



U.S. – Republic of Korea Organic Equivalence Arrangement Questions and Answers

The U.S. has an “equivalence arrangement” with Korea. What does this mean?

This means that as long as the terms of the arrangement are met, U.S. and Korean organic processed products certified to the USDA or Korean organic standards and meeting the terms of the arrangement (described below) may be sold, labeled, and represented as organic in both countries.

Does Korea accept the USDA organic seal? Does the U.S. accept Korea’s organic seal?

Yes. As a result of the trade arrangement, either organic seal may be used on products traded under the arrangement. Products must meet the labeling requirements in the destination country. Organic labeling requirements and high-resolution organic seals are available at:

U.S.: www.ams.usda.gov/NOPOrganicLabeling

Korea: *Coming Soon*

When does this equivalency arrangement take effect?

The equivalency arrangement becomes effective on July 1, 2014, allowing trade under the arrangement to begin on that date.

Which products can be traded under the arrangement?

The scope of the arrangement covers products which:

- Are certified to the USDA or Korean organic regulations
- Are “processed foods,” as defined by the Korean Food Code (see below)
- Contain at least 95 percent organic content
- Have their final processing (as defined in the Korean Food Code) within the U.S. or Korea
- U.S. products: do not contain apples or pears produced with the use of antibiotics
- Korean products: do not contain livestock products produced with the use of antibiotics

Korean Food Code definition of “Processed food:”

Refers to a food manufactured, processed, and packaged by adding food or food additives to food raw materials (agricultural, forestry, livestock, or marine products), transforming food



raw materials (such as grinding or cutting) till their original forms cannot be recognized, or mixing such transformed ones or adding food or food additives to such mixture. However, where, without the use of food additives or other materials, the agricultural, forestry, livestock, or marine products are simply cut, peeled, salted, ripened, or heated (except the cases where heating is performed for sterilization or heating causes significant changes to those products) till their original forms can be recognized or where sanitary risks from treatment processes are not expected and food raw materials are simply treated so as to allow organoleptic identification of food quality, such food products are excluded from the definition of the processed food”

What are some examples of products covered under the arrangement?

Examples of products covered by the arrangement:

- Blends of multiple products, such as nuts, dried fruits, and frozen vegetables
- Processed livestock products, such as ground turkey, pork chops, sausage, and bacon
- Baby food and infant formula
- Pasteurized products, including fluid milk and fruit juices
- Fruits and vegetables with spices or flavorings, such as lemon, cinnamon, or citric acid
- Coffee, tea, cereal, honey, and condiments
- Products listed in Korea’s guidance: [Not Yet Posted]

Examples of products not covered by the arrangement:

- Dried mangoes that aren’t blended with other products
- Frozen peas that aren’t blended with other products
- Fresh fruits and vegetables

Korea’s guidance clarifying covered products is available at: [Not Yet Posted]

Additional information about the arrangement is available at www.ams.usda.gov/NOPTTradeKorea.

What about prohibited substances and methods?

Both the U.S. and Korean organic regulations prohibit similar substances and methods in the production and handling of organic agricultural products. Such prohibited substances and methods include most synthetic pesticides, irradiation, and genetically modified organisms as defined in each country’s regulations.

The USDA organic regulations prohibit the use of antibiotics except to control invasive bacterial infections (fire blight) in organic apple and pear orchards. The Korean organic regulations allow antibiotics only to treat infected animals. For all products traded under this partnership, certifying agents must verify that antibiotics were not used for any reason.

Both countries also have residue testing programs to verify that prohibited substances and methods werenot used. The arrangement allows both countries to -check imported organic products to verify



that excessive residues of prohibited substances and methods, as defined in the destination country's regulations, are not present in the final product.

What happens if an organic operation or certifying agent violates the terms of the arrangement?

Significant non-compliances will be reported to both countries and appropriate enforcement actions may be pursued under the respective country's regulations.

To ensure that the terms of the equivalency arrangement are being met, the U.S. (USDA National Organic Program) and Korea (Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs and National Agricultural Products Quality Management Service, or NAQS) will conduct regular assessments of each other's organic certification systems.

Shipping USDA organic products from the U.S. to Korea

How can I export organic products not covered by the arrangement to Korea?

Korea's law only allows organic equivalency arrangements to cover processed products. Other products, such as fresh cherries or broccoli, need to be certified directly by Korean accredited certifiers. Three certifying agents that operate within the U.S. (QAI (via ACO), Control Union and Ecocert) can provide certification to the Korean organic standards for organic products not covered by the equivalency arrangement.

Can USDA organic products processed outside the U.S. be exported to Korea under this arrangement?

No. In order to be exported to Korea under this arrangement, USDA organic products must have their final processing (as defined above) within the U.S.

Are there substance-related restrictions for products exported to Korea under the arrangement?

Yes. As noted above, processed products exported to Korea under the arrangement may not contain apples or pears produced with the use of antibiotics.

Are products in the USDA's "made with organic..." labeling category included in the arrangement?

Korea does not have a "made with organic..." labeling category like the U.S. Products must contain 95 percent organic content and comply with Korean organic labeling requirements.

What documentation is required for products traded under the arrangement?

The following documents are required for organic shipments exported to Korea:

Organic import certificate. All U.S. organic shipments exported to Korea under this arrangement must be accompanied by the NAQS Import Certificate of Organic Processed Foods: [Not Yet Posted].

U.S. operations should inform their certifying agent that they wish to ship products to Korea. Certifying agents will complete the form and return it to the operator for inclusion with their shipment of organic products. The list of USDA-accredited certifying agents is available at www.ams.usda.gov/NOPACAs.

Shipping Korean organic products to the U.S.

How can I export organic products not covered by the arrangement to the U.S.?

Other products, such as fresh pears or onions, need to be certified to the USDA organic standards. The list of USDA-accredited certifying agents (located around the world) is available at www.ams.usda.gov/NOPACAs.

Can Korean organic products processed outside of Korea be exported to the U.S. under this arrangement?

No. In order to be exported to the U.S. under this arrangement, Korean organic products must have their final processing (as defined above) within Korea.

Are there substance-related restrictions for Korean organic products exported to the U.S. under the arrangement?

Yes. As noted above, processed products exported to Korea under the arrangement may not contain livestock products produced with the use of antibiotics.

What documentation is required for Korean organic products traded under the arrangement?

All shipments of organic products exported to the U.S. under this arrangement must be accompanied by the NOP Import Certificate. Korean operations should inform their certification body that they wish to ship products to the U.S. The certification body will complete the form (<http://1.usa.gov/nop-import-certificate>) and return it to the operator for inclusion with their shipment of organic products.