

# Importing sugar and sweeteners

Guidance on additives, labelling, packaging and hygiene when importing sugar and sweeteners.

## General information

Imports of sugar and sweeteners must meet the same or equivalent food hygiene and compositional standards and procedures as food produced in GB. You do not normally need a health certificate to import these products.

## Import licences

You may not need a health or hygiene licence to import food, but many foods require licences for trading purposes and may be subject to quotas.

For further information please visit the [Rural Payments Agency's website](#).

## Labelling

You will find general information about [food labelling on the GOV.UK website](#). Please visit GOV.UK to locate your local authority's Trading Standards Department or Environmental Health Department for advice on the [labelling of specific products](#).

## Organics

If you are importing organic products (live or unprocessed agricultural products, processed agricultural for use as food or feed and vegetative propagating material and seeds for cultivation) please visit [DEFRA's website](#) to contact the Organic Imports Team. For information on organic regulation and standards, (including labelling) within the UK please contact DEFRA's Organic Strategy Team.

## Packaging

Food contact materials and articles, including those used for food packaging, are controlled by retained UK law. This legislation is particularly thorough in its control of plastic materials and articles intended for food use. For information on the safety of packaging please contact the Food Contact Materials team [through our online form](#).

## Food hygiene

For general enquiries on food hygiene please contact the Food Hygiene Policy team.

## Pesticides

For [information on pesticides safety levels](#) for sugar and sweeteners [contact Health and Safety Executive's \(HSE\) Chemicals Regulation Directorate](#).

## Contaminants

The [Contaminants in Food \(England\) Regulations 2013](#) make provision for enactment and enforcement of retained UK law which set out regulatory limits for contaminants in food, such as nitrate, mycotoxins, metals, 3-MCPD, dioxins and PAHs.

## Import restrictions

Approved food additives, such as sweeteners, are controlled in GB legislation once their safety has been rigorously assessed. The legislation describes the rules for the sale and use of sweeteners, describes the food categories in which they are permitted to be used and the maximum usable dose levels allowed in these categories. Sweeteners that do not appear in the list are not permitted in foods if used primarily for an additive function.

For more information on sweeteners, please contact our Food Additives Team [through our online form](#).

The use of Steviol glycosides are permitted in certain foods at set levels. Steviol glycosides (including stevioside and rebaudioside A) are high intensity sweeteners, 250-300 times sweeter than sucrose. They are isolated and purified from the leaves of the stevia plant (*Stevia rebaudiana* Bertoni). Steviol glycosides complying with specific purity criteria will be permitted in specified food types (such as soft drinks, confectionary and table-top sweeteners) subject to specified maximum levels.

Stevia leaves are regarded to be novel foods and require a [separate application and approval](#) before they can be legally marketed in GB. The Novel Foods catalogue states that a significant history of consumption exists for tea, herbal and fruit infusions containing or prepared with leaves of *Stevia rebaudiana* Bertoni and intended to be consumed as such. It should not be added as an ingredient to other foods and the stevia infusion should not be added to other products.