Part 4 – Tax, Trade Procedures and Sectoral Regulations

Tabseer

Tebseer : Votre partenaire de confiance pour accéder aux marchés saoudien et du Golfe !

saber

SASO QUALITY MARK

Omani Quality Mark

Saudi Food & Drug Authority

SASO OXO-BIODEGRADABLE

Gulf Conformity Mark

Nos Services

Royaume d'Arabie Saoudite

- Enregistrement des produits sur la plateforme SABER.
- Label de Qualité Saoudien (SQM).
- Certificat de Conformité Saoudien.
- Certificat de Conformité d'Expédition.
- Certificat de Conformité pour les équipements de levage.
- Logo pour les plastiques biodégradables.
- Certificats de la SFDA (Saudi Food and Drug Authority).
- Enregistrement des produits alimentaires et cosmétiques sur la plateforme Ghad.
- Inspection et contrôle des produits alimentaires et cosmétiques.

Sultanat d'Oman

- Label de Qualité Omanais.

Pays du Golfe (CCG)

- Marquage de Conformité du Golfe

Égypte

- Service d'émission de certificats d'inspection.
- Service d'empreinte carbone.

2. Exporting to Saudi Arabia

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REGULATORY LANDSCAPE: SFDA, SASO/SABER, ZATCA

Saudi Food & Drug Authority (SFDA)

- Competent authority for food, feed, pharmaceuticals, biologics, cosmetics and medical devices, including pre-market approvals, labelling rules, inspections and post-market surveillance.
- Operates dedicated electronic platforms for registration and clearance (FIRS/FRCS for food, GHAD/MDMA for medical devices).

Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality Organization (SASO) and SABER

- SASO issues technical regulations and standards for a wide range of consumer and industrial products under the Saudi Product Safety Program "SALEEM".
- SABER is the mandatory online platform where importers obtain Product Certificates of Conformity (PCoC) and Shipment Certificates of Conformity (SCoC). Since 1 January 2025 all covered products must have both certificates before customs clearance.

Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority (ZATCA) and Customs

- ZATCA administers customs clearance, duties and import VAT, and checks that shipments are supported by valid SABER and SFDA approvals where required.
- The FASAH single-window platform links SABER, SFDA and customs so that data and certificates are verified electronically at the border.
- In practice, French exporters rarely interface directly with these systems: the Saudi importer usually holds the local accounts and bears legal responsibility, but upstream coordination on specifications and documents is essential.

SFDA ACCREDITATION FOR FOOD AND HEALTH PRODUCTS

For food, beverages, dietary supplements and health products, SFDA approval is necessary for import.

Facility and importer registration

- The Saudi importer (or local subsidiary) must create and validate an account with SFDA (e.g. in FIRS/FRCS), upload commercial registration details and any required authorisations, and ensure that foreign manufacturing sites are correctly identified.
- For medical devices and certain pharmaceuticals, foreign manufacturers may also need to be registered and linked to a Local Authorised Representative (LAR) in Saudi Arabia.

Product registration and approvals

- Each food product (SKU) is registered through SFDA's electronic systems with detailed composition, category, intended use, shelf life and supporting technical documentation; SFDA may require laboratory testing by accredited labs before validation.

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- For medical devices and IVDs, SFDA uses a risk-based classification (A–D) and requires registration in the GHAD system, plus a Medical Device Marketing Authorisation (MDMA) for classes B, C and D; class A devices typically follow a simplified listing route.

Labelling and packaging

- Arabic labelling is mandatory for food products and most consumer-facing health products. Labels must include production and expiry dates, ingredients, allergens, net quantity, storage conditions, manufacturer and importer details, and halal indications where relevant.
- For medical devices, SFDA requires Arabic content on labels and instructions for use for lay users, and implementation of UDI (Unique Device Identification) in line with the Saudi UDI framework.

Inspections and controls

- SFDA may inspect manufacturing sites (directly or via recognised audits), especially for higher-risk product categories.
- At the border, SFDA works with ZATCA to sample and test shipments where needed; non-compliant consignments can be rejected, destroyed or re-exported at the importer's cost.

SASO AND SABER: CONFORMITY WORKFLOWS

Most industrial and consumer products must comply with SASO technical regulations and be registered on SABER before shipment.

Product Certificate of Conformity (PCoC)

- The Saudi importer initiates product registration in SABER, selects the technical regulation and appoints a SASO approved Conformity Assessment Body (CAB).
- The CAB reviews technical documentation (test reports, risk assessments, QMS certificates, product drawings, user instructions) and may require factory inspections for higher-risk products. Once satisfied, it issues a PCoC valid for one year.

Shipment Certificate of Conformity (SCoC)

- For each shipment, the importer registers the HS codes and items in SABER, uploads the commercial invoice and links the relevant PCoCs.
- The CAB verifies the shipment data and issues an SCoC; without this certificate, customs will not allow release of the goods, and post-arrival certification is now treated as a compliance breach.

Timelines and renewals

- Preparing technical files and initial PCoC assessment typically takes one to two weeks when documentation is complete; renewals follow a lighter review but still require updated evidence in case of design changes or updated standards.

- SCoCs can be issued in a few days when HS codes and product–certificate mapping are clear; inaccurate classification is a frequent cause of delay.

Working with notified bodies

- French exporters should agree early with their Saudi partner which CAB will be used, and ensure that existing EU test reports and certificates are mapped to SASO requirements to avoid duplicate testing
- For strategic product lines, building a direct relationship with the chosen CAB can help anticipate regulatory changes and manage renewals smoothly.

PRACTICAL EXPORT CHECKLIST FOR FRENCH COMPANIES

For CEOs and export directors, the priority is to systematise compliance across product lines rather than treating each shipment as a one-off.

Strategic preparation

- Confirm whether your products fall under SFDA (food, drugs, medical devices, cosmetics) and/or SASO technical regulations; map each SKU to the correct HS code and regulatory pathway.
- Select and formalise relationships with Saudi importers/distributors who are experienced with SFDA and SABER and can act as your interface with local authorities.

Documentation and approvals

- Assemble a standard regulatory dossier per product: technical specifications, safety and performance data, test reports, manufacturing licences, CE/FDA approvals where available, and French/EU certificates translated as needed.
- Align labels and packaging with Arabic and GCC requirements, including halal claims, shelf-life formats and any warning statements; obtain SFDA registration or MDMA where applicable, and secure PCoCs in SABER for regulated products.

Shipment execution

- For each shipment, ensure the importer has:
  - Valid SFDA product registrations and, where required, pre-approved import permits.
  - Up-to-date PCoCs and obtained SCoCs through SABER for all regulated items.
  - Complete commercial documentation (certified invoices, packing lists, certificates of origin, insurance certificates) consistent with SABER and customs data.
- Plan lead times by adding at least one to two weeks for first-time registrations on top of sea or air transit, especially for new categories or high-risk products.

Coordination with Saudi distributors or clients

- Define in writing who is responsible for regulatory strategy, certificate costs, lab tests, product changes driven by local rules, and responses to inspections or recalls.
- Share medium-term plans (pipeline products, expected volumes, promotional campaigns) so Saudi partners can secure capacity with SFDA, CABs and logistics providers in advance.