



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Saudi Food & Drug Authority



# **Guide to the Production, Trade, and Import of Honey and Bee Products**

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# Introduction

Honey is considered a natural product produced by bees (*Apis mellifera*) or (*Apis Florea*) from flower nectar, plant secretions, or the honeydew of insects from the order Hemiptera. Bees store it in hexagonal cells as honeycombs, and this syrup is characterized by its sweet taste. It has been known since ancient times for its wide uses in the food and pharmaceutical fields, contributing too many nutritional, health, and economic benefits. The mention of honey and honey bees is found in the Quran, where Allah says: "And your Lord inspired the bee, saying: 'Take habitations in the mountains and in the trees and in what they erect. Then, eat of all fruits and follow the ways of your Lord made easy for you.' There comes forth from their bellies a drink of varying colors wherein is healing for mankind. Verily, in this is indeed a sign for people who think." (SURAH AN-NAHL, 16:68-69). From an economic perspective, beekeeping, honey production, import, and trade represent an important activity that contributes effectively to bringing excellent economic returns to beekeepers, producers, importers, and exporters. In line with the Kingdom's keenness on beekeeping, the Honey Bee Farming Regulations were issued by Royal Decree No. (M/15) dated 13/3/1431 AH. The General Authority for Food and Drug Administration is keen on spreading awareness among beekeepers, producers, and marketers of honey and its products, raising awareness among producers and consumers, and promoting and reinforcing all sound practices and activities in the marketing and trading of honey. Therefore, the General



## **Scope and Objectives:**

This guide is concerned with regulating the production, marketing, and trading of local honey, as well as the importation of honey and bee products for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

# **Chapter 1**

## Controls and Requirements for Importing Honey

## **General Requirements for Importing Honey and Its Products**

Based on the conditions and requirements for importing food from countries wishing to export to the Kingdom and the organized procedures for it, honey and bee products can be imported according to the controls and requirements to be followed when importing honey and bee products into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as published on the Authority's website at the following link:



## **Chapter 2**

# General Requirements for Local and Export Honey Production Facilities for the Kingdom

## **General Requirements for Local and Export Honey Production Facilities for the Kingdom**

General requirements for licensing the practice of honey packaging and manufacturing as follows:

### **Article 1: The health conditions that must be met in local apiaries:**

Without violating the decision of the Ministry of Agriculture No. (295944) dated 20/10/1431 AH from the Executive Regulations of the Beekeeping System:

- 1.** The apiary should be located in an agricultural or wild area where there is abundant or diverse flowering plants and bee-friendly trees as a multiple source of nectar and pollen. The apiary must be far away from cattle, sheep, and poultry sheds, as well as odor sources, because bees' honey absorbs moisture and odors from the surrounding environment.
- 2.** The apiary must be far away from pollution sources such as fertilizer and pesticide stores.
- 3.** It is preferable for the apiary to be far away from residential areas.
- 4.** It is preferable to place a shade above the apiary to protect it from the hot noon sun or place the apiary under trees during the summer.
- 5.** There should be a sufficient distance between the apiary and the nearest neighboring apiary.
- 6.** Depending on the administrative jurisdiction of the investor's apiary, the office in the province or the unit in the center undertakes the preliminary procedures for licensing and the field inspection of the apiaries.
- 7.** The beekeeper must number the cells and place an identification panel on the apiary indicating the reference information for the apiary.



8. A special room must be constructed in the apiary as a warehouse for beekeeping tools and for honey processing.
9. The room must be equipped with ventilated windows, free from cracks, and places for insects and rodents to hide.
10. It is prohibited to transport, trade, and produce honey and bee products from areas with specified epidemic diseases according to the veterinary quarantine system applicable in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

## **Article 2: General conditions related to the site and facilities:**

Without prejudice to the provisions of Saudi Technical Regulation No. (21) for health conditions in food factories and those dealing with them, the facility that processes, manufactures, and packages honey and bee products must have the following:

1. The facility must be away from odors, smoke, dust, and other pollutants, and must be in an area not susceptible to flooding, regardless of its source.
2. The building design should not allow the entry or shelter of pests, insects, birds, rodents, and environmental pollutants such as smoke and dust.
3. Work areas must be spacious enough to carry out work under suitable health conditions. They must also be designed in a way that prevents contamination of products. Clean production sites must be separated from contaminated sites within the facility.
4. The site's constructions must be stable.
5. The boundaries of the facility must be made of concrete, asphalt, or compacted material to prevent airborne pollutants from transferring inside the facility.

- 6.** There must be sufficient barriers between clean areas inside the processing plant and contaminated areas.
- 7.** The floors of the product handling areas must be waterproof, easy to clean and sanitize, and kept clean, hygienic, and suitable for the products.
- 8.** The production area floors must be free of cracks or stagnant water, and an adequate drainage system must be provided.
- 9.** Production areas must be smooth, easy to clean, durable, and have surfaces that are non-porous to water. Walls must be kept clean and suitable for honey production under suitable sanitary conditions.
- 10.** Ceilings in handling areas must be made of easy-to-clean materials, kept clean, and in good condition to facilitate production processes in a sanitary manner.
- 11.** There must be a sufficient number of doors in the facility, and internal doors must be self-closing types. Doors must be made of durable and easy-to-clean materials.
- 12.** Adequate natural or artificial lighting must be provided in the facility, with sufficient protection.
- 13.** Adequate ventilation means must be provided with an air filtration system.
- 14.** A thermal control system must be provided in the facility to prevent heat buildup that affects product quality.
- 15.** Hand washing and sanitizing facilities must be provided in various sections where product handling occurs.
- 16.** Tools, tables, containers, transport belts, and other materials must all be made of non-corrosive and rust-resistant materials.

### **Article 3: General health conditions for local facilities and those exporting to the Kingdom:**

- 1.** Honey should not be treated with heat for sterilization or to facilitate its flow in production pipes within the facility.
- 2.** Means for cleanliness and washing of the factory, its tools, and equipment must be provided.
- 3.** There should be a regular program for washing floors, equipment, machinery, tools, and others.
- 4.** There must be a sufficient number of restrooms, changing rooms, hand washing equipment, foot sanitizers, and hand sanitizers in the facility to ensure the safety and health of the produced food.
- 5.** Containers and equipment used in the processing facility must be clean and suitable for proper and hygienic handling of the product.
- 6.** A sufficient number of bathrooms must be provided for workers.
- 7.** Bathrooms should not directly open onto product processing areas.
- 8.** Washing basin pipes should be of the automatic type (without using hands).
- 9.** All washing basins should be equipped with soap containers, single-use towels, paper napkins, and waste bins.
- 10.** All doors in the processing facility must be self-closing.
- 11.** All entrances to the processing hall must have foot sanitizers.
- 12.** The required level of sanitizing agents must be provided in hand sanitizing containers.
- 13.** Waste baskets should be of the type that does not open with hands.
- 14.** All water closets should be of the type that operates by water flushing.

**15.** Chlorine levels in water for various uses should be the same as those in chemical components used in drinking water or in contact with it, as follows:

Chemical Component	Guideline Value		Notes
Chlorine	50000	5	To achieve the disinfectant effect, the residual free chlorine concentration should be 0.5 parts per million after 30 minutes of contact at a pH < 8.

**16.** When adding the disinfectant to the water, it is necessary to wait for sufficient time for it to be effective in its action.

**17.** Institutions must use detergents and disinfectants approved by the competent authority.

**18.** If highly chlorinated water is used for equipment and surface disinfection, these items must be washed with water before use to deal with the product.

**19.** Swab tests must be conducted on all surfaces in contact with the product as an important factor in ensuring the safety and health of the factory.

## **Article 4: General Health Conditions Applied to Workers:**

- 1.** Individuals working in food handling must undergo medical examination before being appointed by the official health authorities responsible, according to the requirements set by the relevant official body. Medical examinations for workers should be conducted periodically thereafter, at a rate of once a year or more as needed, to ensure their medical fitness and freedom from infectious and epidemic diseases.
- 2.** All employees handling the product must be provided with suitable uniforms, including head covers, face masks, gloves, shoes, and others, and must adhere to the instructions of the relevant authorities in this regard.
- 3.** Workers must be given health and safety training courses.
- 4.** Workers tasked with handling and preparing the product must wash their hands every time they resume work. Any wounds on the hands must be covered with waterproof dressings.
- 5.** Smoking, eating, drinking, and spitting must be prohibited in the workplace and in the storage of honey and its products.
- 6.** Hand swab tests must be conducted on workers to ensure their health.

# **Chapter 3**

## Quality Control System in the Facility

## **Quality Control System in the Facility**

### **First: Responsibilities of the Quality Control Management**

- A.**The facility must have its own quality control system to ensure the safety and quality of its products, and the quality control management is responsible for the self-inspection and auditing of the facility.
- B.**The quality control management must report to the head/owner of the facility, with the purpose of ensuring that there is no bias or interference in quality control without impact.
- C.**Quality control inspectors must obtain appropriate certificates to qualify them for production monitoring.

### **Second: Self-Inspection System (HACCP) or Equivalent System**

- 1.**There must be an internal inspection system for risk analysis and critical control points applied within the facility, or any equivalent system.
- 2.**Employees should be familiar with the latest versions of quality systems.
- 3.**Adoption of the quality system by the regulatory body in the country of origin of the facility, and the quality system in the Kingdom is adopted by the competent authority.
- 4.**There should be pre-requisite programs (SSOP) with necessary documents and reports.
- 5.**The seven principles of the HACCP system must be applied when adopting it.
- 6.**There must be sufficient documents and records available to support the system.
- 7.**There must be an adequate number of trained personnel at the facility to supervise the HACCP system.

### **Third: Internal Inspection and Audit**

- 1.**There should be an organized and regular program for inspecting raw materials. Routine samples should be collected and tested for sensory, microbiological, and chemical standards, and documents should be retained.
- 2.**There should be a scheduled inspection of the product during operations to ensure its quality. Inspection reports should be retained.
- 3.**There should be a regular inspection program for random samples of the final product collected from the final packaging taken from the coolers (storage rooms) and inspected according to sensory, microbiological, and chemical standards.
- 4.**There should be a regular and periodic swab test program for employees or those in direct contact with the product to verify the level of cleanliness and health.

### **Fourth: Product Retrieval and Tracking**

- 1.**There should be an effective system for identifying and tracking the product (traceability)
- 2.**There should be reliable procedures and means for product recall to facilitate the disposal of distributed products in emergency situations.
- 3.**In case of product non-approval (rejection), the facility must decide on disposal of the product (reworking, conversion, or disposal according to the type of product rejection)



## **Fifth: Facility Laboratory (if available)**

1. There should be a laboratory for the facility to conduct routine tests and analyses, and the tests should be conducted in accredited laboratories.
2. The laboratory should have sufficient tools and equipment to conduct these routine tests and analyses.

## **Sixth: Inspection and Audit Reports**

1. Inspection and analysis reports should be retained and stored in separate files.
2. Test reports should be verified by a senior laboratory technician, and the reports should contain the names and signatures of the relevant employees.
3. If the reports are stored on floppy disks, there should be a system to preserve them and ensure the safety of the stored data. There should be a computer system to authenticate the test reports by the laboratory employee.
4. These reports and records should be used as a means of monitoring as part of the verification process when a problem arises and for reviews for various purposes.
5. These records and reports should be retained for at least two years or for the entire product shelf life if longer.

## **Chapter 4**

Conditions and  
Requirements to be met  
by Centers and Stores for  
the Sale and Processing of  
Honey and its Products

## **Conditions and Requirements to be met by Centers and Stores for the Sale and Processing of Honey and its:**

**Products are internally divided into several places according to their area, types of honey, and quantities they contain as follows:**

### **■ Place of Administration and Honey Reception**

**1.**It should be furnished with the necessary equipment for managing the store and receiving suppliers and customers.

**2.**Care should be taken not to expose types of honey and other products to weather conditions during their reception or display, such as direct sunlight, rain, or environmental pollutants such as smoke, dust, insects, and rodents.

### **■ Place for Storing Honey and its Products**

**■ It should be equipped to store all bee products, whether they require a temperature of  $25^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 5^{\circ}\text{C}$  or a refrigeration temperature of  $4^{\circ}\text{C}$ .**

**1.**It should be clean, dry, well-ventilated, and well-lit, with all products protected from sewage water, dust, smoke, chemicals, or other pollutants.

**2.**Storing all types of honey separate from the ground on separate boards or plastic bases with a height of not less than 20 cm from the ground and at a distance from walls and ceilings of not less than 45 cm.

**3.**Documents facilitating the inventory process should be rotated so that what enters first is dispensed first.

**4.**All products in the store must be labeled with the product type and country of origin.

**■ The storage place for packaging materials should be equipped with tightly closed cabinets with shelves for this purpose.**

The storage place for cleaning and sanitizing materials or cleaning tools should be designated by fixed or movable dividers, and equipped with tightly closed cabinets, with a descriptive label placed to identify the place for all workers.

#### Display and Sale Place for Honey and its Products:

1. It should be equipped with a sufficient number of shelves made of non-corrosive materials, such as aluminum or high-strength glass, or any other suitable material.
2. It should be equipped with safe means for pest control.
3. It should be well-lit and ventilated and completely away from any source of heat, moisture, harmful substances, insects, and rodents.

It is strictly forbidden to display and sell all types of honey that show signs of spoilage or corruption, or any change in their natural characteristics (such as fermentation, or honey with moisture higher than 20-23%, or a change in its natural color according to its type for the length of the storage period, or not complying with the approved specifications for quality), and these products must be suitable for human consumption according to the approved technical regulations for each category.

Bee products should be displayed at the appropriate temperature for each category, whether stored at  $25^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 5^{\circ}\text{C}$ , stored at a refrigeration temperature of  $4^{\circ}\text{C}$ , or stored at a freezing temperature of  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

The type of honey (flower honey, honeydew honey, cream honey, etc.) and the botanical source of the honey must be clearly written on the products in a way that does not cause confusion for the consumer. Honey packaging must be tightly closed and contain all the required data for honey products.

# **Chapter 5**

## Product Retrieval Program from Markets and Complaints

## **Product Retrieval Program from Markets:**

1.The honey importer must keep records of product delivery to the first customer, including initial information about the name and address of the product purchaser and the date of transfer of the product from the importer to the buyer. The importer must choose an appropriate tracking method such as a code number.

2.The importer must keep records to document the appropriate method for disposing of products that do not comply with Saudi standards and specifications.

## **Complaints:**

1.The importer must keep records to document complaints received from customers and citizens, as well as any evaluations conducted or actions taken regarding these complaints. When verifying a complaint, the actions taken to correct it and any preventive measures taken must be recorded. The importer must also notify the Saudi Food and Drug Authority of any legal investigation related to this.

2.The importer must prepare documents that provide sufficient information about the manufacturing processes, ready for review by the authority at any time to ensure compliance with the requirements and the food system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



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