
Prescribed Certificate Formats vs. Codex Guidance on Certificates



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Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Certification and Inspection Systems (CCFICS)

- Established in 1992
 - Host Government: Australia
 - Consumer confidence in the safety and quality of their food supply depends on the effectiveness of inspection and certification systems as food control measures
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CCFICS Terms of Reference

- (b) To develop principles and guidelines...to provide assurance where necessary that foodstuffs comply with requirements, especially statutory health requirements;

 - (d) To develop guidelines and criteria with respect to **format**, declarations and language of such official certificates as countries may require a view towards international harmonization;

 - (e) To make recommendations for information exchange in relation to food import/export control
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Codex Guidance—Official Certificates

- **Codex Guidelines for Design, Production, Issuance and Use of Generic Official Certificates (CAC/GL 38-2001)**
 - Adopted 2001; Revisions 2005, 2007, 2009

 - **Model Certificates—Commodity Committees**
 - Fish and Fishery Products (CAC/GL 48-2004)
 - Milk and Milk Products (CAC/GL 67-2008)

 - **Generic Model Official Certificate—CCFICS**
 - Adopted by the 32nd Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) as an Annex to CAC/GL 38-2001
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CAC/GL 38-2001

- **Recognizes the competent authority can require official certificates as a condition for clearance**
 - **Guidelines are not intended to encourage or mandate the use of official certificates**
 - **Provides guidance on the design, production, issuance, and use of official certificates**
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CAC/GL 38-2001—Principles (Section 4)

- **Certificates should only be required when essential information and attestations are necessary to ensure food safety and/or fair trade practices (Section 5, Principle A)**
 - **Recognizes that countries may provide assurances through means other than consignment-by-consignment certificates (Section 6, Principle B)**
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CAC/GL 38-2001—Principles

- **Information and attestations should be essential, determined by the requirements of the importing country's food inspection system, and applied in a non-discriminatory manner (Section 7, Principles C and D)**
 - Commercial or marketing specifications (e.g. conformance to importer specifications) should not be required
 - Importing countries should communicate the requirements for official attestations and information to be contained on the certificates and their rationale
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CAC/GL 38-2001—Principles

- **Information should be presented in a form that simplifies and expedites the clearance process while meeting the importing country's requirements (Section 8, Principle E)**
 - **To the extent practicable, use a standard format (e.g. generic model official certificate)**
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Use of Paper Certificates

Generic Model Official Certificate

- **Annex to CAC/GL 38-2001**
 - **Provides a standard format (spatial layout) for official certificates**
 - **Reduces complexity of multiple formats**
 - **Intended to be read in conjunction with the explanatory notes**
 - **Include information if required, where appropriate, or if known at the time the certificate is issued**
 - **Facilitates transition from paper to electronic**
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Use of Electronic Certificates

- **Eliminates the need for paper certificates**
 - **Facilitates the need to collect redundant or duplicative information**
 - **Data required by different agencies within an importing country (e.g. Single Window concept)**
 - **Use of standard data elements and message structure facilitates the exchange of data**
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Information on the certificate

- **Information on the certificate should include as a minimum (Section 8, Principle E):**
 - Nature of the food
 - Name of the product
 - Quantity
 - Description of the commodity and consignment
 - Identity, as appropriate, of the producer/manufacturer
 - Exporter or consignor
 - Importer or consignee
 - Country of dispatch
 - Country of destination
 - **Additional information as agreed to by the importing and exporting country**
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Information on the certificate

- **Relevant attestations and identifying information required by the importing country should be included on a single official certificate, where possible**
 - General attestations specific to commodities that address international standards
 - Importing country's general attestation that addresses compliance with equivalent requirements
 - Prescriptive attestations confined to the need to ensure the product meets food safety requirements
 - **When measures are implemented to address hazards are satisfactory to the importing country, the use of attestations should be discontinued**
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Conclusion

- **Design an official certificate consistent with provisions in CAC/GL 38-2001**
 - **Official certificates should contain a minimum number of compulsory data elements**
 - **Recognize alternative means to collect duplicative information (e.g. commercial or “single window” through Customs)**
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QUESTIONS?
