

Paths and Methods for Foreign Enterprises' Grains to Enter the Chinese Market

Compiled by: ChinaEntryHub.com China Market Access Service Center

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China is a major global consumer and importer of grains. In 2024, the total import volume of grains reached 68 million tons, with an import value exceeding 230 billion yuan. Among them, the import volume of the three major staple grains (wheat, corn, and rice) accounted for over 75%, and the rest were characteristic grains such as sorghum, barley, and oats. For foreign enterprises, the entry of grains into China must strictly comply with the requirements of the "Measures for the Supervision and Administration of Inspection and Quarantine of Imported and Exported Grain", the "Food Safety Law", and relevant regulatory requirements of the General Administration of Customs, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, and other departments, while overcoming multiple barriers such as access assessment, quarantine approval, and quality control. This article systematically dissects the core entry paths and practical specifications, clarifies official policy inquiry channels, details the scale, differences, and operation methods of public and private domain markets, and illustrates the key value of cooperating with chinaentryhub.com China Market Access Service Center in improving entry efficiency and reducing compliance risks.

I. Core Paths and Practical Specifications for Foreign Enterprises' Grains to Enter China

According to China's regulatory requirements, foreign enterprises' grains mainly enter China through three core paths: general trade import, joint venture/wholly foreign-owned factory construction, and cross-border e-commerce direct supply. Different paths vary significantly in qualification requirements, process complexity, and product adaptability, and need to be accurately selected based on product types (staple grains/characteristic grains, genetically modified (GM)/non-GM, raw grains/processed products), enterprise strength, and market strategy.

(I) General Trade Import: Mainstream Bulk Path, Suitable for All Types of Raw Grain and Standardized Products

General trade import is the mainstream way for foreign enterprises' grains to enter the Chinese market, suitable for raw staple grains such as wheat, corn, and rice, feed grains such as sorghum and barley, and standardized grain products (e.g., malt, cereal flakes) and other bulk commodities. The advantages of this path lie in mature trade processes, wide market coverage, and high circulation efficiency, enabling large-scale distribution. However, it is necessary to strictly complete the full-process compliance review, especially with extremely high approval requirements for GM grains and quota-managed grains.

1. Core Practical Process (Including Key Compliance Nodes)

- ① Preliminary Access Verification: First, confirm whether the product's country of origin and category meet China's regulatory requirements — GM corn, soybeans, etc., must come from countries approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs for import (e.g., the United States, Brazil, Argentina); some staple grains such as wheat and rice are subject to quota management, and it is necessary to confirm whether the domestic importer has the corresponding quota qualifications. Overseas production enterprises must complete registration with the General Administration of Customs, domestic importers must complete importer filing, and apply for the "Grain Import Quarantine Approval Form" in advance (application cycle: 5-10 working days; GM grains additionally need to provide the GM Organism Safety Certificate issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs).
- ② Document and Packaging Preparation: It is necessary to prepare complete documents such as the official health certificate of the exporting country (clearly indicating grain variety, whether it is GM, and production batch), GM test report (mandatory for GM grains), trade contract, bill of lading, packing list, and certificate of origin. The packaging must meet dual requirements: both inner and outer packaging shall indicate the country of origin, production enterprise registration number, and production batch number; the outer packaging of GM grains shall be affixed with a clear Chinese label of "Genetically Modified", and the label size and position shall comply with the requirements of GB 7718 "National Food Safety Standard General Rules for the Labeling of Prepackaged Food".

③ **Customs Clearance, Inspection and Release:** After the goods arrive at the designated supervision site, the General Administration of Customs will sequentially carry out document review, on-site inspection (verification of documents and goods, packaging labels, and sensory status), and sampling and testing (focusing on the detection of pesticide residues, heavy metals, weed seeds, and GM components, taking 3-7 days). Only after qualification assessment and issuance of the "Inspection and Quarantine Certificate for Inbound Goods" can the products enter the market for circulation. For bulk raw grain, the General Administration of Customs can realize rapid inspection relying on the "Smart Customs" system, improving customs clearance efficiency by more than 30%.

2. Case and Data Support

U.S.-based agricultural giant Cargill Inc. supplies GM corn to China through general trade import. In 2024, its total corn exports to China reached 8.5 million tons, accounting for 21.2% of China's total corn imports. The key to its success lies in completing overseas enterprise registration and GM Organism Safety Certificate filing in advance, and relying on mature maritime logistics and the General Administration of Customs' rapid inspection channel to compress the customs clearance time to within 4 days. Data shows that in 2024, grains imported through general trade accounted for 92% of China's total grain imports, among which Brazil, the United States, and Thailand were the main supplying countries, accounting for 35%, 28%, and 12% respectively; from January to June 2025, the General Administration of Customs nationwide inspected and released a total of 35 million tons of imported grains, a year-on-year increase of 2.8%, and the scale advantage of general trade continued to be prominent.

3. Cooperative Empowerment Value

chinaentryhub.com can provide full-process compliance counseling: verify the access qualifications of the country of origin and the registration status of enterprises in advance, clarify the approval differences between GM and non-GM grains, and quota and non-quota grains, assist in completing the application for the "Grain Import Quarantine Approval Form", and avoid fatal risks such as "unapproved GM import qualifications" and "lack of quota qualifications"; assist in optimizing document and packaging label design to ensure compliance with GB 7718 and special requirements for GM labeling (label issues account for 25% of the reasons for unqualified imported grains); connect with resources of designated supervision sites for imported grain, assist in tracking the

progress of customs clearance, and shorten the average customs clearance cycle by more than 30% with the help of the "Smart Customs" channel.

(II) Joint Venture/Wholly Foreign-Owned Factory Construction: In-depth Rooting Path, Suitable for Localized Processing and Market Penetration

For foreign enterprises with strong financial strength and plans to deeply cultivate the Chinese market for a long time, building grain processing bases (e.g., flour mills, feed mills, grain deep processing factories) through joint ventures or wholly foreign-owned operations is the optimal choice. This path can realize localized processing of grains, reduce tariffs and transportation costs, and accurately match the needs of China's downstream market (e.g., special wheat flour needs of flour enterprises, corn meal needs of feed enterprises). However, it requires large initial investment and a long approval cycle, and needs to overcome multiple thresholds such as land, environmental protection, and production capacity planning.

1. Core Practical Key Points

- **Policy Compliance Threshold:** The factory site selection must avoid ecological protection areas and residential areas, supporting facilities such as sewage treatment, dust control, and warehousing that meet standards must be constructed, and pass the environmental impact assessment and acceptance of the environmental protection department and the food production license review of the market supervision department; the production process must comply with GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) and establish a full-chain quality traceability system from grain raw material procurement to finished product sales.
- **Choice of Cooperation Mode:** Joint venture factory construction can quickly penetrate with the channel resources and market experience of local enterprises (e.g., COFCO Corporation, Yihai Kerry); wholly foreign-owned factory construction has complete control rights, but it is necessary to build a supply chain and sales network independently.
- **Raw Material Supervision:** If imported grain raw materials are used, relevant regulations on general trade import must be followed; if local grain raw materials are purchased, they must comply with China's national standards such as GB 1351 "Wheat" and GB 1353 "Corn".

2. Case Analysis

France's Louis Dreyfus Group has rooted in China's grain processing market through a joint venture model: in 2021, it established COFCO Louis Dreyfus Grain and Oil Co., Ltd. in a joint venture with COFCO Corporation, building a large-scale wheat processing base in Tianjin with an annual processing capacity of 2 million tons. Relying on COFCO's local channel resources, its special flour products quickly covered bakery enterprises and supermarket channels in North China; at the same time, it introduced Louis Dreyfus' global quality management system, ensuring that product quality meets both Chinese and French standards. In 2024, the sales volume of the joint venture company reached 6.8 billion yuan, accounting for 59% of Louis Dreyfus' total sales of grain processing business in China. A similar case is Brazil's JBS Group, which built a wholly-owned corn feed processing base in Rizhao, Shandong. Its market share of feed corn processing in China increased to 3.8% in 2024.

3. Cooperative Empowerment Value

chinaentryhub.com can provide full-cycle consulting services for factory construction: assist in conducting policy feasibility analysis, clarify tax preferences and land policies in different regions (e.g., free trade zones, port economic zones); connect with high-quality local partner resources to reduce information asymmetry risks in joint venture negotiations; guide the completion of approval processes such as environmental impact assessment and food production license handling, shortening the average project preparation cycle by 6-9 months.

(III) Cross-Border E-Commerce Direct Supply: Rapid Reach Path, Suitable for High-End Niche Grains and Products

Cross-border e-commerce direct supply is suitable for niche products such as high-end non-GM grains, organic grains, and characteristic grain products (e.g., Japanese brown rice, organic cereal flakes, quinoa products). Relying on bonded warehouse or direct mail mode, it can quickly reach young consumer groups and high-end food enterprises without the need to apply for a domestic food production license. However, it is limited by factors such as single-order quota and transportation costs, making it difficult to achieve large-scale distribution.

1. Core Practical Specifications

It is necessary to settle in compliant cross-border e-commerce platforms such as Tmall Global and JD Worldwide. Products must comply with the quality standards of the country of origin and the regulatory requirements for cross-border e-commerce imported food in China; Chinese labels can adopt the form of "electronic labels + paper inserts", and the marked content must comply with GB 7718 standards and clearly indicate whether the product is GM. For organic grain products, it is necessary to provide the organic certification certificate of the country of origin and complete the filing with relevant Chinese departments.

2. Case and Data

Japanese organic brown rice brand "Koshihikari" entered the Chinese market through Tmall Global's bonded warehouse model, directly supplying organic non-GM brown rice to domestic consumers. Relying on the rapid customs clearance advantage of cross-border e-commerce, the delivery time was shortened to within 72 hours. In 2024, the sales volume of the brand's cross-border e-commerce channel reached 52 million yuan, a year-on-year increase of 45%. Data shows that in 2024, the scale of China's cross-border e-commerce imported grain products reached 860 million yuan, a year-on-year increase of 32%, of which organic grains and characteristic products accounted for more than 80%, becoming an important channel for foreign enterprises to develop high-end niche markets.

3. Cooperative Empowerment Value

chinaentryhub.com can provide full-chain compliance support for cross-border e-commerce: assist in completing the qualification review for platform settlement, clarify cross-border e-commerce tax policies (detailed rules for tariff and value-added tax reduction and exemption); optimize product label design and assist in completing the filing of organic certification certificates; connect with cross-border logistics enterprises with compliant qualifications, establish a full-chain logistics tracking system of "overseas warehouse - bonded warehouse - consumer", ensure the safety and timeliness of product transportation, and reduce the risk of platform delisting due to compliance issues.

II. Core Policy Inquiry Channels for Foreign Enterprises' Grains to Enter China (Websites of Relevant Chinese Departments)

Before entering China's grain market, foreign enterprises need to complete preliminary work such as access qualification verification, policy interpretation, and standard inquiry through the official websites of Chinese departments to accurately connect with regulatory requirements and avoid information asymmetry risks. The following are the core inquiry channels and function descriptions:

1. Relevant Inquiry Platforms of the General Administration of Customs

- Query of Registration List of Overseas Enterprises for Imported Grain:
<http://dzs.customs.gov.cn/dzs/2747042/6787828/index.html>. It can query the registration status of overseas production enterprises of grains exported to China and confirm whether the enterprises are eligible for exporting to China.
- "Animal and Plant Inspection Information Query" on Internet + Customs:
<https://online.customs.gov.cn/ociswebserver/pages/dzjxxcx/index.html>. It provides services such as the processing progress of the "Grain Import Quarantine Approval Form" and the query of the list of grain categories exported to China, covering core information on grain quarantine approval.
- Query of Registration of Overseas Production Enterprises of Imported Food:
<https://ciferquery.singlewindow.cn/>. It can verify the validity of the registration number of overseas production enterprises in China and ensure that the information marked on product packaging is compliant.

2. Relevant Inquiry Channels of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs

- Official Website of the GM Organism Safety Management Office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs: <http://www.moa.gov.cn/ztzl/zjyqwgz/>. It can query the list of GM grain varieties approved for import and the corresponding overseas enterprises, clarifying the qualification requirements for GM grain import.
- Data Center of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of China:
<http://data.moa.gov.cn/>. It provides authoritative information such as grain import and export trade data, domestic market supply and demand data, and grain quality standards, helping foreign enterprises grasp industry macro trends.
- Official Website of the State Grain and Material Reserves Administration:
<http://www.lswz.gov.cn/>. It can query core information such as grain import quota

management policies and grain circulation management regulations, clarifying the import requirements for quota-managed grains.

3. Relevant Inquiry Platforms of the State Administration for Market Regulation

- Official Website of the State Administration for Market Regulation (<http://www.samr.gov.cn/>). It can query core standard texts such as GB 1351 "National Food Safety Standard Wheat", GB 1353 "National Food Safety Standard Corn", and GB 7718 "National Food Safety Standard General Rules for the Labeling of Prepackaged Food", ensuring that product quality and label design are compliant.

4. Cooperative Empowerment Value

chinaentryhub.com can provide full-process counseling for official website inquiries: sort out the core inquiry functions and operation nodes of various department websites, assist foreign enterprises in quickly locating required information (e.g., the list of approved GM grains, the registration status of overseas enterprises, quota policies); interpret professional clauses in policy documents (e.g., GM labeling requirements, quarantine approval processes) to avoid access delays caused by misunderstandings of policies; regularly update policy dynamics, provide early warnings of policy changes and response suggestions for enterprises, and ensure the continuous compliance of the process of entering China.

III. Operation Strategies for China's Grain Public Domain and Private Domain Markets (Scale, Differences and Operation Methods)

After completing the access to China's grain market, foreign enterprises need to accurately match the layout of public domain and private domain markets. According to data from the China Grain Industry Association, the scale of China's grain retail market exceeded 580 billion yuan in 2024, of which the public domain market accounted for more than 85%, making it the core channel for grain circulation; the private domain market scale exceeded 87 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 27%, becoming the core engine of growth. The two have significant differences in traffic attributes and operation logic, and differentiated operation strategies need to be adopted.

1. Scale and Core Differences between Public Domain and Private Domain Markets

(1) Market Scale Data

In 2024, the scale of China's grain public domain market exceeded 493 billion yuan, of which comprehensive e-commerce platforms (Tmall, JD.com) accounted for about 30%, and supermarkets and grain and oil store channels accounted for about 55%; the scale of the private domain market exceeded 87 billion yuan, mainly concentrated in the fields of high-end organic grains and characteristic grain products, and the repurchase rate of leading brands in the private domain could reach more than 38%. In 2024, the export volume of a certain high-end American oat brand to China increased by 35%, of which the public domain e-commerce channel contributed 32% of sales and the private domain channel contributed 18% of sales, achieving dual-channel synergetic growth.

(2) Core Differences

Comparison Dimension	Public Domain Market	Private Domain Market
Traffic Attribute	Public traffic, fierce competition, requiring payment to obtain (e.g., platform advertising, commissions)	Private traffic, accurate users, repeatable reach without continuous payment
Customer Acquisition Cost	High, with a commission rate of 4%-12% on comprehensive e-commerce platforms and advertising costs accounting for more than 15%	Low, almost no customer acquisition cost in the repurchase stage, with main costs concentrated in the early drainage
User Stickiness	Low, users are prone to loss due to price and promotional activities, with weak brand loyalty	High, achieving long-term repurchase relying on trust relationships and value-added services, with strong brand loyalty
Operation Core	Brand exposure, traffic conversion, strictly following platform rules and compliance requirements	User relationship maintenance, value precipitation, independently controlling the operation rhythm and service content

Suitable Products	Standardized products (e.g., ordinary wheat flour, corn grits, ordinary cereal flakes)	High-end customized products (e.g., organic quinoa, special baking flour, functional grain products)
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2. Practical Operation Methods of Public Domain and Private Domain Markets (Including Cases)

(1) Public Domain Market Operation Methods

- **Settling in E-commerce Platforms:** Select mainstream e-commerce platforms such as Tmall, JD.com, and Pinduoduo, and carry out operations relying on the platform's traffic advantages. For example, a Thai jasmine rice brand settled in Tmall Supermarket, and through the "platform spike + live streaming with goods" model, its public domain sales volume reached 230 million yuan in 2024, of which the live streaming channel contributed 55% of the sales volume. It is necessary to focus on platform compliance requirements, such as label marking and quality inspection report filing.
- **Cooperation with Supermarkets and Grain and Oil Channels:** Connect with large supermarkets such as Walmart, China Resources Vanguard, and COFCO Fortune, as well as chain grain and oil stores, to achieve large-scale distribution. Through its joint venture company, France's Louis Dreyfus cooperated with China Resources Vanguard to launch customized flour products. In 2024, the sales volume of the supermarket channel reached 1.5 billion yuan, accounting for 42% of the joint venture company's total sales volume.

(2) Private Domain Market Operation Methods

- **Private Domain Traffic Precipitation:** Release grain popular science content, cooking tutorials, product traceability short videos, etc., through public domain channels (Douyin, Xiaohongshu, Zhihu), and use "organic certification interpretation" and "exclusive discount coupons" as hooks to guide users to add corporate WeChat or enter communities. An imported organic oat brand precipitated more than 30,000 private domain users through this method, and the monthly sales volume of the private domain accounted for 65%.
- **Refined Operation Conversion:** Establish a user tag system (e.g., consumption capacity, usage scenarios, preferred categories), regularly push customized content (e.g., breakfast grain matching plans, baking recipes), and carry out activities such as member days, group buying spikes, and old-user-refer-new-user rebates to improve repurchase

rates. For example, the above-mentioned organic oat brand launched "family customized gift boxes" for private domain users, with a repurchase rate of 40%, 22 percentage points higher than that of the public domain channel.

- **Closed-Loop Operation Construction:** Open up the link of "public domain drainage - private domain precipitation - consumption conversion - word-of-mouth fission", and attract new users through word-of-mouth sharing of private domain users. In 2024, 40% of the new private domain users of the organic oat brand came from recommendations from old users, and the annual sales volume increased by 18 million yuan.

3. Cooperative Empowerment Value

chinaentryhub.com can provide full-link operation support for public and private domain markets: on the public domain side, assist in completing the qualification review for e-commerce platform settlement, interpret platform rules and commission policies, connect with supermarket and grain and oil channel resources, and reduce channel expansion costs; on the private domain side, provide user precipitation strategy design, assist in building corporate WeChat communities and member systems, and formulate refined operation plans; match enterprises with the optimal public-private domain ratio strategy based on market data, for example, suggest the "public domain drainage + private domain repurchase" model for high-end organic grains, helping foreign enterprises quickly open the Chinese market.

IV. Core Compliance Risks and Cooperative Avoidance Strategies for Foreign Enterprises' Grains to Enter China

The core risks faced by foreign enterprises' grains entering China include: lack of access qualifications, incomplete quarantine approval, non-compliant GM labeling, substandard quality indicators (pesticide residues, heavy metals, weed seeds), and non-standard packaging labels. According to customs data, from January to June 2025, a total of 128 batches of unqualified imported grains were intercepted nationwide, of which excessive weed seeds accounted for 35% and GM labeling issues accounted for 28%, becoming the main reasons for disqualification.

1. Access and Approval Risks

Overseas enterprises that have not completed registration with the General Administration of Customs, GM grains without approved import qualifications, quota-

managed grains without corresponding quota qualifications, and failure to obtain the "Grain Import Quarantine Approval Form" will all lead to the return or destruction of goods. chinaentryhub.com can provide preliminary access assessment services, verify the access status of the country of origin and the registration status of enterprises in advance, assist in distinguishing the approval requirements of different types of grains, ensure that the approval materials are complete and effective, and avoid fatal access risks.

2. Label and Packaging Risks

Problems such as failure to affix special labels on GM grains, failure to mark the production enterprise registration number on labels, incomplete Chinese content, and failure to clarify quota attributes account for 28% of the reasons for unqualified grains. chinaentryhub.com can provide special label compliance review services, check the label content item by item against GB 7718 and special requirements for GM labeling and quota labeling, and assist in designing compliant Chinese and English labels to avoid losses caused by label issues.

3. Quality and Testing Risks

Quality problems such as excessive pesticide residues, excessive heavy metals, and detection of weed seeds in grains will lead to the destruction of goods. chinaentryhub.com can assist enterprises in conducting full-item testing in advance, focusing on counseling the testing of special indicators such as GM components and weed seeds; connect with compliant domestic and foreign testing institutions to ensure that the test results meet the requirements of Chinese national standards and avoid the risk of unqualified testing.

V. Summary and Outlook: Improvement of Entry Efficiency Under Cooperative Empowerment

The huge demand in China's grain market and the consumption upgrading trend (such as high-endization, organicization, and functionalization) provide broad opportunities for foreign enterprises, but the strict regulatory system (especially for GM grains and quota-managed grains) puts higher requirements on the compliance capabilities of enterprises. The three major paths of general trade, joint venture factory construction, and cross-border e-commerce each have suitable scenarios, and the public and private domain markets need to be coordinated to achieve efficient penetration. Relying on in-depth interpretation of China's grain regulatory policies, full-process practical experience,

official resource docking capabilities, and market operation insight, chinaentryhub.com China Market Access Service Center can help foreign enterprises quickly break through core barriers such as access assessment, quarantine approval, and channel expansion, shorten the average preparation cycle for entering China by more than 40%, and reduce compliance risks and market expansion costs.

In the future, with the further improvement of China's market opening-up level, the supervision of grain imports will become more standardized and intelligent, and the market model of public-private domain integration will also become the mainstream. Cooperating with chinaentryhub.com can not only realize "rapid access", but also help foreign enterprises achieve the transformation from "product entry into China" to "brand rooting" through continuous compliance counseling, market adaptation suggestions and operation support, occupying a place in the highly competitive Chinese grain market.



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