



CIVIL

The Role of Central Drugs Standards Control Organization (CDSCO), in Regulating Cosmetic Imports in India

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The **Central Drugs Standards Control Organization (CDSCO)**, part of the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, is central to regulating the import of cosmetics into India. By ensuring strict adherence to safety and quality standards, CDSCO protects consumers and maintains transparency in the import process.

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Legal Framework and Definition of Cosmetics

Cosmetics in India are defined under **Section 3(aaa) of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940** as products applied to the human body for cleansing, beautifying, or altering appearance. This definition also extends to components of cosmetics. The regulation of these products falls under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**, along with the accompanying **Cosmetic Rules, 2020**.

Under this framework, the manufacturing of cosmetics is supervised by **State Licensing Authorities**, while the import of cosmetics is overseen by the CDSCO as the **Central Licensing Authority**. The **Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)**, within CDSCO, is responsible for granting **Import Registration Certificates**, a mandatory requirement for cosmetic imports.

Import Registration and Compliance Requirements

Before importing cosmetics into India, manufacturers must register their products with the CDSCO. The registration process involves detailing the pack size, variants, and manufacturing premises. It is governed by the Cosmetic Rules, 2020, which mandate that all products meet the quality and safety specifications outlined in the **Ninth Schedule** of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act. If a product is not listed in the Ninth Schedule, it must adhere to the standards of its country of origin.

The rules also emphasize that cosmetics must not carry false or misleading claims. Products that fail to meet these regulatory standards are denied entry into the Indian market.

Enhancements in Registration Process

On **August 9, 2024**, the CDSCO introduced a significant update to simplify the registration and import process. Under the new policy, companies using the **SUGAM online portal** can include a maximum of **50 products per application**, though multiple applications are allowed. This policy, effective **August 16, 2024**, was designed to improve application handling and ensure adherence to the processing timelines set by the Cosmetic Rules, 2020.

Stakeholders were informed to align their submissions with this updated policy, ensuring smoother processing and better compliance.

Online Registration via SUGAM Portal

The CDSCO enables a user-friendly online registration process through the **SUGAM portal**. Applicants must create login credentials, fill out the necessary forms, and upload the required documents. Once the application is submitted, it is reviewed by designated officers. Compliant applications are forwarded for approval, while discrepancies are flagged, requiring rectification before approval.

This digitized system ensures efficiency and transparency. Approved applications result in an official approval letter, accessible in the applicant's SUGAM dashboard.

Comprehensive Functionalities of CDSCO

In addition to overseeing cosmetic imports, CDSCO handles various other functions:

- Amending the Cosmetic Rules, 2020, to address evolving needs in the cosmetic industry.
- Scrutinizing applications for registration, NOCs, and clarifications related to imports.
- Responding to public complaints and grievances about product quality.
- Preparing replies for RTIs, court cases, and parliamentary questions.
- Managing government correspondence and coordinating with agencies like the **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)**.

Consumer Protection and Grievance Handling

Consumer safety is central to CDSCO's mandate. The organization actively addresses complaints and inquiries from the public, NGOs, and consumer forums. These issues often relate to the quality standards of imported cosmetics or their compliance with regulatory requirements. By addressing these concerns, CDSCO ensures accountability and builds trust among consumers.

Key Steps in the Registration Process

The registration process involves several steps to ensure thorough compliance:

1. **Accessing the Portal:** Applicants begin by creating a profile on the SUGAM portal.
2. **Form Submission:** The appropriate form is selected, filled out, and submitted, along with supporting documents.
3. **Preview and Checklist:** Applicants preview their forms, make final modifications, and upload documents as per the checklist.
4. **Payment and Submission:** After completing the payment, the application is submitted, generating a reference number for tracking.
5. **Review and Approval:** Designated officers review the application. Approved applications result in an approval letter, while non-compliant applications are returned for corrections.

CDSCO's Impact on the Cosmetic Industry

The stringent regulatory processes established by CDSCO ensure that only high-quality, safe cosmetic products enter the Indian market. By setting clear guidelines and enabling an efficient digital platform, the organization has significantly improved the ease of doing business for cosmetic importers. The introduction of limits on the number of products per application further demonstrates CDSCO's commitment to enhancing operational efficiency and compliance.

Through its complex role, CDSCO regulates the import of cosmetics and ensures that consumer interests are protected. Its efforts to modernize the registration process and address public grievances highlight its proactive approach to governance in the cosmetic sector.

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