Asia Pacific Food Law Guide - Singapore

Licensing and approvals requirements to import/export food

| Contents |
| --- |
| To generate table of contents, right-click here and select **Update Field.** |

# Customs registration

The business must first register with the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority to obtain a Unique Entity Number ("UEN"). With the UEN, it can register an account with Singapore Customs. It must also open and maintain a GIRO account with the AVA to pay fees and permits. Thereafter, the business can apply for a license/register with the AVA to import food.

If the food to be imported is meat and fish products, fresh fruits or vegetables, the business will require a license from the AVA. The license will generally take 1-5 working days to be processed by the AVA depending on the type of food. Otherwise, if the food to be imported is processed food (excluding the above types of food) or food appliances, only registration with the AVA is necessary.

Foreign companies will be required to appoint a local agent or open a branch office to apply for the relevant license on their behalf.

All food and food products being exported to Singapore must originate from sources approved by the AVA. Overseas food establishments that export food and food products (i.e., meat and meat products, processed/fresh table eggs, live poultry, processed food and food appliances, fish and fish products) to Singapore must meet the relevant accreditation requirements and procedures from the AVA. No AVA accreditation will be needed for processed food products and food appliances, fresh fruits and vegetables, and these products must be obtained only from establishments regulated by overseas competent authorities.

# Import permit

The relevant import license/registration with the AVA and an import permit are required before a business may import food into Singapore. The import license is valid for one year, and an import permit is required per consignment. However, where the business is a foreign entity, it may appoint a local agent or branch office to apply for the permit on its behalf.

If the import of the food product is specifically regulated by the AVA, additional documentary proof, such as laboratory test reports or health certificates, is required when applying for the import permit. Approval of the import permit will take around one working day.

# Inspection and testing of imported foods

All imported food products and food appliances are subject to inspection at ports of entry and samples may be taken for laboratory analysis. Sampling is compulsory for meat products. Some consignments may be placed on "hold and test," i.e., the consignment cannot be sold or distributed until the laboratory results indicate that the sample is compliant with Singapore food laws.

It is advisable to book an appointment for inspection using the online AVA Inspection & Laboratory e-Services system. All importers of fresh eggs coming through Changi Airfreight Center are required to make an online booking for inspections at least one day before inspection.

Although it is not compulsory for the importer to send the food for testing prior to importing it, it may be good practice to have laboratory analyses done to show evidence of quality control and compliance with the Sale of Food Act (Cap 283) and associated regulations.

Consignments that fail the inspection are not permitted to be sold or distributed in Singapore. Importers of such consignments will have to return or dispose of the consignments. Depending on the severity of the noncompliance, the source and/or exporter may be suspended from exporting to Singapore. The importers may also be suspended from importing from these sources and/or exporters.

# Export permits/clearances

An export permit as well as the same license/registration required with the AVA is needed to export meat, fish and processed eggs out of Singapore. However, the export of fresh eggs, fresh fruits and vegetables, processed food and food appliances are not regulated by the AVA. Such exporters will only require an export permit from Singapore Customs.

Food and food products to be exported from Singapore will have to meet the destination country's import requirements, which may include obtaining export certification. The following types of export certification may be applied from the AVA:

Free Sale Certificate (Food);

Export Health Certification for Meat, Fish and Dairy Products; and

Export Certification for Processed Food.

# Other notifications/approvals/licenses

A license is required to operate a food retail establishment ("**Food Shop License**") where food and drink are sold wholly by retail (Environmental Public Health Act (Cap 95)). This is obtained from the National Environment Agency.

However, if the food establishment is for manufacturing, processing or packing of food (excluding meat and fish), a license to operate such a food factory ("**Food Processing Establishments License**") should be obtained from the AVA pursuant to section 21 of the Sale of Food Act (Cap 283).

If the food establishment is for processing meat/fish or for use as a cold store, yet another license is required under section 12(1) of the Wholesome Meat and Fish Act (Cap 349A) ("**Meat or Fish Processing Establishment or Cold Store License**"). This should also be obtained from the AVA.

All food storage warehouses are required to apply with the AVA for the "Registration to Operate a Food Storage Warehouse". A food storage warehouse refers to any building, facility, structure or premise, where food is stored for the sale or distribution to other processors, wholesalers or any other business selling or distributing to the ultimate consumer. For meat and fish storage, a coldstore license from the AVA is required instead of registration.

©Copyright © 2024 Baker & McKenzie. All rights reserved. **Ownership**: This documentation and content (Content) is a proprietary resource owned exclusively by Baker McKenzie (meaning Baker & McKenzie International and its member firms). The Content is protected under international copyright conventions. Use of this Content does not of itself create a contractual relationship, nor any attorney/client relationship, between Baker McKenzie and any person. **Non-reliance and exclusion**: All Content is for informational purposes only and may not reflect the most current legal and regulatory developments. All summaries of the laws, regulations and practice are subject to change. The Content is not offered as legal or professional advice for any specific matter. It is not intended to be a substitute for reference to (and compliance with) the detailed provisions of applicable laws, rules, regulations or forms. Legal advice should always be sought before taking any action or refraining from taking any action based on any Content. Baker McKenzie and the editors and the contributing authors do not guarantee the accuracy of the Content and expressly disclaim any and all liability to any person in respect of the consequences of anything done or permitted to be done or omitted to be done wholly or partly in reliance upon the whole or any part of the Content. The Content may contain links to external websites and external websites may link to the Content. Baker McKenzie is not responsible for the content or operation of any such external sites and disclaims all liability, howsoever occurring, in respect of the content or operation of any such external websites. **Attorney Advertising**: This Content may qualify as “Attorney Advertising” requiring notice in some jurisdictions. To the extent that this Content may qualify as Attorney Advertising, PRIOR RESULTS DO NOT GUARANTEE A SIMILAR OUTCOME. **Reproduction**: Reproduction or copying of the Content on this Site without express written authorization is strictly prohibited.