Food Regulations in the Middle East: A Mars Perspective

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Agenda

- Few words about Mars Inc.
- What’s going well
- How the system works?
- Current Challenges
- Recommendation
We are the world’s leading confectionery company

a leading chocolate manufacturer,

in 2008 we acquired Wrigley.
We are also the leading petcare company
MARS  

Our Presence in GCC
The Five Principles of Mars

Quality  Responsibility  Mutuality  Efficiency  Freedom
Why do we need Food Regulations?

- To protect consumers from:
  - Unsafe practices
  - Misleading information
- Ease cross boundary trade

Consumer Protection is a joint effort between Regulators, Industry and Academia
MARS

What is going well?

• **Formation of:**
  • GCC food safety committee
  • SFDA
  • Food Safety committee in Egypt (in progress)

• **Positive signs towards alignment with Codex & ISO**
  • SASO role model
  • Should be implemented across the region
  • >16700 standards published
What is going well?

• Commitment towards standardization and harmonization across boundaries
  • GS0 Model
  • 6 GCC + Yemen

• Industry involvement in standards

• Huge focus on Food Safety
  • Stepping up in control & Standards
  • Across the GCC
Elements of Food Regulations

- **Include:**
  - Food Standards
  - Food Labeling
  - Food Safety & Hygiene standards
  - Food Additives
  - Pesticides/ Contaminants
  - Inspection/ Certification
  - Risk Assessment
Current Challenges

- Lengthy & complex approval process for standards
- Lack of fully harmonized standards & requirements across the Middle East
- Need for more alignment between multiple agencies
  - Ministries, authorities
  - Legislate, implement, control
  - Cascading and adoption of standards
- Communication to industry
  - local decrees
  - without consultation or informing
- No trade associations to represent industry
Lengthy Approvals

• The process of food standards approval is complex and lengthy
  • requires the involvement of multiple agencies

• Standards still in draft
  • GMO standard (across Arab world)

• Out of date
  • Morocco chocolate standards have finally been approved
  • Has not changed since 1932
Delayed Adoption

- The adoption and implementation of standards is rather more complex
- More governmental agencies get involved.
- In some occasions the local governments question or refuse some of the content of the standard
  - Shelf Life
Certification

- When products is exported to GCC, why do we need:
  - Health certificate
- Qatar:
  - Requires Radiation free certificate for food products from Europe, Turkey and UAE
- Saudi:
  - Requires Dioxin free certificate
- Sampling and Testing
Food Labeling

- Labeling requirements vary across the Middle East
- Products overly crowded with text to ensure it is Saleable across a wide range of countries
- Use of Production date, product type, product category, etc
- Nutrition information not mandatory
- Allergen labeling not mandatory
- **Food Colors**
- **Additives**
Other Gaps

- GMO
- Functional Food
- Allergens
- Traceability
- Recall
Recommendation

- Food legislation and standards aligned with Codex across the Middle East
  - Consistently reviewed
  - Agreed upon by the international scientific community
  - Deemed as viable and appropriate standard for the food manufacturers to follow
  - Global standard for those countries who don’t have their own legislation
  - Recognized as a global standard by WTO
  - Discrepancies will unduly create trade barriers and potentially affect the flow of food products across borders
Recommendation

- Harmonization across the Middle East
- More early involvement from industry
- Faster approvals and implementation
- Recognition of documentation across the GCC & Middle East
  - Recognition of SASO, ESMA mark etc....
- More Mandatory information to consumers:
  - Nutrition information like GDA should be mandatory
  - Use Best Before Date
  - Allergens
Recommendation

- Utilize the SASO expertise
- GS0 model to be rolled out across the Arab world
And Finally.....

- Let’s get the facts
- Science based evidence
- Collaboration
- The Consumer
Thank you