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**Report Highlights:**

Nicaragua's Ministry of Health (MINSA), the regulator for processed foods, implemented two new administrative resolutions (MINSA 0024/2024 and MINSA 031/2024) in 2024, bringing substantial changes for food importers. Importers are no longer allowed to use proforma invoices for import permits and commercial invoices must now include additional details, such as product expiration dates and product registry numbers, among other items. MINSA's 031/2024 resolution also empowered MINSA's National Sanitary Authority (ANRS) to control the legal powers extended by exporters to local importers for product registration, renewals, and all other import-related applications. Given these recent changes, U.S. exporters can anticipate more information requests from Nicaraguan importers on commercial invoices and their current legal powers.

This report was prepared by the Office of Agricultural Affairs in Managua 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.

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Executive Summary

Navigating product importation in Nicaragua requires adherence to regulations set by two key government bodies: the Nicaraguan Institute of Agricultural Protection and Health (IPSA) and the Ministry of Health (MINSA). Both agencies mandate product registration and the issuance of import permits before any shipment can enter the country.

IPSA’s primary role involves the inspection of agricultural products at points of entry and the registration of animal feeds, agrochemicals, and seeds. Additionally, IPSA has oversight of certain processed foods that pose sanitary and food safety risks such as raw meats, canned foods, and seafood products.

MINSA is responsible for the regulation and registration of most processed foods, and it issues the corresponding import permits for these items. While MINSA handles import permits for most processed foods, commodity shipments like grains and fresh produce fall under IPSA’s jurisdiction due to their inherent sanitary/phytosanitary considerations. It's crucial for importers to note that for processed foods regulated by both IPSA and MINSA (e.g., raw meats, canned goods, seafood), permits from both institutions are required. More information can be found in the single window for Foreign Trade of Nicaragua ([VUCEN](#)), which integrates the management of institutions that regulate import of goods into Nicaragua.

Nicaragua implemented significant changes to its import procedures in 2024 through two key Ministry of Health (MINSA) Administrative Resolutions:

- **MINSA’s 0024/2024 Administrative Resolution:** Effective September 5, 2024, this resolution updates requirements and authorization procedures for importing food and beverages, as well as other goods such as medicines, medical devices, nutritional supplements, and packaging materials.
- **MINSA’s 031/2024 Administrative Resolution:** Effective November 4, 2024, this resolution mandates exporters to grant legal powers to local distributors for product registration procedures, product renewals, and import permit requests. Legal powers must be authorized by MINSA’s National Sanitary Authority (ANRS).

The most relevant changes for food and beverage imports resulting from these resolutions are:

- **New Commercial Invoice Requirements:** Commercial invoices must now include the sanitary registration number in Nicaragua, product expiration date, lot number, technical specifications for raw materials and additives, and the complete addresses of both the exporter and importer. This is in addition to standard invoice information like unit and total value. Furthermore, proforma invoices are no longer accepted for import permit requests, and abbreviations are prohibited in commercial invoices (except for product descriptions). Importers are currently responsible for providing all newly required information in the Spanish translation of the commercial invoice.
- **Mandatory Legal Representation for U.S. Exporters:** Exporters are now required to grant legal representation to importers or local distributors for product registration, renewals, and import permit applications. While U.S. exporters have often provided such powers in the past, MINSA’s 031/2024 administrative resolution empowers MINSA’s ANRS to control the authorization of these legal powers, including the ability to cancel them due to non-compliance by legal representatives. The legal powers are required for import permit requests, product registration and renewals, and all other import-related applications. Given these recent changes, U.S. exporters can anticipate information requests from importers regarding their current legal powers.

Copies of MINSA's 0024/2024 and 031/2024 Administrative Resolutions (including the legal power request form to MINSA’S ANRS) are attached to this report.

**I. List of All Export Certificates Required by Government (Matrix)**

The following certificates are requested when the products (except for plants and animals) have been registered with IPSA or MINSA. Plants and animals require an import permit, sanitary or phytosanitary certificate, a copy of the certificate of origin, and the commercial invoice.

Products	Title of Certificate	Attestation Required on Certificate	Purpose	Requesting Ministry

<b>Products</b>	<b>Title of Certificate</b>	<b>Attestation Required on Certificate</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Requesting Ministry</b>
Agrochemicals and Veterinary Drugs	Certificate of Origin Certificate of Analysis Copy of the Commercial Invoice	Certificate must be issued by a competent government authority	To certify U.S. products meet bilaterally negotiated requirements	IPSA
Feedstuffs	Certificate of Origin Sanitary / Phytosanitary Certificate Copy of the Commercial Invoice	Certificate must be issued by a competent government authority Specific attestations pertaining to product risk	To certify U.S. products meet bilaterally negotiated requirements	IPSA
Plants and Plant Products	Certificate of Origin Phytosanitary Certificate Certificate of Chemical Treatment (as needed) Copy of the Commercial Invoice	Certificate must be issued by a competent government authority Specific attestations pertaining to product risk	To certify U.S. products meet bilaterally negotiated phytosanitary requirements	IPSA
Animals and Animal Products	Sanitary Certificate Certificate of Origin Copy of the Commercial Invoice	Certificate must be issued by a competent government authority Specific attestations pertaining to product risk	To certify U.S. products meet bilaterally negotiated sanitary requirements	IPSA
Processed Foods	Certificate of Origin Sanitary / Phytosanitary Certificate (as needed) Copy of the Commercial Invoice	Certificates must be issued by a competent government authority Specific attestations pertaining to product risk	To certify U.S. products meet bilaterally negotiated food safety requirements	MINSA

## **Section II. Purpose of Specific Export Certificates**

### **Certificate of Origin**

The certificate of origin is submitted to customs to certify the country of origin of the goods. The minimum information a certificate of origin should contain is: name of issuer and contact information, customs tariff code and description of the merchandise, origin, and date of the certificate. IPSA requests certificates of origin issued by chambers of commerce in the exporting country. In addition, when the General Customs Authority (DGA) has doubts of the product's origin, DGA may send the importer a questionnaire requiring additional information on the imported product. If the importer does not fill out the questionnaire, the company may be subject to penalties and fees. In the attached files, you can find a copy of the DGA country of origin questionnaire.

### **Phytosanitary Certificate**

A phytosanitary certificate is used to attest that consignments of plants and plant products meet phytosanitary import requirements. A phytosanitary certificate for export or re-export can be issued only by a public official who is technically qualified and duly authorized by a National Plant Protection Organization. In the United States, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) [Plant Protection and Quarantine](#) (PPQ) program issues phytosanitary certificates for U.S. plant and plant product exports.

### **Sanitary Certificate**

IPSA requires sanitary and health certificates for animals and animal products. APHIS Veterinary Services (VS) provides health certificates for live animals, including hatching eggs. APHIS sanitary certification for [animal](#) and [animal product](#) exports to Nicaragua can be confirmed on the linked APHIS International Regulations (IRegs) pages.

USDA Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) provides sanitary certificates for poultry, beef, and pork meat and products. FSIS lists eligible / ineligible products as well as specific attestations required for specific products on the [Nicaragua](#) page of the FSIS Export Library.

The [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA) issues health certificates for seafood fisheries products. A copy of the latest NOAA health certificate for fisheries products is attached to this report.

### **Commercial Invoice**

A commercial invoice is a bill for the goods from the seller to the buyer. These invoices are often used by governments to determine the value of goods when assessing customs duties. Governments that use the commercial invoice to control imports will often specify its form, content, number of copies, language to be used, and other characteristics.

On September 5, 2024, the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education (MINED) passed 0024/2024 Administrative resolution, which became effective immediately, and requires additional information to be included in the commercial invoice including the sanitary registration number in Nicaragua, product expiration date, lot number, technical specifications for raw materials and additives, and exporter and

importer addresses. This is in addition to standard invoice information like unit and total value of goods. Proforma invoices are no longer allowed for import permit requests, and abbreviations are prohibited in commercial invoices (except for product descriptions). Currently, importers are responsible for providing all new required information in the Spanish translation of the commercial invoice.

Please note that the commercial invoice attached to this report is an example of the document provided by the exporter, and not the translated version prepared by importers that includes the new required information.

### **Certificate of Analysis**

IPSA requires a certificate of analysis for agrochemicals and veterinary products. The certificate provides information about active components of the product and is issued by the manufacturer.

### **Certificate of Free Sale**

MINSa requests a certificate of free sale for product registration. The certificate of free sale must state that goods such as food items, cosmetics, biologics, or medical devices are legally sold or distributed in the open market, freely without restriction, and approved by the regulatory authorities in the country of origin. U.S. exporters typically request certificates of free sale from U.S. chambers of commerce, State governments, and/or the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Note: On October 1, 2018, FDA stopped issuing the certificate of free sale for most food products, including conventional foods, food additives, and substances that are in contact with infant food. FDA instead issues either the “Certificate to a Foreign Government” or the “Certificate of Exportability” for most food products under its jurisdiction. However, FDA continues to issue the certificate of free sale for dietary supplements, medical foods, and foods for special dietary use. Copies of the new FDA certificates are attached at the end of this report.

## **Section III. Specific Attestations Required on Export Certificates**

A competent government authority from the exporting country must issue all required certificates and the products (e.g., agrochemicals, animal feeds, food products, etc.) must be registered in Nicaragua prior to export. Please refer to the 2024 FAIRS Country Report for registration requirements for different products. IPSA may require specific attestations for specific animal or plant products. During periods of disease outbreaks in the exporting country, IPSA will provide importers with a detailed account of the attestations required on the sanitary / phytosanitary export certificates.

## **Section IV. Government Certificate Legal Entry Requirements**

IPSA or MINSa must issue an import permit prior to each importation. The importer requests the import permit with supporting information, including of a copy of a sanitary / phytosanitary certificate (as needed), certificate of origin, and a commercial invoice. Consistent information such as amount, description, origin, and point of shipping must be stated in the request form. MINSa requires that processed food products be registered in Nicaragua prior to importation. Product samples for non-commercial use are allowed one entry without registration, but they must be accompanied by a certificate of free sale.

Sanitary and phytosanitary technical officers review the supporting documents and inspect a product at the time of entry. An import permit is valid for one shipment. If the import permit is not used within thirty days, the importer may request a renewal from Government of Nicaragua authorities. IPSA and MINSA will accept only certificates issued by the competent government authorities of the exporting country. When shipments do not meet Government of Nicaragua import requirements, products are normally detained at the port of entry for sampling. Samples are subject to laboratory analysis to determine their physical and chemical characteristics. A product may be subject to destruction or re-export, depending on the determinations of Nicaraguan government authorities.

## **Section V. Other Certification/Accreditation Requirements**

The Nicaraguan government does not require attestation of radioactivity for imports.

Nicaraguan imposes no additional certification or accreditation requirements on U.S. exporters beyond those listed above and in the 2024 FAIRS Country Report.

## **Appendix I. Export Certificate Forms / Examples**

Please refer to attached documents.

Note: MINSA's food and beverage import permit, the Nicaraguan phytosanitary requirements and the phytosanitary import permit request are available in Spanish only.

### **Attachments:**

[MINSA Resolution 0024-2024.pdf](#)

[MINSA Resolution 0031-2024.pdf](#)

[Authorization of Legal Power Request Form.docx](#)

[Verification of Origin Questionnaire \(5\).docx](#)

[MINSA Food and Beverage Import Permit Request Form \(7\).doc](#)

[CAFTA-DR Certificate of Origin \(Example\).pdf](#)

[Commercial Invoice \(Example\).pdf](#)

[NOAA Health Certificate for Fishery Products .pdf](#)

[IPSA \(Phyto\)Sanitary Import Permit Request \(5\).pdf](#)

[FDA Export Certificates for Dietary Supplements, Medical Foods, and Foods for Special Dietary Use \(2\).pdf](#)

[FDA-Issued Food Export Certificate Examples \(2\).pdf](#)