

GSO Regulates Permissible Tobacco Additives

by Bassam Al Azzeh - b.alazze@tamimi.com -

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The Gulf Standardization Organization (“GSO”) has recently published a technical regulation that regulates the permissible tobacco additives.

The new regulation is an attempt to control the content of tobacco products in the GCC market.

In the past, given that specific legislation on the topic was lacking, tobacco manufacturers had the option of using a wide range of additives in tobacco products. In recent times, the GSO board of directors has decided to take the initiative to regulate the market in order to address this issue. In this regard, the GOS approved technical standard number GSO 2390/2014 in their meeting no. 19 on 14 May, 2014. The technical regulation was initially drafted by the State of Qatar and is largely based on national and international standards and references.

The objective of this new technical regulation is to maintain quality of tobacco product, consumer protection and safety. The new technical regulation contains a list of permissible tobacco additives and a list of impermissible tobacco additives. The permissible list includes additives such as:

1. Fruits, and dried fruits
2. Spices
3. Liquorice extract
4. Coffee extract
5. Tea and tea-like products
6. Cocoa, and cocoa products
7. Honey
8. Maple syrup
9. Sugars suitable for human consumption
10. Menthol
11. Molasses
12. Water
13. Cellulose
14. Arabic Gum
15. Citric acid
16. Caramel

The impermissible additives list includes:

1. Camphor
2. Camphor oil
3. Camphor wood
4. Vanilla roots
5. Poley mint (HerbaPulegii).

The permissible tobacco additives are allowed to be used for specific purposes. For example, Glycerol is permissible as humectants for loose tobacco, cigar, cigarettes and reconstituted tobacco. Arabic Gum is permissible for use as glues, adhesives, and thickening agents and binders for cigars, cigarettes and loose tobacco including black tobacco. On the other hand, the impermissible tobacco additives are prohibited from use for some specific purposes. For example,

the use of Camphor is prohibited in odorants or flavorings. Similarly, odorants or flavorings produced from Vanilla Roots are also prohibited.

Despite the GSO's initiatives to maintain good quality tobacco products, there are questions as to the additives that have not been mentioned in the regulation. The debate over this issue is whether the unnamed additives are permissible or impermissible. This is a grey area in the absence of clear answers from the GSO and requires further consideration from the GSO or the local standardization authorities such as Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality Organization (SASO) or Emirate Standardization and Metrology Authority (ESMA). The GCC states have yet to implement this technical regulation; it is expected to be implemented by the each individual State within the coming months as it needs to pass the legislation process of each country.