

Consultation launched ahead of possible changes to Fukushima import controls

Controls have been placed on imports of food from Japan by the EU since a nuclear incident in March 2011.

The FSA is now carrying out a planned review of these controls to provide food safety and public health advice to Ministers, so a decision can be made on whether these are needed moving forward.

The majority of food products from Japan can already be imported without any restrictions or checks on levels of radioactivity. However, controls remain for a limited number of products from certain regions of Japan.

This has affected a number of fish species, wild mushrooms and foraged Japanese vegetables in these areas.

Responsibility for radiological food safety risk analysis, which over the past decade has resulted in the gradual easing of restrictions, now sits with the FSA for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and Food Standards Scotland in Scotland, following the UK's departure from the EU.

FSA scientists, assisted by COMARE – the Department of Health and Social Care's expert Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment - have concluded that removing the 100 becquerels per kilogram (Bq/kg) maximum level of radiocaesium (radioactive forms of caesium) for food imported from Japan to the UK would result in a negligible increase in dose and any associated risk to UK consumers.

The [scientific risk assessment](#) has been published for information and is available to view online.

FSA Explains

The becquerel is the standard unit of measurement for radioactivity, or in this specific instance of radiocaesium – a radioactive isotope of caesium, formed following a nuclear reaction. For more information, visit our [radioactivity in food webpage](#).

A public consultation is now offering stakeholders and the wider public the opportunity to have their say on next possible steps for the UK.

These include retaining the current controls, removing them entirely, or applying the controls to an even smaller number of products.

Rebecca Sudworth, Director of Policy at the FSA, said:

“Import controls were initially put in place as emergency measures following the Fukushima nuclear incident in 2011. Products from this area are only imported into the UK in small quantities, primarily catering for people with a Japanese diet and restaurants specialising in Japanese food.

“These regulations have since been reviewed on a regular basis by the European Commission. This responsibility has now passed to the FSA, along with FSS, and we have completed a UK import risk assessment and economic impact assessment. We welcome all views on possible changes to the controls, before we advise Ministers on next steps.

“Our priority throughout this process is food safety, and the interests of consumers are at the heart of everything we do. We will continue to provide expert independent advice based on the latest science and evidence to ensure that all food imports into the UK comply with our existing high standards and protect consumer interests.”

The [consultation is available on the FSA website](#), and responses are required by 11 February 2022.

For more information about our process of assessing, managing and communicating food and animal feed safety risks, [watch our 'FSA Explains: Risk Analysis' video](#).