

Required Report: Required - Public Distribution

Date: June 15, 2026

Report Number: SF2026-0016

Report Name: FAIRS Country Report Annual

Country: South Africa - Republic of

Post: Pretoria

Report Category: FAIRS Country Report

Prepared By: Dirk Esterhuizen

Approved By: Oliver Flake

Report Highlights:

The FAIRS Annual Country Report provides a comprehensive overview of the rules and regulations governing the import of food and agricultural products into South Africa. For a complete understanding of South Africa's food laws, standards, and import requirements, this report should be read in conjunction with the FAIRS Export Certificate Report. Recent key regulatory updates include a comprehensive framework governing labeling and composition requirements for meat analogues and plant-based protein products, updated mycotoxin limits, and new regulations on vinegar composition and labeling standards. U.S. exporters should review these developments carefully to ensure compliance and maintain market access in South Africa.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
SECTION I: FOOD LAWS	4
SECTION II: LABELING REQUIREMENTS	8
SECTION III: PACKAGING AND CONTAINER REGULATIONS	15
SECTION IV: FOOD ADDITIVES REGULATIONS	16
SECTION V: PESTICIDES AND CONTAMINANTS	18
SECTION VI: OTHER REQUIREMENTS, REGULATIONS, AND REGISTRATION MEASURES	20
SECTION VII: OTHER SPECIFIC STANDARDS/LAWS	25
SECTION VIII: GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS, TRADEMARKS, BRAND NAMES, AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS	30
SECTION IX: IMPORT PROCEDURES	32
SECTION X: TRADE FACILITATION	33
APPENDIX I: GOVERNMENT REGULATORY AGENCY CONTACTS	37
APPENDIX II: OTHER IMPORT SPECIALIST CONTACTS	38

DISCLAIMER:

This report was prepared by the USDA - Foreign Agricultural Service office in Pretoria, South Africa, for U.S. exporters of domestic food and agricultural products. While every possible care has been taken in the preparation of this report, the information provided may not be completely accurate either because policies have changed since their preparation, or because clear and consistent information about these policies was not available. It is highly recommended that U.S. exporters verify the full set of import requirements with their foreign customers, who are normally best equipped to research such matters with local authorities. FINAL IMPORT APPROVAL IS SUBJECT TO THE IMPORTING COUNTRY'S RULES AND REGULATIONS AS INTERPRETED BY BORDER OFFICIALS AT THE TIME OF PRODUCT ENTRY.

Executive Summary

In 2025, the United States exported \$304 million in agricultural products to South Africa, representing a 27 percent increase from the previous year's \$239 million. The top five exported products included corn, wheat, tree nuts, planting seeds, and dairy products.

U.S. exports benefited from increased import demand for grains in South Africa. A drought during the 2023/24 growing season resulted in a 21 percent reduction in corn production—the smallest domestic corn harvest in five years—increasing South Africa's reliance on corn imports to supplement local supply. Additionally, U.S. wheat exports to South Africa reached their highest level in nine years.

South Africa imported \$8.3 billion in agricultural products globally in 2025, a 5 percent increase from 2024, reflecting elevated demand for grains and plant oils following the drought. Major imported agricultural products included wheat, palm oil, rice, and sugar. Modest growth in agricultural imports is expected to continue as South Africa's medium-term economic outlook remains subdued.

The country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expanded by only 1 percent in 2025, with projected growth rates below 1.5 percent for both 2026 and 2027. Real disposable income has declined in recent years, while the unemployment rate remains elevated at over 30 percent, further constraining consumption growth and limiting market expansion potential.

Recent regulatory developments in South Africa demonstrate the system's ongoing evolution to address emerging challenges and align with international standards. Key developments include: a comprehensive regulatory framework governing meat analogues and plant-based protein products (July 2025); updated mycotoxin limits (February 2026); new regulations regarding the grading, packing, and marking of vinegar and imitation vinegar (March 2026); digitization of pesticide registration (April 2026); and (pending) front-of-package labeling requirements.

While the stated aim of these measures is to strengthen food safety and consumer protection, they also introduce additional compliance requirements and potential market access barriers for U.S. exporters. U.S. agricultural stakeholders should monitor these regulatory changes closely and engage proactively with South African authorities to ensure American products can continue to compete effectively in this market.

SECTION I: FOOD LAWS

South Africa's regulatory philosophy regarding food emphasizes consumer protection, safety and quality assurance, and the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices. The food safety and agricultural regulatory system operate through a multi-departmental framework, with primary oversight distributed among the Department of Agriculture (DoA), Department of Health (DoH), Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), and the Border Management Authority (BMA). This integrated approach ensures comprehensive regulation from farm to fork, covering production standards, food safety, consumer protection, and border control.

This integrated approach ensures comprehensive regulation from production to consumption, covering production standards, food safety, consumer protection, and border control. These ministries designate autonomous organizations to execute specific regulatory functions. Given the number of ministries and agencies involved in regulating agriculture and food products, imported goods may face multiple requirements under different regulatory authorities. American exporters must therefore understand all applicable regulations governing the importation of food and agricultural products to South Africa, as well as identify the relevant regulatory bodies responsible for enforcement.

Department of Agriculture

The DoA serves as the primary authority governing agricultural product quality, composition, marking standards, and animal health and safety protocols.

Core Legislative Framework:

- **Agricultural Product Standard Act (Act No. 119 of 1990)**: This act controls the quality and safety standards for specific agricultural products like dairy, meat, cereals, fruits, and vegetables. It ensures that imported agricultural goods meet the same grading, marking, and packing standards as locally produced goods. The Act was recently modernized through the Agricultural Product Standards Amendment Act (Act No. 12 of 2023), reflecting evolving industry standards and international best practices.
- **Plant Health Act (Act 35 of 2024)**: Assented to in December 2024, this act modernizes South Africa's biosecurity by replacing the Agricultural Pests Act of 1983. It establishes the National Plant Protection Organization of South Africa (NPPOZA) to control regulated pests, regulate imports/exports, and align with international standards. It is not yet fully in force, pending finalization of key draft regulations.
- **Meat Safety Act (Act No. 40 of 2000)**: Regulates the importation of meat into South Africa to ensure all imported products meet the same safety and hygiene standards as locally produced meat. It prevents the introduction of meat "unsafe for human or animal consumption" due to disease, contamination, or decomposition.

- **Liquor Products Act (Act No. 60 of 1989)**: Regulates the import of alcoholic beverages with a volume of more than 1 percent alcohol. The Act ensures imported products meet strict standards for composition, properties, and labeling before they are sold in South Africa. The Act underwent significant amendments in March 2025. These updates introduced enhanced standards for sugar and alcohol content, labeling requirements, and container specifications for various beverage classes.
- **Fertilizer, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act (Act No. 36 of 1947)**: Specifically impacts the import of pet food and animal feed, requiring either a valid registration certificate or an import permit. This Act also regulates the registration, import, and sale of pesticides and ensures that only registered chemical remedies are used in production.
- **Genetically Modified Organisms Act (Act No. 15 of 1997)**: Mandates a commodity clearance permit for the import of Genetically Engineered (GE) products intended for food, feed, or processing.
- **Animal Disease Act (Act No. 35 of 1984)**: Controls the import of animals and animal products (meat, milk, eggs) to prevent the introduction of foreign animal diseases.

Key Operational Directorates:

- **Food Safety & Quality Assurance Directorate**: This directorate regulates the quality and food safety of agricultural products under the Agricultural Product Standards Act, 1990, and controls the production, sale, import, and export of alcoholic products under the Liquor Products Act, 1989, along with related matters.
- **Inspection Services Directorate**: Responsible for ensuring compliance with agricultural legislation, this directorate manages risk assessment of agricultural products and oversees effective biosecurity management and related sector risks.
- **Agriculture Inputs Control Directorate**: This directorate regulates the manufacturing, distribution, importation, sale, use, and advertisement of fertilizers, animal feeds, pesticides, and stock remedies. It also oversees the operation of sterilizing plants and pest control operators under the Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947.

Department of Health

The DoH ensures that all food products are safe for human consumption and protects consumers from misleading health and nutritional claims.

Primary Legislation:

- **Foodstuffs, Disinfectants, and Cosmetics Act (Act No. 54 of 1972)**: This is the principal legislation for food safety in South Africa. It governs the manufacture, sale,

and importation of all foodstuffs from a safety and public health perspective. It prohibits the import of food containing forbidden substances or exceeding permitted limits for additives and contaminants.

Key Operational Directorate:

- **Food Control Directorate:** Regulates food safety, including imports, via the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act. It sets standards for safety, labeling, and quality, while working with Port Health services to monitor imported goods for compliance.

Department of Trade, Industry and Competition

The DTIC oversees the economic and regulatory framework for food imports. While health and safety standards are primarily the domain of the DoH and DoA, the DTIC focuses on trade policy, market regulation, and economic protection.

Primary Legislation:

- **Consumer Protection Act (Act No. 68 of 2008):** This Act significantly impacts imports by holding importers to the same legal standards as local manufacturers and retailers. Under the Act, any business that brings goods into the South Africa is legally integrated into the local supply chain, assuming full responsibility for product quality and safety.
- **National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications Act (Act No. 5 of 2008):** This Act empowers the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS) to enforce "Compulsory Specifications" for high-risk food products including canned meat and various fishery products, ensuring they meet stringent health and safety standards before market entry.
- **International Trade Administration Act (Act No. 71 of 2002):** Administered by the International Trade Administration Commission (ITAC), this act governs import permits for certain controlled goods and can involve trade measures like anti-dumping duties and tariffs.

Key Operational Directorate:

- **Import and Export Control:** South Africa's International Trade Administration Commission of South Africa (ITAC) established under the International Trade Administration Act No. 71 of 2002, administers import and export controls through a permit system for regulated goods. ITAC also provides advisory services to DTIC and manages tariff investigations and trade remedy solutions.

Border Management Authority

The BMA represents South Africa's third armed service, established to centralize border law enforcement. Since its full operational launch in October 2023, it has assumed frontline enforcement responsibilities previously distributed among various separate departments, creating a unified border control system.

Primary Legislation

- **Border Management Authority Act (Act No. 2 of 2020):** This foundational legislation establishes the BMA as a single entity responsible for all border law enforcement.

Delegated Specialized Functions:

While the BMA serves as the enforcing body, it acts on behalf of other departments through Implementation Protocols and delegated authority:

- **Agricultural & Environmental Biosecurity:** The BMA has absorbed specialized agriculture functions formerly under the DoA. It enforces the Agricultural Product Standards Act and the Plant Health Act by inspecting and seizing prohibited goods such as fresh fruit (e.g., mangoes, watermelons) and animal products to prevent pest and disease introduction.
- **Port Health:** Operating under the National Health Act, BMA officers conduct health screenings, and inspect food and water imports for compliance with international health regulations.
- **Immigration Control:** The BMA enforces the Immigration Act and Refugees Act, managing the movement of persons and detecting undocumented or inadmissible travelers at all 71 ports of entry nationwide.
- **Customs Coordination:** Although the South African Revenue Service (SARS) retains its customs-related functions, the BMA works alongside SARS through a mandatory implementation protocol to facilitate legitimate trade while preventing illicit imports.

Enforcement of Food Regulations

South Africa's food safety and agricultural regulatory framework comprise of a sophisticated, multi-layered system designed to protect public health, ensure product quality, promote fair trade, and safeguard biosecurity. The three ministries (DoA, DoH, and DTIC) and the BMA oversee and enforce South African food and agricultural import restrictions, standards, and inspections. Despite several coordination mechanisms—such as Inter-Ministerial Committees—enforcement coordination and capacity limitations remain ongoing challenges. These difficulties can result in inconsistent application and implementation of regulations across different jurisdictions and sectors.

Nevertheless, imported agricultural products must strictly adhere to South African food laws. Food health inspectors at ports of entry enforce compliance with all food-related laws and regulations for imported products, ensuring that international shipments meet national standards

before entering the domestic market. The scope and intensity of inspections vary based on the product's risk profile, origin, and regulatory classification.

SECTION II: LABELING REQUIREMENTS

Existing Labeling Regulations

South Africa's food labeling regulations are primarily governed by the [Foodstuffs, Disinfectants, and Cosmetics Act](#), specifically [Regulation R146 of 2010](#) (as amended). This regulation and other specific food labeling regulations (see Table 1) mandate that labels provide clear, accurate, and non-misleading information to consumers on all mandatory information such as ingredients, nutritional data, and allergens.

The [Consumer Protection Act](#) provides the overarching legal framework that protects the rights of consumers in South Africa, complementing the specific technical rules set by the Foodstuffs, Disinfectants, and Cosmetics Act.

Table 1: Existing Labeling Regulations

Name of Regulation	Website Link
➤ Regulations relating to the labeling and advertising of foodstuffs (R146/2010)	Download
➤ Regulations relating to labeling and advertising of foodstuffs: Amendment (R45/2012)	Download
➤ Regulations relating to the labeling of foodstuffs obtained through certain techniques of genetic modification (R25/2004)	Download
➤ Regulations relating to foodstuffs for infants and young children (R991/2012)	Download
➤ Regulations relating to foodstuffs for infants and young children: extension notice (R433/2014) and amendment (R434/2013)	Download
➤ Regulations relating to health messages on container labels of alcoholic beverages (R764/2007)	Download
➤ Regulations relating to health messages on container labels of alcoholic beverages: amendment (R1208/2008)	Download
➤ Regulations regarding the classification, packing and marking of processed meat products intended for sale in the Republic of South Africa (R1283/2019)	Download

Source: [Department of Health, Food Control Division](#)

Mandatory Core Information (all information must be in English):

- **Product Name:** Must be accurate and clearly describe the food.
- **Ingredients List:** Ingredients must be listed in descending order by weight, with additives and preservatives included.
- **Manufacturer Information:** Name and physical address of the manufacturer, importer, or distributor.
- **Country of Origin:** Mandatory declaration of where the product was manufactured or produced.
- **Batch Identification:** A unique batch number for traceability.
- **Date Marking:** "Best Before" or "Use By" dates must be present.
- **Net Contents:** Displayed in International System of Units (SI units).
- **Storage Instructions:** Specific instructions for safe storage (e.g., "keep refrigerated").

Country of Origin Requirements

Specific requirements govern how the country of origin must appear on food product labels. The label should read "Product of (name of country)" if all the major components, processing, and labor used to manufacture the food product are from that nation. The words "Produced in," "Processed in," "Manufactured in," or "Made in" should appear on the label of any food that has undergone processing that alters its composition in another nation. The phrase "Packed in (name of country)" may also be used.

Date Marking Requirements

The shelf life of all food products should be indicated on the packaging using phrases such as "Best before," "Use by," or "Sell by." The DoH regulations include a list of exemptions to the labeling requirements of certain products and advertising of foodstuffs.

Figure 1: An Example of Food Product Labeling in South Africa



Source: [Foster Packaging](https://www.fosterpackaging.com)

Nutritional Information

- **Typical Nutritional Information Table:** Required on most pre-packaged foods.
- **Content Requirement:** Mandatory information includes Energy (kJ), Protein, Carbohydrates, Sugars, Fat, and Sodium, listed per 100g/ml and per serving. The order of nutrients is strictly regulated, and the sequence cannot be changed.
- **Claims Trigger:** If any nutrition or health claim is made (e.g., "high in fiber"), the full table is mandatory.

In South Africa, the Nutritional Information Table must follow a specific vertical or horizontal format as prescribed by Regulation R146 (see Table 2). It is typically placed on the back or side of the packaging.

Table 2: Standard Vertical Table Template

Typical Nutritional Information	Per 100 g / ml	Per Serving (e.g., 30 g)
Energy (kJ)	1200 kJ	360 kJ
Protein (g)	8.5 g	2.6 g
Glycemic Carbohydrate (g)	55 g	16.5 g
<i>of which total sugar (g)</i>	12 g	3.6 g
Total Fat (g)	4.2 g	1.3 g
<i>of which saturated fat (g)</i>	1.1 g	0.3 g
<i>of which trans-fat (g)</i>	0.0 g	0.0 g
<i>of which monounsaturated fat (g)</i>	1.5 g	0.5 g
<i>of which polyunsaturated fat (g)</i>	1.6 g	0.5 g
Dietary Fiber (g) (optional*)	3.0 g	0.9 g
Total Sodium (mg)	450 mg	135 mg

Source: [Department of Health, Food Control Division](#)

**Note: If a fiber claim is made (e.g., "High in Fiber"), including the fiber line is mandatory.*

Allergen Declaration

Common allergens (e.g. peanuts, eggs, milk, soy, gluten-containing cereals, tree nuts) must be clearly labeled if present, often highlighted in bold within the list of ingredients.

Prohibited Claims

In South Africa, nutrient, health, or other claims on food and beverage labels are restricted and clearly defined. For example, the claim "low in saturated fat" may only be used if the amount of saturated fat in the food is less than 1.5 grams per 100 grams of solids and 0.75 grams per 100 milliliters of liquids and does not account for more than 10 percent of the calories.

Labels cannot suggest a product is "healthy" or "nutritious" without scientific evidence. Negative claims, such as "cholesterol-free" on products that never contain cholesterol (like vegetable oil), are prohibited. Absolute descriptors such as "high fiber" or "low fat," as well as relative descriptors such as "less," "fewer," "reduced," "light," or "more" are acceptable if all regulatory requirements are met. However, comparison statements utilizing the terms "more than," "increased," or similar expressions are not permitted when referring to nutrients that are physiologically beneficial, such as vitamins, minerals, or other beneficial food components.

Meat Product Labeling

For products containing Mechanically Recovered Meat (MRM), specific rules apply. If MRM exceeds 25 percent, it must be clearly stated on the front of the pack.

Documentation and Enforcement

Inspectors at the ports have the authority to request documentation supporting any claims made, including U.S.-approved health claims linking calcium and osteoporosis, fruits/vegetables and cancer, and sodium and hypertension. Implied claims are not covered by the existing South African regulations, and the inspector at the port of entry may interpret such claims in accordance with the rules regarding deceptive claims.

Non-compliance with South Africa's food labeling regulations may result in legal and financial penalties, including fines, imprisonment, and administrative sanctions. Penalties vary depending on whether the violation constitutes a criminal offense under the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act or an administrative breach under the Consumer Protection Act.

Compliance Challenges for U.S. Exporters

Ensuring that American food labels comply with current South African food labeling laws can be challenging. For example, according to South African regulations, labels must include the phrase "typical nutritional information," whereas labels in the United States use the phrase "nutritional facts." While U.S. food labels utilize calories, South African regulations only allow the use of kilojoules (kJ) on food labels.

Regulators and importers prefer that the correct labeling be applied before shipment. However, when shipments are stopped at the port of entry, South Africa allows importers to cover non-compliant labels with stick-on labels. Non-compliant products are not released at the ports of entry until corrective measures are taken. Retailers typically do not accept food products with covered labels because they generate customer suspicion, and importers have previously reported that such a process is too expensive. Figure 2 compares the differences between a South African food label from and a U.S. food label.

Figure 2: Differences between a South African Food Label and United States Food Label



Proposed New Labeling Regulation

On April 21, 2023, the South African Minister of Health issued a Government Notice ([R.3337](#)) inviting public comments on a draft regulation relating to the labeling and advertising of food products under the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics, and Disinfectants Act (see [South Africa Issues New Draft Regulation Food Labeling](#)). The draft regulations, if brought into force, could have several wide-ranging effects on local food manufacturers and imported products.

There is currently no fixed date for when Regulation R3337 will be finalized. The public consultation period officially ended in September 2023. The DoH is currently reviewing thousands of submissions and conducting further consultations with stakeholders to clarify the rationale for certain provisions. As of early 2026, the industry is still awaiting a decision on whether the department will publish a revised draft for further comment or proceed directly to the final regulation. Once the final regulation is published in the Government Gazette, it typically includes a grace period (usually 12 to 24 months) to allow manufacturers time to align all packaging with new font sizes, allergen declarations, and naming rules. FAS/Pretoria will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates accordingly.

New Regulations for Meat Analogues

The Ministry of Agriculture in South Africa has issued new regulations (see [GAIN report: South Africa publishes regulations for meat analogues](#)) under the Agricultural Product Standards Act, 1990 (Act No. 119 of 1990), to establish a comprehensive regulatory framework governing meat analogues and plant-based protein products. Published on July 18, 2025, these regulations will take effect 12 months after publication, providing industry stakeholders with a transition period to ensure compliance.

The new regulations impose specific labeling requirements designed to prevent consumer confusion while allowing clear identification of plant-based products:

- **Mandatory Descriptors:** Terms traditionally associated with meat products, such as "burger," "sausage," "patty," "mince," or "steak," must be preceded by clear descriptors indicating the product's plant-based nature. Acceptable descriptors include "plant-based," "vegan," "vegetarian," or similar terms that clearly communicate the product does not contain animal-derived ingredients.
- **Prohibited Terminology:** References to specific animals or animal-derived meat products (e.g., "chicken-style," "beef-like," "pork-flavored") are explicitly prohibited. This restriction aims to eliminate potential consumer confusion about the product's composition and origin.
- **Clarity and Transparency:** Labels must clearly and prominently display the plant-based nature of the product to ensure consumers can make informed purchasing decisions.

Regulation Relating to the Labeling of Food Containing Genetically Engineered Ingredients

South Africa has had mandatory Genetically Engineered (GE) labeling regulations in place since 2004 when the DoH introduced labelling regulations under the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics, and Disinfectants Act (1972) – [Regulation 25](#). This regulation mandates labeling of GE foods only in certain cases, including when allergens or genes with human or animal origin are present, and when a GE food product differs significantly from a non-GE equivalent in terms of its composition, nutritional value, mode of storage, preparation, or cooking. The regulations also require validation of enhanced-characteristic (e.g., “more nutritious”) claims for GE food products. The regulations do not address claims that products are GE-free. To date, these requirements have not been triggered for any of the GE products/foods on the South African market, and as a result none of these have had to be labeled – i.e., these foods are considered equivalent to their conventional counterparts.

In contrast, the [Consumer Protection Act](#) administered by the DTIC mandates labeling for all GE goods. Draft amendments to the GE labeling regulations were published in October 2012, but they raised significant concerns within South Africa’s business community about the Act’s approach to GE labeling. As a result, final GE labeling regulations under the Consumer Protection Act have not yet been published. This has prevented the enforcement of mandatory GE labeling requirements for stakeholders in South Africa’s food supply chains.

SECTION III: PACKAGING AND CONTAINER REGULATIONS

Existing Packaging and Container Regulations

South Africa's packaging and container regulations for agricultural products are administered under the [Agricultural Product Standards Act](#). Specific regulations apply to various commodities, including fresh fruit, vegetables, and eggs, addressing container specifications, packing methodologies, marking requirements, and quality standards. DoA enforces these regulations to ensure adherence to quality, safety, and labeling standards. Table 3 provides a comprehensive list of regulations pertaining to the grading, classification, container marking, packaging, and container dimensions of agricultural and food products.

Table 3: Regulations Relating to the Grading, Classification, Packaging, and Marking of Agricultural and Food Products

Product	Regulation Link
➤ Animal Products (Dairy and imitation products; eggs; edible ices including ice cream, frozen dessert, yoghurt, fruit sorbet; meat; mohair; poultry meat; and processed meat products).	Animal Products
➤ Agronomy Crops (Canola, dry beans, ground nuts, sorghum, corn, corn products, malting barley, popcorn kernels, pulses, rice, wheat and wheat products, sunflower, and soybeans).	Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. Agronomy Crops
➤ Vegetables (Potatoes, tomatoes, onions and shallots, garlic, and other vegetables).	Vegetables
➤ Processed Products (Canned fruit, canned mushrooms, canned pasta, canned vegetables, dehydrated vegetables, dried fruit, fat spreads, vinegar, and table olives).	Processed Products
➤ Deciduous Fruits (Apples, apricots, grapes, pears, peaches and nectarines, and plums and prunes).	Deciduous Fruit
➤ Citrus and Subtropical Fruit (Avocados, bananas, citrus fruits, litchis, and pineapples)	Citrus and Subtropical Fruits
➤ Other Fresh Fruit	Other Fresh Fruit

Source: [Department of Agriculture](#)

Packaging Sustainability Measures

South Africa's packaging and container regulations require that containers be sufficiently durable for routine handling and product packing, remain undamaged, maintain cleanliness, resist moisture, and be properly sealed. Containers must not impart any flavors, odors, colors, or foreign characteristics to food products during processing or distribution. Regulations further stipulate that containers be free from harmful substances, ingredients, or materials that could contaminate or compromise the integrity of the contents.

Phased Elimination of PCB Materials

In 2014, South Africa promulgated regulations ([G37818 – GN549](#)) establishing a phased elimination of polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) materials and PCB-contaminated materials. The phase-out schedule prohibits any person from:

- Using any PCB materials or PCB-contaminated materials after 2023.
- Possessing any PCB materials, PCB-contaminated materials, or PCB waste after 2026, excluding properly disposed PCB waste.

Material Specifications and International Standards

Packaging composed of natural materials and fibers must be accompanied by official documentation certifying fumigation treatment. The [South African Bureau of Standards](#) (SABS) has established packaging specifications for materials such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC), available for purchase through the SABS webstore. South Africa recognizes international standards, including the Food Safety Certification Scheme ([FSSC](#)), Global Food Safety Initiative Standards (GFSI), and British Retail Consortium ([BRC](#)) standards.

Waste Management and Recycling

South Africa maintains municipal waste disposal legislation and product recycling regulations; however, enforcement of these provisions has not constituted a trade barrier to date. Waste management in South Africa is governed by the [National Environmental Management Waste Act](#) (Act 59 of 2008) and the [National Waste Management Strategy](#). Local municipalities have enacted bylaws consistent with the Waste Act, the [National Environmental Management Act](#) (Act 107 of 1998), and the [Air Quality Act](#) (Act 39 of 2004).

SECTION IV: FOOD ADDITIVES REGULATIONS

South Africa's food additive regulations are primarily governed by the [Foodstuffs, Cosmetics, and Disinfectants Act](#), administered by the DoH to ensure safety, quality, and consumer protection. The regulations are increasingly harmonized with international Codex Alimentarius standards.

Additives must meet stringent purity and identity specifications, be manufactured in accordance with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), and be used at the minimum level necessary to

achieve their intended technological effect. The food additive regulations exclude contaminants and substances added to food solely to maintain or enhance nutritional quality.

Key Regulatory Categories

- **Preservatives and Antioxidants:** Subject to strict maximum permissible levels; additives must be listed in specific annexures to be authorized for use.
- **Sweeteners and Colorants:** Restricted by designated food categories (e.g., colorants and sweeteners are prohibited in plain bread).
- **Miscellaneous Additives:** Regulated under R1425/2016 (and subsequent draft amendments), encompassing substances such as emulsifiers, thickeners, stabilizers, and glazing agents.

Table 4 delineates the restrictions applicable to additives in South Africa, including the permissible foodstuffs for each additive. A positive list of approved additives is available from the Directorate: Food Control (email: foodcontrol@health.gov.za) or on the [DoH](#) website. These regulations also establish standards for additive usage, including labeling requirements and maximum use levels to ensure consumer safety and informed choice.

Table 4: Existing Food Additives Regulations

Name of Regulation	Website link
➤ Regulations relating to the use of sweeteners in foodstuffs (R733/2012)	Download
➤ Regulations – Preservatives and antioxidants: Amendment (R60/2009)	Download
➤ Regulations – Preservatives and antioxidants: (R965/1977)	Download
➤ Regulations relating to food colorants (R1055/1996)	Download
➤ Miscellaneous additives in foodstuffs (R1425/2016)	Download

Source: [Department of Health, Food Control Division](#)

Authorization Process for Non-Listed Additives

In the absence of specialized additive legislation, South Africa generally adheres to the Codex Alimentarius Commission's General Standard for Food Additives. Exporters may petition the DoH for authorization to use an additive not included on South Africa's positive list or not covered by Codex standards. The DoH may require evidence demonstrating the additive's safety for human consumption, which may extend the review and approval timeline. Applicants should anticipate providing comprehensive toxicological data, usage justifications, and compliance documentation to support their authorization requests.

SECTION V: PESTICIDES AND CONTAMINANTS

Pesticide Regulations for Food Products in South Africa

South Africa's pesticide regulations for food products, particularly imports, are primarily governed by the DoH and the DoA. These departments ensure that all imported food complies with safety standards regarding permissible levels of chemical residues, including pesticide and veterinary drug residues. The regulations safeguard food safety and prevent the sale or importation of food products with residue levels that exceed specified limits.

DoH Responsibilities:

- Determines and approves Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) for pesticides, metals, and other chemicals in food products.
- Enforces regulatory compliance through inspection and monitoring programs.
- Conducts residue analysis on food products to verify adherence to established MRLs.
- Takes enforcement action against non-compliant products.

DoA Responsibilities:

- Oversee pesticide registrations, permits, and authorized usage in agricultural production.
- Implement residue monitoring programs to ensure compliance with MRLs.
- Identifies and assesses potential food safety risks related to agricultural chemical use.
- Coordinates with DoH to maintain consistent standards across the food supply chain.

These regulatory frameworks align with international food safety standards and are regularly updated to reflect evolving scientific evidence and best practices in pesticide management. Importers must ensure their products meet South African MRL requirements prior to shipment, as non-compliant products may be rejected at the port of entry or subject to destruction.

Updated Pesticide Residue Regulations

In 2024, the DoH published amended regulations ([Regulations Governing the Maximum Limits for Pesticide Residues that may be present in Foodstuffs](#)), which introduced significant updates including:

- Restriction of specific chemical substances.
- Revised grouping of goods and their corresponding MRLs.
- Addition and revision of numerous MRLs to reflect current scientific evidence.

The Regulations Governing the Maximum Limits for Veterinary Medicine and Stock Remedy Residues that may be present in Foodstuffs (2017) are available on the [DoH website](#), which provides comprehensive guidance for animal-derived food products.

Contaminants Regulations for Food Products in South Africa

Importing food into South Africa requires strict compliance with contaminants regulations designed to ensure food safety and consumer protection. These regulations are primarily governed by the DoH under the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act and are closely aligned with Codex Alimentarius guidelines to maintain consistency with international food safety standards.

Mycotoxins in Foodstuffs

In February 2026, the DoH published new regulations establishing maximum levels for mycotoxins in foodstuffs, including Total Aflatoxins ([Government Notice No. R7091 of 2026](#)). These updated regulations replace the previous standards set forth in [R.1145 of 2004](#) and significantly expand the scope of regulated mycotoxins.

Key features of the updated mycotoxin regulations include:

- **Expanded Coverage:** The regulations address a broader range of mycotoxins beyond those covered in the 2004 framework, reflecting advances in food safety science and risk assessment.
- **Product-Specific Limits:** Maximum levels are established for specific food categories, recognizing that different products pose varying levels of risk.
- **Codex Alignment:** By referencing Codex Alimentarius standards, the regulations facilitate international trade while maintaining high safety standards.
- **Enhanced Consumer Protection:** The updated limits reflect current scientific understanding of mycotoxin health risks and exposure pathways.

Compliance Requirements for Importers

U.S. exporters must ensure their food products comply with South Africa's contaminant regulations prior to shipment. Exporters should maintain comprehensive documentation demonstrating compliance with maximum contaminant levels, including certificates of analysis from accredited laboratories when required.

Additional Contaminant Regulations

Beyond mycotoxins, South Africa regulates various other contaminants in food products. Table 5 provides a comprehensive list of existing contaminant regulations with direct links to the specific regulatory texts. This information is also available on the [DoH website](#), providing exporters with direct access to the technical requirements for each contaminant category.

Regulatory Updates and Monitoring

South Africa's contaminant regulations are subject to periodic review and revision to incorporate new scientific evidence, address emerging food safety risks, and maintain alignment with international standards. Exporters should regularly consult the DoH website and engage with their South African importers or customs brokers to stay informed of regulatory changes that may affect their products.

Table 5: Existing Contaminants Regulations

Name of Regulation	Website Link
➤ Mycotoxins Regulations	<u>R7091 of 2026</u>
➤ Regulations governing the Tolerance for Certain Seeds	<u>GNR1225 of 2002</u>
➤ Heavy Metals Regulations	<u>R588 of 2018</u>
➤ Fungus Produced Toxins	<u>R1145 of 2004</u>
➤ Fungus Produced Toxins in Foodstuffs	<u>R987 of 2004</u>
➤ Regulations Relating to Objects Packed in Foodstuffs Intended for Children	<u>GNR1090 of 2005</u>
➤ Melamine	<u>R1054 of 2009</u>
➤ Marine Biotoxins	<u>R491 of 2016</u>
➤ Regulations Governing Certain Solvents in Foodstuffs	<u>GNR911 of 2001</u>
➤ Mineral Hydrocarbons	<u>R230 of 1977</u>
➤ Regulations on the Radio Activity in Foodstuffs	<u>R1931 of 1990</u>

Source: [Department of Health, Food Control Division](#)

SECTION VI: OTHER REQUIREMENTS, REGULATIONS, AND REGISTRATION MEASURES

Most agricultural and food products can be imported into South Africa without a Certificate of Free Sale (CFS). However, a CFS is required for agricultural products that fall under the category of health supplements and veterinary remedies. Instead of a CFS, South Africa may require an import permit and/or health certificate for certain agricultural products.

Import Permits

Import permits are mandatory for controlled categories, including:

- Meat and meat products.
- Dairy products and eggs.
- Live animals and genetic material.
- Plants, seeds, and plant products.
- Genetically engineered products.
- Certain processed foods containing animal or plant materials.

Permits must be obtained prior to shipment and specify the approved facilities, product descriptions, quantities, and conditions of entry.

Health Certificates

Exporting countries must provide official health certificates (also refer to FAIRS Export Certificate Report) confirming that products meet South African health and safety standards. Common certificates include:

- **Veterinary Health Certificates:** For meat, dairy, eggs, pet food and other animal products, issued by the competent veterinary authority in the exporting country.
- **Phytosanitary Certificates:** For plants and plant products, certifying freedom from quarantine pests and compliance with South African plant health requirements.
- **Health Certificates for Processed Foods:** Issued by the exporting country's food safety authority, confirming compliance with South African food safety regulations.

Certificates must be issued by the official competent authority in the exporting country and must accompany each shipment.

Import Certificates

Import certificates are specifically required for alcoholic beverages (excluding beer), issued by the South African importer's designated authority. These certificates verify that the importer is authorized to bring the product into the country and that applicable excise duties will be paid.

Country-of-Origin Certificate

A country-of-origin certificate is occasionally required by the South African Revenue Service (SARS) to confirm the country of origin for specific duty or quota purposes.

Facility Registration Requirements for Exporting to South Africa

Animal Products and Meat Facilities

Under the [Meat Safety Act \(Act 40 of 2000\)](#), South Africa permits imports of animals and animal products only from certified deboning plants and abattoirs that meet stringent safety and hygiene standards. U.S. facilities seeking to export meat and animal products to South Africa must complete a two-stage registration process.

U.S. Domestic Registration Requirements

Before exporting to South Africa, U.S. facilities must first be registered and certified with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). This domestic certification ensures that facilities meet U.S. federal standards for food safety, sanitation, and inspection protocols. Detailed procedures for facility registration, including application requirements and compliance standards, are available on the FSIS website under Export Guidance ([Export Guidance | Food Safety and Inspection Service](#)).

South African Approval Process

Once registered with FSIS, U.S. facilities are eligible for inclusion in South Africa's approved establishment database, which is maintained by the DoA. Facilities listed in this database are authorized to export products to South Africa and their shipments become eligible for import licenses, provided all additional requirements are met. The list of approved deboning factories and permitted abattoirs can be downloaded from the [DoA website](#). This database is regularly updated to reflect facility approvals, suspensions, and regulatory changes.

Registration Costs and Responsibilities

The financial responsibility for facility registration rests with the U.S. exporter or facility owner. Costs may include:

- FSIS registration and certification fees.
- Documentation and compliance verification expenses.
- Audit and inspection fees, if applicable.

Ongoing Compliance

A facility is required to register only once; however, approved facilities remain subject to:

- Periodic audits by South African authorities or their designated representatives.
- Inspections to verify continued compliance with food safety standards.
- Potential suspension or delisting if non-compliance is identified.
- Updates to registration information when facility operations or ownership changes.

Facilities should maintain comprehensive records of their food safety management systems, sanitation protocols, and product traceability to facilitate audits and demonstrate ongoing compliance.

Plant and Plant-Product Facilities

For facilities exporting plants and plant products to South Africa, registration requirements and procedures are outlined by the DoA and vary depending on the specific commodity and phytosanitary risk profile. Detailed steps and information for registering plant and plant-product facilities are available through the DoA website and listed in Table 6.

Table 6: Facility and Product Registration Requirements in South Africa

Facility or Product	Website link
Application for registration of premises: Nurseries	<u>Download</u>
Application for registration of premises: Seed Production	<u>Download</u>
Application for registration of premises: Laboratories	<u>Download</u>

Source: [Department of Agriculture](#)

APHIS Certification

Phytosanitary certificates issued by the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) are recognized and accepted in South Africa. APHIS serves as the competent authority for plant health certification in the United States and ensures that exported plant products meet the importing country's phytosanitary requirements.

The [APHIS website](#) provides comprehensive information for U.S. exporters and facilities, including:

- Facility registration procedures and requirements.
- Associated costs and fee schedules.
- Export certification processes.
- Country-specific phytosanitary requirements for South Africa.
- Application forms and supporting documentation requirements.

Imports of Genetically Engineered Products

Asynchronous approvals of GE crops can significantly disrupt trade, particularly in South Africa, which enforces a zero-tolerance policy for the unintentional presence of unapproved GE events in food and feed imports. Since implementing its “GMO” Act in 1997, South Africa has become one of the top 10 global producers of GE crops, approving numerous GE events—such as corn and soybeans—for commercial cultivation. South Africa also permits the importation of GE crops, but the “GMO” Act requires that the list of GE events cultivated in an exporting country align with those approved by South African regulators for food and feed purposes.

According to South African regulatory procedures, “Import permits are issued for the import of GE consignments, irrespective of the crop and country, provided the exporting country has approved the same or fewer events than South Africa.” In practice, this requires event-by-event synchronization. Synchronizing GE event lists between countries can be challenging, as commodities often include stacked events (combinations of two or more traits). South Africa mandates separate approval for stacked events, even if the individual traits have already been approved. Additionally, if an exporting country no longer cultivates a previously approved event, South Africa requires confirmation that cultivation has ceased.

Stakeholders in South Africa’s grain and oilseeds industry closely monitor asynchronous GE approvals to prevent trade disruptions with key partners, including the United States. FAS/Pretoria has worked extensively with South African stakeholders to address these challenges and facilitate trade. In 2024, following an El Niño-induced mid-summer drought that reduced South Africa’s corn and soybean production by 21 percent and 33 percent, respectively, FAS/Pretoria received a request from traders seeking to import U.S. soybeans and corn. The traders sought clarification on the synchronicity of GE events between the two countries.

On September 30, 2024, South Africa opened its market to U.S. GE soybeans (also see [South Africa Market Opens United States Soybeans](#)). Subsequently, on November 19, 2024, the DoA informed the industry that all GE corn events causing asynchrony with the United States had been approved, allowing import permits to be issued for U.S. GE corn (also see [South Africa Market Opens for United States Corn](#)). These approvals were critical in addressing domestic consumption needs, as South Africa continued exporting corn to neighboring countries where demand remained high.

While South Africa is the leading producer of GE crops in Southern Africa, other countries in the region remain cautious or have outright bans on GE crops. However, during severe droughts or food shortages, when non-GE grains are unavailable, most countries in the region permit the importation of GE grain.

By the end of the 2024/25 season, the United States exported 225,000 metric tons (MT) of corn and 121,000 MT of soybeans to South Africa, with a combined trade value of \$105 million (also see [South Africa Southern Africa Shortages Boost United States Corn and Soybean Exports Benefiting](#)). These exports underscore the importance of resolving asynchronous GE approvals to maintain and expand agricultural trade between the two countries.

Plant Breeders Right

Plant and propagating material must be registered to receive a “plant breeders rights” permit, valid for either 25 years (for vines and trees) or 20 years (all other cases) according to the [Plant Breeders Rights Act](#). An agent residing in South Africa must submit the application for a plant breeders rights permit on behalf of the international intellectual property owner. For additional information concerning the application procedure, please refer to the following resource site: [Genetic Resources](#).

Product Registration

In South Africa, general food products do not typically require individual product registration for import.

SECTION VII: OTHER SPECIFIC STANDARDS/LAWS

New Regulations on Vinegar and Imitation Vinegar

The South Africa's Ministry of Agriculture published regulations regarding the grading, packing, and marking of vinegar and imitation vinegar intended for sale in South Africa (see [GAIN report: South Africa published new regulations on vinegar and imitation vinegar](#)). These regulations took effect on March 13, 2026. The regulation prohibits the use of class, grade, or quality claims and specifies the format for how acidity must be labeled.

Microwave Popcorn Imports from the United States

In January 2025, the DoA officially notified the FAS/Pretoria that microwave popcorn packages imported from the United States would no longer require phytosanitary measures or phytosanitary certification for entry into South Africa.

Since 2022, importers had been required to either submit a phytosanitary certificate from the exporting government or have the popcorn tested at the port of entry. However, because microwave popcorn is classified as a processed product, APHIS does not issue a phytosanitary certificate. This requirement effectively closed the South African market to U.S. microwave popcorn exports.

Following sustained engagement and advocacy by FAS/Pretoria with South African regulatory authorities and U.S. industry stakeholders, the DoA acknowledged that phytosanitary requirements were inappropriate for processed microwave popcorn products. The January 2025 decision removes these regulatory barriers and reopens the South African market to U.S. exporters.

Wine, Beer, and Other Alcoholic Beverages

The importation and regulation of alcoholic beverages in South Africa involve multiple government agencies, each with distinct responsibilities to ensure product quality, consumer safety, and regulatory compliance. The DoA, DoH, and DTIC collectively enforce laws governing the production, importation, distribution, and sale of alcoholic beverages.

a) Department of Agriculture – Import Regulation and Quality Standards

Under the [Liquor Products Act](#) (Act No. 60 of 1989), the DoA regulates the import and export of liquor products, including wine, spirits, and other alcoholic beverages. The DoA's responsibilities include:

- Issuing import certificates for all alcoholic beverage products entering South Africa.
- Verifying imported products meet prescribed quality standards and compositional requirements.
- Conducting inspections and testing to ensure compliance with South African specifications.
- Maintaining a registry of approved products and importers.

Import certificates are mandatory for all alcoholic beverage products and applications can be submitted electronically through [DoA's website](#). Exporters should work closely with their South African importers to ensure timely submission of certificate applications and supporting documentation.

b) Regulatory Amendments

In March 2025, the DoA published [amended regulations](#) under the Liquor Products Act, 1989. These amendments align the regulations with the [Liquor Products Amendment Act, 2021](#), which came into force in August 2023. The amendments introduce significant changes affecting:

- **Compositional Standards:** Revised requirements for sugar and alcohol content across various liquor product categories, including wine, spirits, and liqueurs.
- **Sensory Characteristics:** Updated specifications for the color, flavor, and aroma profiles of different liquor products to ensure authenticity and quality.
- **Containers and Packaging:** New standards for bottle types, closures, and packaging materials to enhance product integrity and consumer safety.
- **Labeling Requirements:** Enhanced labeling provisions to improve consumer information and traceability.
- **Appeals Process:** Streamlined procedures for appealing regulatory decisions related to product approvals and compliance matters.
- **Miscellaneous Provisions:** Various technical updates to modernize the regulatory framework and address emerging industry practices.

U.S. exporters should review these amendments carefully to ensure their products comply with the updated standards before shipment. Non-compliance may result in delays, additional testing requirements, or refusal of entry.

c) Department of Trade, Industry and Competition– Manufacturing and Distribution

The large-scale manufacture and distribution of alcoholic beverages are governed by the [National Liquor Act](#) (Act No. 59 of 2003), which is administered by the DTIC. This legislation establishes:

- National liquor policy and standards applicable across all provinces.
- The minimum legal drinking age (18 years).
- Licensing requirements for manufacturers, distributors, and retailers.
- Registration procedures with the National Liquor Authority.

Firms engaged in the commercial production or distribution of alcoholic beverages must register with the National Liquor Authority and obtain appropriate licenses. While this primarily affects domestic operators, importers should be aware that their South African distribution partners must hold valid licenses to legally handle and sell imported alcoholic products.

d) Department of Health – Labeling and Advertising

The DoH regulates the labeling and advertising of liquor products to protect public health and ensure consumers receive accurate product information. Key requirements include:

- **Mandatory Label Information:** Product name, alcohol content by volume, volume of contents, country of origin, importer details, and health warnings.
- **Health Warnings:** Prescribed warnings about the dangers of alcohol consumption, particularly for pregnant women and drivers.
- **Advertising Restrictions:** Limitations on marketing practices to prevent targeting minors and irresponsible consumption messaging.
- **Nutritional Information:** Emerging requirements for disclosure of ingredients and nutritional content.

All imported alcoholic beverages must comply with DoH labeling regulations before they may be sold in South Africa. Labels must be in English and may include additional languages as appropriate for the target market.

e) Compliance Recommendations for U.S. Exporters

To successfully export wine, beer, and other alcoholic beverages to South Africa, U.S. exporters should:

- Obtain import certificates from the DoA prior to shipment through their South African importer.
- Ensure products comply with the 2025 amended compositional and quality standards.
- Verify that labels meet all DoH requirements, including mandatory health warnings.
- Confirm that South African importers and distributors hold valid licenses from the National Liquor Authority.
- Maintain comprehensive documentation, including certificates of analysis demonstrating compliance with alcohol content, sugar levels, and other specifications.
- Monitor regulatory updates, as South Africa continues to refine its liquor product regulations.

By proactively addressing these multi-agency requirements, U.S. exporters can facilitate smooth market entry and maintain compliance throughout the distribution chain.

South Africa and the United States are signatories of the Mutual Acceptance Agreement on Oenological Practices, an agreement of the [World Wine Trade Group \(WWTG\)](#). Through this Agreement, WWTG members accept that wine made in another signatory country should be allowed to be sold in its market, despite the differences in oenological practices. The Agreement, however, does not apply to variances in labeling regulations; therefore, U.S. exporters are still required to verify their labels are following South African regulations.

Seafood and Canned Meat Products

The Food and Associated Industries Division of the [National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications](#) (NRCS) regulates canned meat and meat products, canned fish, frozen fish, frozen marine mollusks, frozen rock lobsters, frozen shrimp/prawns, langoustines, crabs, smoked snoek, and live abalone. The division establishes standards and specifications for quality and composition, packaging and labeling, processing facilities, and for entities handling and processing these food products.

Organic Food Certification and Regulations

Government certification programs for organic goods do not exist in South Africa. Only draft legislation and standards exist regarding the management and sale of organic products. Because the organic food industry is not governed by any specific national policy or law in South Africa, the South African Organic Sector Organization (SAOSO) established a [domestic voluntary Standard for Organic Production and Processing](#). SAOSO is the most prominent and active organization in the South African organic industry, and the group based their voluntary standard on the [International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements \(IFOAM\)](#) standards.

Halal and Kosher Foods

In South Africa, Halal and Kosher food regulations are primarily driven by private, reputable certification bodies rather than direct government legislation, though they comply with national food safety acts. These regulations ensure that food production meets religious dietary laws through strict auditing and certification, with a large portion of South Africa's Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) market being halal certified. Where there are Halal or Kosher claims, suitable substantiation from reputable bodies may be requested at the port of entry. There are several voluntary organizations including the [National Independent Halal Trust](#), [South African National Halal Authority](#) and [Kosher SA](#) are responsible for the domestic certification in South Africa.

In May 2024, the DoA published [draft regulations relating to the management control system in respect of the sale and export of certain agricultural products](#) for public comments. The draft regulations include additional requirements for documentation to support label claims for imported food products. The regulations aim to require producers of both domestic and imported food to substantiate the control management system under which they claim their products were produced. A framework will be developed that will contain protocols of the control management system, which is defined within the draft regulation as “means of production that may be claimed through the use of a name, word, expression, reference, particulars, or indication in any manner, either by itself or in conjunction with any other verbal, written, printed, illustrated or visual material”. These control management systems include Kosher, Halal, and organic products. The specific requirements for exported products that make claims under one of these defined management control systems remain unclear. The DoA is currently reviewing the feedback received on the draft regulations during the domestic comment period, which closed in June 2024. There is no indication when the proposed regulations will come into effect (also refer to FAS/Pretoria GAIN report [New Requirements Expected for Kosher, Halal, and Organic Food Products](#)).

Product Samples and Mail Order Shipments

The same registration, certification, testing, and inspection requirements that apply to regular shipments do not apply to samples of most products. To avoid paying import taxes, the importer might need to register with the South African Revenue Service. American exporters should get in touch with the FAS Office in Pretoria to find out if their sample goods will be exempt from regular procedures.

Other Specific Standards

Table 7 below provides information about other laws, regulations, or ordinances governing imported foods not covered in other sections of this report.

Table 7: Other Specific Standards

<u>Name of Regulation</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Website</u>
Fortification and other Nutritional Issues		
• Regulations relating to trans-fats in foodstuffs	DoH	Download
• Regulations relating to the reduction of sodium	DoH	Download
• Regulations relating to food-grade salt	DoH	Download
• Regulations relating to the fortification of certain foodstuffs	DoH	Download
Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)		
• Regulations relating to the application of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point System (HACCP System)	DoH	Download Download (amendment) Download (amendment)
Hygiene		
• Guidelines for monitoring irradiated foodstuffs in South Africa	DoH	Download
• Regulations relating to irradiated foodstuffs	DoH	Download
• Regulations governing hygiene requirements for food premises and the transport of food	DoH	Download
• Regulations relating to milking sheds and the transport of milk	DoH	Download
• Regulations regarding processed foodstuffs	DoH	Download
• Regulations relating to perishable foodstuffs	DoH	Download
Microbiological Standards		
• Regulations governing microbiological standards for foodstuffs	DoH	Download
• Regulations relating to milk and dairy products	DoH	Download Download (amendment) Download (amendment)

Prohibitions		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulations relating to the prohibition of polycarbonate infant feeding bottles containing bisphenol A (BPA) 	DoH	Download
Veterinary Procedural Notices		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other veterinary procedural notices 	DoA	Download

Source: Department of Health and Department of Agriculture

SECTION VIII: GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS, TRADEMARKS, BRAND NAMES, AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Geographical Indications in South Africa

South Africa has adopted the concept of Geographical Indications (GI) to safeguard and promote its distinctive agricultural products, wines, and other goods. The country's GI framework ensures that only products genuinely originating from a specific region may use that region's name. South Africa does not maintain standalone legislation exclusively dedicated to GIs; rather, it employs existing statutes to provide protection.

In 2023, the DoA published revised "Regulations relating to the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin used on agricultural products intended for sale in the Republic of South Africa" ([No. R.3023 of 10 February 2023](#)). Regulation R.3023 applies to the use of registered Geographical Indications (GIs) on agricultural products falling within the scope of the Agricultural Product Standards Act and intended for sale in South Africa. The regulations further consider international agreements regarding the protection of foreign GIs in the Republic of South Africa.

South Africa is party to several international agreements that support the protection of Geographical Indications:

- The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS):** As a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), South Africa is committed to the TRIPS Agreement, which establishes minimum standards for the protection of GIs and other forms of intellectual property.
- The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union (EU):** This agreement includes provisions for the mutual recognition and protection of GIs. It allows South African products with GI status to be protected in the EU market and vice versa, thereby enhancing trade opportunities and market access. The GI protocol ensures that the EU will protect South African names such as *Rooibos*, *Honeybush*, *Karoo Meat of Origin*, and numerous wine appellations including *Stellenbosch* and *Paarl*. In return, South Africa will protect more than 250 EU GI names across food, wines, and spirits. These foods include various cheeses, vinegar, meat products, fresh fruits and vegetables, cereals, and other products.

- **The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA):** South Africa is a signatory to the AfCFTA, which aims to create a single continental market for goods and services. The agreement includes provisions for the protection of intellectual property rights, including GIs, thereby fostering regional cooperation and economic integration.

Trademarks, Brand Names, and Intellectual Property Rights

The registration and maintenance of specific intellectual property (IP) rights (including trademarks, patents, designs, and copyright) are handled by the DTIC's [Companies and Intellectual Property Commission \(CIPC\)](#). Several laws and regulations protect IP rights and provide the registered owner with the ability to have those rights upheld in court. In South Africa, any challenge to IP rights may be pursued through an independent judiciary.

Patents

[The Patents Act of 1978](#) allows for the registration of patents, which have a 20-year term. For definitions, examples, and procedures for registering patents, visit the [CIPC website](#).

Trademarks

Trademarks can be registered under the [Trademarks Act of 1993](#), are granted for 10 years, and may be renewed for an additional 10 years. To view definitions, examples, and procedures for registering trademarks, visit the [CIPC website](#).

Designs

New designs can be registered under the [Designs Act of 1993](#), which grants protection for aesthetic designs for a period of 15 years and for functional designs for a period of 10 years. The [CIPC website](#) offers definitions, examples, and procedures for design registrations.

Merchandise Marks

The [Merchandise Marks Act](#) establishes rules for the marking of goods, coverings included in or sold with goods, and the use of specific words and symbols in commercial contexts. CIPC offers comprehensive [procedures for enforcing your IP rights](#) under the Act.

Additional IP Protections for Agricultural Products

Other laws and regulations relevant to the IP rights of U.S. exporters of agricultural products include the [Plant Breeders Rights Act](#), [Genetically Modified Organisms Act](#), and regulations governing geographical indications (discussed above).

SECTION IX: IMPORT PROCEDURES

Exporter Registration with the South African Revenue Service

Companies and individuals must register with the South African Revenue Service ([SARS](#)) to import into or export from South Africa. FAS/Pretoria advises that exporters select a regionally registered agent to represent them. SARS also publishes the South African [customs tariff schedule](#). The SARS customs branch offices at the ports of entry make tariff determinations; however, an importer or customs broker may apply for a tariff determination in accordance with the [Customs and Excise Duty Act of 2014](#). The application must be accompanied by all clearance documents, product samples, and any relevant manufacturer or supplier literature. The request will be forwarded to the SARS Tariff Division in Pretoria, where a decision will be made and a final response will be transmitted to the applicant via the customs office.

Import Procedures

The steps below outline the basic procedures for importing agricultural products into South Africa.

➤ **STEP 1: MARKET ACCESS ASSESSMENT**

U.S. exporters should assess and determine whether their agricultural or food product is permitted entry into South Africa. Certain products require market access approval and facility registrations prior to exportation. U.S. agencies such as APHIS, FSIS, and FAS/Pretoria may provide valuable information to U.S. exporters.

➤ **STEP 2: IDENTIFY A SOUTH AFRICA-BASED IMPORTER**

U.S. exporters should identify a South Africa-based importer interested in purchasing their products. FAS/Pretoria may assist U.S. exporters by connecting them with reputable importers and distributors. Trade shows also serve as valuable resources for identifying potential buyers.

➤ **STEP 3: APPLY FOR IMPORT PERMIT**

The importer must apply for an import permit from the DoA. Both the South African importer and U.S. exporter must be registered with SARS for customs and tax purposes. The importer must also be registered with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC).

➤ **STEP 4: OBTAIN PHYTOSANITARY OR HEALTH CERTIFICATE**

U.S. exporters should apply for any necessary phytosanitary certificates and obtain the required documents or proof of compliance as stipulated by the import permit. For example, meat imports are only permitted from accredited and registered foreign meat plants and facilities. Agencies involved in this step may include the DoA, APHIS, FSIS, and FDA.

➤ **STEP 5: SHIPMENT AND TRANSPORTATION OF PRODUCTS**

U.S. exporters and South African importers must ensure that all products comply with the shipment or transportation requirements specified in the import permit, health certificate, or agreed treatment protocols between the United States and South Africa. All required documentation must be in order before the shipment departs the United States.

➤ **STEP 6: PORT INSPECTIONS**

Upon arrival in South Africa, products are inspected by BMA officials at the port of entry to ensure compliance with the conditions stipulated in the import permit and health certificate, as well as relevant regulations governing classification, grading, marking, and packaging.

➤ **STEP 7: CUSTOMS CLEARANCE**

SARS inspects the shipment to verify compliance with the correct Harmonized System (HS) code declaration, confirms that the shipment has all required documentation, and ensures that the relevant customs duties and taxes are paid. Typically, the South African importer will manage all customs processes and inquiries.

➤ **STEP 8: RELEASE OR DETENTION OF SHIPMENT**

Once the DoA, BMA, DoH, and SARS are satisfied that all import requirements have been met, the shipment is released. However, should compliance issues arise, communication is sent to the relevant importer or agency handling the shipment. Most agencies strictly enforce the 30-day window for lodging an appeal. FAS/Pretoria may assist U.S. exporters whose shipments have been detained.

SECTION X: TRADE FACILITATION

Trade Facilitation and Customs Modernization

South Africa is a signatory to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which aims to expedite the movement, release, and clearance of goods across borders. SARS is responsible for customs administration in South Africa, implementing customs policies, collecting duties, and ensuring compliance with trade regulations.

SARS has been implementing the New Customs Acts Program to modernize and streamline customs processes, improve compliance, and enhance trade facilitation. In 2021, SARS updated the [Customs and Excise Act](#) to align with the World Customs Organization's Harmonized System. As part of the Customs Modernization Program (CMP), SARS Customs embarked on a Single Window Project.

While the creation of the envisaged National Single Window remains a long-term objective, SARS has already begun laying the fundamental building blocks in relation to its own processes and those of partner agencies through development of the Single Window Portal.

Several key components have been implemented:

- **Electronic Inspection Workflow (Phase 1):** The first focus area was the development of the Other Government Agencies (OGAs) Inspection Workflow, which enables SARS to electronically generate OGA inspection cases and share them with BMA. The BMA can provide inspection case outcomes through a secure interface. This workflow was implemented in September 2023; however, a phased testing approach remains in place with selected plant inspection importers testing the workflow. This restricted phase enables refinement of the process before full implementation.
- **Maritime Single Window:** South Africa implemented a mandatory Maritime Single Window for digital data exchange between ships and port authorities, effective January 1, 2024.
- **SARS-Transnet Collaboration:** Other focus areas include collaboration between SARS and Transnet that will result in marine carriers and other port users submitting reports only once to fulfill the requirements of both parties.

Advance Ruling

South Africa provides advance rulings for all commodities on HS-code classification, tariff determinations, customs value, and labeling compliance. Applicants must apply for a tariff determination through their customs broker or clearing agent to the customs branch office at the intended port of entry where the goods are to be cleared or have already been cleared for importation. The application must conform to the terms of the [Customs and Excise Duty Act of 2014](#) and the World Customs Organization's explanatory notes. The application must be supported by manufacturer's or supplier's literature, all clearing documents, and a sample of the products if available. The application will be forwarded to the SARS Tariff Division in Pretoria for a determination to be made and a final reply to the applicant via the customs branch office. Details on applying for advance rulings and tariff determinations may be found on the SARS website ([advance rulings and tariff determinations](#)).

While advance rulings are helpful in expediting the clearance of products at the ports, the final release of products is subject to the approval of inspectors and customs officials at the port of entry, who may detain shipments for other specific reasons.

Seaport Import Clearance Times

At South African seaports, recent logistical updates and Time Release Study (TRS) data for 2024–2025 indicate that import shipments typically clear customs within 24 to 48 hours provided all documentation is accurate. However, if a shipment is flagged for documentary review or physical inspection, clearance times can extend from under 2 days to 5–14 days. Nevertheless, overall end-to-end processing—from vessel arrival to cargo release—is frequently extended by terminal congestion and infrastructure upgrades. For example, at Durban Port typical waiting times for vessels were reported at 2 to 5 days as of late 2025, depending on peak season pressure and weather conditions, while at Cape Town Port waiting times averaged 3 to 6 days and are frequently affected by high winds and terminal congestion. As of late 2025, Transnet has invested in new equipment (including ship-to-shore cranes and straddle carriers) aimed at

reducing berth wait times by approximately 15 percent. For detailed weekly updates on port performance, traders can monitor [Busa cargo updates](#).

Air Cargo Import Clearance Times

For air imports into South Africa, industry data indicate that standard air cargo typically clears within 24 hours, while express parcels can be released in as little as a few hours to one business day. However, if SARS triggers a physical inspection or documentary review, the time extends to one to three business days for air freight.

Common Causes of Delays

Import shipments into South Africa may experience delays for various reasons. The most common causes of delays include:

- **Incorrect HS Code Declarations:** Misclassification remains the most common cause of delays across all product categories.
- **Incomplete Documentation:** Missing or erroneous information on commercial invoices, bills of lading, packing lists, or certificates of origin.
- **Valuation Discrepancies:** Inconsistencies between declared values and SARS reference prices trigger customs reviews.

Certain product categories face more frequent challenges:

Meat and Animal Products

Meat products face particularly stringent scrutiny due to:

- **Certificate Issues:** Authentication problems, incorrect establishment numbers, mismatched product descriptions, wrong dates, or illegible stamps.
- **SPS-Related Problems:** Microbial contamination, bacterial presence, cold chain failures during transit, prohibited substances, or non-compliance with microbiological standards.
- **Facility Registration:** Meat may only be imported from foreign establishments registered with DoA; shipments from unregistered facilities are rejected.

Consumer-Oriented Products

Consumer-ready food products commonly face delays due to:

- **Non-Compliant Labeling:** Missing or incorrect nutritional information, inadequate allergen declarations, improper ingredient listings, missing date markings, lack of importer details, language requirement failures, or non-compliant formatting.
- **Food Safety Issues:** Products containing novel ingredients, unapproved additives, or requiring safety testing.

Plant and Plant Products

- **Phytosanitary Certificate Issues:** Missing, expired, or incorrectly completed certificates.

- **Pest or Disease Detection:** Presence of quarantine pests, diseases, or soil contamination requiring treatment, re-export, or destruction.
- **Genetically Engineered Products:** Require specific permits, while undeclared GE content causes significant delays.

Recommendations for Exporters

To ensure smooth clearance of food products at South African ports of entry, U.S. exporters should:

- Verify all regulatory requirements for their specific product category well in advance of shipment.
- Obtain necessary permits and certificates before dispatching goods.
- Ensure products are sourced from facilities approved by South African authorities.
- Verify HS code classifications with SARS or apply for advance rulings.
- Maintain comprehensive documentation demonstrating compliance with all applicable standards.
- Work with experienced freight forwarders and customs brokers familiar with South African import procedures.
- Establish clear communication channels with South African importers to address any issues promptly.
- Monitor regulatory updates and changes to import requirements through official channels.

By proactively addressing these requirements, U.S. exporters can minimize delays, reduce costs, and maintain reliable access to the South African market.

APPENDIX I: GOVERNMENT REGULATORY AGENCY CONTACTS

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA/FAS)

U.S. Embassy Pretoria
Postal address: P.O. Box 9536, Pretoria, South Africa, 0001
Tel: +27 12 431 4057
E-mail: AgPretoria@usda.gov

USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

U.S. Embassy Pretoria
Postal address: P.O. Box 9536,
Pretoria, South Africa, 0001
Tel: +27 12 431 4740
Website: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>

Department of Agriculture (DoA)

Postal address: Private Bag X250, Pretoria, South Africa, 0001
Tel: +27 12 319 6000
E-mail: queries@nda.gov.za <mailto:>
Website: <https://www.nda.gov.za/>

Department of Health: Food Control Division (DoH)

Postal address: Private Bag X828,
Pretoria, South Africa, 0001
Tel: +27 12 395 8799
E-mail (Director): Penny.Campbell@health.gov.za
Website: <https://www.health.gov.za/food-control-home/>

Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC)

Postal address: Private Bag X84, Pretoria, South Africa, 0001
Tel: +27 12 394 9500
E-mail: contactus@thedtic.co.za
Website: <https://www.thedtic.gov.za/>

South African Revenue Service (SARS)

Postal address: Private Bag X923, Pretoria, South Africa, 0001
Tel: +27 12 422 4000
E-mail: contactus@sars.gov.za
Website: <https://www.sars.gov.za/>

National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS)

Postal address: Private Bag X25, Brooklyn, South Africa, 0075
Tel: +27 12 482 8700
E-mail: info@nrccs.org.za
Website: <https://www.nrccs.org.za/>

South African Bureau of Standards (SABS)

Postal address: Private Bag X191, Pretoria, South Africa, 0001
Tel: +27 861 277 227
E-mail: info@sabs.co.za
Website: [SABS Website](#)

APPENDIX II: OTHER IMPORT SPECIALIST CONTACTS

South African National Accreditation System (SANAS)

Libertas Office Park
305 cnr Libertas and Highway Street, Equestria, Pretoria, South Africa, 0184
Tel: +27 (0) 12 740 8400
Website: <https://www.sanas.co.za/>

American Chamber of Commerce in South Africa (AmCham South Africa)

P.O. Box 1132,
Houghton, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2041
Tel: +27 11 788 0265
E-mail: amcham@amcham.co.za
Website: <https://www.amcham.co.za/>

Attachments:

No Attachments