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Report Highlights:

Over the past decade the Bahamian Government has passed new laws and regulations pertaining to food safety and animal and plant health. The Bahamas also created a new regulatory authority, The Bahamas Agricultural Health and Food Safety Authority (BAHFSA) to oversee it all. While U.S. exporters need to be mindful of this when shipping products to The Bahamas and should coordinate closely with their Bahamian customers to ensure compliance with regulations, they will continue to find that the country remains import-friendly to U.S. farm products.

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This report was prepared by the Caribbean Basin Agricultural Trade Office (CBATO) in Miami, for U.S. exporters of domestic food and agricultural products. While every possible care has been taken in the preparation of this report, information provided may not be completely accurate either because policies have changed since its 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, before any goods are shipped. FINAL IMPORT APPROVAL OF ANY PRODUCTS IS SUBJECT TO THE IMPORTING COUNTRY'S RULES AND REGULATIONS AS INTERPRETED BY BORDER OFFICIALS AT THE TIME OF PRODUCT ENTRY.

Executive Summary

According to a 2022 estimate, Agricultural land in The Bahamas totals 130 square kilometers (about 50 square miles), representing a mere 1.3 percent of the country's total land area. Thus, farm activity plays a very small role in the island nation's economy. Given this very limited agricultural base, The Bahamas relies heavily on imported food to feed a population of 410,862 (2024 estimate) and millions of tourists who visit the country annually. In 2024, The Bahamas imported \$564.1 million¹ in agricultural products from all sources. Of this amount, \$427.1 million (76 percent) came from the United States, The Bahamas' main trading partner. Consumer-oriented agricultural products make up 91 percent of U.S. agricultural exports to The Bahamas.

The Bahamas is the only country in the Western Hemisphere that is not a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Although a Working Party on the accession of The Bahamas was established back in 2001, nearly 25 years later WTO accession remains a work in progress. Nonetheless, in 2016 The Bahamas enacted several laws to modernize its sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regimes, and in 2024 it passed new trademark legislation, all of which contribute to its efforts to accede to the WTO. The Bahamas has also made noteworthy strides in terms of trade facilitation, including implementation of an electronic single window to streamline export and import processes.

Historically, The Bahamas has imposed only a minimal number of requirements on imported food and agricultural products, particularly from the United States. With the introduction of new legislation and regulations in recent years, U.S. suppliers can expect a greater number of import requirements for practically all products. Requirements are largely managed under one agency, The Bahamas Agricultural Health and Food Safety Authority (BAHFSA), and import processes have been greatly streamlined and automated. To date, no trade restrictive measures have been put in place, and The Bahamas remains one of the most import-friendly countries in the region for U.S. agricultural suppliers.

¹Source: Trade Data Monitor, based on aggregated export statistics for reporting countries

Section I: Food Laws

The following three legislative pieces constitute the backbone of The Bahamas' SPS regime:

- Food Safety and Quality Act, 2016
- Plant Protection Act, 2016
- Animal Health and Production Act, 2016

In addition to these laws, The Bahamas Agricultural Health and Food Safety Authority (BAHFSA) Act of 2016 created an overarching food safety authority under the portfolio of the Ministry of Agriculture. BAHFSA is governed by a board that also advises the Minister of Agriculture on BAHFSA's work in advancing its priorities and programs, especially on matters affecting public policy.

BAHFSA is responsible for overseeing the administration and enforcement of all three of the above-specified laws. In doing so, BAHFSA addresses SPS matters associated with food safety and plant and animal health. The Ministry of Agriculture's Director of Veterinary Services is responsible for administering and carrying out the objectives of the Animal Health and Production Act and works closely with BAHFSA on animal health matters. Similarly, the Ministry's Director of Plant Health is responsible for administering and carrying out the objectives of the Plant Health Protection Act and works closely with BAHFSA on plant health matters. The Department of Environmental Health Services (DEHS), a dependency of the Ministry of the Environment and Housing, assists BAHFSA on food inspection matters. The Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality (BBSQ) also plays a key role in formulating and adopting food standards.

It is the responsibility of BAHFSA to effectively enforce BBSQ's mandatory food standards and other import regulations to ensure compliance. At the port of entry, inspections are conducted by designated food inspectors from DEHS on behalf of BAHFSA, while at the wholesale and retail levels inspections are carried out by BAHFSA inspectors.

The above-specified laws can be viewed on BAHFSA's website. These and other Bahamian laws can also be viewed at the government's legislative portal, Bahamas Laws On-Line. A link to both sites is provided in Appendix II of the report.

Section II: Labeling Requirements

The following mandatory labeling requirements were introduced with the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2016: "No person shall offer for sale in The Bahamas any package of food unless the label thereon:

- a) is written in English;
- b) specifies the product name;
- c) specifies the date of manufacture and expiration;
- d) permits the traceability of the food as prescribed in regulations; and
- e) sets out such particulars as may be prescribed in regulations."

In addition to the above requirements, the following are several important notes regarding labeling of food products in The Bahamas.

- Where food that is not packaged is displayed for sale, it shall bear an identification mark.
- Bilingual labels are allowed as long as English is one of the languages included.
- While it is generally preferred that food labels are in full compliance with Bahamian labeling requirements, stick-on labels may be allowed (on a case-by-case basis) in order to meet requirements. In instances where food is being repackaged from bulk into smaller packaging, for example, stick-on labels may be allowed.
- Products must be labeled in English prior to export. In the case of stick-on labels being used, the labels must accompany the product even if the contents are repackaged and labeled according to Bahamian requirements.
- There are no special labeling requirements for sample-size products. Such products must follow the same requirements as for larger products. In the case of spices, which are normally sold in small packaging, they are still expected to contain basic labeling information such as ingredients and contact information. For institutional-size products destined for the food service sector, the same repackaging requirements as outlined for bulk products also apply.
- Imported products labeled “For Export” or “For Export Only” may be considered misleading to the consumer. Thus, to avoid any issues it is preferred that U.S. products exported to The Bahamas not be labeled as such.
- Use of a “Freeze By” date in lieu of an “Expiration” date is not allowed.
- U.S. Recommended Daily Intake (RDI) guidelines have been accepted and used/referenced in the development of Bahamian national dietary guidelines.
- Currently, the Bahamian Government does not regulate health claims in local food products. However, BAHFSA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness, may regulate health claims of imported products using the Codex as reference. The Codex refers to the Codex Alimentarius or “Food Code” which is a collection of standards, guidelines, and codes of practice adopted by the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission.
- U.S. approved health claims are accepted on imported U.S. products.
- The standard U.S. nutritional fact panel is acceptable.
- Content claims (e.g. low in saturated fat) and absolute descriptors (e.g. high-fiber or low-fat) and the use of relative descriptors such as “less,” “fewer,” “reduced,” “light,” or “more” (e.g. “reduced” sugar or “light” in sodium) are acceptable for U.S. products and products from other approved trading partners. Locally, there is no position on claims other than what is prescribed in Codex.

- Regarding implied claims (e.g. “*You would not believe something so ‘light’ could taste so good*”), BAHFSA currently has no position on the matter. However, implied claims may be treated on a case-by-case basis to determine if they may be misleading and/or detrimental to the wellbeing of the consumer.
- The Food Safety Quality Act requires that food labels must have a manufacturing date and an expiration date. However, products lacking the latter but having a valid “use by,” “best by,” or other date will be treated as an expiration date (last date product can be sold or consumed). In these cases, all other labeling requirements remain the same, including the English language requirement, product name, expiration date, means of traceability (country of origin, batch/lot code), and the identification mark (which may also include country of origin).
- The only case where BAHFSA may grant an exception to labeling requirements is in instances where food is being repackaged and reconditioned from bulk/institutional packaging into smaller packaging as described above. Even so, the labeling of the smaller packaging must still adhere to the country’s labeling laws.

Section III: Packaging and Container Regulations

No special packaging or container sizes are required or preferred. Packaging materials that meet U.S. standards are accepted.

Section IV: Food Additive Regulations

The Bahamas accepts the Codex list of approved food additives. The Bahamas does not maintain its own positive or negative list of additives. However, a list that would restrict or ban selected food additives is reportedly under development. Upon completion, such list would be made available to the public through BAHFSA’s website (link provided in Appendix II of this report) and social media platforms.

Section V: Pesticides and Contaminants

At present, local authorities do not have their own regulations on pesticide and other contaminant residues in foods. Instead, they rely on Codex maximum residue limits (MRLs) and tolerance levels for pesticides. Pesticide registration is not required.

Section VI: Other Requirements, Regulations, and Registration Measures

Imported meat, poultry, unprocessed dairy products, fresh table eggs, unprocessed seafood, and some other animal products require an import permit and must be accompanied by a sanitary export permit certifying compliance with any requirements listed on the import permit. The same holds true for live plants and plant products such as fresh produce. For specifics regarding export certificates, please see

the FAIRS Export Certificate Report for The Bahamas. This and other CBATO reports can be found in USDA's Global Agricultural Information Network (GAIN link provided in Appendix II).

When food-related health threats arise, the regulating agencies monitor imports and work with local distributors and retailers to ensure that affected products are removed from the distribution system. Certain items may be restricted if the government decides they pose a risk to food safety or plant and animal health.

Although not required of U.S. suppliers, local businesses that produce, manufacture, prepare, treat, pack, package, store, transport, handle, serve, or offer up food for sale must register with BAHFSA. Registration consists of submitting an application to BAHFSA's Director of Food Safety and payment of a prescribed fee. If approved, the certificate of registration is valid for a year and subject to renewal upon payment of a renewal fee. Local businesses (including importers) specifically involved with plants, plant products, other regulated plant products or with animals, animal products, other animal-related products must also register with the Director of Plant Protection and the Director of Veterinary Services, respectively. In both cases, the registration process is very similar to the registration process with BAHFSA outlined above. Sanitary registration of food products is not required.

Section VII: Other Specific Standards

The Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality (BBSQ) has set forth several national standards in the area of food and agricultural products (see below). These standards, which are *voluntary*, apply to the specified products (including imported products) when offered for sale in The Bahamas. It is worth noting that the following standards were developed as regional CARICOM (Caribbean Community) standards by CARICOM's Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) and later adopted by BBSQ as Bahamas National Standards.

- BNS CRS 5: 2010 - Labeling of Pre-Packaged Foods: This national standard outlines labeling requirements for the quality and safety of pre-packaged food offered for sale in The Bahamas.
- BNS CRS 28:2012 - Specification for Poultry and Poultry Products: This national standard specifies requirements for primary processed poultry consisting of carcasses, poultry parts and poultry products for human consumption. It defines and distinguishes between the market classes of poultry. Requirements for sanitation, plant hygiene, the dressing operation, grading, packaging, labelling, and marketing, as well as ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection of poultry products sold through commercial distribution systems are also established. This standard does not apply to freshly killed poultry prepared for direct sale to consumers and for which conditions may be prescribed in National Regulations.
- BNS CRS 29:2011 - Specification for Poultry feed and feed ingredients: This national standard establishes specifications for nutrient requirements in the rations fed to poultry. It provides guidance on good manufacturing practices for the production of poultry feeds and good on-farm feeding practices. It applies to the production and use of all materials designed for poultry feed and feed ingredients at all levels, whether produced industrially or on a farm.

- BNS CRS 52: 2005 - Specification for Grading and Quality Requirements for Table Eggs: This national standard establishes: 1) grading criteria and grades; 2) weight classification; 3) labeling requirements; and 4) sampling protocols and methods of testing. This standard is applicable to table eggs that are prepackaged, distributed and offered for sale in the retail trade in CARICOM, of which The Bahamas is a member. It also establishes labeling requirements for processed egg products, which are prepackaged, distributed, and offered for sale in CARICOM.

The full text of the above standards are available for sale via the BBSQ website. A link is provided in Appendix II of this report.

Section VIII: Geographical Indications, Trademarks, Brand Names, and Intellectual Property Rights

The Bahamian government has taken legislative steps to modernize its framework for intellectual property rights (IPR) protection. In recent years it has passed a number of laws and subordinate directives, which include:

- Trade Marks Act, 2024
- Trade Marks Act, 2024 (Appointment Day) Notice, 2025
- Trade Marks Regulations, 2025
- Trade Marks (Fees) Order

The Bahamas is also a signatory to the following intellectual property conventions and agreements:

- Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works
- Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property
- Universal Copyright Convention (UCC)
- Convention establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
- Convention on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export, and transfer of ownership of cultural property

In 2025 The Bahamas also signed on to the following five international treaties under the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO):

- Budapest Treaty – concerning the international recognition of the deposit of microorganisms for the purposes of patent procedure
- Nice Agreement – concerning the International Classification of Goods and Services for the Purposes of the Registration of Marks
- Vienna Agreement – establishing an International Classification of the Figurative Elements of Marks
- Trademark Law Treaty – standardizing and streamlining national and regional trademark registration procedures
- Singapore Treaty – creating a modern and dynamic international framework for the harmonization of administrative trademark registration procedures

Geographical Indications (GI)

The Bahamas does not yet have specific legislation addressing GI.

Trademarks, Brand Names, and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

Trademark registration in The Bahamas is voluntary but highly recommended in order to obtain protection against infringement. Trademarks can be registered with the Intellectual Property Office of the Registrar General's Department for a period of 10 years on a renewable basis. Registration may be made through a local agent (attorney). The Intellectual Property Office can be helpful in identifying a local attorney specializing in intellectual property issues (see Appendix I for contact information). Samples of all relevant forms can be found in the First Schedule of the Trade Marks Regulations, 2025, which can be accessed through Bahamas Laws On-Line (link provided in Appendix II). Fees to be paid in connection with trademark applications and registrations are specified in the Second Schedule of the same regulations. Searches of the trademark registry may be conducted at the Intellectual Property Office for a small fee (see Appendix I for contact information).

When a trademark application is submitted, the registrar will conduct a search of registered marks, pending applications, and geographical indications for the purpose of ascertaining whether any marks for the same goods or services are on record. When an application is accepted, the Registrar then proceeds to publish the application in the government gazette. Two months after such publication, the registrar will, subject to any opposition and the determination thereof, and upon payment of the prescribed fee, enter the trademark into the register and issue a certificate of registration to the applicant.

It is important to note that there are limitations regarding plant varieties, as stated in Item 19 of the Trade Marks Act, 2024: *"Where a denomination must, under any legislation which addresses legal protection for plant varieties and the rights of plant breeders, be used to designate a plant variety, no person shall adopt it as a trade mark in association with the plant variety or another plant variety of the same species or use it in a way likely to mislead, nor shall any person so adopt or so use any sign so nearly resembling that denomination as to be likely to be mistaken therefor."*

Section IX: Import Procedures

Bahamian importers and their customs agents are very knowledgeable about import requirements and clearance procedures and are essential in guiding U.S. exporters through the process. Customs clearance procedures are generally efficient and focused on customer service. Bahamian law allows importers to begin the import clearance of goods before arrival in The Bahamas using standard shipping documents. Depending on the size and nature of the shipment, the clearance process can usually be completed within 2-24 hours after submission of the documents.

The primary requirements for importing into The Bahamas are proof of authorization for processing, proof of value of the goods (invoices or receipts), and proof of freight charges (bill of lading or freight invoice) along with the relevant customs documentation for declarations, depending on the purpose of the importation. For select agricultural products (meat, poultry, unprocessed dairy products, fresh table

eggs, unprocessed seafood, and other animal products), customs documentation usually includes an import permit issued by BAHFSA, as well a sanitary or phytosanitary health certificate from the country of origin.

All imported goods shall be enter for either a) home consumption; b) warehousing in a bonded warehouse; c) temporary admission; or d) transshipment. Goods imported into The Bahamas shall be declared by either the owner of the goods or an authorized agent a) in an electronic format and b) within five days, exclusive of Sundays and public holidays, of the commencement of discharge, or within such further time as the comptroller may allow. The owner of the goods or the authorized agent shall provide the Customs authority with full details supported by documentary evidence of the goods referenced in the entry document. All entries must be signed by either the owner of the goods or an authorized agent. The use of an electronic signature is authorized for the purpose of making an entry under the Act. The person importing goods shall:

- Answer any question asked by the customs officer with respect to the goods; and
- Upon request of the customs officer, present the goods to the officer, remove any covering from the goods, unload any conveyance or open any part of it, or open and unpack any package or container that the officer wishes to examine.

Customs clearance of product samples may be more expeditious. U.S. exporters are advised to check with their importer or authorized customs agent when shipping samples to The Bahamas. Any disputes or discrepancies are generally resolved directly with Customs Department at the time of entry. See Appendix I for contact information.

Section X: Trade Facilitation

Although The Bahamas is not a member of the WTO and thus it is not a signatory party to the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), it has made important strides in simplifying, modernizing, and harmonizing its export and import processes in order to smooth trade with other countries.

The Bahamas Customs and Excise Department website (link provided in Appendix II) provides information critical to engaging in trade in The Bahamas, including:

- Import procedures
- Click2Clear (Electronic Single Window) platform
- BAHFSA's ePermitting System for food, animals, and plants
- Required fees, duties (tariff schedule and duty calculator), and other taxes
- Ports of entry, customs offices, and contacts
- Relevant customs legislation

Perhaps the most noticeable trade facilitation action taken by The Bahamas has been the implementation of Click2Clear (link provided in Appendix II) to facilitate one access point for businesses conducting import and export activities. Click2Clear is connected to various government agencies involved in the import and export processes, including BAHFSA. Certain customs procedures that used to take hours to complete in the past have reportedly been reduced to just a few minutes since

the introduction of Click2Clear. The Click2Clear system is currently being implemented throughout the Bahamian islands.

Given The Bahamas' proximity to the United States, particularly from South Florida ports which are the main gateway for U.S. agricultural exports to the Bahamian archipelago, most maritime shipments can reach their destination in The Bahamas in 14-18 hours. Despite such short transit times, shipments of frozen and canned food can be cleared prior to their arrival thanks to advance ruling and expedited clearance processes. All other types of products reportedly receive expeditious customs clearance and are normally cleared in a matter of hours. Bahamian Customs requires entry forms for goods shipped by sea or air, including mail. An original invoice is required for processing.

The Bahamas also accepts electronic export certificates issued by USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) for meat and poultry shipped from the United States. Similarly, The Bahamas also accepts electronic phytosanitary certificates (ePhytos) issued by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for plants and plant products shipped from the United States. More information on Bahamian export certification requirements can be found in the latest FAIRS Export Certificate Report for The Bahamas available on USDA's GAIN ([link provided in Appendix II](#)).

Appendix I: Government Regulatory Key Agency Contacts

The Bahamas Agricultural Health and Food Safety Authority (BAHFSA)

99 Crawford Street
New Providence, The Bahamas
Telephone: (242) 603-3260
Email: bahfsa@bahamas.gov.bs

Department of Agriculture

Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources
Darville's Business Complex
Gladstone and Munnings Roads
P.O. Box N-3028
Nassau, New Providence, The Bahamas
Telephone: (242) 397-7450/325-7438
Fax: (242) 325-3960
Email: minagriculturemarine@bahamas.gov.bs

Customs Department

Customs House
Thompson Blvd.
P.O. Box N-155
Nassau, New Providence, The Bahamas
Telephone: (242) 604-3124/5
Fax: (242) 322-6223
Email: click2clear@bahamas.gov.bs

Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality

The Source River Centre
1000 Bacardi Road
P.O. Box N- 4843
New Providence, The Bahamas
Telephone: (242) 362-1748 to 55
Email: info@bbsq.bs

Intellectual Property Office

Registrar General's Department
Corner of Shirley and Charlotte Street
P.O. Box N 532
Nassau, New Providence, The Bahamas
Telephone: (242) 397-9114/9119
Fax: (242) 322-5553
Email: RegistrarGeneral@bahamas.gov.bs

Appendix II: Other Import Specialist Technical Contacts

Caribbean Basin Agricultural Trade Office (CBATO)

Foreign Agricultural Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture
909 SE 1st Avenue, Suite 720, Miami, FL 33131

Telephone: (305) 536-5300

Email: atocaribbeanbasin@usda.gov

U.S. Government Websites

1. USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) Global Agricultural Information Network (GAIN):

<https://gain.fas.usda.gov>

2. USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS): <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/live-animal-export/export-live-animals-bahamas>

3. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service Export Library:

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/inspection/import-export/import-export-library/bahamas>

Non-U.S. Government Websites

The following websites are provided for the readers' convenience; USDA does NOT in any way endorse, guarantee the accuracy of, or necessarily concur with the information contained in the websites that follow:

1. Bahamas Agricultural Health and Food Safety Authority: <https://bahfsabahamas.com/> This website provides general information on BAHFSA, including services provided, relevant legislation, and contact information.

2. Official web portal of the Government of The Bahamas: <https://www.bahamas.gov.bs/> Official Government of The Bahamas web portal.

3. The Bahamas Customs Department: <https://www.bahamascustoms.gov.bs/> This website containing links to customs laws, tariff schedules, rates on frequently imported items, processing and environmental levy fees, newly implemented VAT fees, and more.

4. Click2Clear portal: <https://www.bahamascustoms.gov.bs/imports-and-exports/about-click2clear/> Formerly known as The Bahamas Electronic Single Window, this portal provides one access point for traders and businesses within The Bahamas connected to various government agencies.

5. Bahamas Bureau of Standards and Quality: <https://www.bbsq.bs/> This site contains a list of compulsory and voluntary standards. Electronic copies of the standards are available for a fee.

6. The Registrar General's Department: <https://rgd.gov.bs/> This site provides information regarding registering trademarks and other intellectual property issues.

7. Bahamas Laws On-Line: <https://laws.bahamas.gov.bs/cms/> This is a database of statutes and subsidiary legislation of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, including the laws specified in Section I.

Attachments:

No Attachments