

Saudi Arabia: New Law on Geographical Indications

Latest step in modernisation of the Kingdom's IP framework protects products of Saudi origin

In brief

On 11 November 2025, Saudi Arabia issued Cabinet Decision No. 360/1447 approving a new Law on the Protection of Geographical Indications, by virtue of Royal Decree No. M/102 dated 17 November 2025. The Law was subsequently approved by Royal Decree No. M/102 dated 26/05/1447 H corresponding to 17 November 2025. The Law was published in Umm Al-Qura Gazette, Issue No. 5125, and enters into force 180 days from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.

The Implementing Regulation of the Law was subsequently approved by the Board of Directors of the Saudi Authority for Intellectual Property (SAIP) under Administrative Decision No. 01/39/2026/1447, and was published in Umm Al-Qura Gazette, Issue No. 5161 dated 5/12/1447 H corresponding to 21 May 2026. The Implementing Regulation enters into force on the same date as the Law itself.

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Key takeaways

The Law and the Implementing Regulation establish for the first time a dedicated national framework for the registration, protection and enforcement of geographical indications (GIs) in the Kingdom. This is a significant step forward in aligning Saudi Arabia's intellectual property framework with international standards and supporting the wider economic and cultural objectives of Vision 2030.

The launch of the Saudi GI system also follows the operationalisation of the UAE's federal GI framework under Federal Decree-Law No. 36 of 2021 on Trademarks and Cabinet Decision No. 57 of 2022 on its Executive Regulations, reflecting a broader regional trend towards stronger protection of products linked to specific geographic origins across the GCC.

In more detail

What is a geographical indication?

A geographical indication is a name or sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and whose qualities, reputation or characteristics are essentially linked to that place of origin. Internationally well-known examples include "Parmigiano Reggiano" for cheese produced in a specific region of Italy, "Darjeeling" for tea grown in the Darjeeling region of India, and "Café de Colombia" for coffee produced in Colombia.

In the Saudi context, GIs are expected to play an important role in protecting and promoting traditional Saudi agricultural, food, natural and handicraft products, such as dates, honey, coffee, traditional textiles and other regional specialities that carry strong cultural and commercial value.

Why the new framework matters

Before the new Law, Saudi Arabia did not have a dedicated, standalone framework for the protection of geographical indications. The new regime introduces a clear and modern system that:

- Establishes a national register of geographical indications administered by SAIP

- Sets out who may apply to register a GI, the conditions for registration, and the rights that flow from registration
- Provides a structured grievance and appeal process before a dedicated Committee and the competent court
- Codifies inspection, investigation and enforcement procedures. Introduces precautionary measures available to rights holders before the competent court
- Creates a clear criminal liability regime, with the Public Prosecution responsible for prosecuting violations

The framework is designed to safeguard the authenticity and heritage of Saudi-origin products, support local producers and cooperatives, and enhance the commercial value and export potential of Saudi products by allowing them to be marketed under certified origin labelling.

Scope of protection

The new Law extends protection to three categories of geographical indications:

- National GIs registered in the Saudi Register
- Foreign GIs protected in their country of origin and registered in that country's GI register
- Foreign GIs protected under international agreements to which Saudi Arabia is a party

Importantly, registration of a GI does not confer any exclusive right on the applicant. All producers operating within the geographical area specified in the registered Product Specification, and whose products satisfy its requirements, are entitled to use the GI. This is fundamentally different from a trade mark right and reflects the collective nature of GI protection.

Registration process and oversight

SAIP is the sole authority responsible for the registration of GIs in Saudi Arabia. Applications must be filed using the prescribed form and must include evidence linking the product to a specific geographical area and demonstrating that the product's quality, reputation or other characteristics are essentially attributable to that area. A Product Specification setting out the product's name, description, characteristics, method of production and other required information must also be submitted.

Applications for foreign GIs must additionally include evidence of protection and use of the GI in the country of origin and proof that the applicant has the right to use it or is a competent supervisory entity. SAIP may require a certificate of authentication issued by the competent authorities in the applicant's country.

National applications may be submitted directly or through an intellectual property agent registered with SAIP, while applications by foreign producers, associations of producers and States seeking to register a foreign GI must be filed through a SAIP-registered intellectual property agent.

The Law also gives SAIP the ability to register a national GI on its own initiative, even where no producer has filed an application, where this is justified by reference to the conditions set out in the Law and the Implementing Regulation, including considerations such as the reputation of the Kingdom, the competitiveness of national products, and the public interest. The Implementing Regulation vests this discretion in the Chief Executive Officer of SAIP.

Each application is examined by SAIP, published for a public grievance period, and registered once any grievances are resolved. A dedicated Committee, formed by decision of the SAIP Board and including a legal adviser, considers grievances against decisions to accept or reject registration, or to remove a GI from the Register. Further appeals may be filed with the competent court. Notably, the scope of any grievance is limited to the registration of the GI itself and does not extend to the data or elements set out in the Product Specification.

The Implementing Regulation sets out detailed procedural requirements, including timelines for examination, publication, grievance handling, amendment and renewal, as well as the form and content of the Product Specification, the data to be included in the Register, and the requirements for the use of intellectual property agents registered with SAIP.

The term of registration is ten years from the date of publication of the approval of registration, renewable in accordance with the procedures set out in the Implementing Regulation. A GI may also be removed from the Register in defined circumstances, including violation of the registration conditions, the disappearance or change of the circumstances on which the GI was established, registration based on fraud or incorrect information, and, for foreign GIs, the loss of protection in the country of origin.

According to recent guidance, SAIP will begin accepting GI applications once the Law and the Implementing Regulation enter into force, with examination procedures expected to commence following the publication of the applicable official fees.

Inspection, enforcement and criminal liability

The new Law establishes a clear enforcement framework. SAIP inspectors, appointed by decision of the Board, are granted law enforcement capacity and are responsible for detecting violations of the Law and the Implementing Regulation. Officials and employees at premises subject to inspection are required to cooperate with inspectors and provide all necessary facilities, information and documents.

The Public Prosecution is responsible for investigating and prosecuting criminal cases arising from violations of the Law and the Implementing Regulation before the competent court. The competent court has jurisdiction to hear violations, disputes and claims for compensation arising from the application of the Law.

The Law sets out three principal categories of acts that attract criminal liability:

- Unlawful commercial use of a registered GI, or its imitation, or the attempt to do so by any means whatsoever, including the marketing of similar products that do not meet all the elements and data of the Product Specification, even where the true origin of the product is indicated or the GI is used in translation or accompanied by expressions such as “type”, “class”, “method”, “imitation”, “blend” or similar
- Imitation, or the attempt thereof, of a product known to be used with a GI in terms of its shape, packaging, advertising or any other means, in a manner likely to cause confusion to the ordinary consumer between the original and the imitated product
- Any use of a GI constituting an act of unfair competition under the laws of the Kingdom or international agreements to which the Kingdom is a party

Penalties under the Law include imprisonment of between one month and three years, fines of between SAR 5,000 and SAR 1,000,000, or either of these penalties. The court may also order publication of the operative part of the judgment in a local newspaper or any other media outlet. In the case of a repeated offence within three years from the date the judgment acquires finality, the penalty is doubled and the violator’s commercial establishment, project or activity may be closed or suspended, as applicable, for a period of between fifteen days and six months.

The Law also allows for the confiscation of the tools and equipment used in committing the violation and the destruction of infringing products at the expense of the convicted person, or their disposal through non-commercial channels after removal of the infringement.

Precautionary measures

Any interested party may apply to the competent court for an order imposing one or more precautionary measures, including a detailed description of the alleged infringement, precautionary seizure of infringing products and the proceeds resulting from the alleged infringement, the materials, tools and equipment used or to be used in the infringement, the preservation of relevant evidence, the prevention of infringing products from entering the market or being exported (including products imported and immediately released from customs), and the suspension or prevention of the infringement.

The Implementing Regulation provides additional clarity on precautionary measures, including the requirement for SAIP to coordinate with the Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority (ZATCA) for the implementation of judicial orders relating to imported or exported products. ZATCA’s role is limited to executing the judicial order, without assessing the underlying violation. The release of products by customs prior to a judicial order does not constitute a presumption that their use is lawful or compliant.

Conclusions

Guidance for clients

- **For producers, cooperatives and trade bodies:** Parties producing Saudi products with unique regional characteristics including agricultural products, food products, natural products, traditional handicrafts and industrial products linked to a specific area should assess whether their products may qualify for GI protection. Preparing a comprehensive application will typically require coordination with other producers, local authorities and, where relevant, regulatory bodies overseeing the geographical area or the product category. Registration not only protects the product name from misuse but also enhances consumer trust and supports access to export markets.
- **For trade mark owners:** Trade mark owners should review their portfolios in light of the new GI framework. Geographic names that become registered GIs cannot be claimed as exclusive trade marks, and trade mark applications conflicting with a registered GI may be rejected or challenged. Where a brand uses a regional name, owners should consider whether they qualify as authorised users of the GI or whether their branding should be adjusted to comply with the new rules.

- **For foreign rights holders:** Foreign producers, associations and competent authorities holding GI protection in their home country should consider registering their GIs in Saudi Arabia, either through the national registration route or under any applicable international agreement to which the Kingdom is a party. Applications by foreign producers and authorities will need to be filed through a Saudi-registered intellectual property agent, and supporting documents will need to be translated into Arabic as specified by SAIP.
- **For importers, distributors and retailers:** Importers and distributors should review their product portfolios and labelling practices to confirm that no products marketed in the Kingdom use registered Saudi GIs or imitations of foreign GIs protected under international agreements. The Law's recidivism provisions, combined with the possibility of business closure and customs measures, make this a meaningful compliance consideration.

Strategic implications and outlook

The introduction of a comprehensive GI framework in Saudi Arabia is a strategic step that brings the Kingdom into line with international best practice and strengthens the protection of products of Saudi origin. By certifying the origin and quality of traditional Saudi goods, the framework supports the preservation of cultural heritage, the development of rural economies, and the competitiveness of Saudi products on the global stage.

For organisations in the food, agriculture, handicraft and consumer goods sectors, the new framework offers a valuable opportunity to protect and promote regional products and to develop differentiated, origin-based commercial strategies. At the same time, it introduces new compliance considerations for brand owners, importers and distributors operating in the Kingdom.

With the Implementing Regulation now in place, the practical operation of the registration system is expected to begin in the near term, following the publication of the applicable official fees by SAIP. We will continue to monitor developments and provide further updates as the system becomes operational.

Need assistance?

Our IP, Technology and Commercial team advises on all aspects of geographical indications registration, licensing and enforcement in Saudi Arabia and across the wider GCC, including coordination with SAIP and ZATCA, preparation of Product Specifications, advice on the interaction between GIs and trade marks, and enforcement against infringement and unfair competition.

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