [PresidenciaNuevoINSAI@gmail.com](mailto:PresidenciaNuevoINSAI@gmail.com)

The National Institute of Integral Agriculture and Animal Health (INSAI) is MAT’s principal sanitary/phytosanitary (SPS) authority. INSAI is responsible for managing and protecting domestic agricultural production, including ensuring the legislation and compliance of SPS regulations to prevent the introduction or spread of diseases and pests that threaten sustainability and Venezuela’s claim to food sovereignty. Among various functions are regulating the export, import, and internal movement of animals and plants and agricultural products and by-products.

INSAI's charge is to guarantee the nation's comprehensive agricultural health, and is the counterpart of USDA APHIS.

### **Ministry of Fishing and Aquaculture**

Av. Lecuna, Torre Este, Parque Central, Piso 17, Caracas

Tel. (58-212) 577-76-45. (58-212) 574-43-11

Website: <http://minpesca.gob.ve/>

Email: [Atención@MinPesca.com](mailto:Atención@MinPesca.com)

The Ministry of Fishing and Aquaculture (MPA) is responsible for regulating and promoting the national fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The MPA promotes production, industry development, and related marketing activities that support domestic product demand and promote international trade. In addition, MPA regulates the fisheries and aquaculture sectors through the Venezuelan Fishing and Aquaculture Institute.

### **Fishing and Aquaculture Institute**

Av. Santa Lucia con Av. Principal del Bosque y Santa Isabel

Urb. El Bosque, Torre Credicard, piso 9. Caracas

Tel. (58-212) 593.86.91 . (58-212) 951.39.86

Website: <http://insopesca.gob.ve/>

Email: [info@InsoPesca.com.ve](mailto:info@InsoPesca.com.ve)

The Fishing and Aquaculture Institute (INSOPESCA) is the regulatory arm of MPA that establishes and implements policies that support the sanitary development of the fishing and aquaculture sectors.

### **Ministry of Health**

Av. Baralt, Centro Simón Bolívar, Edificio Sur

El Silencio, Caracas

Tel: (58-212) 408-0000

Website: <http://mpps.gob.ve/>

Email: [AtencionalCiudadAnompps@gmail.com](mailto:AtencionalCiudadAnompps@gmail.com)

The Ministry of Health (MINSALUD) regulates domestically produced and imported processed food products, beverages, additives, and food colors destined for human consumption. MINSALUD is responsible for developing and implementing food norms and regulations, including the enforcement of food recalls, and providing recommendations to other ministries to ban local and/or imported food products deemed hazardous to human health. The following are MINSALUD's key regulatory authorities for food products:

- The Sanitary Health Service (or Comptroller)
- The Rafael Rangel National Hygiene Institute
- The National Nutrition Institute

**Sanitary Health Service (Comptroller)**

Directorate for Food Safety and Inspection  
Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Salud  
Av. Baralt, Centro Simón Bolívar,  
Edificio Sur, piso 3, Of. 313  
El Silencio, Caracas  
Tel: (58-212) 408-1533/ 484-3066  
Fax: (58-212) 483-1533  
Website: <http://www.sacs.gob.ve/site>  
Email: [SACSDireccion@gmail.com](mailto:SACSDireccion@gmail.com)

The Sanitary Health Service (or Comptroller), through the Directorate for Food Safety and Inspection, is responsible for registering processed food products. Imported and local products must be registered with the Comptroller before being sold in Venezuela.

**Rafael Rangel Hygiene Institute**

Gerencia de Control y Registro de Alimentos  
Ciudad Universitaria UCV, Los Chaguaramos, Caracas  
Tel: (58-212) 219-1670 / 219-1663  
Website: <http://www.inhrr.gob.ve>  
Email: [grcontrol@inhrr.gob.ve](mailto:grcontrol@inhrr.gob.ve)

The Rafael Rangel National Hygiene Institute serves as the Venezuelan authority's reference laboratory for all food testing. This is the only authorized institute to conduct food analysis for product testing and registration.

**National Nutrition Institute**

Av. Baralt, Esquina El Carmen  
Edificio INN  
El Silencio, Caracas  
Tel: (58-212) 482-6473  
Website: <http://www.inn.gob.ve>  
Email: [prensa@inn.gob.ve](mailto:prensa@inn.gob.ve)

The National Nutrition Institute (INN) is responsible for establishing nutrition guidelines and recommended daily nutritional intakes.

**Ministry of Commerce**

Av. Lecuna, Torre Oeste de Parque Central  
Entrada Nivel Lecuna, Caracas  
Tel. (58-212)-596-7616  
Website: <http://mincomercional.gob.ve>  
Email: [AtencionCiudadanaMppcn@gmail.com](mailto:AtencionCiudadanaMppcn@gmail.com)

The Ministry of Commerce (MINCOMERCIO) has primary responsibility Venezuela's industrial and commercial sectors, including policies regarding technical standards and

intellectual property. MINCOMERCIO also participates an inter-ministerial commission along with MINPAL, MAT, and MINSALUD that defines import criteria for agricultural and processed food products. This authority also supervises advertisements pertaining to food, food quality, labels, and other health-related issues.

The following MINCOMERCIO agencies are involved with agricultural and processed food products:

- The National Autonomous Standardization, Quality, Metrology, and Technical Regulations Service
- The Intellectual Property Registration Service
- The National Superintendence for the Protection of Socio-Economic Rights

### **National Autonomous Standardization, Quality, Metrology, and Technical Regulations Service**

Av. Libertador, C.C. Los Cedros, Planta Baja

La Florida, Caracas

Tel: (58-212) 761-6474

Website: <http://www.sencamer.gob.ve>

Email: [Acreditacion@sencamer.gob.ve](mailto:Acreditacion@sencamer.gob.ve)

The National Autonomous Standardization, Quality, Metrology, and Technical Regulations Service (SENCAMER) is responsible for technical standardization, quality control, metrology, and certification programs and maintains the register of mandatory technical regulations. Selected processed food products must be registered through SENCAMER, which regulates and administers brand names, trademarks, and product quality standards. The previous Venezuelan Commission for Quality and Industrial Norms (COVENIN) was formerly the compiling body for technical standards and norms; however, that responsibility now lies with SENCAMER, but the name “COVENIN” has been kept for the published norms. Note that the Fund for Standardization and Quality Certification (FONDONORMA) is no longer authorized to certify products and quality systems.

### **Intellectual Property Registration Service**

Centro Simón Bolívar, Edificio Norte, Piso 4

El Silencio, Caracas

Tel: (58-212) 481-6478

Fax (58-212) 483-1391

Website: <https://sapi.gob.ve>

Email: [RecepcionVirtual@sapi.gob.ve](mailto:RecepcionVirtual@sapi.gob.ve)

The Intellectual Property Registration Service (SAPI) is responsible for the administration of intellectual property rights in Venezuela. SAPI has two main operational branches: 1) The Industrial Property Registration Directorate (DRPI), responsible for granting patents, utility models, industrial designs, breeder certificates (for plant varieties), and the registration of trademarks, trade names, commercial slogans and appellations of origin; and, 2) The National Copyright Directorate (DNDA), which maintains administrative responsibilities for registration, monitoring, and inspection in connection with copyright and related rights.

### **National Superintendence for the Protection of Socioeconomic Rights**

Av. Libertador, C.C. Los Cedros, PB

La Florida, Caracas

Tel: (58-212) 705-3100 (0-800-5658-786)

Website: <http://www.sundde.gob.ve>

Email: [Sundde.Rupdae@gmail.com](mailto:Sundde.Rupdae@gmail.com)

The National Superintendence for the Protection of Socioeconomic Rights (SUNDDE) is responsible for protecting consumers and end-users against fraudulent sales and promotions, overpricing, usury, and warranty incompliance. It has the authority to conduct on-site inspections of points of sale, manufacturing and processing facilities, and warehouses. SUNDDE's inspections can lead to the shutdowns of businesses and the expropriation of private sector property and manufactured goods.

### **National Integrated Tax Administration Service**

Av. Blandín, C.C. Mata de Coco, Torre SENIAT

La Castellana, Caracas

Tel: (58-212) 274-4000/ 274-4026

Website: <http://declaraciones.seniat.gob.ve>

Email: [AsistenciaAduanas@seniat.gob.ve](mailto:AsistenciaAduanas@seniat.gob.ve)

The National Integrated Tax Administration Service (SENIAT) administers customs services and is responsible for the surveillance and control of imported and exported products through Venezuela's borders and ports, as well as the assessment and collection of import duties and taxes. SENIAT observes the Organic Law of Customs and corresponding customs import and export procedures regulations and has the authority to shut down businesses based on contraband charges or non-compliance with tax collection policies.

### **Venezuelan Central Bank**

Details on the currency exchange system are available at the Venezuelan Central Bank at

<https://www.bcv.org.ve>.

## **APPENDIX II: Other Import Specialist and Technical Contacts**

**Venezuelan American Chamber of Industry and Commerce (VENAMCHAM)**

2da. Av. de Campo Alegre  
Torre Credival, Piso 10, Ofic. A, Caracas  
Tel: (58-212) 263-0833/267-20-76/64-81  
Fax: (58-212) 263-20-60  
Website: <http://www.venamcham.org>  
Email: [Eventos@venamcham.org](mailto:Eventos@venamcham.org)

**Venezuelan Food Industry Chamber (CAVIDEA)**

Av. Principal de los Ruices  
Centro Empresarial Los Ruices, Piso 5, Ofic. 510, Caracas  
Tel: (58-212) 237-6183  
Fax: (58-212) 237-9918  
Website: <http://www.cavidea.org>  
Email: [Administracion@cavidea.org](mailto:Administracion@cavidea.org)

**National Association of Supermarkets (ANSA)**

Av. Principal de los Ruices  
Centro Empresarial Los Ruices, Piso 1, Ofic. 116, Caracas  
Tel: (58-212) 234-4490 / 235-7558  
Fax: (58-212) 238-0308  
Website: [https://twitter.com/ansa\\_venezuela](https://twitter.com/ansa_venezuela)  
Email: [Info@ansa.org.ve](mailto:Info@ansa.org.ve)

**APPENDIX III: Food Products Subject to Regulated Price Controls**



Beef – Several types, carcass meat
Bologna sausage
Bottled water
Cheese – White, Soft, Gouda, Dembo, Edam, Fynbo, Munster, etc.
Chicken – whole, cut, breast, legs
Chicken (feed for chicken)
Cocoa (domestic production)
Coffee (domestic production) beans, roasted and ground
Corn (domestic production) white and yellow
Corn flour
Corn oil
Fruit juices
Infant formulas
Jams/baby food
Margarine
Milk, infant formulas
Oatmeal
Pasta and bread
Peas, lentils, and black beans
Pork – Chops and pork ribs
Powdered milk
Refined sugar and brown sugar
Rice
Salt
Sardines and Tuna
Sorghum
Soy milk
Soybeans
Sunflower
Sunflower oil
Tomato sauce
Vegetable oil – mixed
Wheat bread
Wheat flour

**Attachments:**

No Attachments