

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 third countries must meet the same standards of hygiene and go through the same safety procedures as food produced in GB. 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 GB through specific ports and airports which are authorised Border Control Posts (BCP) 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](#) on GOV.UK website. For advice on the labelling of specific products, please [contact your local authority's Trading Standards Department or Environmental Health Department](#).

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](#) 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 GB.

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

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

Further [information on chemical contaminants](#).

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 third 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 GB through authorised Border Control Posts (BCP) 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 GB, 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 [Industry guide to good hygiene – Watercress](#).

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 on medical claims contact [The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency](#) (MHRA).

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 third countries, 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 GB.

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