Import of Pre-Packaged Food Products to China

Updated to March 2013

The following information is a brief introduction on the import procedures of general pre-packaged food products to China. This information is based on the Administrative Measures on Import and Export Food Safety, which have been published by The General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the P.R.C. (AQSiQ) during October 2012.

Please note that the following information refers to general kinds of food which have no claims for health benefits or food additives. These kinds of products have different import procedure and different phases of inspection.

This is the General description of import of pre-packed food products to China:

Cost of pre-packaged food products exemption (for reference only):

1. Exporter / agent filing: 1,100-2,000RMB (including administrative charges and agent fee)
2. Label filing: 1,000 -1,800RMB per product type (including charges by CIQ and agent fee, not including label translation and design)
3. Custom clearance (all kinds of fees and expenses): 8,000-10,000 RMB for 20 feet container; 10,000RMB-12,000RMB for 40 feet container
4. Custom clearance agent fee: 1,000 – 2,000RMB or sometimes 1% of the good's total value/
**Importer/Exporter Registration**

- Only certified food exporters/agents are authorized to import food products to China. Those certified food exporters/agents should be register in The Bureau of Industry and Commerce ("BIC") as an “authorized food importer” prior to their import to China, and should hold a valid import & export license from BIC.
- Furthermore, both the importer and exporter must comply with AQSIQ’s on-line registration requirements, which include filing relevant information regarding the company’s business scope and details.
- Link to the on-line registration system: [http://ire.eciq.cn/](http://ire.eciq.cn/)

**Custom's Approval**

Once the food products arrive to China, Customs agent inspects them and reviews the commercial invoice, packing list, bill of lading, in order to confirm their declared value. Customs then issues a corresponding duty memo, which must be paid to Customs within 15 days.

**First-Time Import**

**Good's Exemption**

The imported goods should have a China Inspection and Quarantine’s (CIQ) paste-label on the packages' back with the product description in Chinese. This label, serves as an approval by the CIQ and also known as “Food Label Verification Certificate”. For pre-packaged food products, the exporter can either paste the label before export or after its arrival in China. However, cost of storage for pasting label need to be considered.

The imported goods should have as well another CIQ’s certificate, an “Hygiene Certificate for distribution” which proves that sanitary affects has been checked as well.

Once the importer has these two approvals (label+ certificate) he can exempt the goods.

Food products that are imported for the first time always endure complicated procedures. However, after the first import and after the products are shipped more regularly, the process becomes more direct. For subsequent shipments, CIQ officials will still randomly inspect labels and samples even after a first-time import, but such inspections are cursory and less frequent, especially as officials become familiar with the products.
First-Time Import

Imported products should be qualified by The China Inspection and Quarantine (CIQ) office and should have “Hygiene Certificate for distribution” and "Food Label Verification Certificate" as a paste-label on the package back.

The following steps should be taken by the CIQ, in order to get the mentioned certificates:

1. Documents review
   a. Customs Declaration Form –filled through import agent or custom clearance agent
   b. Importer and exporter’s registration number;
   c. Copy of the following documents: Business contract; packing list; bill of lading, Performa Invoice;
   d. Certificate of origin, hygiene evaluation reports from the country of origin (original)
   e. Translation to Chinese of the original label sample
   f. Business license (copy) of the importer/distributor/agent that are stated on the label;
   g. Other documents depending on different categories of the food (International Standard of the product, SPS approvals etc.)

2. Label Verification

The CIQ inspects the Chinese language labels of pre-packaged food products that are imported for the first time. Label requirements vary by food type, but generally include standard information such as a list of ingredients, storage requirements, and the distributor’s contact information. The CIQ also has strict formatting requirements that include specifications on font and label placement. Once CIQ approves the label, it issues a **Food Label Verification Certificate**, which is valid for two years.

3. Sample Inspection

The Inspection procedure includes the following steps:

1. The CIQ inspects food samples to ensure that they meet safety requirements and match their labels. Samples are chosen at the CIQ’s discretion, and are inspected using labs analysis.

2. CIQ also checks if the products are in compliance with any of the existing national food standards according to the Standardization Administration of the People's Republic of China (SAC): [http://www.sac.gov.cn/SACSearch/outlinetemplet/gjbzcx_en.jsp](http://www.sac.gov.cn/SACSearch/outlinetemplet/gjbzcx_en.jsp)

   In case when the food product doesn’t fit any existing national standard, the product must go through administrative approvals at: China’s Ministry of Health (whenever it is a processed food) or China’s Ministry of Agriculture (whenever it is fresh or frozen agriculture product).The above ministries will probably direct you to AQSIQ as well in order to conclude part of the process.

   Once the food product passes the inspection, the CIQ issues the **“Hygiene Certificate for distribution”**, a sanitary certificate for the products, which is valid for three years.