

Importing products of non-animal origin

Explains the legal requirements that food businesses who import products of non-animal origin into Great Britain must comply with.

This legislation lists the products of non-animal origin that have increased levels of controls when importing into Great Britain (GB), and sets out the extra steps and processes importers must undertake at border control posts (BCP) when importing these goods.

Where border controls exist, there is usually a requirement for the Port Health Authority to conduct documentary checks and sampling for analysis or physical examination.

Foodstuffs with current restrictions

These controls exist to protect public health and may either suspend imports or specify conditions of import. In most cases, consignments may only be imported through border control points, documentary checks must be carried out and sampling and analysis or examination may be required prior to release.

Important

Check controls affecting imports from specific Non-EU countries in [the table of foodstuffs with current restrictions \(August 2020\)](#).

Please note that any links to legislation provided in this document are for information purposes only and may not be the most up-to-date version.

Import conditions may be updated due to changes in policy or legislation. It the food business operator's responsibility to ensure that they have the latest information.



Importing through a suitable port

Most non-POAO may enter through any port that can accept food or feed, however you must check that the port has the necessary facilities in place to manage the imported produce. Importers should [contact the port](#) or [contact the local authority where the port is situated](#).

These are products likely to be contaminated with aflatoxins (such as nuts), pesticides, Salmonella or radiocaesium, for example.

Importers should be aware that some products from specific countries are subject to emergency controls and can only enter the UK through designated [border control posts \(BCPs\)](#).

You can access a list of UK designated points of [import for high-risk foods](#).

Legislation for importing produce of non-animal origin

Food that is intended for human consumption must meet the general food safety legal requirements.

Under assimilated [Regulation 178/2002](#), food must not be unsafe. This means:

- injurious to health
- unfit for human consumption

Apart from the general provisions of assimilated Regulation 178/2002, the specific legislation applying to imported food will depend on whether the food is of animal origin or not.

Emergency controls exist for certain food products not of animal origin from specific countries to reduce known human or animal health risks. Assimilated [Regulation 2019/1793](#) applies official controls on imports of certain feed and food of non-animal origin.

Importing trade samples of non-animal origin

Trade samples of food can be imported for test marketing, research and development, or quality assurance purposes. Samples of food that do not contain any POAO can enter GB freely, unless restrictions apply. Where the product is for research purposes (for example, laboratory tests), a display item or for commercial approval, and will not be consumed, they may be exempted from the controls. However, this exemption only applies to samples weighing up to 30kg.

If the samples are for taste testing, they must be edible and free from contamination. Even if the samples are given away, it is likely that they will be controlled by food law as there is an 'extended definition of sale' in the Food Safety Act 1990, which covers food given away. For further advice, contact [your local authority's food safety team or environmental health department](#).

Importers must ensure that their goods are safe and legal before they are imported into GB.

Public analysts, who are skilled scientists, are available to test that food samples comply with food safety requirements by undertaking chemical analysis and/or by arranging for microbiological examination, although there is no legal requirement for importers to do so.

We have published a list of [Official Food Control Laboratories in the UK](#).

In addition, there are other laboratories in the UK and abroad that would undertake the work that importers may require. The importer could then arrange for the analysis report to form the basis of their quality controls for their supplier.