



Ministry of Economy and Industry
Foreign Trade Administration

Introduction to Cosmetics Registration and Filing in China

Economic Mission in Beijing,
Foreign Trade Administration, Ministry of Economy
and Industry

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Part I. Introduction of China Cosmetics Market and Regulatory Landscape



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The Opportunity: China's Cosmetics Market

Massive Growth: China is currently the world's second largest consumer market for cosmetics. Retail sales are projected to USD 208.6 billion by 2026.

Consumer Demand: Strong appetite for premium, innovative, and scientifically advanced beauty products.

Imports are Key: Imported products fill gaps in local offerings, especially in:

- Anti-aging formulations
- Organic skincare
- Microbiome-friendly products
- Cutting-edge cosmeceuticals

Key Regulatory Bodies

SAMR (State Administration for Market Regulation):

Oversees broad market supervision and standardization.

NMPA (National Medical Products Administration):

The primary authority for cosmetics regulation.

- Safety Supervision & Post-market Surveillance
- Registration & Filing Management
- Standards Development (e.g., IECIC Ingredient List)

CCE (Center for Cosmetic Evaluation):

Conducts technical reviews for special cosmetics.

Provincial MPAs:

Handle local inspections, sampling, and enforcement.

IECIC-2021 List:

The official inventory of permitted cosmetic ingredients in China.



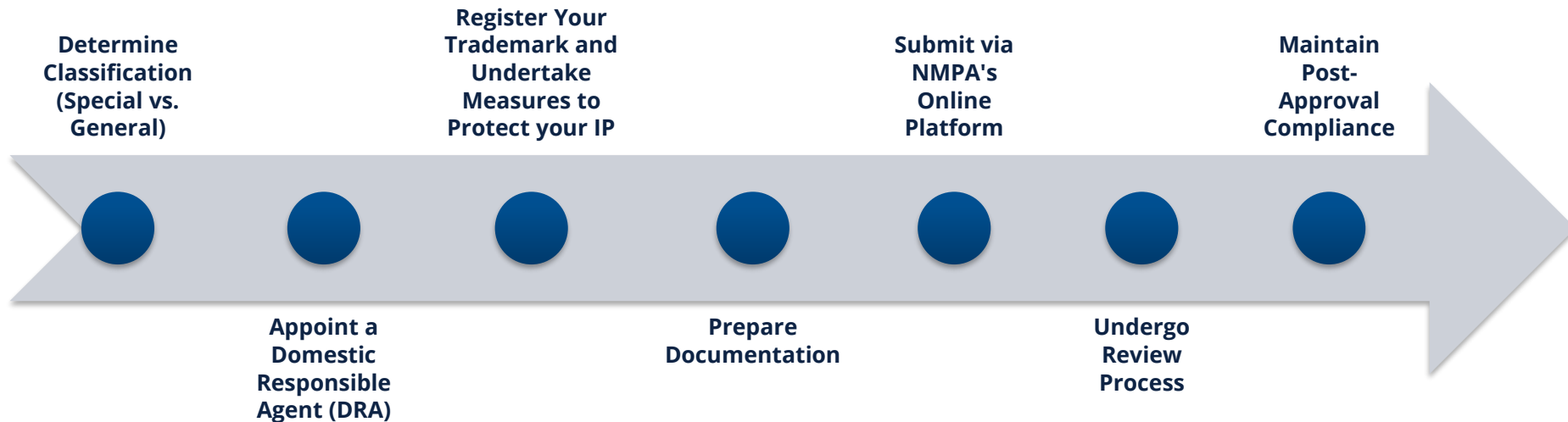
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Part II. Cosmetics Registration and Filing Process



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Key Steps Overview



Product Classification

In China, cosmetics are divided into **two categories**: general cosmetics and special cosmetics.

General Cosmetics

- Refer to cosmetics other than special cosmetics (such as **skin care, hair care, body care, perfume**, and other products)
- Requires **Filing Only** (simplified process, 15-30 days).
- Animal Testing may be waived if certain conditions are met.

Special Cosmetics

- Refer to **anti-spot and whitening, sunscreen, hair dye, hair perm, anti-hair loss cosmetics**;
- Or/and **contains a new cosmetics ingredient** (i.e. it is not listed on the current IECIC 2021 list);
- Or/and cosmetics **claiming new efficacy**;
- Cosmetics that are designed to be **used for infants/children**.
- **Requires Registration** (rigorous review, 90-180 days) + **Animal Testing** is required.

Appointing a DRA

Distributor	Own subsidiary	Consulting firm
+ Distributor may offer to cover upfront investment required to file/register in return for lower transfer price - Possible IP violation as the Distributor has access to sensitive information as part of the filing/registration process - Distributor retains control of filing/registration certificates which can impact imports, change notifications and renewals - No other Distributor can be added without their approval; it can also be difficult to replace Distributor	+ Retain full control of certificates and therefore flexibility in choosing as many channel partners as required - Requires an established and well-functioning cosmetovigilance system in China to conform with NMPA requirements - Considerable investment required to set up a company, find and hire qualified and experienced regulatory experts	+ Qualified and experienced regulatory and quality experts available immediately to file/register your product and undertake Post-Market Surveillance + Retain full flexibility in choosing or replacing channel partners as required + Retain full control of your certificates - Annual representation fees/costs

Source: Cisema

Note: Local distributors may offer to handle product registration at no cost. While financially appealing, this arrangement carries significant long-term risks:

- **Loss of Brand Control:** Exclusive agreements are difficult to terminate, limiting your operational flexibility.
- **Loss of Product Ownership:** If the product is registered in the distributor's name, you do not legally own the registration in that market.
- **Termination Becomes Critical:** If you end the partnership, regaining ownership of your product registration is extremely difficult, if not impossible.

It is recommended to conduct **due diligence checks** when selecting the local distributor, or to register the cosmetics products under a third-party agency or consulting companies.

Secure Your Foundation: Intellectual Property in China

China is a "First-to-File" Country

The first person to register a trademark owns it, regardless of prior international use or brand recognition.

Delay is a major risk. Trademark squatters actively register well-known foreign brands.

What You Must Protect:

- **Trademarks:**
 - Your **brand name** in English and its official **Chinese translation**.
 - Your **logo**.
 - **Product packaging designs** (to prevent counterfeiting).
- **Patents:**
 - File for **unique formulations** or **technological innovations**.
- **Copyrights:**
 - Protect proprietary **marketing materials**, website content, and advertising.

Key Strategies for Israeli Companies:

- **Register Early:** Register your trademarks with the China National Intellectual Property Administration (CNIPA) *before* publicly announcing your market entry. Register your patent as soon as possible.
- **Register Broadly:** Don't just register your core category (e.g., skincare). Cover related classes like cosmetics tools, advertising, and retail services.
- **Conduct Due Diligence:** Before finalizing a Chinese brand name, ensure it is available, culturally appropriate, and not already registered.

Consequence of Inaction:

Loss of brand control, legal battles, and being unable to sell your own products under your own name in the world's second-largest market.

Prepare Documentation

For General Cosmetics (Filing)	For Special Cosmetics (Registration)
1. Application form for administrative approval of imported "general" cosmetics 2. Rationale for nomenclature of the products' Chinese names 3. Product formulas containing the INCI name, content and function, trade name, supplier name of each ingredient 4. Product quality and safety control requirements 5. Packaging layouts (including product labels and inlets) 6. Chinese label 7. Descriptions and diagrams of the production process (flowchart) 8. Product technical requirements 9. Test reports issued by NMPA-accredited testing institutions and related dossier 10. Product Safety Assessment Report 11. Ingredient safety information, Annex 14 or Cosmetic Ingredient Code 12. Free Sales Certificate - Documents proving production and sales of the products in the country (region) of origin 13. Original ISO/GMP certificate 14. Additional information that may be useful for administrative approval, including Contract Manufacturing Agreement (if applicable), Letter of Authorization and Power of Attorney between applicant and DRA, Business License of DRA, etc. Under the CSAR, the following documents will also be required: 1. Resume of the person in charge of quality and safety 2. Overview of the quality management system of the registrant/filer 3. Overview of the monitoring and evaluation system for adverse reactions of the registrant/filer 4. Efficacy test reports	1. All general cosmetics documents plus: 2. Efficacy evaluation report (clinical or literature-based). 3. Toxicology data for novel ingredients (if the ingredients are not included in the IECIC list). 4. One sample of marketed product sealed by a designated test institution. Samples need to be delivered to China, as the cosmetics will be tested against related Chinese standards, even if testing has already been carried out elsewhere.

To Avoid Animal Testing

General Cosmetics

No animal testing is required if the product is:

- Sold online (on authorized platforms such as JD, Alibaba, etc)
- Sold in Hong Kong

If you wish to sell in **retail stores** in mainland China, you can apply for an animal testing exemption if you meet all of the following:

- 1) Produce only "**general** " **cosmetics** (not special cosmetics).
- 2) Rely exclusively on **approved ingredients** already listed in the IECIC 2021 list.
- 3) Be able to carry out a **full product risk assessment** based on existing ingredient data
- 4) Obtain a **GMP certification** issued and granted by your national/local government cosmetics authority

Other Cosmetics

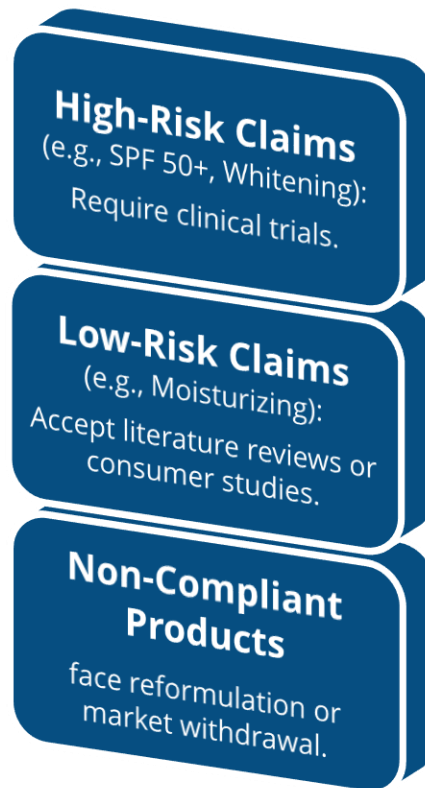
Animal testing is required if the product:

- Is designed to be used for **infants/children**
- Contains:
 - **Sunscreens**
 - **Hair dyes**
 - **Hair perming**
 - **Anti-hair loss**
 - **Whitening products**
- Makes a **new efficacy claim**
- Contains a **new cosmetics ingredients** (i.e. not listed in the IECIC 2021 list)

Efficacy Claims Require Evidence

- Under the new China's New Cosmetics Regulation (CSAR), Cosmetic products with efficacy claims shall be supported by an efficacy evaluation, even for "general cosmetics".

Efficacy Claims	Anti-hair loss, freckle-removing (whitening), sunscreens	Anti-acne, repairing, nourishing	For sensitive skin, tear-free formula	Anti-wrinkle, firming, oil-control, exfoliator (not physical form), prevent hair breakage, anti-dandruff, mild (no irritation), any specific quantitative indicators	Moisturizing, haircare, special claims on the raw material	Any other new efficacy claims
Evaluation Principles	Human Trial					Specific to efficacy claims
	Consumer use test					
				Lab test		
				Literature or research data		
Evaluation Methods	Methods prescribed in mandatory national standards and technical norms					
		• Methods specified in other relevant regulations, national standards and industry standards in China; • Methods prescribed in relevant foreign regulations or technical standards; • Methods released by domestic or international authoritative organizations, technical institutions and industry associations, methods published in professional academic journals and magazines, or self-drafted and developed methods				
Evaluation Institutions	NMPA accredited labs in China	Both Chinese and international institutions are acceptable			NMPA accredited labs in China	



Submission, Fees, and Review

Since September 1, 2024, all submissions must be electronic:

- Create an account on the NMPA Cosmetics Registration and Filing Platform.
- Upload documents (PDF/Word) with digital signatures (CA certificate required).

Pay fees:

- General Cosmetics: ~RMB 2,000 (filing).
- Special Cosmetics: ~RMB15,000–30,000 (registration).

General Cosmetics (Filing)	Special Cosmetics (Registration)
Timeline: 15–30 working days	Timeline: 90–180 working days
Process: - Automated system checks for completeness. -NMPA issues filing certificate (permanent valid).	Process: -Technical review by the Center for Cosmetic Evaluation (CCE). -Ingredient safety and efficacy validation. -On-site factory inspection (if required). -NMPA issues registration certificate (valid for 5 years).

Post-Approval Compliance and Renewal

Post-Approval Compliance:

- **Labeling:** Apply for pre-market packaging approval (Chinese labels with DRA contact).
- **Annual Reporting:** Submit safety and sales data to the NMPA by **March 31** each year.
- **Post-Market Surveillance:** Track adverse reactions (report within 15 days). Prepare for provincial sampling inspections.

Renewal (Special Cosmetics Only):

- Certificates are valid for **5** years.
- Submit renewal application 90-30 working days before expiration.
- Recommendation: Start preparation up to 1 year in advance to accommodate potential new testing requirements.

Labeling Requirements

Category	Mandatory Information & Key Rules
1. Language & Legibility	• Simplified Chinese is mandatory. • Other languages allowed but cannot be more prominent. • Text must be clear, legible, and easy to read.
2. Product Identification	• Product Name (Chinese). • Executive Standard Number. • NMPA Registration/Filing Number (e.g., 国妆特进字JXXXXXXXX).
3. Entity Information	• Registrant/Filer name and address. • Domestic Responsible Agent (DRA) name and address in China. • Manufacturer name, address, and production license number.
4. Product Contents	• Full Ingredient List (in descending order of concentration). • Net Content (weight/volume).
5. Usage & Safety	• Expiration Date or Production Date & Shelf Life. • Usage Instructions. • Safety Warnings & Cautions
6. Prohibited Claims	• No Medical Claims: Cannot claim to "treat," "cure," or "prevent" disease. • No Absolute Claims: Terms like "100% Organic," "Zero Added," "Hypoallergenic" are banned. • No false or misleading efficacy claims.
7. Special Cases	• Special Cosmetics (e.g., sunscreen, hair dye) must display registration number. • Children's Cosmetics must display the "Little Golden Shield" (小金盾) logo. • Inner Container (e.g., bottle, jar) must show product name and expiration date if there is an outer box.
8. E-Commerce	Online product listings must display all the mandatory information found on the physical label.

Solely Sale in Cross Border E-Commerce(CBEC)

What is the Advantage?

- Cosmetics imported through CBEC retail channels (e.g., Tmall Global, JD Worldwide) are **exempt from mandatory NMPA registration and filing**.
- They are legally classified as **"goods for personal use"** and cannot be re-sold within China.

Despite the Exemption, Key Rules Still Apply:

- **Basic Labeling & Claims:**
 - Products must meet basic **consumer safety labeling requirements**.
 - They **cannot make unapproved efficacy claims** (e.g., medical or unsubstantiated "anti-aging" claims).
- **Platform Accountability:**
 - CBEC platforms (like Tmall Global) must **register sellers' real names** and establish **quality and safety control mechanisms**.
 - They enforce their own **platform-specific rules** (e.g., *Tmall Global Cosmetics Platform Standards*), which govern product quality, safety, and consumer rights.
 - Prohibited Action examples:
 - A Chinese distributor buys 100 bottles from your Tmall Global store to stock their physical boutique.
 - A reseller purchases stock via CBEC to list and sell on a domestic e-commerce platform like Tmall.com or JD.com.
 - The products are shipped to a bonded warehouse and then distributed to local stores for sale.
- **Obligations for the Foreign Company:**
 - Must appoint a **China-based legal entity (DRA)** to handle compliance, product recalls, and adverse event monitoring.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid (Part 1)

1. Trademark & IP Missteps

- **The Problem:** China is a "First-to-File" country. Delay or incorrect registration leads to squatters.
- **Example:** A U.S. beauty brand lost **\$150M** in sales because a squatter registered its well-known Chinese name first. The brand could not reclaim it.
- **Best Practice:**
 - Register your trademark in **English and Chinese**. Register in **multiple classes** (e.g., skincare, tools, advertising) to block counterfeiters.

2. Data Privacy & Compliance Risks (for Digital Apps)

- **The Problem:** Virtual try-on apps collecting facial data must comply with China's strict Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL).
- **Example:**
 - An app that uses **bundled consent** (e.g., one agreement for data collection and marketing) is **illegal**.
 - Storing original facial images instead of anonymized data risks fines of up to **5% of annual revenue**.
- **Best Practice:**
 - Obtain **separate, explicit consent** for data collection.
 - Only store **anonymized summaries**, not original biometric data.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid (Part 2)

3. Registration & Partnership Missteps

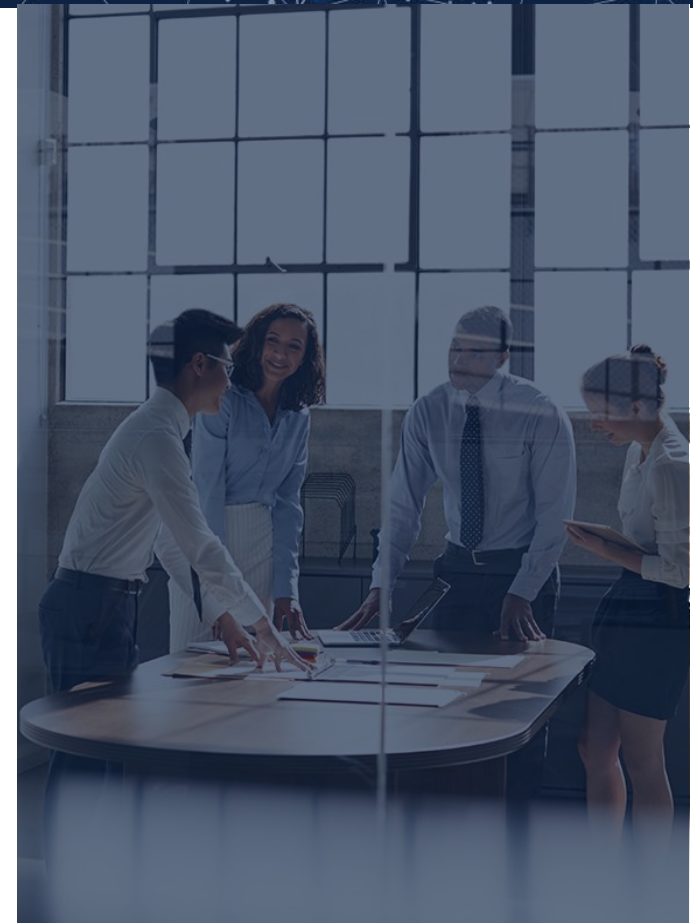
- **The Problem:** Over-reliance on distributors and poor choice of legal representative.
- **Example:**
 - If your **distributor registers your product under their name**, you lose brand control. Terminating the agreement may mean you **lose the right to sell your own product** in China.
 - An **inexperienced Domestic Responsible Agent (DRA)** can cause application delays and compliance failures. **You, the foreign company, are held ultimately liable** by the NMPA for any violations.
- **Best Practice:**
 - Conduct due diligence and appoint a **qualified, experienced DRA**.

4. Misunderstanding Labeling Rules

- **The Problem:** Using banned claims and non-compliant branding.
- **Examples of Banned Claims:**

The words "**Organic**," "**100% Natural**," and "**Zero Added**" are **prohibited** on labels for imported cosmetics, even with international certifications.
- **Example of Non-Compliant vs. Compliant Trademark:**
 - **Non-Compliant Label: LYMPHODIA Anti-Aging Cream**
Why it fails: No Chinese name, uses banned medical claim ("Anti-Aging").
 - **Compliant Label: 琳芙黛亚 (LYMPHODIA) 保湿抗皱面霜**
琳芙黛亚是注册商标, 无具体含义。
Why it works: Provides a Chinese transliteration, and a disclaimer, and uses a permissible claim ("Anti-Wrinkle").
- **Best Practice:**
 - Avoid banned claim terms.
 - Always create and use a **compliant Chinese brand name** on your label.

What We Do- Beijing Economic Mission



How We Can Help





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Thank You

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Annex General Time Line

Filing		Registration	
Duration	Step		Duration
8 weeks	Appoint a DRA		8 weeks
	Apply for NMPA Online Account <i>Packaging & formula review by Cisema</i>		
2 weeks	Transport testing samples to China		2 weeks
10 weeks <i>(not including efficacy claim testing)</i>	Testing		16-40 weeks
	Prepare and submit application		2 weeks
		NMPA Format Review	2 weeks
		Pass ← Supplementary Notice → Fail	
		NMPA Technical Review	22 weeks
		Pass ← Supplementary Notice → Fail	
		Submit supplementary files	Within 90 working days
		NMPA Administrative Review	4 weeks
		Pass ← Recheck → Fail	
		Certificate	2 weeks
1 week		Information Disclosure	1 week
		Customs Clearance & Importation	
	Post Market Surveillance		
4-5 months		14-18 months	

Source: Cisema