

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Good morning, everyone. It is a pleasure to address such a distinguished group of global suppliers. We are here today to talk about a market that acts as a bridge between east and west. As many of you know, the Turkish consumer market is vibrant, young, and highly fashion-forward. However, accessing this market requires more than just good design and competitive pricing; it requires unwavering compliance. Today, I am going to walk you through the critical product safety inspections conducted by the Ministry of Trade. We will look beyond **the red tape** to understand the why and the how of these regulations implemented.

I want to start by clarifying what we are doing. Our regulations are not designed simply to create red tape; they are built on three specific aims. First and foremost, we are here to protect the end-user and the environment from hazardous substances. Second, we aim to prevent unfair competition; we don't want compliant companies to lose out to competitors who cut costs by ignoring safety standards. And finally, we protect the reputation of the brands trading here. When the market is safe, consumer trust increases for everyone.

If you look at the legal backbone of our operations, you will see it rests on the **Product Safety and Technical Legislation Law No. 7223**. For those of you familiar with international trade, it is helpful to know that thanks to the Customs Union, Türkiye's regulations are almost fully harmonized with the European Union. If you are compliant with EU standards, you are compliant with our regulations, too. Specifically for apparel and footwear, we strictly enforce the **REACH** and **POP** (Persistent Organic Pollutants) regulations.

Our inspection structure is essentially divided into two pillars: Market Surveillance and Import Control. Both are managed by the Ministry of Trade, but they function differently.

Market Surveillance happens after the goods are already on store shelves. Here, we look at both domestic and imported goods. We conduct chemical checks for compliance with REACH and POP regulations. We also perform physical checks, looking at labeling and also children's garments in the sense of safety hazards like strangulation risks, cord lengths, and flammability.

Import Control, on the other hand, happens at the border. Here, the focus is slightly tighter. Chemically, we check for REACH compliance. Physically, we are also focused on children's safety, checking for strangulation hazards and cord safety before the goods enter the market. However, unlike the market surveillance, every product in scope of import control has to apply an online, risk-based system in order to enter the Turkish market.

This brings us to the most critical part of your logistics: the **TAREKS**. This is our risk-based trade control system. It's important to understand that TAREKS uses an algorithm to determine how your goods are treated. It works on a sliding scale. If your product is deemed "No Risk," it enters without inspection. If it has "Low Risk," we simply perform a document control; we are checking only test reports, photos, waybills, and invoices. "Moderate Risk" items are facing physical checks in the customs area. However, if you fall into the "High Risk" category, your products will go directly to laboratory testing, even if you already have test reports.

This is where the stakes are high. If a product is tested and found to be unsafe or non-compliant, it will be rejected. But more importantly, that rejection feeds back into the TAREKS algorithm. Your company will then be perceived as “riskier” by the system. This creates a domino effect: future shipments will face frequent stops, drastically longer waiting periods at customs, and significantly higher costs for warehousing and testing. This is an algorithm-driven process supported by human expertise. It creates a level playing field where compliant companies are rewarded with speed, and non-compliant one’s face delays.

So, how do you avoid getting stuck in the “High Risk” channel?

First, you must find the blind spots in your supply chain. You need to prevent cross-contamination; ensure your clean goods aren't sitting next to non-compliant goods in the warehouse.

Second, you have to be strategic about pre-testing. We highly recommend to pre-test goods before the shipment. Don't just test the fabric; focus on the details. Zippers, chains, laces, and adhesives are often where we find heavy metals or prohibited chemicals that cause a shipment to fail. Ensure the labels and fiber compositions in tags are accurate, translated correctly into Turkish and attached securely.

Finally, **validate your test reports**. Before you ship the goods, make sure the documents and test reports you receive from your suppliers are genuine. A false report is the fastest way to damage your standing in the TAREKS system. By paying attention to these details, you ensure a smooth entry into the Turkish market.

In short, The Ministry of Trade’s inspections are not designed to stop trade; they are designed to stop *unsafe* trade. In a market as competitive as Türkiye, **compliance is your passport**. When you prioritize product safety, you are protecting Turkish consumers, but you are also protecting your brand’s integrity. We invite you to view these technical regulations not as constraints, but as the standard of excellence that defines our partnership. Let us work together not just to fill containers, but to ensure that every pair of shoes and every garment that enters Türkiye adds value, safety, and quality to the market.

Thank you for your time.

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