

Paths and Methods for Foreign Enterprises' Snacks and Processed Foods to Enter the Chinese Market

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China is the world's largest consumer market for snacks and processed foods. In 2024, the market size of snacks and processed foods exceeded 5.8 trillion yuan, of which imported products accounted for 12%, with an import value exceeding 70 billion yuan. Core imported categories include leisure snacks (potato chips, chocolate, nuts), ready-to-eat processed foods (instant pasta, frozen prepared foods), baked goods (imported bread, pastries), and healthy functional snacks (organic nuts, low-sugar biscuits), mainly from more than 40 countries and regions such as the United States, Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Thailand. The entry of snacks and processed foods into China by foreign enterprises must strictly comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Law, Measures for the Administration of Food Safety for Import and Export, National Food Safety Standard General Rules for the Labeling of Prepackaged Foods (GB 7718), as well as the regulatory requirements of the General Administration of Customs, the State Administration for Market Regulation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and other departments, and break through multiple barriers such as access qualification review, label compliance, quality inspection, and channel access. This report 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 clarifies the key value of cooperating with chinaentryhub.com China Market Access Service Center in improving entry efficiency, reducing compliance risks, and expanding market share.

I. Core Paths and Practical Specifications for Foreign Enterprises' Snacks and Processed Foods to Enter China

According to China's regulatory requirements and the product characteristics of snacks and processed foods (standardized/customized, normal temperature/cold chain, mass/high-end), foreign enterprises mainly enter China through three core paths:

general trade import, joint venture/wholly foreign-owned construction of processing bases, and cross-border e-commerce direct supply. Different paths vary significantly in qualification requirements, process complexity, and market adaptability, and need to be accurately selected based on enterprise strength, product characteristics, and market strategy.

(I) General Trade Import: Mainstream Bulk Path, Suitable for All Categories of Standardized Snacks and Processed Foods

General trade import is the mainstream way for foreign enterprises' snacks and processed foods to enter the Chinese market, suitable for standardized bulk products such as potato chips, chocolate, normal-temperature pastries, and instant noodles. The advantages of this path lie in mature trade processes, wide market coverage, and high circulation efficiency, which can realize nationwide large-scale distribution. However, it is necessary to strictly complete the full-process compliance review, especially for label marking, additive use, and quality inspection, which have extremely high requirements.

1. Core Practical Process (Including Key Compliance Nodes)

① Preliminary Access Verification: First, confirm that the overseas production enterprise has completed registration with the General Administration of Customs (a necessary requirement for imported prepackaged food) and check the enterprise's registration status; confirm that the product category meets China's regulatory requirements, among which special dietary snacks (such as infant snacks, functional snacks) need to obtain additional relevant approval qualifications; domestic importers need to complete importer filing and clarify whether the ingredients, additives, nutritional components and other information of the imported products comply with Chinese national standards (such as GB 2760 National Food Safety Standard for the Use of Food Additives, GB 28050 National Food Safety Standard General Rules for the Labeling of Nutritional Information on Prepackaged Foods).

② Document and Label Preparation: It is necessary to prepare complete documents such as the health certificate issued by the official of the exporting country/region, certificate of origin, trade contract, bill of lading, packing list, product ingredient list, additive use list, and nutritional component test report; prepackaged food labels must strictly follow the requirements of GB 7718, indicating the Chinese name, country of

origin, importer information, ingredient list, net content, production date, shelf life, storage conditions, and nutritional component list. For products involving allergens, they must be clearly marked (such as nuts, milk, soybeans). Functional snacks must be marked with corresponding functional claims and bases. The label text must be clearly distinguishable and the proportion up to standard.

③ Customs Clearance and Inspection Release: After the goods arrive at the designated supervision site, the General Administration of Customs will sequentially carry out document review, label verification, on-site inspection, and sampling inspection (focusing on the detection of microorganisms, heavy metals, pesticide residues, additive residues, and the authenticity of nutritional components); after qualification assessment, the Inspection and Quarantine Certificate for Inbound Goods will be issued before they can enter the market for circulation. For categories under "Smart Customs" supervision, rapid inspection can be realized through advance declaration and data networking, and customs clearance efficiency can be improved by more than 35%.

2. Case and Data Support

Lay's Potato Chips under PepsiCo of the United States entered the Chinese market through general trade import. Its overseas production enterprise completed registration with the General Administration of Customs in advance, and the labels strictly followed the requirements of GB 7718 to mark allergens (potatoes, soybeans) and nutritional component lists. In 2024, the sales volume of Lay's imported potato chips to China reached 1.5 billion yuan, accounting for 42% of China's imported potato chip market share. Data shows that in 2024, snacks and processed foods imported through general trade accounted for 85% of China's total imports, of which the United States, Japan, and Germany contributed 60% of the import value; from January to June 2025, the General Administration of Customs nationwide inspected and released 3.2 million tons of imported snacks and processed foods, a year-on-year increase of 6.8%, and the scale of general trade imports of standardized products continued to expand.

3. Cooperative Empowerment Value

chinaentryhub.com can provide full-process compliance and practical guidance: check the registration status of overseas production enterprises with the General Administration of Customs in advance and assist in completing the registration

application (if not registered); review whether the product ingredients and additive use comply with Chinese national standards to avoid risks such as "excessive additives" and "false labeling of nutritional components"; guide the design and review of labels, check the label content item by item against standards such as GB 7718 and GB 28050 to ensure label compliance; assist in sorting out and reviewing the completeness of the document list, connect with the "Smart Customs" rapid inspection channel, shorten the average customs clearance cycle by more than 40%, and reduce the loss of goods detained at the port.

(II) Joint Venture/Wholly Foreign-Owned Construction of Processing Bases: In-Depth Rooting Path, Suitable for Localized Customization and Large-Scale Production

For foreign enterprises with strong financial strength and plans to deeply cultivate the Chinese market for a long time, establishing processing bases through joint ventures or wholly foreign-owned operations is the optimal choice. This path can realize localized product customization (such as low-sugar snacks adapted to Chinese tastes, Chinese-style prepared frozen foods), reduce import tariffs and transportation costs, and accurately match the needs of downstream channels (such as supermarket private brands, catering chain raw material supply). However, it requires large initial investment and a long approval cycle, and needs to break through multiple thresholds such as land, environmental protection, and food production licenses.

1. Core Practical Points

- **Policy Compliance Threshold:** The site selection of the base must avoid ecological protection areas and residential areas, be equipped with sewage treatment and waste gas treatment facilities that meet the standards, and pass the environmental impact assessment and acceptance of environmental protection departments; the processing base needs to apply for a Food Production License (SC Certification) from the market supervision department, establish a full-chain quality traceability system from raw material procurement to finished product sales, and the production process must follow GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices) requirements.
- **Choice of Cooperation Mode:** Joint venture construction can quickly penetrate with the channel resources and market experience of local enterprises (such as Want Want, Three Squirrels); wholly foreign-owned construction has complete control rights, but it is

necessary to independently build a supply chain and sales network.

- **Raw Material Supervision:** If imported raw materials are used, relevant regulations on general trade import must be followed; if local raw materials are purchased, they must comply with Chinese national standards, and key indicators such as pesticide residues and heavy metals of raw materials must be inspected.

2. Case Analysis

Japan's Meiji Group has rooted in China's baked goods market through a joint venture model: in 2021, it established Meiji (Shanghai) Food Co., Ltd. in a joint venture with a local Chinese enterprise, building a baked goods processing base in Shanghai with an annual processing capacity of 12,000 tons. To adapt to the taste preferences of Chinese consumers, it launched customized products such as low-sugar red bean bread and matcha pastries. Relying on the supermarket channel resources of local partners, the products have quickly covered more than 2,000 supermarkets in East China and South China. In 2024, the sales volume of the joint venture company reached 850 million yuan, accounting for 58% of Meiji Group's total snack business sales in China. A similar case is South Korea's CJ Group, which established a wholly foreign-owned frozen prepared food processing base in Qingdao, Shandong. In 2024, the sales volume of Korean-style fried chicken prepared food processed from imported raw materials reached 600 million yuan, and the market share increased to 7.2%.

3. Cooperative Empowerment Value

chinaentryhub.com can provide full-cycle consulting services for base construction: assist in conducting policy feasibility analysis, clarify tax preferences, land policies and industrial subsidies in different regions (such as free trade zones, food industrial parks); 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 (SC Certification) application, assist in establishing a quality traceability system that meets Chinese standards, and shorten the average project preparation cycle by 6-10 months.

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

Cross-border e-commerce direct supply is suitable for high-end niche snacks (such as

Japanese limited-edition biscuits, French hand-made chocolate), organic healthy snacks (organic nuts, additive-free dried fruits), characteristic processed foods (Korean ready-to-eat rice cakes, Thai frozen durian cakes) and other products. Relying on the bonded warehouse or direct mail model, it can quickly reach young consumer groups and high-end food lovers without applying for domestic food production licenses. However, it is limited by factors such as single-order quota (the single limit for personal cross-border e-commerce imports is 5,000 yuan), high transportation costs, and strict shelf life requirements, 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, JD Worldwide, and Kaola Haigou. Products must comply with the quality standards of the country of origin and the regulatory requirements of China's cross-border e-commerce imported food; Chinese labels can adopt the form of "electronic labels + paper attachments", and the marked content must comply with GB 7718 standards, clearly indicating core information such as product name, country of origin, importer information, shelf life, storage conditions, and allergens; organic snacks must provide organic certification certificates from the country of origin and complete the filing with relevant Chinese departments; cold chain processed foods (such as frozen prepared foods) must be transported by cold chain throughout the process, with the temperature controlled below -18°C and records kept.

2. Case and Data

Japanese high-end biscuit brand "YOKUMOKU" entered the Chinese market through Tmall Global's bonded warehouse model, directly transporting limited-edition hand-made butter biscuits from Japan to Hangzhou Bonded Warehouse in China. Relying on the platform's cold chain distribution network, it realized delivery within 72 hours in core cities across the country. In 2024, the sales volume of the brand's cross-border e-commerce channel reached 280 million yuan, a year-on-year increase of 62%, and the repurchase rate reached 45%. Data shows that in 2024, the scale of China's cross-border e-commerce imported snacks and processed foods reached 8.6 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 48%, of which high-end niche snacks accounted for more than 75% and organic healthy snacks accounted for 20%, becoming an important channel for foreign enterprises to develop high-end niche markets.

3. Cooperative Empowerment Value

chinaentryhub.com can provide full-chain compliance and operation 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 reductions and exemptions) and single-order quota requirements; optimize product label design and assist in completing the filing of organic certification certificates; connect with cross-border logistics enterprises with cold chain qualifications, establish a full-chain cold chain traceability system of "overseas warehouse - bonded warehouse - consumer", and ensure the freshness and safety of products; guide the formulation of platform operation strategies and avoid the risk of platform removal due to compliance issues.

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

Before entering China's snack and processed food 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

- Inquiry of Registration Information of Overseas Food Production Enterprises for Imported Food: <https://ciferquery.singlewindow.cn/>, which can query the information of overseas food production enterprises that have completed registration with the General Administration of Customs and confirm whether the cooperative enterprises have the qualification to export to China.
- "Food Safety Information Inquiry" on Internet + Customs: <https://online.customs.gov.cn/ociswebserver/pages/spaqxxcx/index.html>, which provides services such as the processing progress of imported food quarantine approval, inspection standard inquiry, and notification of unqualified food, covering the core information of quarantine of snacks and processed foods.
- Official Website of the Import and Export Food Safety Bureau of the General Administration of Customs: <http://www.customs.gov.cn/customs/302249/302266/302267/index.html>, which can query authoritative information such as imported food supervision policies, label review

requirements, and special rectification notices.

2. Relevant Inquiry Channels of the State Administration for Market Regulation

- Official Website of the State Administration for Market Regulation (<http://www.samr.gov.cn/>), which can query core standard texts such as National Food Safety Standard General Rules for the Labeling of Prepackaged Foods (GB 7718), National Food Safety Standard for the Use of Food Additives (GB 2760), and National Food Safety Standard General Rules for the Labeling of Nutritional Information on Prepackaged Foods (GB 28050), ensuring that product quality and label design are compliant.
- Official Website of the Department of Food Production and Operation Supervision: <http://www.samr.gov.cn/spscjgj/>, which can query information such as the requirements for applying for a Food Production License (SC Certification) and the supervision policies for food production and operation, providing reference for joint venture/wholly foreign-owned factory construction.

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

- Official Website of the Agricultural Product Quality and Safety Supervision Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs: <http://nongye.moa.gov.cn/nyb/zt/scpzlaq/index.shtml>, which can query quality standards and pesticide residue limit requirements for agricultural raw materials (such as nuts, grain raw materials).
- Data Center of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of China: <http://data.moa.gov.cn/>, which provides authoritative information such as import and export trade data of food raw materials and domestic market supply and demand data, helping foreign enterprises grasp industry macro trends.

4. Relevant Inquiry Channels of the Ministry of Commerce

- Official Website of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation of the Ministry of Commerce: <http://www.caitec.org.cn/>, which can query information such as China's food consumption market trends, imported food tariff policies, and cross-border e-commerce related policies, providing reference for market layout.

5. Cooperative Empowerment Value

chinaentryhub.com can provide full-process guidance 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 (such as the registration status of overseas enterprises, label standards, additive use requirements); interpret professional clauses in policy documents (such as label review rules, cross-border e-commerce supervision requirements) to avoid access delays caused by misunderstandings of policies; regularly update policy dynamics (such as standard adjustments, tariff preferential policies), provide early warnings of policy changes and response suggestions for enterprises, and ensure the continuous compliance of the entry process into China.

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

After completing the access to China's snack and processed food market, foreign enterprises need to accurately match the layout of public and private domain markets and rely on differentiated channels to achieve efficient penetration. According to data from the China National Food Industry Association, the scale of China's snack and processed food retail market exceeded 5.8 trillion yuan in 2024, of which the public domain market accounted for more than 92%, making it the core circulation channel; the private domain market scale exceeded 460 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 42%, becoming the core engine of growth. The two have significant differences in traffic attributes, operation logic, and user needs, 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 snack and processed food public domain market exceeded 5.3 trillion yuan, of which supermarkets and chain convenience stores accounted for about 55% (such as Walmart, Family Mart), comprehensive e-commerce platforms (Tmall, JD.com, Pinduoduo) accounted for about 32%, and farmers' markets and small neighborhood stores accounted for about 5%; the private domain market scale exceeded 460 billion yuan, mainly concentrated in the fields of high-end snacks and healthy

functional snacks, and the repurchase rate of leading high-end snack brands in the private domain could reach more than 50%. In 2024, the sales volume of Meiji's imported snacks to China increased by 28%, of which the public domain supermarket channel contributed 60% of sales and the private domain community channel contributed 22% 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 (such as platform advertising, channel commissions)	Private traffic, accurate users, repeatable reach without continuous payment
Customer Acquisition Cost	High, with a commission rate of 6%-18% on comprehensive e-commerce platforms and entry fees accounting for more than 12% in supermarket channels	Low, almost no customer acquisition cost in the repurchase stage, with main costs concentrated in early drainage and content operation
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 personalized services, with strong brand loyalty
Operation Core	Brand exposure, large-scale distribution, compliance control, strictly following platform/channel rules	User relationship maintenance, precise marketing, word-of-mouth fission, independently controlling the operation rhythm
Suitable Products	Standardized mass snacks (such as potato chips, ordinary chocolate, instant noodles)	High-end customized snacks (such as hand-made chocolate, organic nut gift boxes), healthy functional snacks
Operation Difficulties	Fierce channel competition, squeezed profit margins, strict compliance requirements	Difficult early drainage, need to continuously output high-quality content, high user management costs

2. Practical Operation Methods of Public Domain and Private Domain Markets (Including Cases)

(1) Public Domain Market Operation Methods

- **Settling in and Operating on 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, Pringles under Procter & Gamble of the United States settled in Tmall Supermarket, and through the "platform promotion + live streaming with goods" model, the sales volume of the Tmall channel reached 1.2 billion yuan in 2024, of which the live streaming channel contributed 58% of the sales volume. It is necessary to focus on platform compliance requirements, such as label publicity, quality inspection report upload, and allergen labeling.
- **Cooperation with Supermarkets and Chain Convenience Stores:** Connect with large supermarkets and chain convenience stores such as Walmart, China Resources Vanguard, and Family Mart to achieve large-scale distribution. Ferrero Chocolate from Germany cooperated with Family Mart to launch limited-edition mini chocolates. In 2024, the sales volume of the convenience store channel reached 750 million yuan, accounting for 35% of its total sales in China.

(2) Private Domain Market Operation Methods

- **Private Domain Traffic Precipitation:** Release snack reviews, healthy diet popularization, product traceability short videos and other content through public domain channels (Douyin, Xiaohongshu, Zhihu), and use "exclusive discount coupons" and "high-end snack tasting" as hooks to guide users to add corporate WeChat or enter communities. An imported organic nut brand precipitated more than 80,000 private domain users through this method, and the monthly sales volume of the private domain accounted for 75%.
- **Refined Operation Conversion:** Establish a user tag system (such as consumption capacity, taste preferences, usage scenarios), regularly push customized content (such as holiday snack gift box matching plans, healthy snack matching guides), 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 nut brand launched "customized family nut gift boxes" for private domain users, with a repurchase rate of 52%, 28 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, 50% of the new private domain users of the organic nut brand came from recommendations from old users, and the annual sales volume increased by 120 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 chain convenience store 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; combine product characteristics (such as high-end snacks, healthy snacks) to match enterprises with the optimal public-private domain ratio strategy, for example, suggest the "public domain popular science drainage + private domain professional service conversion" model for healthy functional snacks, helping foreign enterprises quickly open the Chinese market.

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

The core risks faced by foreign enterprises' snacks and processed foods entering China include: unregistered overseas enterprises, non-standard label marking, excessive additives, microbial contamination, false labeling of nutritional components, unmarked allergens, etc. According to customs data, from January to June 2025, a total of 156 batches of unqualified imported snacks and processed foods were intercepted nationwide, of which non-standard label marking accounted for 32%, excessive additives accounted for 25%, and microbial contamination accounted for 18%, which were the main reasons for disqualification.

1. Access and Registration Risks

If the overseas production enterprise has not completed registration with the General Administration of Customs, special dietary snacks have not obtained relevant approval qualifications, or the domestic importer has not completed filing, the goods will be

returned or destroyed. chinaentryhub.com can provide preliminary access assessment services, check the registration status of overseas enterprises in advance, assist in completing the registration application, clarify the approval requirements for special categories, ensure that the access qualifications are complete and effective, and avoid fatal access risks.

2. Label Compliance Risks

Problems such as unmarked allergens, incomplete Chinese content, false nutritional component lists, and unsubstantiated functional claims account for 32% of the reasons for disqualification. chinaentryhub.com can provide special label compliance review services, check the label content item by item against standards such as GB 7718 and GB 28050, assist in designing compliant Chinese and English labels, and provide label pre-review services to avoid losses caused by label problems.

3. Quality and Inspection Risks

Quality problems such as excessive additives, microbial contamination, and excessive heavy metals will lead to the destruction of goods. chinaentryhub.com can assist enterprises in conducting full-item quality inspections in advance, focusing on guiding the testing of special indicators such as additives, microorganisms, and nutritional components; connect with compliant domestic and foreign testing institutions to ensure that the test results meet Chinese national standards and avoid quality inspection risks.

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

China's huge demand for snacks and processed foods and the trend of consumption upgrading (such as healthiness, high-endization, and personalization) provide broad opportunities for foreign enterprises. However, the strict regulatory system (especially for label compliance and quality safety), complex channel layout, and fierce market competition put forward higher requirements for enterprises' compliance capabilities and operational capabilities. The three major paths of general trade, joint venture/wholly foreign-owned base 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 regulatory policies on imported snacks and processed foods, full-process practical experience, official resource

docking capabilities, and market operation insight, chinaentryhub.com China Market Access Service Center can assist foreign enterprises in quickly breaking through core barriers such as access registration, label review, channel expansion, and quality control, shortening the average preparation cycle for entering China by more than 50%, while reducing compliance risks and market expansion costs.

In the future, with the further improvement of China's market opening-up level, the supervision of imported snacks and processed foods 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 operational support, occupying a place in the highly competitive Chinese snack and processed food market.



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