

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

**Date:** April 04, 2025

**Report Number:** CO2025-0011

**Report Name:** Colombia Approves the Use of Starch as Thickener and Stabilizer Agent for Cheese

**Country:** Colombia

**Post:** Bogota

**Report Category:** FAIRS Subject Report, Dairy and Products

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**Report Highlights:**

On March 5, 2025, Colombia's National Institute for the Surveillance of Food and Medicines (INVIMA) confirmed that starch is approved by the Colombian government as an additive for use as a thickener and stabilizer agent in fresh cheese. FAS Bogota reached out to INVIMA for this confirmation after receiving several reports of issues with shipments of U.S. cheese at Colombian ports that contained starch. In 2024, U.S. exports of cheese to Colombia reached over \$35 million.

On March 5, 2025, Colombia's National Institute for the Surveillance of Food and Medicines (INVIMA) confirmed that starch is approved by the Colombian government as an additive for use as a thickener and stabilizer agent in fresh cheese. Therefore, when used as such, cheese products containing starch do not need to be labeled as imitation cheese (as long as they meet all other Colombian requirements). FAS Bogota reached out to INVIMA for this confirmation after receiving several reports of issues with shipments of U.S. cheese at Colombian ports that contained starch. In its March 5<sup>th</sup> response to the United States, INVIMA confirmed the following starches are authorized as thickeners and stabilizer additives in fresh cheese, under the understanding that they are already approved by [Codex](#):

*INS 1420 Starch acetate, INS 1422 Acetylated distarch adipate, INS 1405 Starches, enzyme treated, INS 1451 Acetylated oxidized starch, INS 1403 Bleached starch, INS 1440 Hydroxypropyl starch, INS 1404 Oxidized starch, INS 1401 Acid-treated starch, INS 1402 Alkali treated starch, INS 1412 Distarch phosphate, INS 1400 Dextrins, toasted starch, INS 1414 Acetylated distarch phosphate, INS 1413 Phosphated distarch phosphate, INS 1442 Hydroxypropyl distarch phosphate, INS 1410 Monostarch phosphate, INS 1450 Octenyl sodium suction from starch*

Fresh cheese that uses any of these additives as a thickener and/ or stabilizer, regardless of whether it is destined for the final consumer or for food service, does not need to be labeled as “imitation” in order to obtain customs clearance in Colombia. In January 2025, INVIMA had similarly provided approval for the use of cellulose as an anti-caking agent in grated and/or granulated fresh cheese (see GAIN report [CO2025-0001](#)).

According to Colombian [Resolution 2310 of 1986](#), in order to be labeled as cheese, products must use only the authorized ingredients, additives, preservatives and food stabilizers contained in Resolution 2310. The use of any other agent, such as starch, must obtain previous authorization through the [Specialized Group for Foods & Beverages](#) (SEAB acronym in Spanish). If the additive is not authorized, the product must be labeled as “imitation” cheese.

Importers are advised to include the specific use of starch approved by INVIMA, as well as the number of INVIMA’s concept note #20251054512 (see attachment below), when requesting the import license through the “Unique Window for Foreign Trade” ([VUCE](#)) in order to avoid delays at the port. Any different use of starch in fresh cheese, must be previously approved by INVIMA.

For assistance on trade policy and port issues in Colombia, U.S. exporters are encouraged to contact FAS Bogota at [agbogota@fas.usda.gov](mailto:agbogota@fas.usda.gov) or [jose.quintero@usda.gov](mailto:jose.quintero@usda.gov).

**Attachments:**

[Invima's Concept 20251054512 \(Spanish\).pdf](#)

[Invima's concept 20251054512 \(English\).pdf](#)