

Importing plant products and vegetarian products

Information on importing plant and vegetarian products, including additives, labelling and chemical safety. This doesn't include fruit and vegetables

General information

Imports of Plant products and vegetarian products from countries outside the European Union (EU) must meet the same standards of food hygiene and go through the same procedures as food produced in the EU. This page covers plant products like:

- chickpeas
- kidney beans
- tofu
- peas
- beans
- pulses
- mycoproteins such as quorn
- soy products such as textured vegetable protein (TVP)
- millet
- sunflower seeds
- pumpkin seeds

For tea and coffee imports see also [Importing drinks](#) and [Importing fruit and vegetables](#).

Import licences

You may not need a health or hygiene licence to import food, but many foods from countries outside the EU require licences for trading purposes and may be subject to quotas. [Rural Payments Agency](#).

Food colourings, flavourings and sweeteners

Some plant and vegetarian products may 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. [Email our food additives team](#) for any queries.

Labelling

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

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, contact the [Organic Imports team](#) at DEFRA. For information on organic regulation and standards, 1 (including labelling) within the UK please contact the [Organic Strategy team](#).

Packaging

Food contact materials and articles, including those used for food packaging, are controlled by a comprehensive EU harmonised legislation that has been fully 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](#).

Food hygiene

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

Pesticides

Information on [pesticides safety levels](#) contact Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Chemicals Regulation Directorate (CRD).

Contaminants

A guidance note on the Contaminants in Food (England) Regulations 2013, which make provision for enactment and enforcement of Commission Regulations setting regulatory limits for contaminants in food (nitrate, mycotoxins, metals, 3-MCPD, dioxins and PAHs), can be found [archived](#) on The National Archives website.

Import restrictions

There are some import restrictions/requirements that can apply to plant products or vegetarian products. These are as follows:

Higher-risk products

Imports of certain feed and food of non-animal origin that are considered to be 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. Read our business guidance on [mycotoxins](#).

Aflatoxins

As of 1 January 2010 imports of certain foodstuffs from certain non-EU countries are subject to special conditions due to contamination risk by aflatoxins. This will mean 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. Information for business operators as well as our guidance on [mycotoxins](#).

Vegetarian foods containing dairy products

Many vegetarian foods contain dairy products and as such may be considered as products of animal origin. For further information please contact the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) in Carlisle on 01228 403 600 (option 3) or by email at imports@apha.gsi.gov.uk. APHA is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Plant health requirements

There are a number of 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 (e.g. soil) are vital to help prevent the introduction and spread of harmful organisms.

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

Imports of feed and food from Japan

As of 27 March 2011 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 will mean that consignments of feed and food can only enter the UK through specific ports and airports where official controls will be carried out. Further information for business operators.

Team Contacts

Food Additives Team

foodadditives@food.gov.uk

Food Contact Materials Team

FoodContactMaterial@food.gov.uk

Food Hygiene Policy Team

foodhygiene.policy@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk