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In general, standards and labeling do not pose a major hurdle for U.S. exporters to El Salvador. El Salvador is a “standards taker” and not a “standards maker”. Many products made in the U.S. already meet El Salvador’s standards. The main area of difference is items for human consumption, such as pharmaceuticals and food. In El Salvador, registration and labeling requirements require U.S. exporters to follow strict local guidelines.

El Salvador is open to participation by the U.S. in the standards development process. With CAFTA-DR implementation, local producers will experience additional changes as El Salvador’s products are redesigned and packaged to meet international standards.

The U.S. actively serves as a resource to assist El Salvador in developing or streamlining standards. The objectives of Chapter 7 (Technical Barriers to Trade) in the CAFTA-DR agreement are to: increase and facilitate trade through improvement to the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) agreement, eliminate unnecessary barriers and enhance bilateral cooperation. Read more on Technical Barriers to Trade under CAFTA-DR at <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/cafta-dr-dominican-republic-central-america-fta/final-text>.

Standards Organizations

Since 1992, the National Science and Technical Council (CONACYT) has been responsible for standards in El Salvador. In July 2011, El Salvador approved the Quality Salvadoran System Law, which regulates the study, development, and application of standards; accreditation, technical regulation, and metrology; develops the capacity of professionals; and strengthens the material, financial, and human resources of the entities responsible for quality topics in the country. The Quality Salvadoran System Law entered into force in September 2011.

The head of the new Quality Salvadoran System is the Quality National Council, which includes four specialized organizations: the Salvadoran Standardization Organism (OSN), Salvadoran Technical Regulation Organism (OSARTEC), Salvadoran Accreditation Organism (OSA); and Metrology Investigation Center (CIM). In addition, there is the Administrative Office of the Salvadoran Quality System (OAC).

The Salvadoran Standards Organism (OSN) is the entity responsible for:

- a. Drafting, updating, adopting, derogating, and disseminating standards that seek the improvement of the quality of the products, processes, and services; and coordinating the drafting, adoption, and adjustment of standards through technical committees.
- b. Contributing to and participating in the development of national and international standards.
- c. Developing a national standards program that will be approved by the Council
- d. Promoting the creation of standards technical committees and sub-committees for the development of standards.
- e. Representing El Salvador in regional or international standard organizations
- f. Maintaining, updating and making available for the public, a database of standards implemented or under drafting process in El Salvador.
- g. Enforcing the application of technical standards in all sectors.

The Salvadoran Technical Regulation Organism (OSARTEC) is the entity responsible for:

- a. Observing and complying with international guidelines and commitments of El Salvador on technical regulations. Submit comments resulted from public or international consultations to the appropriate institution.
- b. Be aware of the annual plan on technical regulations of the different institutions
- c. Verifying that all technical regulations go through a public or international consultation
- d. Keeping an updated data base of Salvadoran technical regulations approved and in process
- e. Informing the WTO of any technical trade barrier, and sanitary or phytosanitary technical regulation projects.
- f. Acting as the Coordinator and point of contact in El Salvador at the CODEX Alimentarius Commission or any other international organization.

El Salvador is a member of the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to the Trade (TBT Agreement); and adopted the Code of Good Practice annexed to the TBT Agreement. There are two types of standards in Salvadoran legislation: Mandatory Salvadoran Standards (NSO), known as Technical Regulations; and recommended Salvadoran Standards (NSR); known as Technical Standards. NSOs are mandatory standards, primarily for products affecting human conditions and are based on international, regional, or foreign standards. NSRs are recommended standards that follow ISO standards and are not independently created by the government of El Salvador. NSOs include the standards regulating the International System of Units; standards relating to materials, procedures, products, and services that may affect human life; safety and integrity and the safety and integrity of other live organisms; environmental protection standards; product registration, labeling, manufacturing practices; and standards considered by the government to be relevant to the economy or in the public interest.

Committees are responsible for studying and preparing draft NSOs and NSRs. Government officials and representatives of sectors with an interest in developing a specific standard make up the committees. Once a draft NSO is ready, the regulation goes to national and international consultation. An announcement is published in a local newspaper, and in the OSARTEC website. The WTO Secretariat and the Central American Secretariat for Economic Integration (SIECA) are notified. Interested parties are then given a period of 60 days to file comments. At the end of the two-month period, the committee reviews comments received on the draft standard and submits it for approval to the Directive Commission, who will then forward it to the institution responsible for acting as the regulator of such standard, who will be responsible to authorize and issue an executive decision that officially establishes it as a mandatory Salvadoran standard. The NSO is then published in the *Official Journal (Diario Oficial de El Salvador)*. Standards enter into force six months after their publication in the Journal. The NSR process includes national consultation; and only needs approval by the Salvadoran Standardization Organism Directive Commission.

The general practice is that committees adopt international standards; consequently local standards organizations are more “takers” not “makers”. ISO is the first reference used; others including Pan-American Commission on Technical Standards (COPANT) and CODEX Alimentarius Commission are also consulted. Most recently, Colombian and Mexican standards are now being consulted. El Salvador has an agreement with the American Standards Testing and Materials (ASTM) and, since 2007, has a memorandum of understanding with the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) to share information on standards. Representatives of related organizations in El Salvador have received training from the National Institute of Science and Technology (NIST).

NIST Notify U.S. Service

Member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to report to the WTO all proposed technical regulations that could affect trade with other Member countries. **Notify U.S.** is a free, web-based e-mail subscription service that offers an opportunity to review and comment on proposed foreign technical regulations that can affect your access to international markets.

Register online at Internet URL: <https://tsapps.nist.gov/notifyus/data/index/index.cfm>.

Conformity Assessment

The Salvadoran Accreditation Organism is responsible for the accreditation of official bodies and maintains a list of those bodies (public, private, local or foreign) and applicants at <http://www.infoq.org.sv>. Policies and criteria for accreditation are described in the Rules of Accreditation of Testing Laboratories and Analysis (Reglamento de Acreditación de Laboratorios de Ensayos y Análisis). Conformity Assessment bodies include laboratories, inspection bodies and certification bodies.

Product Certification

The process of product certification requires the establishment of a Certification Technical Committee, which includes participation or representatives of: the manufacturing sector, government, consumers, and academia. Product certification programs are in accordance with international standards/ISO certification process. For additional information, please visit: the ISO/IEC 65 guide at:

<http://www.iso.org/iso/search.htm?qt=ISO+IEC+65&searchSubmit=Search&sort=rel&type=simple&published=on>.

Accreditation

Accreditation is voluntary unless any government institution requires it through a special law or norm making it necessary to conduct conformity assessment. El Salvador is a member of the Inter American Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC) and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC). The Salvadoran Accreditation Organism has accredited eleven laboratories; a list is transmitted electronically at <http://www.infoq.org.sv>.

Publication of Technical Regulations

Proposed technical regulations are published in major newspapers, and the WTO and Central American Secretaries for Economic Integration are notified. Final regulations are published in the *Official Journal*. Summaries can be found at:

<http://www.imprentanacional.gob.sv/index.php/institucion> .

The installation of standards drafting committees is announced in major newspapers for interested parties to participate.

Labeling and Marking

Detailed labeling requirements for pharmaceuticals and other products can be found at: <http://www.infoq.org.sv> . Also, the following requirements are included in the Consumer Protection Law:

Retailers must display the price of the product, either on the packaging or in a visible place.

Products that are sold by weight or volume, or any other measure, must have the weight, volume, or an exact measure of its content on the label.

For pharmaceuticals, the list of ingredients, expiration date, dosage, contraindications, risks involved when used, residual toxic effects, etc. as established by the Ministry of Public Health must be printed on the label.

Labels on frozen and canned foods must include an expiration date.

Labeling must be in Spanish (language).

Contacts

Organismo Salvadoreño de Normalización (OSN):

Tel: (503) 2247-5321

www.osn.gob.sv (under construction)

Organismo Salvadoreño de Reglamentacion Tecnica (ORSATEC)

Tel. (503) 2247-5331

www.orsatec.gob.sv (under construction)

Organismo Salvadoreño de Acreditacion (OSA)

Tel. (503) 2247-5300

www.osa.gob.sv (under construction)

Address: 1 Calle Poniente, Final 41 Av. Norte #18.

San Salvador, El Salvador

Trade Agreements

In 1995, El Salvador joined the World Trade Organization.

On March 1, 2006, the U.S. Central America Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) entered into force between El Salvador and the United States. Approximately 80% of U.S. industrial and commercial goods now enter El Salvador duty-free, with the remaining tariffs on these goods phased out over 10 years. For more information, see the CAFTA-DR Final Text at <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/cafta-dr-dominican-republic-central-america-fta/final-text>

The General Treaty for Central American Integration, signed December 13, 1960, created the Central American Common Market (CACM). After nearly two decades of inactivity, CACM was revived in the early 1990s. The five member countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua) have agreed on maximum tariffs and harmonized 95% of tariff rates, mostly for industrial goods; but there is no date for the establishment of a complete Central American customs union. There has been some progress on labeling standards, but the region

has yet to address other issues related to creating a customs union, such as customs procedures, sanitary and phytosanitary standards, standards, quota management, and intellectual property rights.

In 1999, El Salvador, together with Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, signed free trade agreements with the Dominican Republic and Chile. In 2002, the region concluded agreements with Panama and Mexico. In 2007, El Salvador and Honduras signed a Free Trade Agreement with Taiwan, and the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras), signed a Free Trade Agreement with Colombia. In 2010, Central America signed an Association Agreement with the European Union that includes the establishment of a Free Trade Area, which is expected to enter into force in late 2012. Central America also negotiated a FTA with Mexico which entered into force in December 2011. The Central American countries are negotiating a free trade agreement with Canada and Peru and signed a partial scope agreement with Cuba in 2011 which is expected to enter into force in 2012. In 2012, Central America will negotiate an FTA with the Caribbean Community (formed by Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago). El Salvador will also negotiate an FTA with South Korea in 2012.

The U.S. Trade Compliance Center (TCC) (<http://www.trade.gov/tcc>) is the gateway to the U.S. Department of Commerce's Trade Agreements Compliance Program – a network of U.S. Commerce Department and other U.S. Government resources working together to reduce or eliminate foreign trade barriers. Upon receiving a complaint, the TCC organizes a case-management team of U.S. government experts -- including country, industry, and trade agreement specialists, as well as Commercial Service officers at home and abroad -- to help U.S. firms facing barriers to trade in foreign markets. These experts work with foreign governments to resolve these problems and ensure that they receive the benefits of all U.S. trade agreements. The TCC mission is to improve market access for U.S. workers, exporters, and investors and to seek compliance by foreign governments with U.S. trade agreements. U.S. companies that believe they have a complaint can tap the resources of the U.S. Department of Commerce's Trade Agreements Compliance Program by submitting a trade complaint form, found online at <http://tcc.export.gov> (click on "Report a Barrier"). The TCC web site also includes a checklist of common trade problems, texts of over 270 trade and related agreements, Exporter Guides with brief explanations of selected trade agreements, Market Access News, subscription to the weekly "What's New" e-mail update on trade-related news, and information on WTO standards notifications via "Notify U.S."

Contact information for the TCC:

Trade Compliance Center
Market Access and Compliance/ITA U.S. Department of Commerce
14th and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 202-482-1191
Fax: 202-482-6097
Web page: <http://tcc.export.gov> E-mail: tcc@trade.gov

Web Resources

Regional Customs Integration, Central America Economic Integration System (SIECA):

<http://www.sieca.int>

Standards Inquiry Point: <http://www.infoq.org.sv>.

NIST Notify U.S. Service: <http://www.nist.gov/notifyus/>

Ministry of Economy: <http://www.minec.gob.sv>

Trade Agreements, Organization of American States:

http://www.sice.oas.org/news_s.asp

CAFTA-DR: <http://www.export.gov/FTA/cafta-dr/index.asp>

Customs Authority: <http://www.mh.gob.sv/portal/page/portal/PMH/Institucion/Aduana>

U.S. Trade Compliance Center (TCC): <http://tcc.export.gov>

El Salvador Official Journal: <http://www.imprentanacional.gob.sv>