

MINISTRIAL DECISION NO. 4/97
ISSUING QUALITY CONTROL
REGULATION FOR OMANI FISHERY EXPORT

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries :

- In pursuance of Royal Decree Number 53/81 promulgating the Marine Fishing and Protection of Living Aquatic Resources Law.
- And the Ministerial Decision Number 4/94 issuing the Executive Regulation of the Law referred to above.
- And the Decision of H.E. Minister of Commerce and Industry Number 58/84 approving the Labeling of Prepackaged Foods, and the Decision Number 61/84 approving the conditions concerning foodstuff plants and their personnel and the Decision Number 9/84 approving the Unified Gulf Standard Specifications.
- And in accordance with the exigencies of public interest.

Has decreed as follows :

Article (1) : The Provisions and Conditions stated in the attached regulation shall be adopted with regard to quality control of Omani Fishery Export.

Article (2) : Companies establishments and individuals working in exporting Omani Fisheries should adhere to the provisions of this regulation.

Article (3) : Without prejudice to any severer penalty stipulated in any other law the penalties in Article (51) of the Ministerial Decision No. 4/94 referred to above shall be imposed on violators of this regulation and its provisions.

Article (4) : This Decision shall be published in the official Gazette and shall have effect six months from the date of publication.

Issued on:
the 6th Ramadan 1417
corresponding to the 15th of Jan. 1997

Mohammed Bin Abdullah bin Zahir Al-Hinai
Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries

QUALITY CONTROL REGULATION
FOR OMANI FISHERY EXPORTS

CHAPTER ONE
DEFINITIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Article (1) : In application of provisions of this regulation, the following words and expressions shall have the meaning hereby assigned to them, except where the context otherwise requires :-

- * **The Ministry** :
Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.
- * **The Competent Authority** :
The Directorate General of Fisheries Resources of the Ministry.
- * **Establishments and Buildings** :
Any premises where fishery products are prepared, processed, chilled, packaged or stored.
- * **Fish** :
All seawater or freshwater living aquatic resources or parts thereof, including their roes, excluding aquatic mammals.
- * **Chilled Fish** :
Fish chilled using ice, cool air or saline water to a temperature approaching that of melting ice.
- * **Frozen Fish** :
Fish which has undergone a freezing process to reach a core temperature of (-18) degrees centigrade or lower in the thickest portion of the flesh.
- * **Fresh Fish** :
Any fish, including products packaged under vacuum or in modified atmosphere, that have not undergone any treatment to ensure preservation other than chilling.

* **Prepared Fish** :

Any fish that has undergone an operation of cleaning or an operation affecting its anatomical wholeness such as gutting, heading, cutting of limbs or chopping.

* **Processed Fish** :

Any frozen or chilled fish that has undergone a chemical or physical process such as smoking, heating, salting, dehydration or marinating.

* **Sound Fish** :

Free from disease, mold, deterioration or damage.

* **Packaging** :

The procedure of protecting fish by a wrapper, a container or any suitable device.

* **Sample Unit** :

One fish from bulk product or one primary container.

* **Batch** :

A homogeneous limited quantity of fish taken from the consignment.

* **Consignment** :

Quantity of fish sent or received at one time under special contract or a bill of lading and consisting of one batch or more.

* **Means of Transport** :

Means of transport by sea, land and air including ships, boats, container, vehicles, trailers and airplanes.

* **Pests** :

Include parasites, insects, rodents and birds.

Article (2) : This regulation aims at the promotion of Oman fish exports by ensuring that fish intended for export are produced, processed and transported under conditions that will result in high quality product.

CHAPTER TWO

GENERAL PROVISIONS

- Article (3) :** Exports of fish from Sultanate of Oman are prohibited unless the provisions of this regulation are complied with.
- Article (4) :** The competent authority shall implement the provisions of this regulation and in this regard it has the right and authority to inspect fish, establishments, means of transport, register exporters, define their categories and issue the necessary licences.
- Article (5) :** All enterprises, companies and individuals working in the field of fish export, should observe the followings :-
- (a) Register themselves with the competent authority and obtain their respective quality control number before practising any fish export activity.
 - (b) Their fish products should be in compliance with the conditions and specifications of fish quality control stipulated in this regulation and other standard specifications in force in the Sultanate for food plants and personnel should also be adhered to.
 - (c) Obtain necessary licences from the competent authority.

CHAPTER THREE
GENERAL CONDITIONS AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR QUALITY
CONTROL OF CHILLED AND FROZEN FISH EXPORT.

Article (6) : Establishments and Buildings :-

The following conditions and specifications should be met with in establishments and buildings in which fish are prepared, processed, chilled or freezed : -

- * Location, design and contents of the establishment should be in accordance with conditions determined by the competent authority.
- * Establishments should be equipped with machine and equipment sufficiently powerful to achieve rapid reduction in the temperature of fish.
- * When fish freezing is carried out, freezing rooms to maintain fish at a temperature of (-18)degrees centigrade or less, should be available.
- * When fish chilling is carried out, chilling rooms to maintain fish at a temperature of (5) degrees centigrade or less, should be available.
- * Establishments and buildings should always be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition.

Article (7) : Equipment and Means of Transport :-

Ice boxes : Ice boxes should be manufactured in accordance with the following specifications :-

- (1) Ice box should be fabricated from insulated, non - corrosive and unpoisonous material.
- (2) Ice box opening should be of appropriate size to facilitate cleaning and covers should be tight.
- (3) The dimensions and designs of ice boxes should be in accordance with the samples approved by the competent authority.

Means of Transport : Means of transport used in transporting exported fish should be in accordance with conditions approved by the competent authority.

Article (8) : Labelling :-

A label containing the following information should be fixed outside each package or container :-

- (1) The common name of the fish and the international code.
- (2) The form of fish ; whole or parts.
- (3) The method of preservation.
- (4) The net weight.
- (5) The date of production and expiry.
- (6) If additives and ingredients are used, they should be listed in a decreasing order of importance.
- (7) The name of the establishment and address of the head office.
- (8) The trade designation " Product of Oman ".
- (9) The quality control number or production batch number.

Article (9) : Inspection Procedure :-

- * Individual inspection of establishments, buildings, ice boxes and fish handling, processing and transportation practices, shall be made in accordance with quality control programmes developed by the competent authority.
- * Certificate of inspections and inspection audits are to be provided by the competent authority or any recognized body approved by the competent authority.
- * Any internationally approved inspection system may be employed at the discretion of the competent authority to reduce reliance on end product certification.

Article (10) : Sampling :-

Sampling shall be made according to the following conditions:

- (a) Distinguished marks shall be put on fish of each production batch.
- (b) Rejected and unpacked samples shall not be mixed with packed and accepted fish.
- (c) The fish sample unit shall be drawn at random from the net weight of the relevant consignment for comparison with the appropriate acceptance number of each sample unit according to appendix (A).
- (d) The assessment and reassessment of the following fish sample shall be made as mentioned hereunder :

- * All fish (except bulk loaded tuna) in accordance with sampling plan (1) of appendix (A).
 - * Fish rejected in accordance with sampling plan (1) may be reassessed in accordance with sampling plan (2) provided that other samples are taken immediately from the batch.
 - * Bulk loaded tuna in accordance with sampling plan (3).
- (e) The net weight of the container shall not be less than the weight mentioned in the label, and the average net weight of the sample unit shall not be less than 95% of its weight. The net weight of chilled fish should be determined after removing ice using the method defined by the competent authority.

Article (11) : *Acceptance, Rejection and Rectification of batch and samples :-*

- (1) A batch is considered meeting the requirements of the appropriate standard when the number of defective units does not exceed the acceptance number of the relevant sampling plan of appendix (A) and all other conditions and standards mentioned in this regulation.
- (2) A batch will be rejected in any of the following two cases :-
 - a) if the number of samples exceeded the defined number in the sampling plan.
 - b) if it was found that the condition of the fish has rendered the fish unfit for human consumption.
- (3) The defective samples within the batch will be rejected even if the batch is accepted as a whole.
- (4) Rejected batches may be eligible for rectification only if the number of defective samples do not exceed 30% of the number of samples taken for inspection and reassessment of the same shall be in accordance with sampling plan (1).

CHAPTER FOUR
ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS AND SPECIFICATIONS
FOR CHILLED FISH

Article (12) : Provisions of this chapter shall be applied to fish species included in the species List of Exported Chilled Fish issued by the competent authority.

Article (13) : The temperature of the chilled fish shall not exceed (5) degrees centigrade.

Article (14) : Chilled fish shall be prepared and presented in clean & sanitary packages in any of the following forms :-

- * Whole fish.
- * Headed fish : without head & guts removed.
- * Sectioned fish : cut sections of the meat with skin on or off limbs or any similar part.

Article (15) : All ingredients or additives must be approved by the competent authority.

Article (16) : Fish product shall not be from poisonous fish of the following families :-

- * TETRAODONTIDAE
- * MOLIDAE
- * DIODONTIDAE
- * CANTHIGASTERIDAE

Article (17) : Fish products shall not be prepared from fishery products containing biotoxins such as :

- * MUSCLE - PARALYZING TOXINS
- * CIGUATERA TOXINS

Article (18) : Chilled products shall have the following characteristics :-

- * Eyes : bright, moist and clean.
- * Gills : clean, free from slime and bright red colour.
- * Meat texture : firm, tender, of good colour and rubber like when pressed.

- * Odour : fresh and characteristic of the species.
- * Gut cavity : clean and smooth.
- * If skinned, the product shall be practically free from skin and scales.

Article (19) : Methods of the Association of Official Analytical Chemists (AOAC) shall be used in analysis of sample units of the following fish species :-

- * Clupeidae
- * Scombridae
- * Carangidae
- * Pomatomidae
- * Coryphaenidae

Article (20) : Chilled fish shall not contain histamine and methyl mercury expressed as mercury (Hg) in excess of the following limits :

- a) Histamine : 100 part per million (PPM) based on the average of the sample unit tested or 200 PPM in any sample unit.
- b) Methyl mercury expressed as mercury (Hg) one part per million (PPM), edible portion only, based on a composite analyzed in accordance with (AOAC) methods.

Article (21) : Each sample unit is considered defective in any of the following cases:-

- (1) If its temperature is not within range of (0) degree centigrade to (5) degrees centigrade.
- (2) If any of its parts is characterized by :-
 - * Abnormal odour compared to the characteristic odour of the species.
 - * Abnormal colour.
 - * Excessive slime.
 - * Flesh is not soft.
 - * Dull sunken eyes.
 - * Blood along backbone is dark and brown, or purple with offensive odour.
 - * Gut cavity not properly cleaned.

- * Unacceptable general appearance.
- * Presence of pieces of skins (for skinned only).
- * Gills of excessive slime and dull colour.

(3) If the weight of packages or containers is less than the declared weight, or the information on the lable is incomplete or not in compliance with this regulation.

Article (22) : Fish and repacked fish shall be labelled in accordance with Omani specifications.

Article (23) : Chilled fish shall be stored and transported in accordance with the following conditions :-

- (1) Fish shall be kept at temperature of (0) degree centigrade or less.
- (2) The mechanical refrigerators used in chilling ice production shall be in a good working condition and operating throughout the storage and transportation period. Ice shall also be available in reasonable quantities.
- (3) Storage rooms, transportation boxes and vehicles shall be clean and complying with sanitary and technical requirements.
- (4) Any recommended international code of practice or standard specifications approved by the competent authority.

CHAPTER FIVE
ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS AND SPECIFICATIONS
FOR FROZEN FISH

Article (24) : Provisions of this chapter shall be applied to fish species included in the species List of Exported Frozen Fish issued by the competent authority.

Article (25) : The temperature of the frozen fish shall not exceed (-18) degrees centigrade.

Article (26) : Frozen fish shall be prepared and presented in packages or in any of the following forms :-

- * Whole.
- * Head off & guts removed.
- * Fillets.
- * Any form approved by the competent authority.

Article (27) : All ingredients or additives must be approved by the competent authority.

Article (28) : Frozen fish shall have the following characteristics :-

- (1) Sound quality, wholesome and suitable for human consumption.
- (2) Free from parasites, damage and foreign matter.
- (3) Free of histamine and methyl mercury in the defined families and within the limits defined in Article (20) of this regulation.

Article (29) : Each sample unit of frozen fish is considered defective in any of the following cases :-

- (1) If its temperature exceeded (-18) degrees centigrade.
- (2) If any of its parts is characterized by :-
 - * Unpleasant abnormal odour.
 - * General appearance : dry with physical damage and presence of foreign matter.

Article (30) : Packages and samples shall be rejected in the following cases:

- (1) Contents less than the declared weight.
- (2) Information on the lable incomplete or not in compliance with the regulation.
- (3) Contain unapproved additives.

Article (31) : Frozen fish shall be stored and transported according to the following conditions :-

- (1) At (-18) degrees centigrade or less.
- (2) Fish of high quality and processed under hygienic condition.
- (3) Packed and handled after glazing and not subjected to dehydration.

**ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS AND SPECIFICATIONS
FOR CHILLED AND FROZEN LOBSTER**

Article (32) : Provisions of this chapter shall be applied to lobster species as defined in the species List of lobster for export which is issued by the competent authority.

Article (33) : The temperature of the chilled and frozen lobster shall be as follows :-

- * Chilled lobster : maximum temperature of (5) degrees centigrade and minimum temperature of (0) degrees centigrade.
- * Frozen lobster : temperature of (-18) degrees centigrade or less.

Article (34) : Chilled and frozen lobsters shall be prepared and presented in raw or cooked form and packed in any of the following forms :-

- * Whole.
- * Divided into two equal halves with viscera removed.
- * Tails with shells and heads removed.
- * Flesh without shell.

Article (35) : All ingredients or additives must be approved.

Article (36) : Chilled and frozen lobsters shall have the following characteristics :-

- * Suitable for human consumption with odour, flavour and colour characteristic of the species.
- * Where raw, the flesh shall be white or pink and translucent
- * Where cooked, the flesh shall be white or pink and not translucent.
- * Where in the shell, the flesh shall be firm and undamaged or soft.
- * Free from viscera and micro-organisms in accordance with percentages defined by the competent authority with particular reference to salmonella.

Article (37) : Each sample unit of lobster is considered defective in any of the following cases :-

- (1) if the temperature of the chilled lobster is not within (0) to (4) degrees centigrade.
- (2) if the frozen lobster is at a temperature of less than (-18) degrees centigrade, and not dehydration translucent.
- (3) Percentage of damages and cracks in shells exceeding 5%.
- (4) Weight of shells, blood and viscera or shell fragments is more than 2% of the sample weight.

Article (38) : Lobsters shall be handled, transported and stored under hygeinic conditions in accordance with the following conditions :-

- * Chilled lobsters : at temperature between (0) and (4) degrees centigrade.
- * Frozen lobsters : at temperature of (-18) degrees centigrade or less.

Appendix (A) :

ACCORDING TO ARTICLE (10) (C&D)

3 - 1 : The following plans are used to sample fish :-

• **SAMPLING PLAN (1)**

For assessment of all fish excluding bulk tuna

Consignment (net contents of immediate container)			Number of Samples	Acceptance Number
< 1 kg	1 kg - 4.5 kg	> 4.5 kg		
--	--	2 - 15	2	0
--	2 - 200	16 - 50	2	0
5 - 2400	201 -1200	51 -300	3	0
2401 - 12000	1201 - 7200	301 - 1400	6	1
12001 - 24000	7201 - 15000	1401 - 3500	13	2
24001 - 48000	15001 - 24000	3501 - 7200	21	3
48001 - 84000	24001 - 42000	7201 - 15000	29	4
84001 - 1444000	42001 - 72000	15001 - 24000	48	6
144001- 240000	72001 - 120000	24001 - 42000	84	9
over 240000	over 120000	over 42000	126	13

• **SAMPLING PLAN (2)**

For reassessment of rejected fish according to sampling plan (1)

Consignment (net contents of immediate container)			Number of Samples	Acceptance Number
< 1 kg	1 kg - 4.5 kg	> 4.5 kg		
--	--	2 - 15	3	0
--	2 - 200	16 - 50	5	1
5 - 2400	201 -1200	51 -300	6	1
2401 - 12000	1201 - 7200	301 - 1400	13	2
12001 - 24000	7201 - 15000	1401 - 3500	21	3
24001 - 48000	15001 - 24000	3501 - 7200	29	4
48001 - 84000	24001 - 42000	7201 - 15000	48	6
84001 - 1444000	42001 - 72000	15001 - 24000	84	9
144001- 240000	72001 - 120000	24001 - 42000	126	13
over 240000	over 120000	over 42000	200	19

- SAMPLING PLAN (3)
For assessment of bulk tuna

Consignment Weight	Number of Samples	Acceptance Number
< one ton	3 tunas	0
1 - 25 tons	13 tunas	2
1 - 50 tons	26 tunas	3
over 50 tons	52 tunas	7