

YS Trade Partners

HAMBURG · GULF

UAE Retail Listing Process

How a European product gets from your warehouse to a modern-trade shelf in the UAE — the steps, the economics and the mistakes that cost listings.

Step 1 · The distributor holds the door

UAE hypermarket and supermarket chains (Carrefour, LuLu, Spinneys, Union Coop and others) list through approved local distributors, not through foreign suppliers directly. Your distributor's existing relationship with the retailer's category buyer is the single biggest factor in your listing speed. Without a distributor there is no listing meeting.

Step 2 · Compliance pack

Before any buyer meeting, the distributor needs a complete file: product specification, ingredient and nutrition data, Halal certificate (where applicable), free-sale certificate, certificate of origin, and an Arabic/English label that meets UAE labelling rules. Barcodes (GS1) and a shelf-life statement are checked at this stage.

Step 3 · The listing proposal

The distributor presents a category proposal: why the product, which shelf, what price ladder, what launch support. Retailers expect a listing fee per SKU per store or banner, an opening promotion, and often in-store sampling. Budget for these as the cost of entry, not as negotiable extras.

Step 4 · Margin arithmetic

Work from the shelf price backwards: retailer margin, distributor margin, listing and promotional costs, 5% customs duty, cold-chain or dry logistics, then your landed price. A product that only closes the arithmetic at a shelf price above its local competitors will be delisted at the first range review.

Step 5 · Launch and the first range review

Listings are provisional. Retailers review sell-through after the first cycle (typically a quarter). Products that were not supported — no promotion, no visibility, no replenishment discipline — are removed. Agree the first-quarter plan with your distributor in writing before the first container ships.

What delays listings

Non-compliant labels (missing Arabic, wrong date format), incomplete Halal documentation, shelf life under six months on arrival, unrealistic ex-works pricing, and a distributor that carries too many competing brands in your category.

Find out in 14 working days whether a Gulf distributor will take your product.

Free 2-minute product check. If it fits: €500 for a written distributor decision — refunded on a “no”.

CHECK YOUR PRODUCT