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Guidelines

Food and Beverage Technical Requirements and Labelling





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1. Overview of Import Requirements for Pre-Packaged Food and Beverages



Pre-packaged food and beverage products exported to China need to obtain a Chinese sanitary certificate and must comply with labelling requirements, among several requirements. All imported foodstuffs and beverages are subject to inspections by the China Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau (CIQ), 出入境检验检疫局 in Chinese. Accessing up-to-date information on quarantine and customs requirements for such things as labelling & packaging requirements, food standards and allowable ingredient listings can be a time consuming and challenging process. It is therefore important to be prepared, and not to underestimate the time, cost, and volume of documentation required to complete the process.

All imported, pre-packaged food must be labelled in Chinese (simplified Chinese characters as used in Mainland China). In addition to Chinese characters, English and other foreign languages may also be used; this is useful for differentiating an imported product from local products. The **General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Food is GB7718-2011**.¹

Before exporting to China, foreign companies as well as importers, are required to register with the Filing Management System for Exporters/Agents and Consignees of Imported Food.² In addition, EU SMEs are advised to check with the Chinese Certification and Accreditation Administration (CNCA) to determine if their products also require producer registration. Once products arrive in China, they are required to obtain the CIQ sanitary certificate. A sanitary certificate must be issued for every shipment of products.

To clear customs, an **EU SME's first shipment** of pre-packaged goods will need to:

- Acquire a CIQ certificate of import food labelling verification for the Chinese label of the product;
- Meet declaration requirements at customs;
- Acquire a CIQ sanitary certificate.

1.1. Documentation Required for Clearing Customs

- Documentation verifying permission to manufacture and sell in the country or region of origin;
- Documentation to support the label verification application; foreign companies are required to submit the following documents:
 - A sample of the original label along with a Chinese translation;
 - A sample of the Chinese label for the pre-packaged food or beverage;
 - Copies of business licenses of importers, distributors or agents that are listed on labels.

It is typical for local distributors, importers or agents to provide the above documentation to CIQ. Foreign companies must share the required documents with local partners in order to have Chinese, translations completed for submission to CIQ.

When pre-packaged food labels state that a product is award-winning, certified, from a certain geographical region, or that it contains a special ingredient, corresponding materials verifying such claims should be provided. Details concerning this requirement can be found in the following document:

¹<http://www.moh.gov.cn/zwgkzt/cybz/201106/a054a6affd0e489da150cf2b51a971a7/files/e84256474d1445919246b4a41a87f172.pdf>

²<http://ire.eciq.cn/>

"The Provisions on the Inspection, Supervision and Administration of the Labels for Import and Export Pre-packaged Food No. 27 Notice of 2012."³

To comply with China's food labelling regulations, all imported foods and beverages must have a label, often white in colour, written in simplified Chinese characters used in Mainland China and attached to individual bottles, cans or packets. Labels must be approved by the CIQ. The regulation requests that products be labelled before shipping, but as this can be difficult to carry out, CIQ allows labelling to take place in bonded warehouses in China.

The following is the minimum requirement for information to be listed on labels:

- Standard name of foodstuffs
- List of ingredients
- Quantity of ingredients (listed in descending order by weight or volume)⁴
- Net weight and configuration⁵
- Name, address and contact information of manufacturer and local agent or distributor
- Production date, use by date in YY/MM/DD format and guidance for storing
- Generic names of food additives as per the PRC national standard
- Food production license number⁶
- Country of origin
- Code of the product standard
- Special contents if there are any (e.g. irradiated food, genetically modified, nutrition list for baby food or diet food)

Inclusion of the quality grade of a pre-packaged product is optional on the label.⁷

Some imported brands have been known to print information in simplified Chinese on packaging and, therefore, their products do not require labels to be stuck on. Imported infant milk formula must have the minimum required information, as listed above, printed in Chinese on the packaging. If imported infant milk formula does not have the required information printed onto its container it will not be allowed to be sold in China.

CIQ requirements often change and can be difficult to interpret. It is therefore important for EU SMEs to regularly communicate with local partners to understand regulations and any changes to regulations that may impact the import of their products to China. European exporters are encouraged to re-confirm labelling requirements and other product certification with their importers in China or relevant departments prior to dispatching goods. Tighter, stricter regulations are being seen across food and beverage categories in response to food safety concerns.

³ http://www.aqsiq.gov.cn/xxgk_13386/jlgg_12538/zjgg/2012/201203/t20120305_239034.htm

⁴ http://www.sda.gov.cn/WS01/CL1196/118041_3.html

According to the General Rules for Nutrition Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods (GB28050-2011) ingredients must be listed in descending order by weight or volume. The percentage of nutritional information should also be listed on the Chinese label, minimum requirements state that the energy, protein, fat, carbohydrate, sodium, Vitamin A and B must be noted on the label : http://www.gov.cn/gzdt/2012-07/09/content_2179396.htm

⁵ If a product is a multi-pack it must state on the label how many individual wrapped products are included in the packaging.

⁶ http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/General%20Rules%20for%20the%20Labeling%20of%20Prepackaged%20Foods_Beijing_China%20-%20Peoples%20Republic%20of_5-25-2011.pdf

⁷ <http://www.jlwsjd.gov.cn/classshow.asp?id=8252>

1.2. Shipment Declaration Papers

Required documentation should be submitted to the local CIQ port prior to the arrival of goods. Chinese labels for products must be registered and verified for use. This can be done before shipment or after goods arrive in China. In practice it saves time to complete this procedure ahead of shipping. After the goods arrive in China, importers pay duties at customs. The goods are submitted to CIQ where three to five packages or four to six bottles are selected for sampling and inspection. If products pass the testing, a CIQ sanitary certificate is issued.

All pre-packaged food and beverages go through a similar process. Labelling requirements differ slightly for pre-packaged food, beverages and foods for special dietary uses. SMEs can expect pre-packaged health foods to spend longer in CIQ inspection than ordinary food and beverage products. Wine is often sampled more generously than pre-packaged food products.

Since the adoption of China's Food Safety Law in 2009, all imported food products, food additives and food-related products are subject to national food safety standards. All producers and distributors of imported food products are required to register with the entry-exit inspection and quarantine authorities.

2. Technical Requirements for Pre-Packaged Food and Beverage Products Imported into China

2.1. Standards for Imported Foods and Beverages

The Regulation of the Implementation of the Food Safety Law of the People's Republic of China ("The Food Safety Law")

A revised food safety law in China will become effective as of 1st October 2015; the law was passed by The Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress (NPC) on 24th April 2015.⁸ The adoption of this law affects ingredients allowed, testing methods, manufacturing, contact substances, packaging, and nutrition labelling.⁹ The law has been published in Chinese on the website of the State Council of the People's Republic of China at http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2015-04/25/content_2853643.htm. Amendments regarding penalties for violations of the revised 2015 version of The Food Safety Law are as follows:

- Directly accountable person(s)-in-charge and other directly accountable personnel of any companies that add inedible substances to food products could face detention for up to 15 days. This is considered to be the toughest punishment of The Food Safety Law, as it involves fines and the revocation of certificates;
- Consumers can demand reparation of three times the amount of any losses suffered from substandard food;
- Producers may face fines of up to 30 times the value of their products, (the penalty was previously 10 times the value). If the products are worth less than EUR 1,410 (CNY 10,000), then the fine will be up to EUR 21,490 (CNY 150,000; three times the previous amount)¹⁰;
- The landlords of production sites and suppliers that sell unlawful substances may have revenue confiscated and be fined up to EUR 28,200 (CNY 200,000);

⁸ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-04/24/c_134181774.htm

⁹ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/johnbalzano/2015/03/08/issues-on-the-horizon-for-chinese-food-safety-law-in-2015/>

¹⁰ RMB 100 = EUR 14.10, Yahoo Finance, accessed on 15th May 2015.

- Officials who fail to protect the public or conspire in cover-ups will be demoted or dismissed;
- Infant milk formula will be heavily regulated to restore public confidence in the domestic dairy industry. Producers will be required to register powdered baby milk formula with food and drug regulators at the China Food and Drug Administration (CFDA); Chinese: 国家食品药品监督管理总局);
- Online platforms will be required to register the true identity of vendors and to check their certificates. If online platforms cannot provide the real names, addresses and valid contact details of retailers, they will have to compensate consumers.¹¹

Before this law comes into force, EU SME's should obey the provisions of China's first Food Safety Law, which was adopted on 28th July 2009. The Law covers:

- Production and trading of food and food additives;
- Packing materials, vessels, detergents and disinfectants for food and equipment used in food production;
- Food additives and food related products used by food producers and traders;
- Safety management of food, food additives and food related products.¹²

The Food Safety Law also covers all imported food products, which are subject to the national food safety standards of China.

As noted earlier, exporters and importers of food products into China are required to register with the state entry-exit inspection and quarantine authorities. Importers must record the foods imported as well as distributed in China and must keep these records for at least two years. Ingredients or components not registered in China must be registered as new-to-China components.¹³ Any food or food ingredient or component that has had an import history prior to the new 2015 Food Safety Law should be allowed entry even if there is no Chinese standard.

Foreign producers are required to register with The [Certification and Accreditation Administration of the People's Republic of China](#) (CNCA). CNCA has published the latest lists of [approved foreign producers and facilities](#). Please note that this only refers to meat, dairy and fishery producers.¹⁴

Decree 55 was issued by the The General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine AQSIQ- 国家质量监督检验检疫总局, as part of the Food Safety Law in 2012. Decree 55 requires European exporters and agents, as well as Chinese importers, to complete an [online registration form](#), for a wide range of products under the jurisdiction of the AQSIQ Food Safety Bureau. This includes prescribed food commodities such as:

- Meat and meat products;
- Aquatic products;

¹¹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-04/24/c_134182721.htm

¹² http://www.fdi.gov.cn/1800000121_39_4037_0_7.html;http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/China%27s%20Food%20Safety%20Law%20%28Second%20Draft%20for%20Public%20Comments%29_Beijing_China%20-%20Peoples%20Republic%20of_1-9-2015.pdf

¹³ http://www.gov.cn/gzdt/2012-07/09/content_2179396.htm

¹⁴ <http://www.cnca.gov.cn/ywzl/gjgnhz/jkzl/>

- Egg and egg products;
- Dairy products;
- Bee products;
- Other non-prescribed foods such as biscuits and beverages.

Detailed manuals that contain step-by-step instructions on how to complete the registration process are currently available in both English and Chinese; please find more details at <http://ire.eciq.cn/>.¹⁵ Exporters are encouraged to work closely with their importers to provide the required information.

The US Department of Agriculture has translated overviews of two mandatory regulations and standards for importing pre-packaged foods. The regulations listed below cover food labelling. They can be downloaded at:

- Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards (18th December 2013) http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Food%20and%20Agricultural%20Import%20Regulations%20and%20Standards%20-%20Certification_Beijing_China%20-%20Peoples%20Republic%20of_12-18-2013.pdf
- Chinese Standards for Food Additives - GB2760-2015 (28th April 2015) http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Standard%20for%20Food%20Additive%20Use%20-%20GB2760-2015_Beijing_China%20-%20Peoples%20Republic%20of_4-28-2015.pdf

The most recent update for national food safety standards was amended on 24th April 2015, when the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC, formerly the Ministry of Health) released a directory of 58 food additives and standards for those additives.¹⁶

The National Health and Family Planning Commission issued the No. 4 announcement in 2013, which highlighted a revision of the national "food security" standards and general hygienic regulations for food production GB14881-2013. The new amendment was implemented on 1st June 2014.

Please refer to the following link:

[General hygienic regulation for food production GB14881-2013](#)¹⁷ showing the main changes compared to the previous edition of GB 14881. These include:

- Revised standard names;
- Revised standard structure;
- More terms and definitions included;
- An emphasis on the requirements for food safety control of the entire food production process including raw materials, processing, product storage and transportation, as well as an introduction to the main measures to control biological, chemical, and physical contamination;
- Modifications to content related to production equipment, including information on equipment layout, production materials and equipment as seen from the perspective of biological, chemical, and physical pollution prevention.
- Increased control over raw material purchasing, acceptance, storage and transportation;

¹⁵ <http://www.gz.gdcic.gov.cn/info.do?infoId=5293>

¹⁶ <http://www.standardcn.com/article/show.asp?id=38588>

¹⁷ <http://www.moh.gov.cn/sps/s7891/201306/56f30af754ef49448705806d35af06a1.shtml>

- Increased requirements for product traceability and recall;
- Increased requirements for record keeping and file management.

The basic requirements and management process for food production enterprises covered in GB 14881-2013 focus on:

- Hygiene requirements regarding procurement and transportation of raw materials;
- Hygiene requirements for factory design and facilities;
- Hygiene management of factories;
- Hygiene requirements for production processes;
- Health and quality inspection management;
- Hygiene requirements regarding storage and transportation of finished products;
- Hygiene and health requirements.

These standards apply to food production enterprises and factories, and serve as the basis for specific hygiene standards and regulations.

2.2. Chinese National Standards (GB) and Professional Standards

Chinese national standards (GB standards) are formulated for technical requirements that need uniform nationwide application. Nomenclature for GB standards takes the form of a standard code number followed by the year of issuance. The Standardisation Administration of China (SAC) provides a national standards enquiry service: <http://www.sac.gov.cn/SACSearch/outlinetemplate/gjbzcx.jsp> searchable by standard number, title and ICS code. To learn more about Chinese GB standards please visit our [standardisation section](#).

An incomplete bilingual list of GB food standards is available [here](#).

If national standards do not exist, and technical requirements for a certain industry need to be unified, then **professional standards**, often referred to as industry standards, are formulated. These are to be formulated by competent administrative authorities under the State Council and reported for record keeping to the department of standardisation administration under the State Council. They should be annulled on publication of national (GB) standards.

Users are able to enquire about applicable professional standards through the SAC professional standards enquiry service searchable only in Chinese:

<http://www.sac.gov.cn/SACSearch/outlinetemplate/hbSearch.jsp>

The majority of standards mentioned in the three directories relating to imported food and food additives are GB standards. A small number of professional standards are also involved.

2.3. List of Relevant Organisations Maintaining Professional Standards

Organisation that maintains professional standards	Profession/industry code	Profession/industry
MOFCOM	SB (Shangye Biaozhun) SB/T (SB recommended)	Domestic trade
AQSIQ	SN SN/T	Entry and exit inspection and quarantine
State Administration of Grain	LS (Liangshi)	Grain
Ministry of Agriculture	NY (Nongye)	Agriculture
Ministry of Industry and Information Technology	QB (Qinggong biaozhun) QB/T	Light industry
Ministry of Industry and Information Technology	HG (Huagong)	Chemical industry
Ministry of Industry and Information Technology	BB (Baozhuang biaozhun)	Packaging

2.4. Comparison with International Standards

Since the introduction of the Food Safety Law in 2009, China has been rapidly updating food standards to comply with the law. In the past, food standards could be issued by multiple organisations, often resulting in overlap, duplication and omission. Food standards must now be approved by a single authority. Chinese agencies report that currently 70% of food standards comply with international Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) for contaminants. However, incidences of inconsistency between local and international standards still occur. For example, Liaoning CIQ reported that domestic and international standards for sugar content in wine are quite different. As a result, wines can be improperly classified as dry wines instead of semi-dry wines based on their sugar content.

3. Import Procedures

The table below provides a detailed introduction to the steps required to import pre-packaged food and beverages into China. This information is as accurate as possible as of the beginning of May 2015; however, it may not be complete. There have been no amendments of procedures and regulations since May 2011.

3.1. Import Procedures for Pre-Packaged Food Not Subject to Exemptions

No.	Responsible government agency	Procedure	Estimated time to complete/notify	Application form/certificate	Related regulations (See Annex 1 for details of regulations and web links)
1	Certification and Accreditation Administration of China (CNCA)	Obtain foreign exporter producer registration . Currently only producers exporting certain products are subject to SPS protocols and required to register at CNCA. However, CNCA is expanding the scope of food and beverages that require registration. Producers are advised to consult CNCA when planning to export new food products to China.	CNCA unable to estimate time, because country of origin site inspections may be required.		Administrative measures for registration of enterprises producing food for import Registration procedures for enterprises producing food for import
2	Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) local agency	To qualify to import goods, importers complete a foreign trade operator registration form . As of 1 st July 2004, this replaced the certificate of approval for enterprises with foreign trade rights in the People's Republic of China. However, certificates issued before that date are still acceptable.	3-5 working days	Foreign trade operator registration form, Certificate of approval for enterprises with foreign trade rights in the P.R.C.	Procedures for registration of foreign trade operators
3	MOFCOM local agency	Importers can apply for an automatic import licence if the product is included in the 2014 goods catalogue for automatic import licence management. Most goods are included in this list and the application process in most cases is straightforward. However, there are some exceptions. Before signing a contract with an overseas producer, importers are advised to consult with local government agencies, such as	10 working days	Automatic import licence application form. Available from the Beijing Municipal Commission of Commerce at: www.bjmbc.gov.cn/download/ad/ad/1091021044.doc	Measures on the administration of automatic import licence of goods 2015 catalogue of goods falling under the automatic import licence administration

	<p>the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce, to clarify if the product requires a licence. An automatic import licence is not necessary for goods not included in the catalogue, such as wine.</p>			
4	<p>Documentation to demonstrate permission to manufacture and sell in the country/region of origin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturer’s business licence • Certificate of origin from supplier trade promotion association • Sanitary certificate from supplier Department of Agriculture or equivalent • Certificate of free sale • Copy of supplier contract <p>Consignee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributor business licence <p>Shipment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration papers from supplier including consignment, name, address, net weight of goods • Detailed packing list including net weight, gross weight, contents. Information on packaging materials, for example, if the product is packed in wooden crates, it must be stated that the wood has been heat treated. List must be stamped with official company seal • Invoice <p>Labelling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application form for import food labelling verification • Six copies of the label in Chinese • Copy of the label in original language • Documentation to support any specific claims made on the label, such as ”royal salute”, “a long-term best-seller”, 	<p>Send by airmail to arrive in advance of shipment</p>	<p>Contact local chamber of commerce in country or region of origin</p>	<p>Labelling regulations for import and export foods</p>

	<p>Geographical Indication (GI), "reserve" status, or "endorsed" status.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation to support international quality accreditation standards, for example, Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) or ISO9002 • Documentation to support any honour or medal mentioned on the label • Health food labels must be accompanied by a copy of the imported health food approval certificate from China Food and Drugs Administration (CFDA) <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other documentation may be requested by an authorised inspection and quarantine body during the verification process. • Chinese language translations must be provided of all documents in a foreign language, and these must be stamped with the applicant's official seal. 		<p>Application form of import food labelling verification http://wenku.baidu.com/view/4d18f36faf1ffc4ffe47ac20.html</p>	<p>General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods for special dietary uses GB13432-2004.</p> <p>General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged alcoholic beverages GB10344-2005.</p> <p>General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods GB 7718 - 2004 updated to GB 7718 - 2011. In 2014 it was updated further.</p>
5	<p>CIQ</p> <p>Consignee filing</p>	5 working days	<p>Registration form for consignee of imported food, available from Shenzhen CIQ at http://www.szciq.gov.cn/n001/ShowArticle.aspx?id=181109</p> <p>A record code will be issued to the consignee by CIQ. The code is a prerequisite to apply for an inspection of samples. Otherwise the applications are not accepted.</p>	<p>Instructions on the administration of import food consignee filing.</p>

6	CIQ local or discharging port	<p>Label verification If the Chinese label is approved, a certificate of import food labelling verification is issued. The certificate is valid for two years. If not approved, applicants are notified of the reasons for the decision in writing. This application process is best completed ahead of shipment, rather than after products arrive in China.</p>	If the documents are fully prepared beforehand, it usually takes 10-15 working days to verify and file the label. The labelling process usually takes 4-7 days	Certificate of import food labelling verification	<p>Labelling regulations for imported and exported foods.</p> <p>General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods for special dietary uses GB13432-2004.</p> <p>General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged alcoholic beverages GB10344-2005.</p> <p>General standard for the labelling of pre-packaged foods GB 7718 - 2011.</p>
7	CIQ local or discharging port	<p>Sample inspection application Usually submitted after the shipment arrives, but can be submitted in advance for example at the Shenzhen port. Please note that this is dependent on the port of arrival and product.</p>	2-3 working days	Application form for inspection certificate of imported commodities	<p>Regulations governing entry-exit inspection and quarantine</p> <p>Import and export commodity inspection law of the People's Republic of China.</p> <p>Regulations for the implementation of the import and export commodity inspection law of the People's Republic of China.</p> <p>Directory of industry standards for entry-exit inspection and quarantine.</p> <p>188 industry standards for entry-exit inspection and quarantine.</p> <p>General administration of customs decree No. 17, 2010 (on matters related to the regulation of wine imports).</p>

8	Customs Bureau	<p>Goods declaration Price verification Customs Clearance FAQs are available at: http://www.customs.gov.cn/Default.aspx?Tabid=2556</p>	3 working days	People's Republic of China customs entry declaration form	
9	Customs Bureau	<p>Duties assessment Duties payment and customs clearance. Customs Clearance FAQs are available at: http://www.customs.gov.cn/Default.aspx?Tabid=2556</p>	2 working days		
10	CIQ	<p>Sample inspection Samples are chosen subject to the discretion of CIQ officials. In the case of wine, for example, SMEs can expect, on average, 2000cl (4-6 bottles) or 3-5 packages of each product to be sampled. Goods are stored in CIQ warehouses for the inspection period. A sanitary certificate is issued.</p>	<p>3-5 working days at city-level CIQ. If a city-level CIQ does not have appropriate inspection equipment, inspection is transferred to the provincial CIQ. This process then takes 15 working days. For health food, central AQSIQ is responsible for inspection.</p>	CIQ sanitary certificate	<p>Import and export commodity inspection law of the People's Republic of China.</p> <p>Directory of industry standards for entry-exit inspection and quarantine.</p> <p>Regulations for the implementation of the import and export commodity inspection law of the People's Republic of China.</p> <p>188 industry standards for entry-exit inspection and quarantine.</p> <p>General administration of customs decree No. 17, 2010 (on matters related to the regulation of wine imports).</p> <p>General standard for health (functional) foods.</p> <p>General standard for wines.</p>

					<p>Announcement on the standards for the inspection of imported food and food additives.</p> <p>Administrative regulations on the licensing of imported food not falling under existing national food safety standards.</p>
11	CIQ	The importer or agent attaches Chinese labels onto the goods in the warehouse. Labels checked by CIQ.			Labelling regulations for imported and exported foods.
12		Goods released to distributor			

4. Exemptions from Import Procedures

Exemptions from food import procedures are allowed for food for the diplomatic community (embassies, consulates and duty-free stores), food for use at exhibitions and fairs, and sample food. Small quantities of foodstuffs imported for trial sales are not exempted and must go through normal inspection and certification procedures.

The importer, distributor or agent should take the exemption from Chinese labelling procedures (Certificate of Exemption of Label 标签豁免证明) to the appropriate local food inspection agency before the goods arrive. The following pre-packaged foods can be exempted from declaring the date of minimum durability:

- Alcoholic beverages where the alcohol content is 10% or over;
- Vinegar;
- Salt;
- Sugar in solid form;
- Monosodium glutamate.

5. Labelling

CIQ requirements often change. Exporters are advised to confirm requirements for labelling and other product certifications prior to the dispatch of goods for export to China.

While similar measures are employed by other importing countries, the way in which China applies import regulations can adversely affect trade due to compliance difficulties and increased costs. China's requirements are generally greater than those of other countries. The Chinese standards concerning labelling requirements for agricultural commodities (i.e. foodstuffs), such as ingredient listing, labelling of gift boxes and production year present many problems for those wishing to export to the Chinese market. The case of distilled spirits in the wine and spirits sector illustrates this point. In China, distilled spirits are required to have product labels that include a bottling date. However, usual international practise does not require the date of manufacture, as many spirits consist of a blend of years that are aged for varying periods, rendering the identification of a single date of manufacture impossible. China also maintains typeface and translation specifications that are inconsistent with international standards. Even when companies are able to comply with such strict labelling standards, compliance generally increases costs.

Local importers report that once this labelling process has been navigated the first time, subsequent shipments are not difficult. Then the primary challenge is making sure that the correct label is applied to the correct bottle, and that the Chinese label is placed over the label of origin.

5.1. Labelling Requirements: Pre-Packaged Food (GB7718-2011)

The Labelling Requirements of Pre-packaged Food (GB 7718-2011) was amended based on the GB 7718-2004 standards. These new standards were implemented beginning 20th April 2012. In 2014, the regulation was amended further to incorporate the change of the Ministry of Health (MOH) name to the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPCC). Amendments also include a new requirement to state the name of bacteria used for manufacturing yoghurt, a requirement to state if sulphur dioxide was used in the production of wine, on labels. An additional change allows imported

food labels to use a foreign language and traditional Chinese; however, simplified Chinese is still required to be used for providing required information.¹⁸

The revised scope of this standard is applicable to labels on pre-packaged food sold directly to consumers, as well as labels on pre-packaged food that is not sold directly to consumers.

This standard does not apply to labelling for packaging that has been placed around pre-packaged food for transport, or labelling for bulk foods, unpackaged food and fresh food during the process of storage and transportation. The revised standard:

- Modified the definition of pre-packaged food and production date; increased specifications and cancelled the defined holding period;
- Modified the method for marking food additives;
- Increased labelling method specifications;
- Modified the producer, distributor, address and contact markings required on the label;
- Revised text, symbols, numbers that are required to meet mandatory labelling requirements should not be less than 1.8mm when the packaging or container maximizes the surface area;
- Enhanced labelling requirements for allergenic substances in food;
- Modified methods to calculate the maximum in Appendix A of the standard;
- Made additions to Appendix B and C of the standard.

For reference, please read GB 7718-2004 as follows:

Label approval applications are submitted in advance of the first shipment of goods, and determined in conjunction with the first sampling and inspection process.

The label should state, among other things:

- Name and trademark of the product
- Type of food
- The manufacturer's name and address
- Country of origin
- Ingredients in descending order by weight or volume
- Net weight and volume
- Date of manufacture
- Best before or expiry date
- Usage instructions
- Batch number
- Relevant standard code

¹⁸ <http://www.nhfpc.gov.cn/sps/s3594/201402/544c0539b95d4d35b99fbc105579071.shtml> ; http://wenku.baidu.com/link?url=U4Nc7J-xuwNsJdbblt6Z2RmFpFD60gW7_ZxpJlfZPRy-33i2ha1mjRYCGC4PjaBSpAiAiH9VSn6A87VOQP1H9xqu4NHhY1_LpWT2x1ju_a

5.2. Label Requirements: Food for Special Dietary Uses (GB 13432-2013)

The GB 13432-2013 standard was amended based on General Standards for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods for Special Dietary Uses (GB13432-2004). All imported pre-packaged foods for special dietary uses must be labelled in both English and simplified Chinese used in mainland China, based on the provisions of the General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods for Special Dietary Uses (GB13432-2013).

Compared with the former standard GB13432-2004, changes to the contents of GB13432-2013 are as follows:

- Revised definition of special dietary food specifies food categories that must use pre-packaged special dietary food labels and nutritional label. The standard defines the general requirements for edible food labelling for pre-packaged special meals, such as the food name, list of ingredients, production date, shelf life, and the requirements for nutrition labelling, including nutrient composition tables, claims concerning nutrition content and the functions of the nutrients. The standard defines classifications of special meals food and sets labelling requirements that conform to the standard.
- The original GB13432-2004 listed statements such as "sugar free instant soybean powder" and "iron fortified high protein instant soybean powder" as belonging to the nutrition claims category. Foods in this category shall be labelled in accordance with the "pre-packaged food label general rule" (GB7718-2011) and the "pre-packaged food nutrition label rule" (GB28050-2011).
- Increased the basic requirements for content claims and function claims for infant formula food for babies 0-6 months old, based on international standards.
- Modifications of energy and nutrition labelling methods and broadened tolerance for marking errors.
- Merged the required labelling content and recommended labelling content into one standard.
- Modified the requirements for content concerning energy and nutrition component claims and terms concerning functional claims and, according to international practice, eliminated the use of comparative claims (professional terms used only for food labelling of special dietary products and which define the functions of certain ingredients in nutrient components).

The following outlines the minimum information required under the General Standards for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods for Special Dietary Uses (GB13432-2013):

- Food name;
- List of ingredients and exact volume of each ingredient;
- Nutrient;
- Net weight and volume;
- Name and address of manufacturer and local agent or distributor;
- Production date, use by date and guidance for storing;
- Method for consuming product, recommended nutrient intake, and targeted people;
- Code for national standard, or industrial standard, or enterprise standard for the product;
- Quality grade.

The labelling of pre-packaged food for special dietary uses must follow Section 4 of GB13432-2014. The following kinds of information are prohibited from appearing on the label:

- Any claims as to prevention, alleviation, treatment or cure of a disease.
- Claims promising “rejuvenation”, “longevity”, “restoration of hair colour”, “prevention or cure of cancer” or claims making equivalent promises.
- The use of a drug name immediately before or after the name of a food, or the use of an image and the name of a drug to imply the food has treatment value. (This does not apply to substances that can be used both as drugs and food.)

5.3. Labelling Requirements: Pre-Packaged Alcoholic Beverages (GB10344-2005)

According to Chinese standardisation laws and food safety laws, as of 1st March 2015 the Standardization Administration of the PRC abolished “Label Requirements for Pre-packaged Alcoholic Beverages (GB 10344-2005)”. At present, no updated standards have replaced GB 10344-2005. See the following introduction to the earlier standard GB 10344-2005 for reference.

Imported pre-packaged alcoholic beverages must be labelled in both English and simplified Chinese as used in mainland China and follow the General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Alcoholic Beverages (GB10344-2005).

The General Standard for Beverages (GB 10789-2007) and General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods (GB 7718-2011) are used by CIQ for label verification of non-alcoholic beverages.

The following lists the minimum information required for wine labels. Please note that wine and alcoholic beverages with over 10 per cent alcohol volume are not required to list the date of minimum durability (use by date/expiry date) on the label. Other information may be required depending on the specific product and it is advised that exporters check with specialist logistical companies or relevant departments prior to exporting products to China.

- Wine name and type (e.g. dry red, semi-dry);
- Vintage year;
- Grape variety;
- Country and wine region;
- List of ingredients (including raw ingredients, juice volume and any additives);
- Alcoholic strength;
- Name and address of manufacturer and local agent or distributor;
- Production date, (or bottling date: YYYY.MM.DD), shelf life and guidance for storing;
- Net weight and volume;
- Code for national, industrial, or enterprise standard for the products;
- Quality grade;
- Production licence;
- Warnings.

5.4. Labelling Requirements: Pre-Packaged Non-Alcoholic Beverages (GB 10789-2007)

There is no separate standard for the labelling of non-alcoholic beverages. The General Standard for Beverages (GB 10789-2007) is used to categorise beverages and importers can refer to the General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods (GB 7718-2011) for labelling. As of 1st April 2016, GB10789-2007 will be replaced by GB10789-2015.

6. Time Frame and Costs

6.1. Overall Time for Import Procedures

One of the main difficulties faced by food and beverage exporters to China is the difficulty in estimating time frames and costs. These can vary markedly from shipment to shipment. Customs officials, agents and local importers estimate that it takes thirty to forty days for a shipment of goods to clear customs, CIQ inspection and labelling verification at the major ports (Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai). Unpredictable delays can lengthen this time frame considerably. The first wine shipment of one Beijing importer spent four months in Customs and CIQ. Another well-established Beijing wine importer found one shipment unaccountably delayed by a price verification discrepancy. That wine importer estimates that, on average, goods take about four months to travel from the supplier warehouse in Europe to their warehouse in Beijing, at which time they can be released to distributors.

For the importation of health foods, 13 to 19 extra months are needed because an Imported Health Food Approval Certificate is required.

6.2. Cost Estimates

Costs, like timeframes, are never firm. The actual cost of an individual licence can be negligible—an automatic import licence costs just CNY 20 (EUR 2.80).¹⁹ The label verification process usually costs approximately CNY 2,500 (EUR 353) in Guangdong and Shanghai, but can vary at other ports. A daily charge for goods housed at Customs, uncertainty over the precise number of goods selected for sampling and inspection, and variable charges for other procedures result in differing costs for each shipment.

Import agencies charge CNY 2,500-3,000 (EUR 353-424) per shipment and around CNY 600 (EUR 84.80) for the design of a Chinese label. In particular, the export of health foods to China is expensive. An application for an Imported Health Food Approval Certificate costs from CNY 60,000-310,000 (EUR 8476-43,800). Import agencies charge around CNY 80,000 (EUR 11,300) to manage the process. Time frames and costs may appear arbitrary, but familiarity with the procedures and paying careful attention to meeting stated requirements can reduce uncertainty. These costs include Customs declaration fees, inspections fees and a labelling fee (if labels are added in China).²⁰

¹⁹ RMB 100 = EUR 14.10, Yahoo Finance, accessed on 15th May 2015.

²⁰ <http://www.customslawyer.cn/fgk/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=57066>

7. Annex 1: Details of Regulations Applicable to the Import of Food and Beverages to China

Ref	English	Chinese	Issued by	Date (DD/MM/YYYY)	Web link
1.	Registration Procedures for Enterprises Producing Import Food	进口食品国外生产企业注册程序	CNCA	Took effect on 1/4/2002	http://www.foodmate.net/law/chukou/164052.html
2.	Administrative Measures for Registration of Enterprises Producing Import Food	进口食品境外生产企业注册管理规定	CNCA	Took effect on 1/5/2012	http://www.cnca.gov.cn/ywzl/gjgnhz/jkzl/flfg/201405/t20140506_20062.html
3.	Procedures for Registration of Foreign Trade Operators	对外贸易经营者备案登记办法	Ministry of Commerce	Took effect on 1/7/2004	www.ft.cq.cn/Uploadfile/200804071525401471.doc
4.	2015 Catalogue of Goods Falling under Automatic Import Licence Administration	2015 年自动进口许可管理货物目录	Ministry of Commerce and General Administration of Customs	Took effect on 1/1/2015	http://wms.mofcom.gov.cn/article/zcfb/c/201412/20141200854848.shtml
5.	Instructions on the Administration of Import Food Consignee Filing	Name varies depending on regulations of local CIQs	CIQ	Issued on 25/4/2011 Issued on 9/9/2014 Issued on 11/8/2008	Shenzhen CIQ: http://zwdt.szciqic.net/zw/external/index!getRedirect.action?pageLook=1&directFlag=1&bustypeId=1824933 Shanghai CIQ: http://www.shciq.gov.cn/tslm/tgyw/jwgl/201409/t20140909_40772.shtml Wenzhou CIQ: http://xxgk.wenzhou.gov.cn/xxgk/jcms_files/jcms1/web67/site/art/2008/8/11/art_1422_56824.html
6.	Administrative Regulations on the Licensing of Import	进口食品安全国家标准食品许可管理规定 Safety Standards	NHFPC	Released on 9/8/2010	www.gov.cn/gzdt/att/att/site1/20100817/001e3741a2cc0dd490cd01.doc

7.	Measures on the Administration of Automatic Import Licence of Goods	货物自动进口许可管理办法	Ministry of Commerce	Took effect on 1/1/2005	http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/b/e/200501/20050100327887.html
8.	Import and Export Commodity Inspection Law of the People's Republic of China	中华人民共和国进出口商品检验法	AQSIQ	Adopted on 21/2/1989 Took effect on 1/10/2002 Amended on 29/06/2013	http://www.npc.gov.cn/wxzl/gongbao/2013-10/22/content_1811008.htm
9.	Regulations for the Implementation of the Import and Export Commodity Inspection Law of the People's Republic of China	中华人民共和国进出口商品检验法实施条例	AQSIQ	Took effect on 1/12/ 2005 Amended on 18/07/2013	http://www.gov.cn/zwgg/2005-09/15/content_63637.htm http://www.gov.cn/flfg/2013-07/26/content_2477674.htm
10.	Provisions For the Exemption of Import and Export Commodities from Inspection	进出口商品免验办法	AQSIQ	Took effect on 1/10/2002	http://www.lnciq.gov.cn/zwpd/zcfg/zjl/200207/t20020724_2697.htm
11.	Directory of Industry Standards for Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine	出入境检验检疫行业标准目录	AQSIQ	Took effect on 1/7/2011 Amended on 31/12/2014 Amended on 9/02/2015 Revisions effective from 1/05/2015	http://bgt.aqsiq.gov.cn/gd/xxgkml/ywxx/msc/201503/t20150309_433756.htm
12.	Regulations Governing Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine	出入境检验检疫报检规定	CIQ	Took effect on 1/11/2000 Amended	http://www.people.com.cn/zixun/flfgk/item/dwjf/falv/6/6-2-30.html

13.	Measures for Charging Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Fees	出入境检验检疫收费办法	National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Finance	Took effect on 1/4/2004	http://bgt.aqsiq.gov.cn/wmda/zjwj/201408/t20140801_418759.htm ²¹
14.	Administrative Measures for the Inspection and Supervision of Import & Export Food Packaging Containers and Packaging Materials	进出口食品包装容器、包装材料实施检验检疫监管工作管理规定	AQSIQ	Took effect on 1/8/2006	http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/aarticle/b/g/200606/2006062509556.html
15.	Work Standards for the Inspection and Supervision of Import and Export Food Packaging Containers and Packaging Materials	进出口食品包装容器、包装材料检验检疫监管工作规范	AQSIQ	Took effect on 5/7/2006	http://www.sc.gov.cn/scszfxxgkml_2/sbgt_27/fggw/gw/200711/t20071114_224208.shtml
16.	Requirements for Restricting Excessive Packaging for Foods and Cosmetics	限制商品过度包装要求：食品和化妆品	AQSIQ SAC	Took effect on 1/4/2010	http://www.aqsiq.gov.cn/zjxw/dfzjxw/dfftpxw/200904/t20090429_112612.htm http://www.shzj.gov.cn/art/2015/5/20/art_52311_1132658.html
17.	Catalogue of Entry-Exit Commodities for Inspection and Quarantine by the Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Authorities 2011	出入境检验检疫机构实施检验检疫的进出境商品目录	AQSIQ, General Administration of Customs	Took effect on 15/07/2014	http://tgyws.aqsiq.gov.cn/xxfw/fjml/201504/t20150403_435864.htm
18.	Announcement on the Standards for the Inspection of Imported Food and Food Additives Attachment 1: Directory of Imported Food and Related Standards Attachment 2: Directory of	关于进口食品、食品添加剂检验有关适用标准问题的公告 2009 年第 72 号 附件 1：进口食品及对应适用标准目录	AQSIQ and NHFPC	Took effect on 25/05/2015	http://www.nhfpc.gov.cn/sps/s3593/201412/d9a9f04bc35f42ecac0600e0360f8c89.shtml English translation available at: http://gain.fas.usda.gov/Recent%20GAIN%20Publications/Standard%20for%20Food%20Additive%20Use%20-%20GB2760-

²¹ Article 12 therein has been invalidated.

	Food Additives Allowed for Use in the PRC and Related Standards. Updated in May 2015 to the National Food Safety Standard for Uses of Food Additives; this includes an updated approved list of flavours. Attachment 3: Directory of Flavours Allowed for Use in the PRC and Related Standards.	附件 2 : 我国允许使用食品添加剂及对应适用标准目录 附件 3 : 我国允许使用香料及对应适用标准目录			2015 Beijing China%20-%20Peoples%20Republic%20of_4-28-2015.pdf
19.	Product Quality Law of People's Republic of China	中华人民共和国产品质量法	Standing Committee of the National People's Congress	Took effect on 8/7/2000	http://www.fdi.gov.cn/1800000121_23_68191_0_7.html
20.	Food Safety Law of the People's Republic of China	中华人民共和国食品安全法	Standing Committee of the National People's Congress	Took effect on 1/10/ 2015	http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-04/25/content_2852919.htm
21.	Administrative Measures for National Food Safety Standards	食品安全国家标准管理办法	NHFPC	Took effect on 1/12/2010	http://www.safefood.gov.cn/Info/n2357.html
22.	Administrative Measures on Import and Export Food Safety	进出口食品安全管理办法	AQSIQ	Took effect on 1/3/2012	http://jckspaqj.aqsiq.gov.cn/jblgg/2011/201506/t20150624_443310.htm
23.	Hygiene Standard for Uses of Food Additives GB 2760-2011 which acts as the replacement of GB2760—2007	食品添加剂使用卫生标准 GB 2760-2011	NHFPC and SAC	Took effect on 20/6/2011	http://www.nhfpc.gov.cn/cmsresources/mohwsjdj/cmsrsdocument/doc11938.pdf
24.	Hygiene Standard for Fermented Alcoholic Beverages GB 2758-2012 which serves as the replacement of GB 2758-2005	发酵酒卫生标准 GB 2758-2012	NHFPC and SAC	Took effect on 1/08 /2013	http://max.book118.com/html/2014/1220/10754506_shtm http://www.nhfpc.gov.cn/sps/s7891/201209/4090a1d1c0d64671bc2fa7811808a3ee/files/e77be02440cc4ec6a36bf432e0f5653.pdf

25.	Hygiene Standard for the Use of Nutritional Fortification Substances in Foods GB14880-2012 which serves as the replacement of GB14480-94	食品营养强化剂使用卫生标准 GB14880-2012	NHFPC and SAC	Took effect on 1/1/2013	http://www.shfda.gov.cn/spaqbz/GB%2014880-2012%20%E9%A3%9F%E5%93%81%E8%90%A5%E5%85%BB%E5%BC%BA%E5%8C%96%E5%89%82%E4%BD%BF%E7%94%A8%E6%A0%87%E5%87%86.pdf
26.	Regulations Governing Hygiene Supervision and Inspection Procedures for Import Food Products	进口食品卫生监督检查工作规程	NHFPC	Took effect on 15/05/1991	http://www.aqsiq.gov.cn/xxgkml/flfg/wsjsj/200610/t20061027_17037.htm
27.	Standardisation Law of the People's Republic of China	中华人民共和国标准化法	Standing Committee of the National People's Congress	Took effect on 1/4/1989	http://www.cnca.gov.cn/rjwzcf/flfg/fl/518.shtml
28.	Regulations for the Implementation of the Standardisation Law of the People's Republic of China	中华人民共和国标准化法实施条例	National Congress No.53 Notice	Took effect 6/4/1990	http://www.cnca.gov.cn/rjwzcf/flfg/fl/46830.shtml
29.	General Standard for Beverages GB10789-2015 acts as the amendment of GB 10789-2007	饮料通则 GB/T10789-2015	SAC	Took effect on 1/04/2016	http://www.aqsiq.gov.cn/xxgk_13386/zxxxgk/201502/t20150211_432472.htm
30.	General Standard for Wines	葡萄酒国家标准 GB 15037-2006	AQSIQ and SAC	Took effect on 1/1/2008	http://www.gxzl.org.cn/zjgg/zjgg_nr.asp?id=1641 http://www.bjiwex.com/show.php?contentid=330
31.	Administrative Measures on the Adoption of International Standards	采用国际标准管理办法	AQSIQ	Took effect on 4/12/2001	http://www.gdqt.gov.cn/govinfo/auto31/200809/t20080904_761.html
32.	188 Industry Standards for Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine	188 项出入境检验检疫行业标准	AQSIQ	Took effect on 1/5/2011	http://sn.cnca.cn/standard/menu/information.jsp?publicMessageTableId=2321
33.	106 Industry Standards for Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine including "Methods for the Detection	《进出口食品中尼古丁残留量的检测方法》等 106	Certification and Accreditation Administration of People's Republic of China	Took effect on 16/7/2010	http://sn.cnca.cn/standard/menu/information.jsp?publicMessageTableId=1521

	of Nicotine Residues in the Import and Export of Food Products”	项出入境检验检疫行业标准			
34.	150 Industry Standards for Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine including Inspection and Quarantine Standards for the Import of Cassava	《进境木薯干检验检疫规程》等 150 项出入境检验检疫行业标准	CNCA: Accreditation Administration of People’s Republic of China (CNCA)	Took effect on 1/12/2010	http://sn.cnca.cn/standard/menu/information.jsp?publicMessageTableId=1982
35.	Provisions on the Inspection, Supervision and Administration of Labels for Import and Export Pre-packaged Food	进出口预包装食品标签检验监督管理规定	AQSIQ	Took effect on 1/6/2012	http://www.aqsiq.gov.cn/xxgk_13386/jlgg_12538/zjgg/2012/201203/t20120305_239034.htm http://www.aqsiq.gov.cn/xxgk_13386/jlgg_12538/zjgg/2012/201203/P020121016423191514738.doc
36.	General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods for Special Dietary Uses GB 13432-2013 serves as the replacement of GB13432-2004	特殊膳食用食品标签通则 GB 13432-2013	AQSIQ and SAC	Took effect on 1/07/2015	http://www.nhfpc.gov.cn/ewebeditor/uploadfile/2014/05/20140505140531583.pdf
37.	General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods GB7718-2011 serves as the replacement of GB7718-2004	预包装食品标签通则 GB7718-2011	SAC	Amended on 20/04/2011 Took effect on 20/4/2012	http://www.nhfpc.gov.cn/zwgkzt/cybz/201106/a054a6affd0e489da150cf2b51a971a7/files/e84256474d1445919246b4a41a87f172.pdf
38.	2010 Resolution on Classification of Commodities	2010 年商品归类决定	General Administration of Customs	Took effect 28/2/2010	http://www.customs.gov.cn/publish/portal0/tab515/info216909.htm

39.	Administrative Rules for Imported Alcohol in the Chinese Market	进口酒类国内市场监督管理办法	State Economic and Trade Commission, State Administration for Industry and Commerce, Customs General Administration, State Bureau of Technical Supervision, Ministry of Public Health, and State Administration of Import and Export Commodities Inspection	Took effect on 9/9/1997	http://www.fdi.gov.cn/1800000121_23_68879_0_7.html
40.	General Administration of Customs Decree No. 17, 2010 (On matters related to the regulation of wine imports)	海关总署公告 2010 年第 17 号 (关于规范进口葡萄酒有关事项)	General Administration of Customs	Took effect on 1/4/2010	http://www.customs.gov.cn/publish/portal0/tab1/info218226.htm
41.	Standard for Uses of Food Additives GB 2760-2014 serves as the replacement of GB2760-2011	食品添加剂使用标准 GB 2760-2014	NHFPC	Took effect on 24/05/2015	http://www.moh.gov.cn/sps/s3593/201412/d9a9f04bc35f42ecac0600e0360f8c89.shtml
42.	Honey GB 14963-2011	蜂蜜 GB 14963-2011	NHFPC	Issued on 20/4/2011 Took effect on 20/10/2011	http://www.nhfpc.gov.cn/ewebeditor/uploadfile/2015/01/20150107101759720.zip
43.	Maximum levels of Mycotoxins Allowed in Foods	食品中真菌毒素限量 GB 2761—2011	NHFPC	Issued on 20/4/2011 Took effect on 20/10/2011	http://www.aqsiq.gov.cn/xxgk_13386/jgfl/dzwjyjgs/zcfg/201506/P020150619617473347581.pdf

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