Intertek Country Guide
Are you looking at Saudi Arabia as a new export market for your business? Then this guide will give you valuable information on Saudi Arabia, its opportunities and how to do business with its consumers.

Exporting to and Trading with Saudi Arabia
Intertek’s guide on trading with Saudi Arabia has been produced to give exporters a deeper understanding of this growing market and the opportunities within it. With an overview of its economy and opportunities, business culture and a guide to export regulations it is an excellent source of information especially for a first time exporter. The guide also contains useful links and sources of more detailed information and expert advice.

Important information - sanctions and embargoes

Some countries may be subject to export restrictions due to sanctions and embargoes placed on them by the UN or EU. Exporting companies are responsible for checking that their goods can be exported and that they are using the correct licences.

Further import and trade information is available on www.bis.gov.uk/exportcontrol
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia lies between the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf, and has a land mass about the size of Western Europe. It contains the world’s largest continuous sand desert, known as the Empty Quarter, and it is the biggest and most dominant country of the Arabian Peninsula.

Saudi Arabia is bordered by Jordan to the north; Iraq and Kuwait to the northeast, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to the east, and Yemen and the Sultanate of Oman to the south.

Riyadh is the Kingdom’s capital with an estimated population of over five million. All the main Saudi government offices and Embassies are located here.

Other key cities are Jeddah, the commercial capital, located on the Red Sea coast, and Dammam on the Arabian Gulf.

Saudi Arabia’s key trading partners are Japan, China, USA, South Korea, India, Germany, UAE, UK, France and Italy.

The UK is Saudi Arabia’s second largest foreign investor after the USA.

**Strengths of the market**

With an estimated population of 26.5 million and an economic growth rate of nearly 7% per year, Saudi Arabia offers a growing market accounting for 25% of the Arab world’s GDP.

The Saudi capital is strategically located at a major crossroads of the continents of the world, at the heart of the Kingdom and the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, 600m above sea level.

Arabic and English are the business languages.

Basic economic statistics (2009/2010 figures):

- GDP: USD 577.6 billion
- Real GDP Growth rate: 6.8%
- GDP per capita: USD 24,500
- Inflation: 5%
- Total Exports: USD 350.7 billion (2011 est.)
- Total Imports: USD 106.5 billion (2011 est.)
- Population Total: 26.5 million people

Source: CIA World Fact book

Saudi Arabia’s main imports are machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, chemicals, motor vehicles, textiles.
Economic overview

Saudi Arabia has an oil-based economy with strong government controls over major economic activities. The Kingdom possesses around 25% of the world’s petroleum reserves, ranks as the largest exporter of petroleum, and plays a leading role in OPEC. The petroleum sector accounts for roughly 80% of budget revenues, 45% of GDP, and 90% of export earnings.

Saudi Arabia has witnessed a period of relatively high growth and economic progress allowing increased public spending on infrastructure and welfare to match its growing population.

Diversification has focused on power generation, telecommunications, natural gas exploration, petrochemical sectors, and particularly focusing on employing its large youth population. Saudi Arabia has substantially boosted spending on job training and education. The government is also engaged in attracting local and foreign private investment across all sectors, which was made easier by the Foreign Investment Act of 2000, leading to the establishment of the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA).

You will find more information on their website: www.sagia.gov.sa

As part of its effort to attract foreign investment, Saudi Arabia joined the WTO in December 2005 after many years of negotiations. This committed the country to further liberalisation of its trading system and the creation of a more transparent and predictable environment for trade and foreign investment, in accordance with WTO rules.

The World Bank saw Saudi Arabia move up to 11th in the world rankings, ahead of all other Arab and Middle Eastern countries.

Population

The Saudi population is one of the fastest growing in the world, and it is expected that there will be 29 million Saudis in 2020. 60% of Saudis are under 20 years old.

Riyadh, Jeddah and Mecca are the highest populated cities and account for just under 10 million residents with 82% of the population living in urban areas.

Political overview

Saudi Arabia is named after the ruling Al Saud family. The Kingdom was established by King Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud in 1932. Since his death in 1953, Saudi Arabia has been ruled by several of his sons, although decisions are taken by consensus within a wide circle of Princes and trusted advisors.

The Kingdom is an absolute monarchy and is currently ruled by King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.

Local government is administered through general municipal councils, district councils and tribal and village councils.

The Holy Koran is the constitution of the country and the government operates on the basis of Islamic law (Sharia).
Transportation
Saudi Arabia is accessible by air and sea. There are also roads from all countries sharing a land border with Saudi Arabia, as well as Bahrain via the causeway. Non-Muslims may not enter Mecca or central Medina.

Getting there:
By air
Most of the major international airlines have regular flights to important cities in Saudi Arabia. The main Saudi Arabia Airports are located at Riyadh, Jeddah and Al Dammam. There are also a number of domestic airlines including Saudi Arabian and Arabian Express Airlines.

Plan to avoid pilgrim rush dates, public holidays and summer, See the Saudi calendar: [http://saudical.com/events/](http://saudical.com/events/)

By Rail
The Saudi Railways Organisation [www.saudirailways.org](http://www.saudirailways.org) operates rail services across the length of the country with the 570km long Riyadh to Dammam line being the main route. Along the route, destinations such as Dhahran, Abqaiq, Hofuf, Harad and Al Kharj are served with air-conditioned trains providing regular services throughout the week.

At the airport
Taxis are the only mode of public transport available to/from Riyadh airport and must be paid for in advance. Authorised taxis marked with the airport logo are available 24 hours a day to the city centre (journey time: 30 minutes). By law, taxis must have a meter and passengers should check this before setting off. Average prices start at SAR60.

Visas
Visas are required by all visitors to Saudi Arabia, except nationals of GCC states, and must be obtained in advance from Saudi counterparts in the Kingdom and thereafter processed at Saudi embassies and consulates abroad. The expiry date of passports must extend at least six months beyond the date on which you will leave the Kingdom. Visitors with passports containing evidence of a visit or an intended visit to Israel will not be admitted.

Visas are issued based on the Hijra calendar. Many people get caught out with visa expiry as they believe it’s valid according to the Gregorian calendar. Hijra months are shorter than Gregorian months, so check carefully so that you don’t end up overstaying.

Visa applications must first be notified to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Riyadh, who will, if approved, issue an immediate “E” authorisation number.

Visa applications must then follow the requirements as specified on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [www.mofa.gov.sa](http://www.mofa.gov.sa)

Please look at the website of your local Saudi Embassy for more details on how to apply online.

It must be noted that passengers visiting Saudi Arabia cannot carry alcohol for consumption as part of their luggage as it is strictly banned.

Your stay
How to do business with Saudi Arabia

There are three key commercial regions in Saudi Arabia: the Western Region, with the commercial center of Jeddah which has been a port and trading centre for centuries; the Central Region, where the capital city of Riyadh is located; and the Eastern Province with a population of around 3.5 million, the capital of which is Dammam, which originally was a fishing village. It is the second largest port, where the oil and gas industry is concentrated and it includes the contiguous cities of Dhahran and Al-Khobar. Each city has a distinct business community and cultural flavor.

In order to successfully enter the Saudi Arabian market, it is imperative to develop an understanding of the local culture and secure local contacts. Taking the time to visit the Kingdom, understand the local market and research potential partners will give you a competitive advantage when trying to market your business.

**Market entry and start up considerations**

There are several ways in which companies can enter the Saudi Arabian market:

- Export directly
- Set up an agency
- Appoint a distributor
- Set up a Joint Venture
- Sell to the government

Saudi Law does not require foreign companies to appoint a commercial agent to do business in the Kingdom. Companies can make direct sales to the private sector from outside Saudi Arabia. But in practice, appointing an agent or distributor is the most common procedure for companies wishing to enter the Saudi market. Virtually all government purchasing is conducted by local tenders and in the majority of cases only Saudi Arabian companies may bid. Foreign companies need a Saudi agent to bid for Saudi government tenders.

On a regional basis Saudi Law permits the appointment of more than one agent, and for particular products. However, many companies prefer to appoint a sole agent to avoid conflict of interest and possible mix-ups, especially when bidding for government contracts.

The Ministry of Commerce regulates the relationship between a foreign contractor and his Saudi agent.

www.commerce.gov.sa
As in any market, doing business in Saudi Arabia has its challenges.

**Establishing an office**

How you establish an office in Saudi Arabia depends on the type of business. The most common way is to appoint an agent/distributor who can set up the office under its own commercial registry. The agent/distributor agreement should be registered with the Ministry of Commerce & Industry (MoCI) and The Commercial Agency regulations govern the agent/distributor agreement.

You can also establish a technical and scientific service office to provide technical and advisory support to Saudi distributors only, as well as conduct market surveys and product research. You will need a licence from the MoCI.

You may set up a branch office, permitted under Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Investment Law however they are restricted to an administrative role and cannot trade.

Joint ventures or limited liability partnerships are permitted. These partnerships must be also registered with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI).

Lastly you can establish a liaison office, this is normally only for companies that have multiple contracts with the Government and require a local office to oversee contract implementation.

To establish an office in Saudi Arabia you will need to submit: articles of association as incorporated in the country of origin, a copy of its commercial registration, a written approval by the board of directors of the company. All aforementioned documents are to be attested as required.

Follow this link for more information [http://www.mci.gov.sa](http://www.mci.gov.sa)
Recruiting and retaining staffing
Currently the estimate is that there are around 6 million expats working in the Kingdom.

This, coupled with rapid population growth has led to high levels of unemployment among Saudi nationals, particularly those aged under 25. As a result, the Government has introduced a number of measures designed to limit the number of expatriates working in the country, in the hope of boosting the employment of Saudis. Each private sector company is supposed to have a certain percentage of staff depending on the type of business. The Ministry of Labour has the power to specify those occupations, trades, professions, activities and ventures which are restricted to Saudis. The Minister may on occasions reduce the Saudisation percentage in situations where there are no adequate technically or academically qualified workers to fill the position, or if it is not possible to fill the vacant job with Saudi nationals for another valid reason.

It is important to monitor your employee situation to show that you are trying to comply with Saudisation, as it can be an important factor in the awarding of government contracts.

The government is also currently boosting technical and vocational training for its unemployed youths, to enhance their employment value, and help the Saudisation project. Long term investment, improvement in education, and expansion of the non-oil sector are all required in order to alleviate the unemployment problem.

Selling to the market
Franchising
Franchising is becoming an increasingly popular way to access Saudi Arabian consumers. The growth in this sector is based on Saudis’ desire to own their own business. Opportunities are known to exist in many business streams business categories, including clothing, laundry and dry cleaning services, automotive parts and servicing, restaurants, mail and package services, printing and convenience stores.

Selling to consumers and the private sector
Saudi Arabia is the largest consumer market in the GGC countries, characterised with high disposable income. With a large percentage of the population aged under 25 there is an increased demand for consumer goods and products.

Price is fairly important in the purchasing decision making process. Generally speaking Saudi Arabians like to do comparisons before buying.

With internet services being freely available a large proportion of Saudi consumers report that they have purchased products and services online.

Saudi Arabia is generally a cash society, however credit card usage has increased with a rise in Sharia or Islamic Law compliant cards. Establishing a distributor agreement is a good way to sell to the private sector.

Selling to the Government
Saudi Arabia does not have a central tender board which means that each government agency is responsible for their own contracts. Overseas companies interested in bidding on a government project must apply to that specific government agency/ministry. When a project is put out to tender, the government agency/ministry selects bidders from a list of prequalified/known companies and invites them to bid for that project. The law states that all qualified companies and individuals will be given opportunities in dealing with the Government and will be treated equally.
Saudi Government Contacting & Procurement Law also states that all government bids shall be announced in the official gazette Umm al-Qoura (Arabic) and in two local newspapers, as well as in the electronic media. Projects which do not have a contractor must be advertised both inside and outside Saudi Arabia.

Selling to NGOs
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) tend to buy from foreign sources, which are either associated with, or based in their countries of origin. It is best for companies to target NGOs based in their own country, especially through their headquarters. This market segment can be both quality and price sensitive.

Distribution and Sales Channels

Wholesalers and Retailers
The majority of goods in Saudi Arabia are distributed through a wholesale or retail network. Wholesalers will import goods direct from the manufacturers or from overseas in bulk. They will then transport the goods to bonded warehouses, and later distribute them to retailers in the local market.

Retailers purchase the goods, pay the required duties, and sell in small shops.

There are many goods which you are not allowed to bring into the country. These include weapons, alcohol, pork, pornographic materials and many others. There are also some products which require approval and/or registration, for example; pharmaceuticals, telecom and communication equipments, wireless equipment, veterinary medicines, pesticides, and military uniforms.

Imports come through ports of entry, and are cleared through Customs subject to having the correct documentation and certification. Most consumer goods will be subject to the Saudi Conformity Assessment Programme (see link for details http://www.intertek.com/government/product-conformity/exports/saudi-arabia/) requiring a Certificate of Conformity for Customs clearance. Details of what you need to do to apply for the Certificate of Conformity are displayed in this video “How to Apply for a Certificate of Conformity”.

Electronic Commerce
E-commerce is a growing sector with freely available internet and the majority of the population owning mobile phones. Credit cards are used but the most popular method of payment to consider is cash on delivery.

Direct Marketing
Direct Marketing is not widely used in Saudi Arabia with consumers preferring a more personal relationship with vendor. Postal mail is not particularly reliable. All mail going to Saudi Arabia needs to be addressed to a PO Box as there is no house/building delivery, unless you are using an international delivery firm such as Aramex, DHL, FedEx, or UPS. Most business to business communication is still conducted by fax rather than phone or e-mail.

International airmail to/from Europe takes 4-5 days, and to/from the US 8-10 days.

Print and Media Advertising
Advertising has increased in popularity and importance in recent years, aided by the removal of the ban on television commercials. Saudi companies now use all the advertising methods available to them, including TV, newspapers, trade magazines and billboards, in addition to trade promotion events. Several key international advertising agencies have offices in the Kingdom. Advertising is monitored, subject to approval and should abide by the cultural conservancy.

Newspapers
There is a wide variety of magazines and newspapers on sale in Saudi Arabia. Newspaper advertising is available in both the local English and Arabic press. Rates for advertising in these publications vary greatly.

Radio and Television
Television commercials are broadcast on the two Saudi channels, one in Arabic, the other in English, in addition to several regional satellite channels. Broadcasts reach all parts of Saudi Arabia. In general, costs of advertising are lower for Saudi companies than for foreign firms. All broadcasts are vigorously screened, in order to ensure conformity with Islamic moral and religious standards.
Telecommunications

Various telecommunication services are provided through landlines, mobile phones, internet and data transmission services by three companies - Saudi Telecom Company (STC), Etihad Etisalat (Mobily) and Zain, along with two landline companies - STC and Atheedb. There is full coverage for UK networks with International roaming facilities.

Both the net and e-mail are increasingly widely used, although the current telecoms infrastructure is inadequate for the demands placed upon it, and service can be patchy, with overloaded lines making access difficult at peak times. Some internet sites are censored. Dial-up subscription rates are very low, ADSL and satellite connections can also be installed. Although prices are coming down, they are more expensive and less reliable than in other countries such as the UK Broadband. The internet has alleviated some of these frustrations but there are still frequent service glitches.

Saudi has its own yellow pages, a useful directory for finding telephone numbers: www.saudianyellowpages.com

Links to newspapers and television station can be found in our useful contacts section.
There are some products that may be imported duty-free, including most livestock and aircraft.

Regulations, Customs and Taxation

**Customs and regulations**
Saudi Arabia is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the World Trade Organisations (WTO). Customs tariffs on most imported goods is 5%. There is also a protective tariff of 12 or 20% on some imports to support some national industries. Saudi Arabia has been implementing the Brussels Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System (H.S.) since 1991. There are some products that may be imported duty-free, including most livestock and aircraft. Alcohol for consumption purpose is banned.

More information can be found in the Ministry of Finance website: http://www.customs.gov.sa

**Local regulations**
Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) is the gateway to investment in Saudi Arabia. The Foreign Investment Law allows non-Saudi companies and individuals the possibility of 100 percent ownership of projects and enables them to retain the same incentives given to national companies. Foreigners are excluded from investing in certain businesses. More details on investment regulations and applicable taxation is available from the website of SAGIA - www.sagia.gov.sa

**Taxes**
Taxation is a specialised subject and advice should be sought from specialists practising in Saudi Arabia as part of the planning stage before any investment is made. The following is offered as a very simplified introduction only.

**Personal Tax**
There are no personal taxes in Saudi Arabia. Neither Saudi nationals nor foreigners resident in the Kingdom are taxed on their salaries.

**Corporation Tax**
In general, companies pay 20% corporate tax. But, foreigners who derive net income from investments in Saudi businesses, and self-employed individuals who do business in the Kingdom, are subject to corporate tax on a sliding scale according to their income.

**Rules and Regulations**
A summary of the main rules and regulations are as follows:

Those subject to 20% tax are:
A. A foreign partner’s share in a resident capital company,
B. A resident foreigner who does business in the Kingdom,
C. A non-resident who does business in the Kingdom through a permanent establishment.

The tax rate on companies engaged in the production of oil and other hydrocarbons productions will be 85%.

The tax rate on companies engaged only in natural gas investment fields is subject to a 30% tax rate.

**Zakat**
Zakat is a religious wealth tax, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. Saudis, GCC nationals and companies entirely owned by those individuals have to pay zakat. If companies or partnerships are owned by Saudi or GCC nationals and by other foreigners, zakat is assessed on the taxable income of the entity in proportion to the equity interest of Saudi and GCC nationals in the company.
Complex rules apply to the calculation of zakat liabilities. In general, zakat is levied at a rate of 2.5% on capital that is not invested in fixed assets or long-term investments and on pre-incorporation expenses deferred, as adjusted by net results for the year.

Social Security Taxes

The General Organisation of Social Insurance (GOSI) is the government body responsible for the enforcement and collection of social insurance. Employers are required to pay Saudi social insurance tax on behalf of their employees.

For more details please see - www.gosi.gov.sa

Tax Incentives

The government has granted tax concessions for ten years from the start of any project and are offered in the following regions: Hai, Jazan, Najran, Al-Baha, Al-Jouf, Northern Territory.

For more details about taxation, please visit the Saudi investment website www.sagia.gov.sa

Import requirements and documentation

To assure Saudi Arabia consumers of the safety and quality of imported goods they buy, and to protect Saudi Arabian manufacturers from unfair competition, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) implemented a Conformity Assessment Programme which requires that all goods exported to Saudi Arabia need a Certificate of Conformity (also referred to as a SASO certificate) in order to clear Customs. Only medical equipment, medical products, food and military related products are exempt from the programme.

Import tariffs

Detailed information on current taxes, including import tariff lists, can be found at the Ministry of Finance website: http://www.customs.gov.sa/

Import/Export requirements

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has jurisdiction over all standards issues in the country, except those products within the scope of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority. Their website is:
http://www.mci.gov.sa
http://www.sfda.gov.sa

Labelling and marking requirements

All consumer products have to have Arabic labelling. If a product is not correctly labelled it will be rejected at the port of entry.

Importers also need to be aware of product expiry dates. Products arriving in Saudi Arabia with short periods before expiration will generally be rejected and prohibited from being sold on the market. Details of relevant standards are available with Saudi Arabian Standards Organisation (SASO) and with Intertek.

Prohibited and restricted imports

The culture of Saudi Arabia follows Islamic law very closely. The items that are banned in both Islamic law and Saudi law include; alcohol, narcotics, pornography, pork products, religious books and material, imitation and counterfeit goods. See the Saudi guidelines for more details.

Restricted are weapons, ammunition, explosive materials and any type of blades. Only blades with special permission from the Ministry of Interior (MoI) can be imported into the Kingdom, otherwise these are strictly prohibited. Medicines can be approved only by the Ministry of Health (MoH). Electronic equipment for personal use may be checked for potential offensive material.

Customs, regulations and contact information

Saudi Customs
Tel: 009661 - 4013334 Ext: 1655
Fax: 009661 - 4043412-
Riyadh Zip Code: 11197 P.O Box: 3483
E-mail: cdeputy_dg@customs.gov.sa
Website: http://www.customs.gov.sa
Getting paid

How do I get paid
If selling to consumers, cash on delivery is widely used, however credit card usage has increased with a rise in Sharia or Islamic Law compliant cards that are compliant to the Islamic Sharia, issued by Islamic Banks that are popular among end consumers in Saudi, but offer the same transactional benefits and security.

Normally an irrevocable letter of Credit (L/C) is used to pay for imports. Open account, cash in advance and documentary collections are also acceptable if both parties are in agreement. Maximum or minimum credit terms are not required.

The Saudi Credit Bureau (SIMAH ) is the first and sole licensed national credit bureau offering consumer and commercial credit information services but only to its respective member as the current laws of Saudi Arabia do not allow sharing of financial information with non-banking institutions.

Debt collection is usually undertaken by a legal firm.

Foreign-Exchange controls
Saudi Arabia imposes no foreign exchange restrictions on capital receipts or payments by residents or non-residents, beyond a prohibition against transactions with Israel.
Business etiquette, language and culture

Business customs
A lot of time has to be spent getting to know people and establishing relationships before doing business in Saudi Arabia.

It can be quite common for meetings to be interrupted by phone calls and people coming in, but it’s important not be put off by this, patience and courtesy are essential.

Language
Arabic is the official language but English is widely spoken and used especially for international business purposes.

Office Hours
Working days are Saturday to Wednesday, office hours vary depending on public or private sector are mainly 8am to 3pm.

All offices and shops close four times a day for Prayers.

Dress
Saudi businessmen often wear the traditional thobe and shemagh - head dress - in public. Saudi women and foreign women must wear an abaya - a full length black cloak - in public. A headscarf needs to be worn at all times.

Under the abaya, women visitors are advised to wear a full-length dress or trousers and top with high neck and long sleeves, in case you are invited to remove it at less formal business meetings.

Visiting businessmen usually wear suits for appointments.

Religion
No religious practices other than Islam are allowed. Muslims pray five times a day and all shops and many offices will close to observe prayer times. Copies of the Bible or any other non-Islamic religious literature may not be brought into the country, nor any non-Islamic symbols or statues.

Religious Police
The Muttawa are members of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. They maintain a vigilant eye on Saudis and foreigners to ensure that they conform to the Kingdom’s strict dress and behaviour codes. Women approached by the Muttawa and asked to cover their hair, should do so and move on quickly to avoid confrontation.

Saudi Arabia is the strictest of all Muslim countries and behaviour in public is subject to inflexible rules. Islam dominates all aspects of life. The sexes are strictly segregated for example in restaurants and in hotel swimming pools/gyms, and no public displays of affection may be shown when out and about.

It is important that anyone doing business in Saudi Arabia, or living in the country, understands the laws and traditions and obeys them.
How to export to the Saudi Arabia

Introduction

Mandatory standards in Saudi Arabia are applied equally to both imported and domestically produced products for the protection of health, safety, national security, public morals, the environment and prevention of deceptive practices. Procedures for assurance of conformity to the applicable Saudi standards are enforced by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry (MoCI) for imported products and by the Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Municipalities, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Heath and Saudi Food and Drug Authority also the MoCI for domestic products.

The MoCI, has implemented the Conformity Assessment Programme (CAP), as a combined conformity assessment, inspection and certification scheme on the basis of which consignments are allowed entry into Saudi Arabia, and cleared more quickly through Customs upon arrival.

Compliance with the relevant Saudi standards, or approved equivalent alternatives (e.g. international and exceptionally national standards) results in the issue of a Certificate of Conformity (CoC) prior to shipment. Details of Saudi and alternative standards are contained in CAP technical documents, available on request from Country Offices or Registration and Licensing Centres.

The CAP provides assurance to the Saudi consumer that products that are subject to certification are free from potential safety hazards and are fit for use in Saudi Arabia. The manufacturer benefits from the demonstration that their products satisfy the requirements of Saudi Arabia. Exporters and importers benefit from the streamlined Customs process, which allows goods to clear more quickly without risk of rejection. The CAP applies to all consumer products exported to Saudi Arabia. A wide choice of Saudi approved and/or nationally or internationally accredited laboratories are available to carry out testing to Saudi requirements. The Exporter Guidelines provides detailed information of the steps needed to comply with the requirements of the Programme in order to obtain a Certificate of Conformity for the shipments. It also includes the requirements relating to the Registration and Type Approval Licensing processes.

Mandatory standards in Saudi Arabia are applied equally to both imported and domestically produced products for the protection of health, safety, national security, public morals and the environment.

Definition of Terms

Conformity Assessment: Any activity concerned with determining directly or indirectly that relevant requirements are met.

Conformity Evaluation: Systematic examination of the extent to which a product fulfils specific requirements.

Inspection: Conformity evaluation by observation and judgement accompanied as appropriate by measurement, testing and gauging.

Inspection Body: Body that performs Inspection.

Conformity Testing: Conformity evaluation by means of testing.

Type Testing: Conformity testing on the basis of one or more specimens of a product representative of the production.

Testing Laboratory: Laboratory that performs tests.

Conformity Surveillance: Conformity evaluation to determine the continuing conformity to specified requirements.

Verification of Conformity: Confirmation, by examination of evidence, that a product fulfils specified requirements.

Supplier’s Declaration: Procedure by which a supplier gives written assurance that a product conforms to specified requirements.

Registration: Procedure by which a body indicates relevant characteristics of a product in an appropriate, publicly available list.

Type Approval: Permission for a product to be marketed or used for stated purposes or under stated conditions based on type testing.
**Certification**: Procedure by which a third party gives written assurance that a product conforms to specified requirements.

**Certification Body**: Body that conducts certification by operating its own testing and inspection activities or overseeing these activities carried out on its behalf by other bodies.

**Certificate of Conformity**: Document issued under the rules of a certification system, providing confidence that a duly identified product is in conformity with a specific standard.


**Conformity Assessment Programme (CAP)**: The Certification Scheme that has its own rules of procedure and management for carrying out Certification of Conformity on all consumer products exported to or manufactured in Saudi Arabia.

**Products that are subject to certification**: Products currently required to be certified prior to supply under the CAP. MoCI Decree 6386.

**Approved Laboratory**: A Testing Laboratory, which has been evaluated and approved based on its qualifications to carry out type testing and/or some level of conformity testing on selected regulated products. Eligibility for approval is open to:

- Laboratories accredited by nationally recognised laboratory accreditation bodies.
- Qualified laboratories nominated by various countries under their governments’ full responsibility.
- Other qualified laboratories nominated by manufacturers.

**Type Approval Licence**: Document, issued under the CAP confirming Type Approval status for an identified product.

**Registration and Licensing Centre (RLC)**: The certification body that administers the Registration process, carry out Verification of Conformity, and issue Type Approval Licences.

**Country Office (CO)**: The Body designated in a specified country or region to carry out Inspection, Verification of Conformity and Certification under the CAP.

**NOTE 1**: An Approved Laboratory that meets the Inspection qualification criteria can be classified as an Inspection Body.

**NOTE 2**: Inspection Bodies can be authorised, if qualified, to issue Certificates of Conformity.
Procedures for Product Compliance

The essential elements of the Programme are:

• Regulated Products must demonstrate compliance with Saudi Arabian technical regulations i.e. Saudi or other approved international standards.

• Each shipment of products that are subject to certification must be accompanied by a CAP Certificate of Conformity.

Methods of achieving these requirements vary, according to the nature of the product and the current level of compliance met by existing product certifications. Exporters may choose the route most appropriate to their product range and frequency of exports. These options are described in detail below:

Route 1:

Compliance Verification: This option is considered appropriate for infrequent exporters or suppliers to market. It involves the presupply inspection and presupply testing of products in a consignment and prepared for supply to the Saudi Arabia market. Physical inspection of the goods is carried out to verify all requirements that may be visually determined. These include, but are not confined to: safety marking, country of origin, language requirements, instruction manuals, labelling, packaging, storage, accompanying certificates etc. Presupply testing may involve the destructive, or non-destructive testing required to establish compliance to essential safety, environmental or other criteria specified by the Saudi Arabian technical regulations. Testing requirements may be satisfied by the presentation of test data produced by an accredited laboratory, witness testing, or by manufacturer’s independently certified data.

Route 2:

Registration and Pre-supply Inspection: This option involves a declaration and substantiation by the manufacturer or exporter that their products satisfy the essential Saudi Arabian requirements as a minimum. In most cases, these requirements relate to the aspects of Saudi Arabia standards that take account of Saudi Arabian specific climatic/geographical conditions, national security requirements and public moral standards. Registration provides information to allow an assessment to be made of the current level of compliance to declared standards. The manufacturer or exporter is informed of the relevant standards and/or steps to be taken in order to satisfy essential Saudi Arabian requirements. These steps may involve product testing for compliance, and modification to products where deficiencies are noted. Registration remains valid after the first year, subject to periodic review and assurance that no change in compliance status has occurred. This is established by data evaluation, or testing, where necessary. Consignments of registered products are subject to routine presupply inspection. The inspection process aims to verify full compliance of the registered product, including compliance with those elements of the Saudi Arabian standards, in addition to the essential requirements, necessary to attain full conformity. Minor deviations, such as some types of labelling requirements, may be allowed, recorded and monitored through the discrepancy reports resulting from the inspection activities. In such cases, Certificates of Conformity continue to be issued. Exporters and local manufacturers are expected to raise progressively the level of compliance in subsequent shipments. Eventually, full compliance is enforced. In cases where a satisfactory level of compliance has not been demonstrated, limited pre-supply testing may be necessary in order to obtain a Certificate of Conformity. Where registered products undergo subsequent technical or physical modification, it is necessary to verify continued compliance. In these cases, re-registration of the modified product models or types is required.
Route 3:

Type Approval Licensing: To achieve Type Approval Licensing, products must demonstrate full compliance to Saudi Arabian requirements. Licensed products may be supplied with the minimum of intervention. Through the progressive Registration process, products which demonstrate full and continued compliance with Saudi Arabian standards qualify for Type Approval status and issuance of a Type Approval Licence. Manufacturers of unregistered products who choose to apply directly for Type Approval are required to submit their products for pre-assessment to establish their extent of compliance with Saudi Arabian standards.

The requirements of Registration must be satisfied during this pre-assessment stage before progressing with Type Approval Licensing procedures. In addition to full compliance, a major determining factor of compliance assurance maintenance is the evaluation and approval of the manufacturer’s quality control system. Licensing procedures closely follow ISO/IEC Guide 28 - General Rules for a Model Third Party Certification System for products. Supplier’s declaration of conformity, with respect to test reports, quality marks or certifications issued by approved internationally accredited Conformity and Type Testing laboratories, including third party certification and notified bodies, are accorded full recognition in so far as they satisfy the relevant elements of the Registration and Type Approval criteria. Type testing will normally be limited to those elements of the Saudi Arabian standards not satisfied by the existing certification. Unnecessary duplication is thereby avoided. Full details of Licensing requirements, steps involved, and the fee structure, are contained in the Licence Application Pack, available on request from any RLC.

Application for Licensing: A manufacturer must complete an Application for Licensing for each product or products for which a Licence is required.

The following information is requested:

i. Technical description of the products referenced in the application.

ii. Identification of the Laboratory chosen for the Conformity and Type Testing from the list of Saudi Arabian Approved Laboratories, or nomination by the manufacturer of other laboratory for evaluation and approval.

iii. Identification of any existing surveillance activities at the factory locations producing the Products to be covered by the Licence. Conformity Testing, Type Evaluation and approval: once the Registration and Licensing Centre has received the required information, the manufacturer can contact the Approved Laboratory noted in the Licence Application to perform type evaluation. At the conclusion of the evaluation by the Approved Laboratory, a Conformity Test and Evaluation Report is issued by the Approved Laboratory. The Conformity Test and Evaluation Report is then submitted to the Registration and Licensing Centre for review and Verification of Conformity to Programme Requirements. If satisfactory results are received, Type Approval is confirmed.

Licence Issuance Requirements:

Following Type Approval, the Licence Surveillance Process commences. The Type Approval Licence can only be issued if the factories that produce the Type Approved Product are successfully audited.

• Initial Factory Inspection: It involves initial factory inspection of all applicable manufacturing sites of the product to be Licensed. In cases where the applicant is not the manufacturer of the product to be Type Approved, co-operation of the manufacturer must be obtained.

• Surveillance: ISO Guide 28 requires that a Certifying Body must exercise surveillance of its Licensed products to ensure continued compliance to the standard(s). Under the provisions of Licensing this surveillance is comprised of periodic re-inspection of the factory and limited retest of the product(s), to
selected provisions of the Programme requirements, to ensure continued compliance. Occasionally samples will be selected from shipments and from manufacturing locations to allow for testing and continued evaluation. Process related products, where natural variability of the raw materials necessitates closer monitoring and control for quality assurance purposes, are subject to more frequent surveillance, sample selection and testing. Examples of these are; cigarettes, jewellery, cement, perfumes and cosmetics.

**Surveillance responsibilities of the Registration and Licensing Centre:**

i. Co-ordinate the surveillance activities at each manufacturing location.

ii. Require the submission of inspection documents (Audit Reports) on a periodic basis, in order to review compliance to Programme guidelines.

iii. Administer the periodic sample selection and testing of Licensed Products. Upon completion of the above mentioned evaluation and inspection activities, payment of Licensing fees, and execution of the Licence Agreement, the manufacturer is awarded a Type Approval Licence.

**CoC for Licensed Products:** Presupply inspection is normally not required for each consignment of Type Approved Products. A manufacturer may obtain a Certificate of Conformity for Licensed products on submission of full shipment details and a valid Type Approval Licence to the CO. Under certain circumstances, a manufacturer holding the appropriate Type Approval Licence may choose to issue their own CoC provided that the approved stationery is used and recognised procedures are followed. If this option is chosen, copies of all shipping documents, the Type Approval Licence, and the draft CoC for each consignment must be provided to the CO at the earliest opportunity. This is to facilitate monitoring and intervention by the CO in the event of discrepancies or violations. If all documentation is satisfactory, a CoC Identification Number is provided by the CO. This number must appear on all Certificates for validation.

Type Approved products shipped by independent exporters will require Certificates of Conformity to be issued by the manufacturer or CO and will be subject to limited random presupply inspection in order to verify the integrity and composition of shipments. Notwithstanding Type Approval status, occasional presupply inspections may also be necessary for some products in order to satisfy the assurance of conformity criteria.

Routes 1, 2 and 3 are shown in the flow diagram on the following page (Fig. 1). They are also shown in more detail in separate diagrams (Figs. 2, 3 and 4).

**The primary objective of the Conformity Assessment program in Saudi Arabia is to protect public health and safety, national security, religious and public morals and prevent deceptive practices.**
Fig 1: Compliance Verification Options

MANUFACTURERS
OR EXPORTERS

Route 1
No registration
No type approval
Testing and Inspection
CoC
Periodic evaluation

Route 2
Product Registration
Inspection & Random Testing
CoC

Route 3
Type approval licence
Licence review per shipment
CoC

KSA

Fig 2: Route 1. Pre-supply Verification

MANUFACTURERS
OR EXPORTERS

Submit request for certification (RFC) to CO
Sample testing at approved laboratory

CO schedules inspection
Inspection performed and report issued

CO issues CoC

Original CoC

KSA
**Fig 3: Route 2. Registration and Pre-supply Inspection**

1. **MANUFACTURERS OR EXPORTERS**
   - Application for registration, supplier's declaration, substantiating documents and fees
   - Evaluation of conformity to Saudi essential requirements and statement for registration

2. **CONSIGNMENT FOR EXPORT**
   - Contact CO

3. **RLC**
   - Contact RLC

4. **CONSIGNMENT FOR EXPORT**
   - PSI
   - CoC

5. **KSA**
   - PST (Random)

6. **KSA**

**Fig 4: Route 3. Type Approval and Licensing**

1. **MANUFACTURERS**
   - Type testing and evaluation
   - Review type evaluation report and arrange for start of surveillance
   - Initial factory inspection and annual surveillance
   - Type approval licence

2. **EXPORTER**
   - Manufacturer prepares CoC for consignment
   - Agreement with manufacturer to issue CoC

3. **CONSIGNMENT FOR EXPORT**
   - CoC

4. **KSA**
   - Contact CO to issue CoC

5. **KSA**
   - Type approval licence
Shipment Certification Procedures

The following steps are involved in obtaining a Certificate of Conformity under each of the conditions described in the previous Section:-

Route 1 - Presupply Compliance Verification - No Registration and No Type Approval
i. Exporter contacts appropriate Country Office (CO) of the Certification Body (e.g. Intertek) and provides requested product shipment details using Request for Certification form (RFC).
ii. Exporter advised of requirements and, if possible, arranges for provision of test data.
iii. CO arranges laboratory testing, (if required) and pre-supply inspection.
iv. Test data submitted to CO or testing carried out and the test certificate submitted to CO.
v. Pre-supply inspection carried out and report submitted to CO.
vi. CO reviews test and inspection reports and, if satisfactory, issues CoC.

Route 2 - Registration and Pre-supply Inspection - No Type Approval
i. Following Registration, exporter contacts CO and provides shipment details using RFC form, together with copy of Statement of Registration.
ii. CO verifies Registration and proceeds to arrange inspection. In some cases, additional testing or provision of test data may be requested.
iii. Pre-supply inspection carried out and report submitted to CO.
iv. CO reviews (or arranges review of) test data (if required) and inspection report and, if satisfactory, issues Certificate of Conformity.

Route 3 - Type Approval Manufacturer
i. For a manufacturer who is also the exporter, following Type Approval and receipt of Type Approval Licence, manufacturer produces CoC (or requests CO to issue CoC), submits shipment details together with copy of Type Approval Licence (and CoC) to CO.

ii. CO verifies Type Approval Licence details against shipment documentation:
   - If satisfactory, CO assigns and notifies CoC Identification Number (or issues CoC) and manufacturer proceeds with shipment.
   - If discrepancies or violations are found, CO withholds CoC, and notifies the manufacturer. An expedient investigation is carried out and appropriate action taken on the basis of the findings. Depending on the severity, frequency, and cause of the discrepancy, appropriate action may include suspension or withdrawal of the Type Approval Licence.

Exporters/Suppliers to Market
i. For exporters/suppliers to market who are not the manufacturer, exporter/supplier submits shipment details to manufacturer, or submits a copy of Type Approval Licence supplied by the Manufacturer, together with shipping details to CO.

ii. CO verifies Type Approval Licence details against shipment documentation:
   - If satisfactory, CO assigns CoC Identification Number, manufacturer or CO issues CoC, and exporter proceeds with shipment.
   - If discrepancies or violations are found, CO withholds CoC and notifies other parties involved.
   - An expedient investigation is carried out and appropriate action taken on the basis of the findings. Depending on the severity, frequency, and cause of the discrepancy, appropriate action may include suspension or withdrawal of the Type Approval Licence.

iii. CO arranges for limited random preshipment inspection.
Additional Guidelines

It is essential that importers assist in making their exporters aware of the above requirements and options. It is strongly recommended that the presentation of a Certificate of Conformity be made a requirement of the condition of sale and be included in Letters of Credit (L/C).

Requests for Certification must be submitted far enough in advance to ensure that the Certificate of Conformity is issued prior to the intended shipment date. Typical operational turnaround times are as follows:

A. Pre-supply inspection is normally conducted on a mutually agreed date scheduled within five working days from the date of notification by the manufacturer or exporter that a consignment is ready for shipment. Following the receipt of the final documents and successful completion of the pre-supply inspection, a Certificate of Conformity is normally issued within five working days.

B. Registration is normally completed within five working days.

C. For Type Approved products, a Certificate of Conformity is issued within three working days.

If a consignment fails to meet the requirements, the exporter will be given full details of the deficiency and an opportunity to take corrective action. Where corrective action is not taken, a Statement of Non-Conformity is issued.

Upon arrival of the shipment at the Saudi Arabian port of entry, or before locally manufactured product is supplied to the market, the accompanying Certificate of Conformity is checked for authenticity and shipment details before final release.

Compliance verification performed under the mandate of this Programme does not relieve the exporter or manufacturer of their obligations to the importer or distributor under the terms of the contract of sale.

One of the legitimate objectives of the Programme is to prevent deceptive practices.

This includes, but is not confined to, fraudulent attempts to export or market counterfeit goods or goods deliberately “passed off” under well known or branded names.

Where these practices are evident, the Certificate of Conformity will be refused, and the information will be passed to the relevant authorities in Saudi Arabia and/or the country of export.

Regulated Products - Scope

All consumer products shipped to the KSA are considered regulated products. Further clarification of products covered under this Programme may be obtained from the Country Offices or Registration and Licensing Centres.

Examples of Products that may be exempt from the CAP procedures are:

- Products imported or placed on the market for use as samples or for demonstration purposes, and not for resale in the local market.

- Products imported as components of large industrial projects; and products imported into Saudi Arabia on a temporary basis.

If an exporter is not certain whether or not products being exported or supplied to the Saudi Arabia market are covered by the CAP, offices may be contacted for clarification.
Points of contact
Country Offices
The Country Offices have the responsibility to arrange and conduct pre-supply compliance verification procedures and issue Certificates of Conformity within their nominated countries of export or supply. If a Country Office (CO) is not available in a country, the inspection/testing can be arranged by contacting the CO in the nominated country that will have at its disposal a network of inspection agencies and approved laboratories located in the country of the exporter.

The CO acts as the central contact, information and processing point within its region between manufacturers or exporters, approved Testing Laboratories and Registration and Licensing Centres. The CO is responsible for the receipt, dissemination and clarification of Programme requirements, and the distribution of other updated relevant information.

To ensure the CO’s competence, integrity and uniformity of procedures, CO staff are continuously evaluated and receive extensive training on all technical and administrative activities involved in the inspection and certification processes. Under the supervision of Central Coordinating Office, consistency of performance of the COs is assured.

The location of COs is continuously reviewed, and additional COs are established according to geographic and operational considerations.

Questions relating to the contents of this document should be directed, in the first instance, to one of the Country Offices (CO).

Registration and Licensing Centres
The Registration and Licensing Centres (RLCs) are responsible for the review and evaluation of suppliers’ declarations, test data and existing certificates, in order to process and issue the Statements for Registration and Type Approval Licences. The RLCs provide information to new Registrants on all requirements of conformity assessment, such as updates to standards, compliance requirements, Saudi national deviations, and details on equivalency of international standards.

The RLCs work closely with the Registrants to assist them in achieving and maintaining satisfactory levels of compliance. These services continue to be provided through the annual programme subscription.

Five Regional Licensing Centres are located in strategic regions of the world. The staff of each RLC are committed to provide timely service and consultation. The activities and practices of each Centre are co-ordinated by the Programme Management. This ensures consistent delivery of Programme requirements and guidelines. Additionally Country Offices can issue Registration and License on a case by case basis.

Approved Laboratories
To support the inspection and testing activities of the Programme, a large network of independent laboratories has been established. These laboratories provide the analytical services and test data required to confirm adherence to Saudi requirements and include commercial, government, university and manufacturer facilities. The exporter is free to contact any of these approved laboratories directly or he may nominate his CO to act on his behalf.

Some of the approved laboratories have specialist capabilities and have been additionally approved for Type Approval purposes. These laboratories provide conformity testing and type testing services and must hold appropriate accreditations, recognised by Programme Management.

Central Programme Management Coordinating Office Details
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**Confidentiality**

All information (written and oral) concerning the business affairs of an exporter or manufacturer which is made available during execution of this Programme will be kept confidential by Programme Management and any of its agents.

All such information obtained will be used solely in connection with the implementation and maintenance of the Programme requirements.

**Fees**

Fees applicable to the CAP are paid by the party requesting certification, or other Programme related services, to the appropriate body issuing the CoC or performing conformity assessment and verification functions. These fees cover the cost of inspection, evaluation, testing, and all other technical and administrative activities involved in the shipment certification, Registration, Type Approval and Licensing processes.

1. **Registration and Type Approval**: Fees associated with product Registration and Type Approval are payable by the party submitting the application.

2. **Shipment Certification**: Pre-supply inspection fees are calculated as a percentage based on the FOB value of the shipment. This percentage decreases as the FOB value increases. Additional testing or data evaluation fees may be applicable. Unless otherwise agreed in advance, fees are payable prior to the release of the Certificate of Conformity.

"All products are subject to certification and require a Certificate of Conformity except: medical equipment, medical products, food and military related products"
Resources/useful links for exporters

Ministry of Finance:
http://www.customs.gov.sa

Saudi Arabia Tourism Board:

Ministry of Commerce and Industry:
http://beta.mci.gov.sa/

Saudi Food and Drug Authority:
http://www.sfda.gov.sa

Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority:
http://www.sagia.gov.sa

Communications and Information Technology Commission:
http://www.citc.gov.sa

GCC Patent Office:
http://www.gccpo.org/

Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency - SAMA:
http://www.sama.gov.sa

Middle East North Africa Financial Network:
http://www.menafn.com

**Television**

Middle East Broadcasting Corporation:
http://www.mbc1.tv/index.asp

Arab Radio & Television:
http://www.artonline.tv/home/

LBC:
http://www.lbcgroup.tv/

Future Television:
http://www.future.com.lb/

Dubai TV:
http://www.dmi.ae/dubaitv/

New TV:
http://www.aljadeed.tv/

Arabiya:
http://www.alarabiya.net/

Al-Jazira TV:
http://www.aljazeera.com/

**Newspapers**

Al-Watan:
http://www.alwatan.com.sa/

Arab News:
http://www.arabnews.com/

Saudi Gazette:
http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/

Asharq Al-Awsat:
http://www.aawsat.com/

Al-Hayat:
http://alhayat.com/

Al-Riyadh:
http://www.alriyadh.com/

Al-Jazirah:
http://www.al-jazirah.com/

Al-Eqtisadiah:
http://www.aleqt.com/

Okaz News Agency:
http://www.aleqt.com/

Al-Madinah Press:
http://www.almadinapress.com/

Arabian Business:
http://www.arabianbusiness.com/

**Exhibition Companies**

Riyadh Exhibitions Company:
http://www.recexpo.com

Al-Harithy Company for Exhibitions (Jeddah):
http://acexpos.com/

Dhahran International Exhibitions Company:
http://www.diec.com.sa

**Import Procedures**

www.export2saudi.com


Resources/useful links for UK exporters

**Business Link: International Trade**

Business Link's International Trade pages provide an overview of export basics including licensing, customs procedures, classifying and movement of goods, other regulatory information and export paperwork requirements. It also introduces exporters to the UK Trade Tariff.

**Essential reading for exporters**

Find out more at: [http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?r.s=tl&r.lc=en&topicId=1079717544](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?r.s=tl&r.lc=en&topicId=1079717544)

Country Information:

**BBC Website:**
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/country_profiles/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/country_profiles/default.stm)

**FCO Country Profile:**

**Customs & Regulations:**

**HM Revenue & Customs:**
[http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/)

**Import Controls and documentation (SITPRO):**
[http://www.sitpro.org.uk](http://www.sitpro.org.uk)

**Economic information:**

**Economist:**

**Export Control:**

**Export Control Organisation:**

**Export finance and insurance:**

**ECGD:**

**Intellectual Property:**

**Intellectual Property Office:**

**Market Access:**

Market Access Database for Tariffs (for non-EU markets only):
[http://mkaccdb.eu.int/mkaccdb2/indexPubli.htm](http://mkaccdb.eu.int/mkaccdb2/indexPubli.htm)

**Standard and Technical Regulations:**

British Standards Institution (BSI):
UK contacts for UK exporters

If you have a specific question which is not answered by this report, please contact:

**Export and Technical Requirements, Certificates of Conformity:**
Intertek
Government and Trade Services
Academy Place,
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Brentwood, Essex,
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Fax: +44 (0)1277 220 296
E-mail: info.government@intertek.com
Website www.intertek.com/government

**British and Foreign Commonwealth Office:**
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Email: grace.makani@fco.gov.uk

Subiro Mwapinga
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Email: subiro.mwapinga@fco.gov.uk

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