

LEBTRADE PORTAL A GOLDMINE FOR EXPORTERS



Creating Export Opportunities by
MINISTRY OF ECONOMY & TRADE

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TABLE GRAPES HS CODE: 080610 – POTENTIAL MARKET IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

1. PRODUCT DESCRIPTION AND CLASSIFICATION

Harmonized System (HS) code	08061000 Fresh grapes 08061010 Fresh table grapes
Top varieties found in Lebanon	• Tfeifihi (also called Halawani) • Baytamouni (also Beytamouneh “date of Beirut”) • Maghdouchi (brown-skinned) • Jbaai (dark-skinned) • Thompson Seedless (Sultanina) • Superior Seedless (Early Superior) • Flame Seedless • Crimson Seedless • Black Pearl

2. THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES BODIES

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which also includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. Within this framework, food safety and import requirements are largely harmonized under the Gulf Standardization Organization (GSO), which issues unified technical regulations for food imports across GCC member states.

GSO standards form the primary reference framework for regulating imported food products, including fresh fruits and vegetables such as table grapes.

a. International Standards and Regulatory References

UAE and GCC food regulations are developed with reference to internationally recognized food safety frameworks:

- Codex Alimentarius Commission (FAO/WHO)
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO)
- European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- Official GCC technical regulations found at the [Online Standards store](#).

b. Institutional Responsibilities for Food Import Control

Food import regulation in the UAE is implemented through federal and local authorities:

- MOCCAE: National food safety policy, GCC alignment, risk management, NFSC coordination
- ESMA: Technical standards development, GCC harmonization, conformity requirements
- UAE Municipalities: Product registration (FIRS/ZADI), inspections, labeling, testing, clearance decisions

Key Municipalities

Importers are encouraged to use the online services provided by the Municipalities as a resource for information on food item registration and product label requirements:

- [Dubai Municipality](#)
- [Abu Dhabi Municipality](#)
- [Sharjah Municipality](#)
- [Other local municipalities](#) across the UAE

c. Import Control System Overview

- Step 1: Product Registration (FIRS / ZADI)

- Step 2: Compliance Review (standards, labeling, MRL)
- Step 3: Border Inspection (sampling & testing)
- Step 4: Release Decision (approved / rejected / re-export)

3. FOOD IMPORT PROCEDURE

a. Food Product Registration

Food product registration is a mandatory process for any business looking to legally import, manufacture, or sell food items in Dubai. Administered by the Dubai Municipality through platforms like the Dubai Municipality's [Food Import and Re-export Service \(FIRS\)](#) and the [ZADI portal](#). This process ensures that all consumables strictly conform to local health, safety, and labeling standards.

UAE importers will apply online and provide a copy of the product's label, packaging and official certificate from a competent authority in the country of origin. Once the request is approved, the importer will receive the product registration certificate and he may apply for an import permit and bring shipments through any port in the UAE.

Key Requirements for Users

- **Account Creation:** Companies must be registered with the [Dubai Municipality](#) portal to access online business services.
- **Trade License:** Your business must hold an active UAE-based trading license with valid food or general trading activities.
- **Access:** Food business operators with a Dubai ID can log in and link their companies to manage food safety requirements, including submitting necessary documentation like health certificates and test reports.
- **Documentation:** Required documents include a bill of entry, delivery order, health certificate, and certificate of origin.
- **Compliance:** Products must meet UAE standards, with mandatory ingredient and label disclosures
- **Assessment:** The Dubai Municipality evaluates ingredients and verifies the label. They may also request laboratory testing to assess product quality and check for prohibited substances.

b. Food Import Documentation

Before the table grapes leave the country of origin, the exporter must perform specific quality testing and secure official certifications. Dubai Municipality cross-references these files at the port of entry. These are the pre-Shipment testing & documentation:

- **Health Certificate:** A certificate issued by the competent authority in the exporting country, verifying that the food items comply with health and safety standards.
- **Certificate of Origin:** This certifies that the food products were manufactured or processed in the country of origin.
- **Certificate of Analysis (CoA):** Issued by an accredited independent laboratory in the source country. This report outlines the initial testing data for the batch.
- **Labeling and Packaging Details:** Grapes packed in consumer bags or boxes require an approved label review. The packaging must clearly state the country of origin, product name, batch/lot number, and production/expiry dates in Arabic (or a dual English/Arabic format)
- **Pesticide Residue Free / Organic Proof:** If you market the grapes as organic, you must provide a valid organic certification matching the destination requirements. If the grapes contain synthetic residue, the CoA must show they fall below the strict UAE hierarchical MRLs (such as **0.01 mg/kg** for standard default pesticides).

4. QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

You must comply with the marketing standard for table grapes of [General Requirements For Fresh Fruits And Vegetables GSO 123:1990](#) to export your products to the GCC countries.

a. General Quality Requirements

At the very least, bunches and berries of fresh table grapes must be:

- homogenous with regard to: variety, ripeness, size, color and shape;
- fresh, fully mature, unwithered or wet, without change in color or characteristics or shall not be over riped
- clean; practically free of any visible foreign matter;
- practically free from pests; The fruit shall be free from insect infections, molds or diseases within the allowable limits in relevant Gulf standards for the product
- practically free from damage caused by pests;

- free from traces of chemical materials, and pesticides except within allowable limits in relevant Gulf standards for the product
- free from any foreign odor or taste;
- free from wounds, and bruises except within the allowable limits in relevant Gulf standards for the product

In addition, the grape berries must be intact, well-formed and normally developed. The package shall not contain any damaged fruit.

b. Classification

Fresh fruit and vegetables are graded according to their quality and specifications into three principal classes as follows:

- Extra class
- Class I
- Class II

Key Rule

All packages within a shipment must be uniform in quality and classification.

Any deviation from declared classification may result in the consignment being considered non-compliant or ungraded, leading to rejection or restricted market access.

Quality Tolerance Principle

- Extra Class must meet or exceed Class I requirements
- Class I must meet or exceed Class II requirements
- No tolerance beyond the limits of the next lower class is permitted

c. Pesticides Residues and other contaminants

All table grapes exported to the UAE must comply with strict pesticide and contaminant regulations aligned with Codex and GCC standards, including:

- **UAE.S MRL 1/2024** – Maximum Residue Limits for pesticides in agricultural products
- **UAE.S GSO 2532/2016** – Maximum limits for pesticide residues in organic food

Core Principle

Pesticide residues must not exceed established Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) expressed in mg/kg (milligrams per kilogram of food). Non-compliance may result in:

- Shipment rejection
- Destruction of goods
- Re-export at exporter's cost

Indicative MRL Thresholds (Table Grapes)

Active Ingredient	Primary Class	Baseline UAE / Codex MRL Standard
Abamectin	Insecticide	0.01 mg/kg
Azoxystrobin	Fungicide	2.0 mg/kg
Boscalid	Fungicide	5.0 mg/kg
Cypermethrin	Insecticide	0.2 mg/kg
Dimethoate	Insecticide	1.0 mg/kg
Pyraclostrobin	Fungicide	0.5 mg/kg

Critical Compliance Notice:

The following substances are subject to **zero or near-zero tolerance policies**:

- Chlorpyrifos → restricted / near-zero detection limit (0.01 mg/kg)
- Carbendazim → heavily restricted or prohibited under GCC/EU-aligned standards

Any detectable level of banned substances may result in automatic shipment rejection.

Default Rule for Unlisted Substances

If a pesticide is not explicitly listed in UAE or Codex MRL databases, a default strict limit of 0.01 mg/kg applies.

Packaging Chemical Safety

Packaging materials must also comply with food safety requirements:

- No transfer of harmful substances to the product (no chemical migration)
- Compliance with Codex Standard 193/1995 for food contact materials
- Any post-harvest chemical treatment must be:
 - o Approved by relevant authorities
 - o Properly declared on documentation
 - o Within GCC permissible limits

Organic Certification Requirements

For products marketed as organic, compliance with UAE.S GSO 2532/2016 is mandatory:

- Maximum total pesticide residue: 0.01 mg/kg
- Exceeding this threshold invalidates organic certification status
- Product cannot be marketed or sold as organic in the UAE

d. Microbiological criteria

UAE food safety regulations adopt Codex-aligned microbiological standards to ensure product safety throughout the supply chain.

Key regulatory frameworks include:

- **UAE.S GSO 1694/2005** – General Principles of Food Hygiene
- **UAE.S 1016/2017** – Microbiological Criteria for Food Stuffs

Required Practices:

Exporters must apply:

- Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)
- Good Hygienic Practices (GHP)
- Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) during handling and packaging

These practices minimize contamination risks and ensure compliance with UAE food safety expectations.

Guiding Standard:

Exporters are strongly advised to follow [Codex Alimentarius](#) - Code Of Hygienic Practice For Fresh Fruits And Vegetables as a guideline.

5. PACKAGING REQUIREMENTS

Packaging for table grapes must ensure the product stays **safe, fresh, and undamaged** during transport to the UAE. All packaging must comply with **UAE.S/GSO 839:2021**, **UAE.S/GSO 1863/2021**, and **UAE.S GSO 2231/2012**, which define GCC food-contact material safety rules.

Key requirements

- Must be **food-grade, safe, and non-toxic**
- Must not transfer chemicals, odor, or taste to grapes
- Must protect fruit from **damage, moisture, and contamination**
- Must allow **air circulation to prevent mold and overheating**

Approved materials

- Cardboard cartons (corrugated fiberboard)
- Solid cardboard boxes
- Food-grade plastic crates

Important rules

- Packaging must be strong enough to prevent crushing or damage
- No strong-smelling wood or chemical-treated materials
- Only food-safe inks, glue, and coatings allowed
- Recycled materials are only allowed if certified food-grade

Special packaging options

- Perforated films → allow airflow and moisture control
- MAP (Modified Atmosphere Packaging) → slows down fruit ripening



Simple rule

Packaging must protect grapes, keep them fresh, and never affect quality or safety



6. FOOD LABELING

Labeling rules apply to all food products packed in bulk or retail packaging. Exporters must ensure all label information is clear, accurate, and easy to read to avoid shipment rejection in the UAE.

All products must comply with UAE.S GSO 9:2022/Amd1:2025 (food labeling) and UAE.S/GSO 839:2021 (food packaging requirements), which set the rules for packaging materials and label content.

Before export, Lebanese exporters should always confirm that their labeling and packaging meet UAE requirements.

a. General Requirements:

For table grapes exported to the UAE, the outer carton or crate must have a clear and readable label in Arabic or in Arabic/English. Each package must include the following key information:

- Product name: Fresh Table Grapes
- Variety (e.g., Thompson Seedless, Crimson Seedless, Flame Seedless)
- Country of origin (must clearly state "Lebanon")
- Exporter and packer details (name and address)
- Packing date (DD-MM-YYYY format)
- Net and gross weight
- Quality grade (Extra Class, Class I, or Class II)

Important: No added ingredients are allowed. If grapes are mixed with any other items, they will no longer be treated as fresh produce and must follow full prepackaged food rules.

b. Table Grapes Labeling Specifications:

This section covers label content, registration controls, sticker rules, and enforcement requirements applied by UAE authorities.

Labeling Requirements (Dates & Basic Rules)

For fresh fruits and vegetables, UAE regulations require:

- Production date or harvest year
- Packing date (depending on product type)
- An expiry date is not required for fresh fruits and vegetables, dried legumes, or dried vegetables.

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Date: 24-June-26

Revision: 01

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Key Labeling Control Requirements (Dubai Rules)

To ensure compliance, exporters and importers must follow strict control rules:

- Newly registered products may undergo **laboratory testing in Dubai**
- If an ingredient or additive is found but not declared on the label, the product may be **rejected**
- Each different pack size (e.g., 100g vs 200g) must be **registered separately**
- Any change in label, barcode, packaging, or weight requires **new label approval (re-assessment)**
- Labels must be approved before shipment and cannot be corrected upon arrival
- Stickers must be pre-approved and applied before export
- Each barcode must be unique to one product only

Sticker Rules (Strict Enforcement)

All stickers used on packaging must:

- Not cover any mandatory label information
- Match the original approved label exactly
- Not include production or expiry dates
- Be permanent and not easily removable
- Be approved by UAE authorities before use

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c. Specific Labeling Claims

Exporters must be careful when adding any claim to the label of table grapes exported to the UAE. Claims must be clear, truthful, and supported by official proof when required. Any statement that cannot be verified may lead to label rejection or shipment delays.

i. Nutritional and Marketing Claims

All nutrition, health, and marketing claims must follow UAE/GCC rules, including:

- UAE.S GSO CAC GL 1/2008 – General Claims Guidelines
- UAE.S GSO 2333/2019 – Nutrition and Health Claims
- UAE.S 2233/2021 – Nutrition Labeling Requirements
- UAE.S GSO 2576:2021 – Marketing Terms on Labels

For fresh grapes, exporters should avoid using claims unless they are accurate and can be proven.

Examples of claims that need support:

- “Premium”
- “Sweet”
- “High quality”
- “Organic”
- “GMO-free”
- “Natural”

Exporter tip:

Only write claims on the label if you have documents, certificates, or clear evidence to support them.

Simple rule:

Any claim on the label must be true, verifiable, and not misleading.

ii. Irradiated Food Labeling

- If grapes are treated with irradiation, this must be clearly mentioned on the label.
- The package must also show the international irradiation logo, as required by UAE.S GSO 9/2019.
- For fresh fruits and vegetables, irradiation is only allowed when it follows the technical and safety limits under GSO 1814:2007.

Exporter tip:

Do not use irradiation unless it is approved, documented, and correctly declared on the label.

iii. Organic Food Labeling

If grapes are labeled or marketed as “organic” in the UAE, they must:

- Come from certified organic farms
- Show the approved organic logo on the package
- Be supported by an accredited certificate recognized by the UAE authorities

This requirement is based on UAE.S GSO 2374/2014.

If the grapes are organic but the word “organic” is not used on the label or in marketing, then no organic certificate or attestation is required.

Exporter tip:

Do not write “organic” unless you have the official certificate.

iv. Genetically Modified Products — GMO

- Under UAE.S/GSO 2142:2011, GMO labeling is required if an agricultural product contains more than 1% genetically modified material.
- Any GMO product must also be approved in the country of origin for human or animal consumption.

Exporter tip:

For fresh table grapes, avoid GMO-related claims unless you have official proof.

v. GMO-Free Labeling

If the label says “GMO Free,” the supplier must provide an official GMO-free certificate issued by a competent government authority in the country of origin.

Exporter tip:

Do not use “GMO Free” as a marketing claim unless the official certificate is available before export.

vi. Weight and Label Accuracy

- UAE rules also check whether the weight shown on the label matches the real product weight.
- Under UAE.S/GSO OIML R 87:2007, grapes may be sold as fixed-weight packs or variable-weight packs.

Fixed Pre-Packs

Examples: 500 g clamshells, 1 kg bags

For fixed pre-packs:

- All packs must show the same declared weight
- The average batch weight must match the label
- Small weight differences may be accepted within allowed limits
- If packs are underweight, the shipment may be rejected

Variable Weight Packs

Examples: catchweight punnets or packs sold by actual weight

For variable-weight packs:

- Each pack may have a different weight
- Each label must show the exact real weight of that specific pack

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- The average-weight rule does not apply

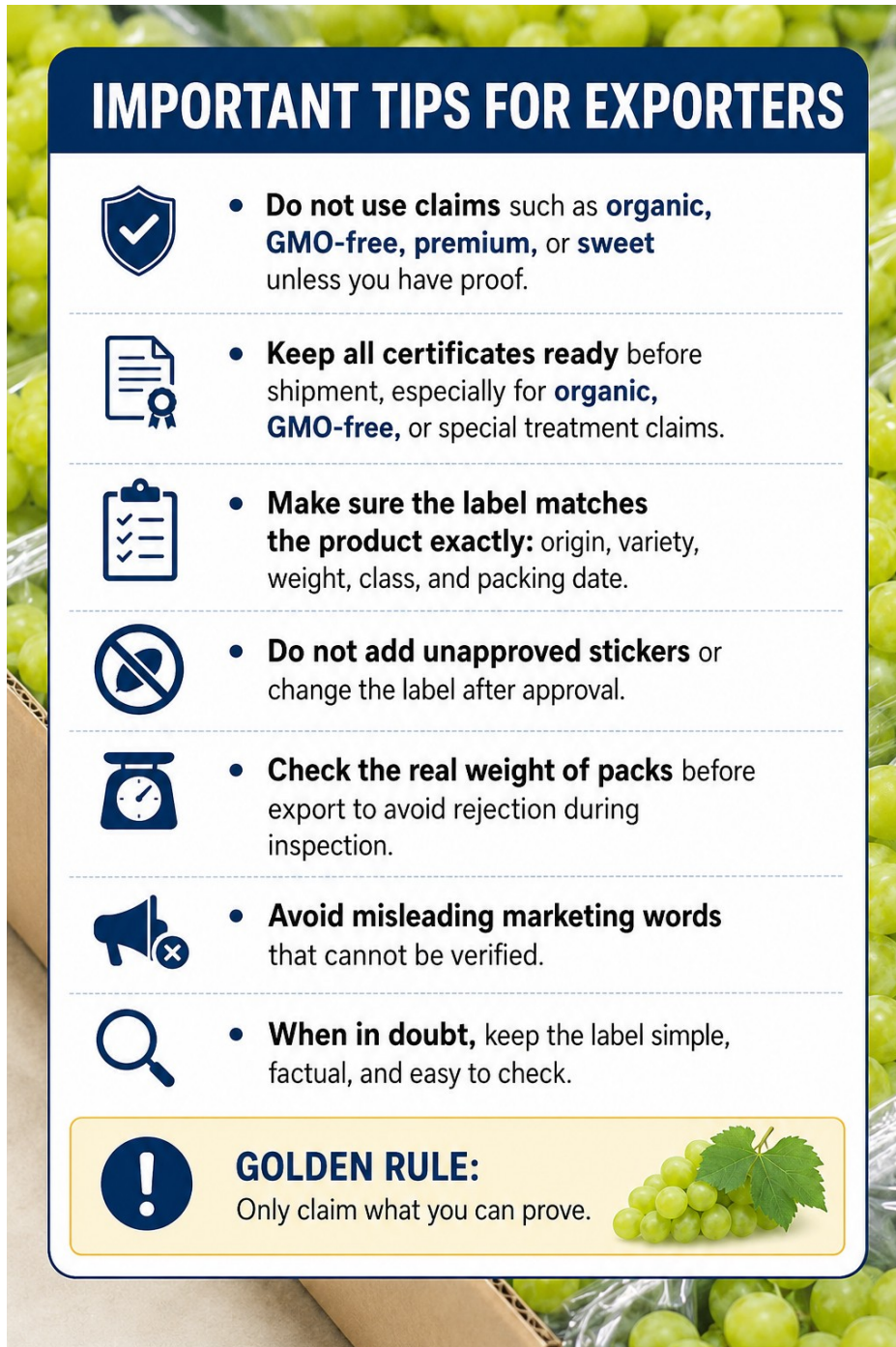
Exporter tip:

Check weight accuracy before shipment. One underweight pack can create problems for the full batch during inspection.

vii. Simple Rule to Remember

The label must always match the product exactly.

All claims, weights, origin details, and quality information must be truthful, clear, and supported by documents when required.



IMPORTANT TIPS FOR EXPORTERS

- **Do not use claims** such as **organic**, **GMO-free**, **premium**, or **sweet** unless you have proof.
- **Keep all certificates ready** before shipment, especially for **organic**, **GMO-free**, or special treatment claims.
- **Make sure the label matches the product exactly:** origin, variety, weight, class, and packing date.
- **Do not add unapproved stickers** or change the label after approval.
- **Check the real weight of packs** before export to avoid rejection during inspection.
- **Avoid misleading marketing words** that cannot be verified.
- **When in doubt**, keep the label simple, factual, and easy to check.

GOLDEN RULE:
Only claim what you can prove.