

# Importing fruit and vegetables

Guidance on what a higher risk product is, labelling, packaging, chemical safety and controls on plant health.

Imports of fruit and vegetables (whether fresh, dried, tinned, processed or frozen) from outside the European Union (EU) must meet the same standards of hygiene and go through the same safety procedures as food produced in the EU . You do not normally need a health certificate to import fruit and vegetables.

If importing fruit and vegetables, also see [Importing plant products and vegetarian products](#) for guidance on importing these types of products.

## Higher risk products

Imports of certain feed and food of non-animal origin that are considered “higher-risk” can only enter the UK through specific ports and airports which are designated points of entry (DPEs) where official controls will be carried out. A “higher-risk” product is feed or food that is either known to be, or is an emerging risk, to public health.

## Labelling

You will find [general information about food labelling online](#). For advice on the labelling of specific products, please contact your local authority’s Trading Standards Department or Environmental Health Department.

You can [find contact details for these online](#).

## Packaging

Food contact materials and articles, including those used for food packaging, are controlled by all-encompassing EU legislation that has been implemented in the UK. 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](#) by email.

## Food hygiene

For general enquiries on food hygiene, including frozen food and seeds for sprouting, please contact the [Food Hygiene Policy Team](#) by email.

## Additives

Some products contain food colourings, flavourings or sweeteners. Although these may be approved by the food authority in the country of origin, some of them may not be approved in the EU.

For information on food flavourings, sweeteners, colourings and preservatives, please contact the Food Standards Agency (FSA)’s [Food Additives team](#) by email.

## Chemical safety

### Contaminants

A guidance note on the [Contaminants in Food](#) (England) Regulations 2013, which make provision for enactment and enforcement of Commission Regulations setting limits for contaminants in food (nitrate, mycotoxins, metals, 3-MCPD, dioxins and PAHs), is available online.

### Pesticides

Regarding pesticides safety levels, please contact the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Chemicals Regulation Directorate (CRD)

### Aflatoxins

Imports of certain foodstuffs from certain non-EU countries such as dried figs and dried fig products from Turkey, and dried fruits, are subject to special conditions due to contamination risk by aflatoxins. This means that consignments can only enter the EU through specific ports or airports which are designated points of imports (DPIs) where official controls will be carried out.

### Plant health

There are many plant products that are either prohibited from entering the UK from countries outside the EU, or require a phytosanitary certificate to do so. Official controls and restrictions on the import, movement, and keeping of plants, plant pests and other material for example soil are vital to help prevent the introduction and spread of harmful organisms.

The Plant Health team at the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) provides [information about any plant health requirements](#), or whether the fruit and vegetables you want to import require a phytosanitary, certificate on their website.

Alternatively you can access their webpage on [Plant health controls](#).

### Advertising nutrition and health claims

For information on any marketing standards requirements for fresh fruit and vegetables, please contact [DEFRA's Horticultural Marketing Inspectorate](#) through their website.

### Food industry guides available

For specific information on hygiene requirements for Watercress, read our [Industry guide to good hygiene – Watercress 2017](#) on the [Watercress, Good for Everybody](#) website.

### Medical claims

Medicinal claims are made for some fruit and vegetables e.g. the Wonder Bean 'Lupinus Albus'. Products where claims are made for the treatment or prevention of disease, or which is administered with a view to restoring, correcting or modifying physiological functions by exerting a pharmacological, immunological or metabolic action, fall within the definition of a medicine.

For further information please contact

You can find out [further information on medical claims](#) by contacting The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), through their website.

## **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), from outside the EU, please contact the [Organic Imports team](#) through DEFRA's website.

## **Imports from certain countries**

### **Hijiki seaweed**

The FSA is advising people not to eat 'Hijiki', a type of seaweed, following a survey that showed that it contains high levels of a form of arsenic which is known to have carcinogenic properties. For more information on Hijiki seaweed get in touch with our [Chemical contaminants team](#) by email.

### **Lettuce and spinach**

The above contaminants legislation also applies to safety levels of nitrate in lettuce and spinach imported into the UK.

Contact us

for information about these levels and testing procedures please contact our [Chemical Contaminants team](#) by email.

## **Imports of feed and food from Japan**

Imports of all feed and food originating in or consigned from Japan to the EU are subject to special conditions. This is following the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan in March 2011. This means that consignments of feed and food can only enter the UK through specific ports and airports where official controls will be carried out.

## **Team contacts**

### **Food contact materials team**

[FoodContactMaterial@food.gov.uk](mailto:FoodContactMaterial@food.gov.uk)

### **Food hygiene policy**

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