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Report Highlights:

Regulations for importing food and agricultural products in Guatemala remain unchanged since the 2024 FAIRS report. In July 2025, the Ministry of Health launched SNAP-GT, a digital platform designed to streamline the registration of processed foods and the issuance of import permits. The platform is currently undergoing upgrades to broaden access, allowing more types of users to register products, request permits, and consult the database. Additionally, the most recent updates include revised links and trade-related administrative costs to ensure importers have the latest information.

DISCLAIMER: This report was prepared by FAS Guatemala, for U.S. exporters of domestic food and agricultural products. While every possible care has been taken in preparing the report, the information provided may not be completely accurate either because policies have changed since its preparation, or because clear and consistent information about these policies 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.

All links to Guatemalan government websites, laws, regulations, and norms will display in Spanish only.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Guatemala has been a member of the Dominican Republic–Central America Free Trade Agreement **(**CAFTA-DR**)** since it entered into force in 2006. White corn, the country's main staple, is the only agricultural product subject to a tariff-rate quota (TRQ) while all other agricultural products are imported duty free.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath slowed regional harmonization efforts, several regulations are now under review. These include dairy standards, updates to processed food regulations, and work toward a unified draft rule on maximum residue limits (MRLs) of agrochemicals in food.

A major regulatory change is the Central American Regional Technical Regulation on Processed Food Registration (RTCA 67.01.31:20), which entered into force on August 5, 2024, replacing RTCA 67.031:07. The new regulation requires registration of certain semi-processed or processed foods used as ingredients, although no official list of affected products has been published. In practice, ingredients imported directly by a processing facility do not require registration, while registration is required if the ingredient is imported by a distributor to supply processors.

SECTION I. FOOD LAWS

Guatemalan food laws are based on a framework of laws, presidential decrees, and ministerial decrees designed to protect human, animal, and plant health. In general, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food (MAGA) oversees fresh, refrigerated, or unprocessed frozen food products, while the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (MSPAS) regulates processed food products. An exception is pet food and treats, which fall under MAGA's jurisdiction. Some categories, such as seeds used as ingredients, flours, and processed foods of animal origin, are subject to the authority of both ministries. The principal legislation governing food safety in Guatemala is Government Decree 969-99.

Within MSPAS, the Division of Registration and Control of Foods (commonly referred to as Food Control) is the main authority for processed food products legally imported or manufactured in Guatemala. Acting under Government Decree 969-99, the Food Control Division enforces food regulations and norms issued through the Ministry of Economy's National Quality System. The National Quality System includes the Commission of Standards (COGUANOR), which is responsible for developing standards for both food and industrial products. Standards issued before 2005 were mandatory, but since then, COGUANOR standards have been voluntary unless formally adopted by a ministry.

The same standards apply to both local and imported products, except for foods sold in public markets and certain food service locations, which only require a sanitary operating license. U.S. exporters are not required to register their facilities with Guatemalan authorities; however, local producers, processors, packers, distributors, or transporters handling non-processed food must obtain a sanitary license from MAGA. This license is valid for one year and is granted or renewed only after a MAGA inspection.

The Vice Ministry of Animal and Plant Health (VISAR) of MAGA is the competent authority for import permits covering all fresh food products and feed, plus certain processed categories (flour, seeds used as ingredients, and processed foods of animal origin), as well as agricultural inputs. VISAR Import Requirements must be met by U.S. exporters and Guatemalan importers. VISAR operates through five Directorates which include Plant Health, Animal Health, Food Safety, Genetic Resources, and Fisheries and Aquaculture. Food and feed oversight falls primarily to the Plant Health, Animal Health, and Food Safety Directorates. The Genetic Resources Directorate manages seed and breed registration, including approvals for planting genetically engineered (GE) seeds and plant import permits. The Fisheries and Aquaculture Directorate focuses on domestic operations and is rarely involved in imports unless the traded product appears on an endangered species list.

Plant and animal health are governed by Government Decree 36-98 and its implementing regulation, Government Decree 745-99. The Plant Health Directorate verifies that agricultural products meet Guatemala's phytosanitary requirements. Exporters and importers should ensure that sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) certificates include attestations covering the relevant pests

and conditions required by the Government of Guatemala; omissions can render a certificate invalid, lead to denial of the import permit, and block entry. For new plant products, phytosanitary import requirements are determined through a MAGA risk analysis, which currently takes more than six months. Exporters must complete a specific electronic application form available upon request from the Plant Health Directorate.

Food safety oversight lies with MAGA's Food Safety Directorate under Government Decree 969-99, while Government Decree 72-2003 establishes rules for the production, transport, import, and export of non-processed foods. Although Decree 72-2003 does not establish microbiological criteria, the Directorate applies Codex Alimentarius or U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) standards as benchmarks. To obtain an import permit, all foods of animal or plant origin, processed or unprocessed, as well as animal feed must comply with the following documentation requirements:

1. **Export Certificate**: Required for all non-processed and processed meat products under MAGA authority. (See the latest Guatemala GAIN FAIRS Export Certificate Report for details on the U.S. government agencies that issue certificates accepted by Guatemala.)

2. **Certificate of Free Sale (CFS)**: Required for processed food products subject to registration, including pet food. Guatemala accepts federal or state-issued certificates. If a state no longer issues CFS, a certificate from a Chamber of Commerce or Chamber of Agriculture is acceptable, though FDA-issued certificates are preferred.

    - U.S. exporters are often asked by customers or foreign governments to provide FDA-issued export certification for regulated products. FDA issues these certifications in various forms, such as the following:
        - Certificate to a Foreign Government
        - Certificate of Exportability
        - Certificate of Free Sale
        - Certificate for Cosmetics
        - Health certificates for collagen and gelatin destined for the EU

    - In addition, some foreign authorities require certification in the form of publicly available lists of eligible exporters.

    - More details are available on the FDA's Food Export Certificates and Food Export Lists webpages, as well as in the FDA's Export Library.

    - For a complete overview of the certificates recognized by Guatemala, exporters should consult the most recent Guatemala GAIN FAIRS Export Certificates Report.

3. **Commercial Invoice**

4. **Bill of Lading**

5. **Certificate of Origin**: Required for customs and tariff purposes. Under CAFTA-DR, the certification of origin can be provided by either the exporter or the importer, and it ensures that preferential tariffs are applied. Corrections are allowed if mistakes are found in mandatory fields, including the Harmonized System (HS) classification. Exporters should confirm that the correct HS tariff code is included so Guatemalan importers can benefit from preferential tariffs.

6. **Re-Export Certificate**: Required if the product is being re-exported from another country. However, for live plants, animals, or fresh produce, the original export certificate is still required.

Domestic regulations and standards in Guatemala may be superseded by Central American regulations once these are officially published by the relevant ministries. As part of ongoing regional harmonization efforts, the Central American Secretariat of Economic Integration (SIECA) was established as the technical and administrative body responsible for guiding and coordinating the region's economic integration agenda. Within this framework, Central American Technical Regulations (RTCAs) are developed, analyzed, and adopted to create common standards across member countries. To date, the following RTCAs have been issued for processed food and beverages:

1. Sanitary Licenses and Product Registration, RTCA 67.01.31:20
2. Microbiological Criteria, RTCA 67.04.50:17
3. General Labeling of Food, RTCA 67.01.07:10
4. Nutritional Labeling of Food, RTCA 67.01.60:10 CO
5. Fermented Alcoholic Beverages Labeling, RTCA 67.01.05:11
6. Distilled Alcoholic Beverages Labeling, RTCA 67.01.06:11
7. Food and Beverage Additives, RTCA 67.04.54:18
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9. Dairy Terms Use, RTCA 67.04.65:12
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15. Non-Cured Cheese, RTCA 67.04.72:7
16. Cured Cheese, RTCA 67.04.75.17
17. Butter, RTCA 67.04.77:20
18. Oils and Fats, RTCA 67.04.40:07

19. Fortified Wheat Flour, RTCA 67.01.15:07

In addition, Guatemala has additional laws and regulations related to food enrichment and fortification:

- Food Enrichment, Decree 44-92
- Salt Iodizing and Fluorination, Presidential Decree 29-2004 and its latest update under Presidential Decree 205-2019.
- Nutrient fortification for "nixtamalizado" corn flour, Presidential Decree 298-2015, and its reforms, Presidential Decree 147-2017
- Vitamin A sugar fortification, Presidential Decree 021-2000

The RTCAs that affect non-processed food and feed, processed feed or agricultural inputs are the following:

- Pet Food, RTCA 65.05.52:11
- Pesticides, RTCA 65.05.67:18

The RTCAs apply to all Central American countries; however, the extent of the implementation and interpretation may vary from country to country.

SECTION II. LABELING REQUIREMENTS

Non-processed foods are exempt from labeling requirements. Labeling, however, is mandatory for all processed food products, and the same rules apply to both domestic and imported goods. The applicable regulation is RTCA 67.01.07:10, which establishes general labeling requirements and is based on the CODEX General Standard for the Labeling of Prepackaged Foods. The rule does not require Spanish-only labels. Instead, it allows complementary Spanish labeling, which may be provided as stick-on labels. These can be applied either by the exporter in the United States or by the importer once the product arrives in Guatemala. Importantly, FDA-compliant labels are accepted in Central America, which simplifies requirements for U.S. exporters.

Under this regulation, labels must be informative, accurate, and not misleading to consumers. False claims are strictly prohibited. The rule also provides definitions, labeling examples (depending on package size and format), and complementary labeling options. Certain products, such as spices and herbs cut into pieces smaller than 10 cm^2, broths, chewing gums, confectionery, and other individually packaged small items, are exempt from having labels on each unit, but the outer packaging must be properly labeled. For complete Spanish labels, the following information must appear:

1. **Name of the product**: This should be the official name as noted on the RTCA 67.01.07:10

2. **Description of the product**: Should be specific rather than generic and should be based on the RTCA 67.01.07:10 food category if spelled out. Otherwise, it should be based on

CODEX food categories and may not necessarily translate exactly as the name in English. On the front label, the type of presentation, condition, or treatment (such as dehydrated, concentrated, reconstituted, smoked, pasteurized, etc.) must be specified. If it is an imitation product, it should be named according to its main ingredients; imitation names are not permitted. Dairy terms must follow the RTCA 67.04.65:12 for naming dairy products and avoiding the names for non-dairy products.

3. **Net weight/volume**: Must be declared in metric units:
   - If liquid, in volume (milliliter or liter)
   - If solid, in weight (grams or kilograms)
   - If semisolid, in weight and volume if viscous
   - If solid or semisolid packed in a liquid medium (weight without the liquid)

4. **List of ingredients (including allergens) and additives**: The ingredients need to appear from the highest to lowest content. If one of the ingredients shows on the front panel, or if the product is a mix or combination which characterizes the nature of the food, the ingredients must be declared in percentage composition (if a percentage in a mix supersedes 100 percent of the composition, its percentage may be declared based on the total net weight or volume).

5. **Form of preparation**: The label must provide the preparation instructions, including the need for reconstitution or cooking, or "keep refrigerated" or "keep frozen", if applicable.

6. **Expiration date**: For less than 3-month expiration, the expiration date must be specified in Spanish format (day/month/year); the day/month can be interchanged if the month appears in letters (or its abbreviation). For expiration dates beyond 3-months, the month and year are enough and should follow the Spanish format (month/year). Products exempt from expiration date are (please read alcoholic drinks and liqueur specific labeling later in the document):
   - Wine, liqueur wines, sparkling wine, flavored wines, flavored wines, fruit wines, fruit sparkling wine.
   - Alcoholic beverages with 10 percent or more alcohol per volume
   - Vinegar
   - Food grade salt
   - Solid sugar
   - Confectionery products consisting of flavored or colored sugars
   - Chewing gum

7. **Registration number** (assigned by Food Control of the Ministry of Health of Guatemala)
8. **Country of Origin**
9. **Lot Production Identification** (Lot, Lot Number, Lot date)

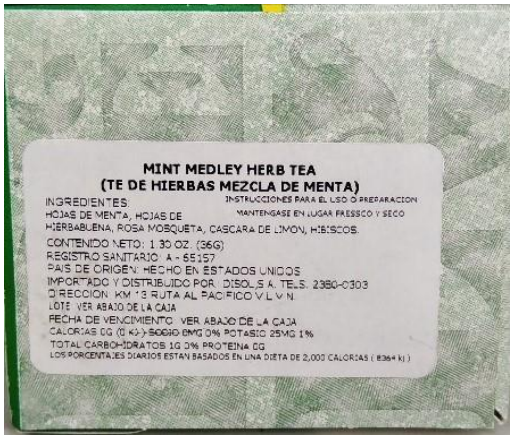
10. **Name and Address of the Authorized Importer**
11. **Radiation:** Guatemala requires attestation of radioactivity for domestic and imported food. If the product has an irradiated ingredient, it must be spelled out in parenthesis after the listed ingredient. If the product is based on one ingredient only, from an irradiated raw material, it must be indicated in the front panel. The radiation symbol is optional.

The following are examples of complementary Spanish stickers and Spanish or bilingual approved labels per Central American ruling.

Figure 1. Example of Spanish language sticker label on original product

Source: FAS Guatemala

Figure 2. Example of Spanish language sticker label on small package (tea box)



Source: FAS Guatemala

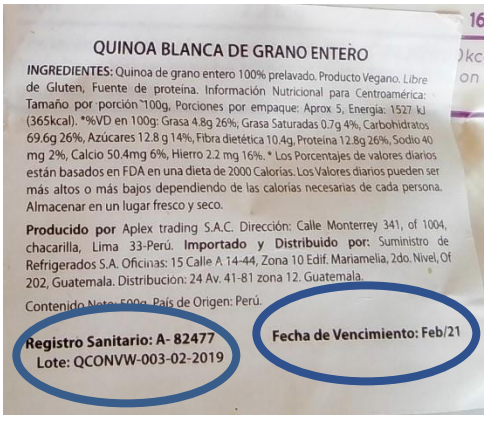
Figure 3. Example of a Spanish language sticker label on the outside plastic of various packed products

Source: FAS Guatemala

Figure 4. Example of a printed valid English/Spanish language expiration date

Source: FAS Guatemala

Figure 5. Example of a Spanish language sticker label highlighting the registry, lot information and expiration date



Source: FAS Guatemala

Figure 6. Example of a bilingual English/Spanish language approved general and *nutritional label*

Source: FAS Guatemala

RTCA 67.01.60:10 regulates nutritional labeling and includes all needed terminology for that purpose, which informs the consumer about the nutritious content of the food product, and may include valid and accepted claims. Claims may include comparative properties (example: reduced), nutritional properties or descriptors, relative properties according to the nutrient function, relative properties for the content of the nutrient (example: low fat), proven health claims, disease risk reduction, healthy diet declarations, and fortification or enrichment. Nutritional labeling must not misguide the consumer by making false claims or false comparisons with other products. There are several Annexes in the rule, providing labeling examples, nutrient calculation and conversions, as well as accepted claims. Stickers are also allowed for nutritional labeling, including the claims or health claims in the original labeling. FDA nutritional labeling is accepted, but must use the International Metric System (for energy and net volume), and must include:

- Energy value, which must be specified in kilo Jules (KJ) per 100 g or 100 ml or portion if provided; calories are optional.
- Total Fat
- Saturated fat (needs to be declared only if the content is above 0.5 g/portion; if below 0.5 g/portion, it may show as 0 g or below, and the nutritional table must declare "not a significant source of saturated fat")
- Carbohydrates
- Protein
- Sodium (needs to be declared only if the content is above 5 mg/portion; if below 5 mg, it may show as 0 mg or below the nutritional table it must declare "not a significant source of sodium")
- If a claim is made for the type of carbohydrate, the nutritional table must declare sugars and starches
- If a claim is made for the type of fat, the nutritional table must provide content of cholesterol, saturated, and non-saturated (mono- and poli-) fats
- If a claim is made for fiber, the label must declare if it is dietary fiber or soluble or insoluble fiber
- Vitamin and mineral content must be declared according to the international system (content percent or content per serving) or in Daily Reference Value (DRV), according to CODEX; if another reference is used, the source must be spelled out (example, DRV based on FDA, 2019). Declared macronutrients and sodium have a +/- 20 percent tolerance, and micronutrients need to have at least 80 percent of the declared content, except in the case of fortified products.

OTHER SPECIFIC LABELING REQUIREMENTS

Milk Labeling

Central America regulates the use of milk-related terminology under RTCA 67.04.65:12, which aligns with CODEX Standard 206-199. This regulation prohibits the use of the word "milk" for products that are not derived from cow's milk or other animal milk, with the sole exception of coconut milk. As a result, products labeled as "soy milk," "almond milk," or similar are not permitted to be commercialized in Guatemala under the term milk. U.S. exporters must label these products as "drinks" or "beverages" on the original packaging. Flavored or colored milk, however, may still be labeled as milk under the regulation.
Pasteurized milk is specifically governed by RTCA 67.04.66:12, which establishes the requirements for milk that has undergone pasteurization, defined as exposure to heat within approved parameters. According to this rule, pasteurized milk must have the following composition:

Table 1. Approved composition of milk either pasteurized or UHT

Parameter	Whole	Partly Skimmed	Skimmed
Fat content (%)	≥ 3.0	≥ 0.5 and < 3	< 0.5
Protein (N x 6.38) (%)	≥ 3.0	≥ 3.0	≥ 3.0
Non-fat dry milk extract	≥ 8.2	≥ 8.2	≥ 8.2
Acidity, expressed as lactic acid (%)	≥ 0.13 and ≤ 0.17	≥ 0.13 and ≤ 0.17	≥ 0.13 and ≤ 0.17
Freezing point (°C)	≤ -0.53	≤ -0.53	≤ -0.53

Source: RTCA 67.04.66:12 and RTCA 67.04.73:17

The above table also applies for the UHT process, and according to RTCA 67.04.73:17, specific to UHT, the milk must have been exposed to 135-145 °C for 2-4 minutes, in the different combinations that ensure the milk is safe for human consumption.

Powdered milk and cream are regulated by RTCA 67.04.76:18. According to this rule, milk, and cream in a powder form must specify it is dehydrated milk or cream that might be reconstituted to its liquid form. The approved nutrient composition for milk and cream powder presentations is:

Table 2. Powder milk and cream composition

Parameters	Whole Milk (weight %)	Partially Skimmed (weight %)	Skimmed (weight %)	Powder Cream (weight %)
Fat Content	≥ 26 and < 42	≥ 1,5 and < 26	< 1,5	≥ 42
Protein	≥ 34	≥ 34	≥ 34	≥ 34
Moisture	≤ 5	≤ 5	≤ 5	≤ 5

Source: RTCA 67.04.76:18

Creams and Prepared Creams

Creams and prepared creams are governed by RTCA 67.04.71:14, which corresponds with CODEX standard norm 288-1976. According to the rule, creams, and sour cream, to be named creams must have above 10 percent fat content and be derived exclusively from milk.

Table 3. Milk Fat Content in Crams and Acid Cream

Type of Cream	≥ Fat (% w/w)
Cream or custard	18
Whipped or whipping cream	28
Rich whipped or whipping cream	35
Extra rich whipped or whipping cream	45

Source: RTCA 67.04.71:14

Approved ingredients in cream and custard are: non-fat milk solids (2 percent max), caseinate (0.1 percent max), powdered milk serum (1 percent max), food-safe cultured microorganisms (for fermented or acidified cream), milk-derived products originating from milk or serum (containing at least 35 percent w/w of milk protein) which may be used as stabilizers or thickeners if they don't exceed 2 percent content, starch and gelatin (only if added for stabilizing purposes). In addition, for the manufacturing of reconstituted or recombined cream, the use of butter, milk fat, powder milk or powder cream, and water are permitted.

Yogurt

Under RTCA 67.04.79:23, yogurt is defined as a product that contains microorganisms that remain viable and active throughout its shelf life, with a minimum concentration of 1 x 10^7 colony-forming units (CFU) per gram.

The regulation permits the following ingredients:

- Lactic acid bacteria or starter cultures
- Probiotics and prebiotics
- Gelatin and starch
- Sugars
- Flavoring and aromatic additives
- Other foods or ingredients, such as fruits and vegetables, provided they comply with corresponding food safety standards

Yogurt is classified into the following categories based on its composition:

- **Natural**: contains no added flavors or additional ingredients
- **Sweet**: contains added sugar or sweeteners

- **Flavored**: contains natural or artificial flavors but no other added ingredients
- **With added ingredients:** contain additional permitted ingredients (e.g., fruit pieces, cereals)
- **Concentrated**: has at least 5.6 percent higher protein content, added either before or after fermentation

Additionally, the product name must specify the fat content of the yogurt.

Table 4. Yogurt Classification per RTCA 67.04.79:23

Yogurt Classification	Fat Content (% w/w)
Whole	**≥ 3%**
Partially skimmed	**0.5% and < 3%**
Skimmed	**> 0.5%**

Source: RTCA 67.04.79:23

Table 5. Physic-chemical characteristics of the yogurt per RTCA 67.04.79:23

Parameters	Whole	Partially skimmed	Skimmed
Lactic Protein g per 100 g	≥ 2,7	≥ 2,7	≥ 2,7
Acidity (lactic acid grams per-100 grams or pH)	≥0,6 y ≤1,5 ≤ 4,6	≥0,6 y ≤1,5 ≤ 4,6	≥0,6 y ≤1,5 ≤ 4,6
Fat content (%)	≥3	≥0,5 y <3	<0.5
Microorganisms (CFU/g)	≥ 107	≥ 107	≥ 107
Labeled microorganisms (CFU/g, in total)	≥ 106	≥ 106	≥ 106

Source: RTCA 67.04.79:23

Cheese

Products labeled as cheese must be derived exclusively from milk. The term imitation cheese is not allowed, and such products must be named according to their identity. Cheese may be processed, non-cured (fresh), or cured (dry). Non-cured cheese or fresh cheese is regulated by RTCA 67.04.72:17 and is based on CODEX standard norm 221-2001. Non-cured cheese is classified based on the fat content in the dry extract, as specified in Table 6.

Table 6. Non-cured cheese names

Non-matured Cheese Description	Fat content in the dry extract (%)
Extra fat double cream	≥ 60
Fat	≥ 45 and < 60
Partially fat	≥ 25 and < 45
Low fat	≥ 10 y < 25
Skimmed	< 10

Source: RTCA 67.04.72:17

Approved ingredients for non-cured cheese are rennet or coagulant, acid lactic fermented bacteria culture and/or flavor or tasting modifiers, enzymes, water, condiments, spices, herbs, fruits, fresh or processed fruits or vegetables, and natural or artificial smokes, among others.

Cured cheese is regulated under RTCA 67.04.75:17, which does not correspond to another international rule. Cured cheese can be named according to its moisture content without fat (HSMG), which is calculated as the percentage of moisture over the total weight minus the fat. In these cheeses, the same ingredients listed above for the non-cured cheese are also allowed, as well as sodium or calcium chloride.

Table 7. Cured cheese names according to its moisture content without fat

Cured Cheese Name	Mositure percentage without fat HSMG (%)
Extra hard	< 51
Hard	≥ 49 and ≤ 56
Firm / Semifirm	≥ 54 and ≤ 69
Soft	≥ 67

Source: RTCA 67.04.75:17

Butter

RTCA 67.04.77:20 establishes specifications for butter. This technical rule is an adoption of Codex Norm CXS 279-1971 and defines butter as a fat product derived exclusively from milk and/or products obtained from milk, mainly in the form of emulsion of water in oil. Its permitted ingredients are food standard salt or other salt, water, fermentation bacteria cultures producing lactic acid or modifiers for flavor or smell, and other ingredients such as condiments or spices, natural or artificial smoke flavor, fruits or other fresh or processed vegetables, among others, that do not affect its food safety. Table 8 shows approved butter composition.

Table 8. Butter composition (expressed in % w/w)

Parameter	Butter
Minimum content of dairy fat	80
Maximum content of milk lean dry extract	2
Maximum content of water	16

Source: RTCA 67.04.77:20

Beer, Wine, and Liquors

Beer, wine, and other liquors require specific labels. RTCA 67.01.05:11 governs fermented alcoholic beverages. The same general labeling of any other food product or beverage applies, including the use of complementary labels if not in Spanish, with the following specifications:

- The alcohol content must be specified in the International System, on percent alcohol/volume or Gay Loussac (G.L.) measure.
- If the product has more than 10 percent alcohol content, it does not require an expiration date; expiration date follows the same general labeling rule described at the beginning of Section II of this report.
- If the product contains less than 10 percent alcoholic content, an expiration date should appear, especially when it includes other ingredients such as eggs or another perishable.
- A list of ingredients is required if it has more than one ingredient and must also be listed in descending order of composition.
- The front panel must have the following health warning "excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages represents a health risk"; there is no specific font for this statement.
- It can be considered light if it has 25 percent reduced energy from the same original product.

Distilled Alcoholic Beverages

Distilled alcoholic beverages are governed by RTCA 67.01.06:11. The same general labeling rules are described in the beginning of this Section. Complementary labels are permitted if the originals are not in Spanish, which can be applied either by the U.S. exporter or Guatemalan importer. If aging is declared on the label, it must indicate complete full year aging only. As in fermented alcoholic beverages, an "excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages represents a health risk" claim must be shown on the front panel, and the same rules for listing of ingredients apply, if the product contains more than one ingredient. If the distilled alcoholic beverage has less than 10 percent alcoholic content, it needs an expiration date.

Fruit Nectars

Fruit nectars and their labeling are regulated by RTCA 67.04.48:08. The minimum content of juice or pulp in fruit nectars is 25 percent (volume/volume) for all fruits, except for those whose

acidity level cannot allow that percentage (minimum acidity allowed is 0.5 percent of the corresponding organic acid according to the fruit type). Litchi (Litchi chinensis Sonn.) is the only exception to the rule and must have 20 percent juice or pulp content. Other ingredients approved in fruit nectars are the following:

- Sugars: saccharose, glucose, dextrose, and fructose.
- Syrups: liquid saccharose, inverted sugar syrup, glucose or fructose syrup, high fructose content syrup, honey and/or fruit derived sugars.
- Essential Nutrients: vitamins and minerals
- Lime and/or lemon juice may be added up to 5 g/L equivalent anhydrous citric acid.

This RTCA also lists the approved additives that may be used as antioxidants, acid regulators, colors, stabilizers, colorants, and sweeteners; approved adjuvants are also listed. The rule includes a table with quality and microbiological criteria. The general labeling rule applies, with additional specifications:

- Name: The product must have the name of the nectar accompanied by the name of the fruit or fruits (from major to minor on a weight basis) and if the product includes more than three fruits, it can be called a "mix", but all the fruits must be listed in the ingredient's declaration.
- Pasteurized nectars can be labeled as such.
- The fruit variety may be named in the front panel if the common name accompanies it.
- The fruit content must be labeled as a percentage (volume/volume) of the fruit.

Oils and Fats

The specifications and labeling for oil and fats are governed by RTCA 67.04.40:07. The identity of the oil or fat must be in accordance with its fatty acid composition, based on gas chromatography. The different profiles and types of oils and greases are listed in the rule, including the approved spices or condiments and additives. The following ingredients can be added to margarines and emulsified greases:

- Milk, dairy solids, or mixtures
- Vitamins (A, D, E, and others)
- Salt (sodium chloride), potassium chloride for low sodium margarines (or without sodium) or a mix of salts
- Sugars
- Edible proteins
- Spices and condiments
- Permitted additives (see rule)

The rule provides for microbiological criteria, coloring and flavors allowed in oils and fats. Tolerance for heavy metals is 0.1 mg/kg of arsenic and 0.1 mg/kg of lead. For oils or margarines with added ingredients, the name of the secondary ingredient must be shown in the label (example, olive oil with garlic). If margarine has 80 percent fat, it is margarine; if less than 80 percent of fat/oil, it can still be called margarine if the content fat/oil is spelled out. If

the margarine has 25 percent less fat content than its original, it can be called “light”. It can be labeled as cholesterol-free if the nutritional label shows 0 percent cholesterol (less than 2 mg/portion of at least 14 grams; the same rule applies for trans-fats, if less than 0.5 g/portion of at least 14 grams).

Pet Food

Bulk pet food does not require labeling, nor do packed pet meat bones or cuttlefish bones. However, packed pet food is regulated under RTCA 65.05.52:11, which requires that all pet food products be registered with MAGA. Currently, only one legal importer representative is authorized to manage the registry. These representative issues approval letters to other importers interested in bringing the product into Guatemala. The legal representative is responsible for registering the product and renewing the registration every five years. Renewals must be submitted within three months prior to expiration; otherwise, the product must go through the full registration process again.

Pet food labeling is also mandatory. If the original label is not in Spanish, complementary Spanish labeling (stickers or adhesives) is accepted. Labels must include the following information:

- Registry number assigned by MAGA
- Product name
- Physical presentation of the product (e.g., flour, pellet, extruded, powder, etc.)
- Type of product and species/animal category it is intended for
- Net weight of the product (mg, g, or kg)
- Chemical composition analysis
- List of ingredients, including carriers or fillers
- Directions for use
- Precautions, alerts, restrictions, or limitations (must be in bold), as well as storage conditions
- Name, address, telephone number, and country of origin; if formulated or manufactured for another company, manufacturer or packer details must be included
- Name, address, and telephone number of the importer
- Lot number, production date, and expiration date (day/month/year)

The product name must accurately reflect the nature of the product, the species or animal for which it was formulated, and the growth stage or age of the animal. The name must not be deceptive and must comply with the following rules:

- If the product was artificially dried, the term **“**dehydrated**”** must precede the name.
- The term “protein” may not be used if the nitrogen content does not come from a protein source.
- The term “vitamin” may only be used if the product was formulated with a premix or vitamin supplement.
- The term “mineral” may only be used if the supplement contains trace minerals.

- The term “iodized” may only be used if the product contains at least 0.007 percent iodine that is uniformly distributed.

The guaranteed analysis must be supported by a laboratory certification and must include:

- Maximum moisture content
- Minimum percentage of crude protein, or maximum percentage of crude protein equivalent to non-protein nitrogen when added to feed
- Minimum percentage of ether extract (crude fat), if present
- Maximum percentage of crude fiber
- Minimum and maximum percentage of calcium (Ca)
- Minimum percentage of phosphorus (P)
- Minimum and maximum percentage of salt (NaCl), if present
- Name and minimum concentration of vitamins A, D_3, and E (in IU/kg); all other vitamins must be expressed in mg/kg of product
- Name and minimum concentration of minerals, expressed as macro minerals (%) and micro minerals (mg/kg of product). Vitamin or mineral guarantees are not required for animal feed used exclusively as a supplement or premix.

The energy value must be declared as kilocalories per kilogram (kcal/kg) of feed, or megacalories (MCal/kg) for large species. Energy must be expressed as metabolizable energy for avian and pet species or digestible energy for ruminants, swine, and pets.

Minerals must not be expressed in their salt form, but rather as the mineral itself. Raw materials must not include brand names and should be identified only by generic or common names. If raw materials are of ruminant origin, the label must carry the warning: “Not approved for ruminants.”

The ingredient list must include all additives, drugs, carriers, or fillers used. Any drugs must appear in bold letters**,** specifying the active ingredient, its concentration in the product, and its intended purpose. The regulation also provides a classification of pet food categories, along with a reference list of approved additives and drugs.

SECTION III. PACKAGING AND CONTAINER REGULATIONS

There are no special requirements in Guatemala regarding packaging type or container size. Bulk-packed food products do not require labeling unless they are sold at the retail level as individual units. Shelf-life labeling is mandatory. Products must display either an expiration date or a best “use-by” date printed directly on the package. Authorities have identified issues with distributors importing goods where the date was removed or where products were already expired at the time of entry. Stickers may be used as complementary labels; however, they must never cover the “use-by” date. U.S. exporters are strongly advised not to ship products close to their expiration date, as these shipments risk rejection. Problems have also occurred when products were stamped only with a manufacture date, which MAGA inspectors at the port sometimes interpret as an expired product. If including a manufacture date is part of company practice, it is best to also include a clear expiration or best “use-by” date to prevent delays or refusals at entry.

Packaging Sustainability Measures

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) issued Presidential Decree 164-2021 on August 9, 2021, which was later amended by Presidential Decree 184-2023. This decree establishes the framework for the integrated management of residues and common solid waste in Guatemala. While most of its provisions apply primarily to Guatemalan companies and municipalities, Chapter V addresses sustainable economies. Specifically, Article 48 calls for the progressive reduction of both locally produced and imported materials that are difficult to degrade, unless it can be scientifically demonstrated that no viable substitutes exist. MARN is responsible for issuing the corresponding measures within the first three years of the decree's implementation, while producers are granted up to a maximum of seven years to achieve full compliance.

SECTION IV. FOOD ADDITIVE REGULATIONS

Food additives in Guatemala are regulated under RTCA 67.04.54:18, which partially adopts the CODEX Standard 192-1995. This rule provides a positive list of approved additives, specifying tolerances by food category and intended use. It also describes food product categories, common manufacturing considerations, and exempts common ingredients and adjuvants from the additives list. Tolerances are presented in table format.

All flavorings evaluated by JECFA with standards adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission are automatically accepted in the Central American region. Likewise, if Codex eliminates an additive, it is automatically eliminated from Guatemalan regulations. Flavorings approved by the FDA, FEMA, and the European Union are also accepted.

Based on CODEX, food additives must comply with the following principles:

- Maintain food quality without altering it.
- Modify food composition if intended for consumer groups with special dietary needs.
- Increase shelf life, stabilize the product, or improve organoleptic properties.
- Facilitate manufacturing, preparation, treatment, packaging, transport, or storage.
- Not be used to conceal defective raw materials, poor hygiene, or undesirable processing techniques.

According to Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs):

- Additives must be used only in the minimum quantity necessary to achieve the desired effect.
- Additives incorporated during manufacturing should be reduced to the lowest possible level.
- Additives must be of food quality and handled as food ingredients.
- If a food additive serves multiple functions, approval for one function applies to all, and it only needs to be listed once.

- Additives are not permitted in infant food or food intended for infants.

For additives other than flavorings, approvals by the FDA or other international agencies do not automatically apply in Central America. These require a regional approval process, which can delay product registration or renewal. The process takes around six months, as all Central American countries must jointly approve the request.

To request approval of additional additives not included in Annex B of the RTCA, the importer must submit a petition to Food Control with the following information:

- CODEX food category or category number
- Additive name (denomination)
- International Numbering System (INS) code
- Maximum dosage allowed (mg or ml per kg or L), or GMP-based limits
  Reference to the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and applicable notes
  Functional class
- Additional observations

Through COMIECO Resolution 496-2025, Guatemala is prohibiting the use of INS 127 (Erythrosine, Red #3) as of July 15, 2025. This follows the FDA's revocation of the additive on January 15, 2025. Products with labels showing production dates prior to July 15, 2025, will remain valid on the market for up to one year, until July 14, 2026.

The petition letter must be addressed to the Central American Commission on Additives (CCAA), and must include:

- Date and country where the petition is presented
- Contact information
- Type of petition (inclusion, exclusion, modification of the maximum dosage of the additive)
- Codex INS number or CFR reference for FDA approved additives not listed in the RTCA
- Physicochemical specifications of the additive that indicate its identity and purity
- Functional class according to CODEX Stand 182-195 or JECFA
- Reference regulation to modify the maximum dosage
- Maximum dosage for its use in mg or ml or kg or L or GMP
  - Attached documentation (method of analysis, toxicological evaluations performed by recognized organizations that can demonstrate its food safety such as EFSA, JECFA, FDA (GRAS), reference for its technological function, CODEX food category for which the uses and maximum dosage are approved, and a summary explaining the technological need for which the maximum dosage is required if it is the case.

SECTION V. PESTICIDE AND CONTAMINANTS

The Plant and Animal Health Directorate of VISAR regulates pesticides and veterinary drugs. Guatemala rules maximum residue levels (MRLs) through Ministerial Decree 343-2019, which spells out that local tolerance levels of pesticides in basic grains, fruits, and vegetables will prevail, followed by those established through the Codex Alimentarius, followed by the standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of the United States, and lastly on those set by the European Union (in that hierarchy). So far, there are no Guatemalan standards for tolerance levels of pesticides in food products, but Plant Health/VISAR maintains a list of pesticides that are not permitted in Guatemala; please consult the list of contacts provided in Appendix A to request the latest list of pesticides not approved in Guatemala.

In general, Guatemala has registration procedures for inorganic, organic, biochemical, botanic, biological controls, and similar types of functional biopesticides. Veterinary Drugs are regulated by Animal Health/VISAR from the Ministry of Agriculture, requiring their registration through RTCA 65.05.51:18. The Ministries of Agriculture in Central America are presently discussing a regional proposal to harmonize MRLs based on international standards.

The RTCA 67.04.50:17 contains rules for maximum residue limits of microbiological contaminants in packed non-processed food and processed food products. The rule provides a table for maximum residue limits of food borne pathogens for registration purposes (for animal derived and high-risk products) and another table for microbiological maximum approved limits for Food Control's surveillance program under the Ministry of Health. All food is classified into high risk (A category), medium risk (B category), and low risk (C category).

In addition, all food is divided into eighteen types of groups, with specific microbiological criteria for each group and specific subgroups. The main food groups are:

- Milk and Dairy
- Fats, Oils, and Emulsions
- Ice and Water-Based Desserts
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Confectionery
- Cereals and Derived Products
- Bread, Pastries, and Bakery
- Meat and Products
- Fish, Seafood, Aquaculture, and Products
- Eggs and Products
- Honey
- Sauces, Dressings, and Spices
- Special Dietary Food
- Non-Alcoholic Beverages

- Snacks, Seeds, and Nuts
- Soups, Creams and Dehydrated Broths
- Ready-to-Eat Food

The Food Safety Directorate of VISAR may randomly sample non-processed food imports for surveillance purposes. The food must comply with international standards on food safety, including CODEX or FDA.

SECTION VI. OTHER REQUIREMENTS, REGULATIONS, AND REGISTRATION MEASURES

Sanitary Registration

Guatemalan government authorities do not require pre-inspection or inspection at origin for any food to be exported from the United States. Any facility under U.S. state or federal inspection is eligible to export to Guatemala if the requested certifications are issued. Sanitary licenses of operation and registration are the responsibility of the Guatemalan importer, processor, or distributor. The Government of Guatemala recognizes poultry and red meat equivalence with the United States since CAFTA-DR implementation in 2006. All federally inspected poultry and red meat slaughterhouses, and processing facilities are eligible to export to Guatemala. There is no need to pass an inspection or register facilities. The Food Safety Directorate at MAGA maintains an updated list of companies and/or exporting facilities from the United States. Every time a new company or exporting facility sends its products to Guatemala, the list is automatically updated.

For fisheries and related products, NOAA will issue an export certificate for FDA registered establishments (processing facilities or warehouses) or NOAA approved establishments. The list of exporting companies or facilities is populated automatically as imports arrive in Guatemala.

For processed food products, Food Control does not carry pre-inspection or inspection in origin. If the facility operates under state or federal authority and can be granted a Certificate of Free Sale or any other official export certificate, the facilities are eligible. For pet food, the Certificate of Free Sale is good enough as well, and facilities are not required to be inspected by MAGA.

Processed Product Registration (RTCA 67.01.31:20)

For processed food products, only the Guatemalan importer must register. U.S. exporters do not need to register, unless interested in getting a registration and authorizing importers for their products. The Guatemalan importer, being a processor, packer, or distributor, will also need to register with Food Control, unless previously authorized under an existing or new registry. All Guatemalan food processing facilities need to register with Food Control (for a five-year license of operations). All processed food products, domestic or imported, need to go through a product-

by-product registration procedure. Therefore, foreign exporters must contact an importer to be able to register their products, unless they are doing the importation through an affiliate based in Guatemala, in which case during the registration process additional authorized importers may be approved. Registration doesn't require a lawyer or legal firm in Guatemala, unless protected IPR needs to be secured first. Processed food registration doesn't require a lawyer either, unless the company wishes to manage a subsidiary or establish a local representation. References for independent consultants that can support with registration can be found in Appendix II.

Product registration is a pre-requisite for any company interested in commercializing processed food products in Guatemala. U.S. exporters have three different options for registering processed products in Guatemala: a) the exporter can register directly and approve importers, b) the importer registers the product if no registration exists, and c) a new or different importer requests other importer that already registered the product to provide an authorization to import directly. The cost for registration will be the same, independently of the type of registration, but the difference will be on the timing for commercialization, as a new registration for a non-animal origin product may take 1-3 months, but an animal origin product can take up to 3-6 months as it needs a previous laboratory examination.

For animal origin processed food products, adding a new authorized importer to the registry will allow for the immediate commercialization of the product, as it has been previously analyzed and can be commercialized. The processed of approving 'authorized importers" is a new update of the RTCA 67.01.31:20, which updates the food product registration process. The regulation entered effect on August 5, 2024, superseding previous regulation RTCA 67.031:07, which allowed for sanitary subscriptions to obtain extensions of an existing registry.

The new rule also makes it mandatory to register semi-processed or processed foods intended for further processing in order to expedite import permits. At present, there is no official list specifying which raw materials or ingredients must be registered. In practice, however, the Ministry of Health in Guatemala applies the following criteria: products imported by a distributor must be registered, while products imported directly by a processor may qualify for a registration waiver if the processor provides a valid sanitary license as reference.

SECTION VII. OTHER REQUIREMENTS, REGULATIONS, AND REGISTRATION MEASURES

At present, products labeled as "homeopathic", and "prophylactic" or "phyto-therapeutic", which contain excipients, must be registered as drugs. Hemp food or products are not allowed in Guatemala. For registration, all products must be tested by the Health National Laboratory (LNS), which is the Ministry of Health's only laboratory. Product samples must be provided at the time of registration. For specific regulations and guidelines on registration of the above mentioned products, please consult the Guatemala Country Commercial Guide, issued by Commerce and updated on a yearly basis. MAGA has no samples regulation; all non-processed or animal-derived product must be accompanied by the official export documents, even if the samples are for registration purposes or for tasting and exhibition.

RTCA 67.01.32:06 regulates import requirements for tasting and exhibition purposes for processed food or packed food products. The rule provides a form for submitting the petition for importing samples to Guatemala and the Central America region. The form requires the name of the product, its brand, the quantity requested, and its origin. In Guatemala, the authorized quantity amount per sample is 20 kilograms, but if larger amounts are required, a cover letter explaining the purpose of such amount must accompany the request. Samples require a "not for sale" disclosure or stamp and cannot be commercialized.

VITAMIN-ENRICHMENT REQUIREMENTS; DIETETIC OR SPECIAL USE FOODS; HALAL / KOSHER; FOOD SANITATION LAWS/GUIDELINES; PLANT-BASED MEAT AND/OR DAIRY ALTERNATIVES; BIOTECHNOLOGY

Vitamin Enrichment Requirements

Fortification in Central America is regulated by the Central American Institute for Nutrition (INCAP) and enforced by the regional Ministries of Health. INCAP is the only institute approved to evaluate and provide recommendations for fortifying food, including approved micronutrients, formulas, and processes. Legislative Decree 44-92 provides the general framework for food enrichment in Guatemala. At present there are three regulations that establish mandatory fortifications:

- Presidential Decree 021-2000: Establishes fortification of sugar with vitamin A; all sugar commercialized in Guatemala needs to be fortified with hydro dispensable retinol with enough stability during the shelf-life of the product, so it doesn't alter the sugar's organoleptic properties. Fortification levels should average 15 mg $\pm$ 5 milligrams of retinol per kilogram of sugar.

- Presidential Decree 205-2019: Mandates the fortification of salt with iodine and fluoride. Imported salt must comply with the fortification requirement of 20-60 mg of iodine per kg of salt. Salt may also be fortified with fluor, within the range of 17 to 225 milligrams per kilogram of salt. The salt needs to be labeled as IODIZED SALT or IODIZED and FLUORIZED salt. If the salt is not intended for direct sale and will be further fortified in Guatemala or is intended for industrial purposes, it can be imported without fortification. In this last case, the Guatemalan importer will provide Food Control with a pre-approval issued letter for import purpose.

- Presidential Decrees 298-2015 and 147-2017: Mandates that all corn flour commercialized in Guatemala, intended for human consumption must go through a process called "nixtamalization", consisting in the partial pre-cooking of the corn dough in water containing calcium hydroxide. The mix is later dehydrated to be sold as a dough. The "nixtamalized" corn dough should be fortified with the following nutrients: thiamin, niacin, riboflavin, vitamin B12, folic acid, iron, and zinc. The rule provides for

fortification levels, pesticide residue limits, and microbiological criteria, with a special emphasis on mycotoxins.

- RTCA 67.01.15:07 regulates fortified wheat flour, providing specifications, approved additives, microbiological criteria, heavy metals limits, and levels of fortification for wheat flour for direct human consumption; fortification must include iron, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, and folic acid. The rule only applies to soft wheat and not durum. It does not apply to the following wheat:

    - whole wheat or semolina or wheat used for the beer industry or wheat for starch/gluten manufacturing or wheat not intended for the food industry
    - flours in which protein content has been reduced or those which after the milling process have been subject to special treatment different from drying or bleaching, or have added other ingredients different from minerals and micronutrients for enrichment purposes

Dietetic or Special Use Foods

On August 24, 2022, Guatemala issued Technical Norm 001-2022 for food supplements. The norm entered in effect on September 24, 2022, but manufacturers had eleven months to comply with the new norm, as of June 24, 2023. The norm establishes that food complements are food sources with high concentration of vitamins and minerals, either isolated or combined, which are commercialized as capsules, tablets, powders, or solutions, intended for eventual intake in low quantity and not for daily intake as conventional food. Its intention is to complement vitamins and minerals in the diet, as an oral intake, that does not represent a health risk. The norm differentiates between supplements and complements, being supplements those food sources with high concentration of nutrients, proteins, amino acids, or other nutrients, but not intended for daily intake as conventional food. In addition, supplements must also comply with CODEX CAC/GL 55-205 directives and, for those products not listed under this directive, additional guidance is provided.

According to the new norm, food complements and supplements should be registered following similar guidance for food nutritional labeling and comply with the existing Central American Technical Regulations for registration, additives, microbiological criteria, and dairy standards. In addition, for the registration of the product, the following documents are required: a) Qualitative and quantitative formula, expressed in International System Measures, issued by the manufacturer, b) technical fact sheet containing, at least the name of the product, net content, ingredients' list, expected use of the product, nutritional characterizes, shelf life, and storage conditions, and c) samples of the same lot and expiration date of those submitted for the registration.

Halal/Kosher

There are no specific rules, but the Ministry of Health will require for the registration of these products a Quality Certificate specifying the name of the product and the manufacturer.

Food Sanitation Laws/Guidelines

Food sanitation laws and guidelines apply only for facility licensing of a domestic warehouse, storage room, processing, and packing facilities. Exported food and food products are not subject to food facilities licensing, which require complying with the Central American Technical Regulation for Good Manufacturing Practices, 67.01.33:06.

Plant-based meat and/or Dairy Alternatives

Plant-based meat cannot be called meat. Despite not existing a specific rule for meat labeling at this moment, though Central America is already discussing a deli meat labeling, the existing labeling regulation does not permit the use of a term which is misleading. On the other hand, dairy alternatives find significant marketing challenges as no milk or milk related terms can be applied and use of the word "imitation" is also prohibited. Substitutes for dairy must often use complex names that spell out the origin of the product, such as vegetable hydrogenated fat with flavor. Please refer to the regulation on dairy terms use, RTCA 67.04.65:12.

Biotechnology

No specific regulation in place for food or food products derived from biotechnology, just for seed and propagative material, per Technical Regulation RT 65.06.01:18 and its corresponding specific ruling and manuals.

SECTION VIII. GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATORS, TRADEMARKS, BRAND NAMES, AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Guatemalan legislation on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) is modern and follows multilateral agreements such as the Paris, Berne, and Rome Conventions, and as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has included TRIPS (Trade Related Intellectual Property) provisions. Legislative Decree 57-2000 published in August 2000 and Presidential Decree 89-2002 rule IPR in Guatemala, with its corresponding reforms under Presidential Decrees 95-2014, 148-2014, and 52-2022. Guatemala recognizes trademarks, brand names, patents, origin denomination, and author rights. The IPR Registry, under the Ministry of Economy, is responsible for all registrations. Registration of patents and trademarks is on a first-in-time, first-in-right basis, so it is highly recommended to apply for trademark and patent protection before starting business.

Trademarks and Brand Names: Guatemala IPR provides for 10-year protection for the following services or products' distinctive signs: a) Marks: denominative, figurative, mixed, tridimensional, olfactory, and sound, b) Brand Names, and c) Expressions or Publicity Signs (legends, phrases, or commercial advertisements). The 10-year protection can be renewed.

Geographic Indications (GI) and Origin Denominations (OD): For commercialization purposes, Guatemala protects all geographic expression, image or sign that designates a specific locality that identifies the product as original, after going through a GI or OD verification and registration process. This protection may be used only when the product qualities or characteristics are derived from the locality where it is produced. Protection is provided if no previous commercial use of the product can be demonstrated and the protection cannot be granted for generic names, just specific names.

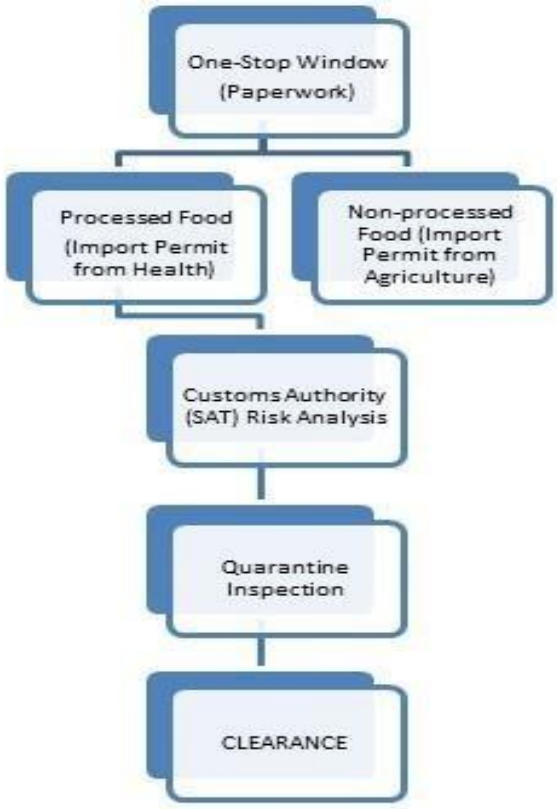
Patents: Guatemala protects inventions through patents provided to the inventor, either for the invention (20-year protection) or utilization models for the invention (10-year protection).

UPOV: Guatemala is member and signatory to UPOV but has failed to approve a related law. Presently, patents for seeds are not readily available, but MAGA is responsible for the registration of seeds and vegetative materials to be commercialized in agriculture. The Seeds Law of 1961 governs the production, certification, and commercialization of agricultural and forestry seeds. Companies interested in certifying their seeds or vegetative materials must possess a license with MAGA; vegetative materials are ruled through Ministerial Decree 012-2010, with specific prior testing quarantine requirements for some seeds like tomato. In addition, MAGA provides for genealogical registry of animals.

SECTION IX. IMPORT PROCEDURES

The import permit procedure begins at the import window of the Ministry of Agriculture through the electronic platform SIGIE. Depending on the type of product, the required documentation may include: a phytosanitary or sanitary certificate (or corresponding export certificate), commercial invoice, bill of lading, certificate of free sale, packing list, and certificate of origin (for re-exported products). To obtain an import permit, applicants must submit the electronic application form along with the supporting documents and pay a fee ranging from US$1.25 to US$31.25, depending on the product. Processing times have improved significantly: what once took about 24 hours is now completed in 10 to 20 minutes through the SIGIE system.

Figure 7. Guatemala's Import Procedures' Flow



Source: FAS/Guatemala, 2024

1. For processed foods and all products of animal origin**,** the import procedure at the Ministry of Health requires that the application be signed and stamped by Food Control to confirm that the product has a valid sanitary registration number. If the shipment is a sample for registration, Food Control will also require a Certificate of Free Sale to process the request. These certificates are typically issued by U.S. state health or agricultural departments to certify wholesomeness. Under the U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), the FDA also issues this type of certificate. Applications and certificates must be submitted to the Food Control offices in Zone 8, open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Food Control currently uses the SNRSA-G online platform for registration, which is being fully replaced by the new SNAP-GT platform**.**

2. Import permits are authorized by Food Control and MAGA. At the same time, the customs authority (SAT) reviews the electronically submitted declaration of import goods and assigns a risk category to the shipment based on customs records such as the importer's history, valuation, origin, and applicable taxes.

   It is essential that all quantities match exactly across all documents, as discrepancies can cause serious delays in customs clearance. Exporters should not add boxes to a container after documentation totals have been finalized, and the totals on the phytosanitary or sanitary certificate must match the quantities listed on the invoice. If there are discrepancies, the

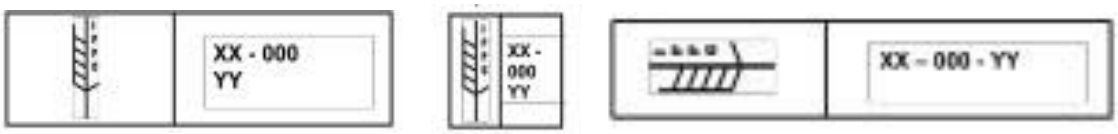
container will be held, and clearance may become difficult. This often creates major problems for importers, particularly when undeclared samples are included in a shipment. In such cases, the entire cargo may be delayed for weeks until a certificate of free sale is provided, or the undeclared products are destroyed.

A tariff-rate quota system still applies for white corn under CAFTA-DR. For more information on TRQ administration in Guatemala, importers should consult the Foreign Commerce Administration Directorate (DACE) on the Ministry of Economy's website. Once the import certificate has been issued, the importer submits it along with all supporting documentation to customs. Duties are then paid to the Tax Superintendence (SAT). Payment is made as a deposit at one of the two authorized banks, and the deposit slip serves as proof of payment.

3. At the port of entry, all products are also inspected by the OIRSA, a regional body delegated by Central American Ministries of Agriculture to carry out quarantine actions at customs. Regardless of whether goods arrive by air, land, or sea, OIRSA inspectors are present to conduct a visual inspection before authorizing release from customs. OIRSA may take samples to test for quarantine pests, particularly in shipments of raw agricultural products and coarse grains. If pests are suspected, fumigation may be required. To reduce the risk of fumigation with methyl bromide, exporters are advised to obtain an "in-transit fumigation certificate." If OIRSA takes samples of processed products or fresh produce not intended for planting, the FAS Guatemala office should be notified immediately to prevent unnecessary delays in laboratory analysis.

OIRSA also verifies compliance with the ISPM-15 rule of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), which requires treated wood pallets to bear the official mark. If even a single pallet lacks the ISPM-15 symbol, all cargo will be unloaded to search for additional non-compliant pallets. This process can disrupt the cold chain and hold the shipment for up to three days while pallets are treated. Although not required, some importers take photos of pallets before shipment to provide proof of compliance if questions arise.

Figure 8. ISPM 15 symbols for wood treated pallets



Source: ISPM-15

SECTION X. TRADE FACILITATION

Guatemala approved the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) on February 13, 2017, through Legislative Decree 1-2017. The TFA became effective on March 8, 2017. The agreement allows developing countries to define broader timelines for implementing the actions required for full compliance. Current priorities in Guatemala have focused on ensuring that information on import and export procedures is available at each government institution responsible for trade, approving authorized economic operators such as importers and customs agents to reduce clearance times, and streamlining procedures. The most significant advances reported so far have been in simplifying procedures, such as the implementation and recognition of e-phyto certificate issuance. Guatemala does not have a single trade window and is still far from implementing one.

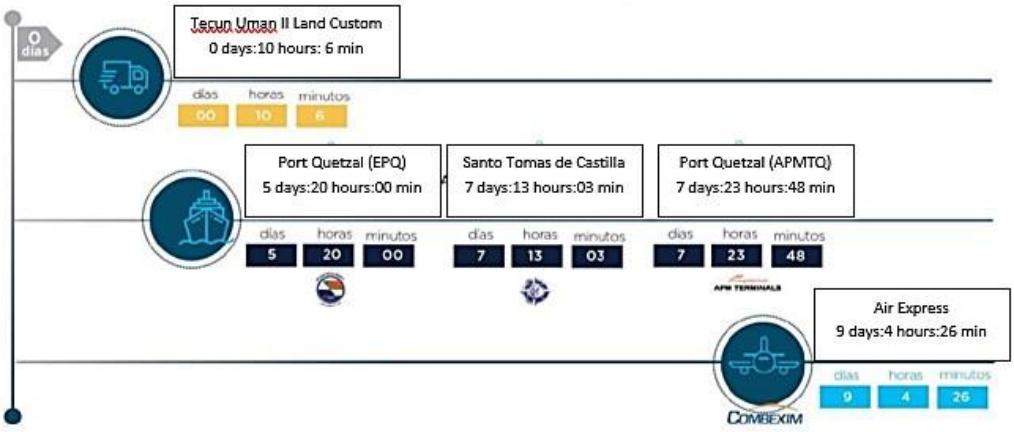
Advance rulings are available for products under CAFTA-DR. The Ministry of Economy is responsible for country-of-origin advance rulings, while SAT is responsible for product classification advance rulings. The Government of Guatemala does not require consularization of commercial documents, in accordance with Legislative Decree 1-2016 and, specifically for the Ministry of Health, Ministerial Decree 196-2015.

Guatemala has four main seaports of entry: Puerto Barrios and Santo Tomás on the Atlantic, and San José and Puerto Quetzal on the Pacific. Santo Tomás is the busiest port on the Atlantic side and handles most container cargo, while Puerto Quetzal is the main port for bulk commodities. Common delays are reported for shipments of fruits, potatoes, poultry, and meats. Import permit fees and OIRSA inspection and treatment fees are set by MAGA Ministerial Decree 114-2018 and MAGA Ministerial Decree 157-2018. Processed food registration and import permit fees are listed under food control services fees. Based on the most recent data, the total average cost of documentary compliance for imports into Guatemala is approximately $405.

MAGA inspection fees are based on product weight, starting at $3.50 for packed vegetative materials under 30 kilograms and up to $203 for bulk shipments above 20,000 metric tons. Similar weight-based inspections and fees apply for live animals. OIRSA may also collect samples at airports or ports to test for pests or diseases, with fees ranging from $27 to $41, to be paid by the importer.

Guatemala was the first country in Central America and the second in Latin America to publish its Time Release Study (TRS) on January 30, 2020, with support from the World Customs Organization (WCO). The TRS is a tool developed by WCO to measure clearance and release times as an indicator of efficiency in border procedures. The study found that release times vary depending on the customs office and port logistics operations. Figure 9 shows the average release times for Guatemala's main commercial ports.

Figure 9. Average release times for imports in the main ports in Guatemala



Source: Guatemala Time Release Study (TRS)

The Time Release Study details clearance times at each port under the Customs "red light/green light" system, where red indicates high-risk cargo and green indicates low risk. The study breaks down specific timelines in the dispatch process, highlighting delays linked to SAT operations and OIRSA inspections. The most frequent delays for bulk cargo involve X-Ray scans and pest diagnostics or fumigation. X-Ray inspections are the responsibility of the port, while OIRSA conducts quarantine pest inspections. Because there are no pest diagnostic experts stationed at the ports, OIRSA sends intercepted insect samples to Guatemala City for identification, a process that can take one to three days. If the pest is confirmed to be a quarantine species, fumigation is required, which adds another 48 hours before the shipment can be cleared. In total, inspection and quarantine treatments can delay final clearance by five to seven days.

Another common source of delay is related to SAT questioning the declared value of goods. Customs maintains a database of reference values based on the import history of identical or similar products, and invoices are not always accepted as sufficient proof of value. When a Customs reviewer challenges a declared value, the importer must submit additional documentation. Previously, valuation disputes could delay clearance by up to ten days. With the implementation of a more automated "reasonable doubt" system, shipments can now be released on bond while valuation issues are investigated, allowing most cases to be resolved within 48 hours.

On September 12, 2023, MAGA published Ministerial Decree 185-2023, announcing the completion of procedures to comply with Legislative Decree 5-2021, which mandated the simplification of processes and the reduction of bureaucratic red tape. Earlier in March 2023, MAGA opened the draft procedures for public comment and finalized them at the end of August 2023. Despite these efforts, the Ministry of Agriculture has faced significant delays in

implementing simplification measures and transitioning to digital systems. At the ports, the main delays related to MAGA are tied to SEPA/OIRSA inspections, which continue to apply a discriminatory approach rather than a risk-based system. This often subjects cargo to 100 percent inspection, particularly when problems are alleged with ISPM-15–compliant wooden pallets. These inspections can add two to four extra days to dispatch times and increase costs when quarantine treatments are applied to pallets.

The most significant trade-related costs, as shown in Table 8, are tied to demurrage at ports. Demurrage costs are approximately $150 per day for non-refrigerated containers and $250 per day for refrigerated or frozen containers. In addition, shipping companies charge about $20,000 per day while vessels wait to dock, with Guatemalan port inefficiencies leading to delays of 20 to 40 days before docking is permitted. Further costs result from duplicative inspections at ports, including fees that can be as high as twice the cost of a ramp. While these costs are initially borne by importers, they are inevitably passed on to consumers in the final retail price, along with the 12 percent VAT applied to imports in Guatemala.

Table 8. Trade-related costs and times when exporting to Guatemala

Government Institution	***Process***	***Time***	***Cost (US$)***
Ministry of Agriculture	Import permit for non-processed animal products	6 hours	31.25
	(Equivalent export permit)		*6.25*
	Import permit for non-processed vegetable products	4-36 hours	31.25
	(Equivalent export permit)		*6.25*
	Import permit for seeds	2 days	1.25 – 3.75
	Re-export of seeds	3 days	1.25
	Food safety import permit	2 days	6.25
	(Food safety export permit)		*3.75*
	Risk analysis for plant pests or diseases		3,750.00
	Risk analysis based on source of entry (contamination through transportation, cargo, or people)	6-12 months	6,250.00
	Plant variety registration	4 months	62.50
	Animal breed registration		6.25/specimen
	Bulk agricultural products inspection	1-3 days	20.50-203.00

	fee (weight based)		
	Packed agricultural products inspection fee	1-3 days	3.50-34.00
	Live animals' inspection fee (weight based)	1-3 days	14.00 – 68.00
	Samples for laboratory analysis	1-3 days	27.00 – 41.00
	Destruction of merchandise	1-7 days	47.00
	Quarantine treatments	1-4 days	6.00-7.50
	Food registration (new or renewal)	1-3 months	32.50
Ministry of Health	Sanitary Inscription (laboratory analysis)	1-3 months	214.50
	Total food registration	1-3 months	247.00
	Food registry updates	1-3 months	6.50
Customs - SAT	Tariffs (none) VAT – Value added tax [commercial invoice + transportation + insurance + value adjustment (frequent)]	2- 10 days	12%
Ports fees and demurrage costs	Inspection fee for ships	1-3 days	37.00
	Inspection fee for aircrafts	1-3 days	11.00 – 30.00
	Shipping	10-40 days	26,000.00
	Container (20-40 MT)	20-40 days	3,500-7,000
	Inspection Ramps (per ramp)	1-4 days	2,275 – 4,000
	Transportation to Guatemala City (truck)	3-7 days	522.88

Source: FAS Guatemala, 2025

APPENDIX I. GOVERNMENT REGULATORY KEY AGENCY CONTACTS

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Director for Food and Drugs Regulations
Ministry of Health (MSPAS)
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Animal Health, Ministry of Agriculture

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Foreign Commerce Administration Direction/Ministry of Economy
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DACE, Ministry of Economy

Edwin Curtidor
Customs Intendent
Superintendence of Tax Administration (SAT)/Customs Authority
7a Av. 3-73, Zona 9, Edificio Torre SAT, Guatemala City
(502) 2329-7070
eocurtidor@sat.gob.gt

APPENDIX II. OTHER IMPORT SPECIALIST TECHNICAL CONTACTS

If you have any questions regarding this report or need assistance exporting to Guatemala, please contact the U.S. Agricultural Affairs Office at the following address. Inquiry points on how to contact the U.S. regulatory agencies responsible for providing certification for U.S. food products: pptrd@usda.gov

Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy
Boulevard Austríaco 11-51, Zona 16
Ciudad de Guatemala
Tel: (502) 2354-0837
Email: AgGuatemala@usda.gov
Webpage: FAS Guatemala

Office of Commerce, U.S. Embassy
Avenida Reforma 7-01 Zona 10
Guatemala, Ciudad 01010
Tel: (502) 2326-4227
Email: office.guatemala@trade.gov
Webpage: TRADE

American Chamber of Commerce of Guatemala (AMCHAM)
Europlaza Business Center 5a. Avenida 5-55 Tower 1, 5th floor, Office 502
Tel: (502) 2417-0800
E-mail: info@amchamguate.com
Webpage: AMCHAM

For specialized private support for registration of products, please contact:

Amabilia Alvarez de Pizzilo
FACENDO, S.A.
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Gladys Arreola Camargo
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For further information on exporting U.S. agricultural products to Guatemala and other countries, please visit the Foreign Agriculture Service home page:
https://www.fas.usda.gov/data/search

Attachments:

No Attachments