

Fruit and vegetables

General information

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

Please also see Trade Information Sheet No 11 titled 'Plant products (not fruit/vegetables) and vegetarian products'

Applying for a 'Certificate of conformity'

Many fruit and vegetables must meet European marketing standards to be imported into the UK, or other European Union (EU) countries. If you are planning to import fresh fruit or vegetables you should apply for a 'Certificate of Conformity' under the PEACH system, which is run by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The PEACH system can be accessed on the DEFRA website at <http://peach.defra.gov.uk/>

If you have any queries regarding the PEACH system, please contact DEFRA on 0845 607 3224 or by email at peachenquiries@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) licences:

When importing fruit and vegetables you may require a CAP licence issued by the Rural Payments Agency. For further advice please contact the Rural Payments Agency on 03300 416500 or by email at: Trader@rpa.gsi.gov.uk

Food colourings, flavourings and sweeteners

Some 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. For information on food flavourings, sweeteners, colourings and preservatives, please contact the Food Standards Agency (FSA)'s Food Additives team on 020 7276 8570 or by email at foodadditives@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Labelling

You will find general information about food labelling in the GOV.UK website:

<https://www.gov.uk/food-labelling-and-packaging/overview>

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 via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-trading-standards-office>

Marketing standards

For information on any marketing standards requirements for fresh fruit and vegetables, please contact DEFRA's Horticultural Marketing Inspectorate on 0845 607 3224 or by email at HMI-TDC@rpa.gsi.gov.uk

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 at DEFRA at organic.imports@defra.gsi.gov.uk. For information on organic regulation and standards, (including labelling) within the UK please contact the Organic Strategy team at organic.standards@defra.gsi.gov.uk

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 on 020 7276 8570 or by email at: FoodContactMaterial@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Food hygiene

For general enquiries on food hygiene, including frozen food and seeds for sprouting, please contact the Food Hygiene Policy Team by email at foodhygiene.policy@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Pesticides

Regarding pesticides safety levels, please contact the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Chemicals Regulation Directorate (CRD) for information on the level for imports by accessing the link: <http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/>

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 at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/news/2013/oct/regulations>

Import restrictions

There are some other import restrictions/requirements that can apply to fruit and vegetables, of which importers need to be aware, and these are as follows:

“Higher-risk” products

As of 25 January 2010 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. Further information for business operators can be found at

http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/imports/banned_restricted/highrisknonpoa

For a complete list of foods (not of animal origin) with current EU restrictions, please see the following link on the FSA’s website:

www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/imports/banned_restricted/restricted_foodstuffs

Aflatoxins

As of 1 January 2010 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 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. Further information for business operators can be found at http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/imports/banned_restricted/aflatoxinreq8842014

***Hijiki* seaweed**

The FSA is advising people not to eat ‘*Hijiki*’, a particular 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 please contact:

ChemicalContaminants@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Lettuce and spinach

The above contaminants legislation also applies to safety levels of nitrate in lettuce and spinach imported into the UK. For information about these levels and testing procedures please contact: ChemicalContaminants@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Plant health

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 at the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) on 01904 405 123 or by email at planthealth.info@apha.gsi.gov.uk .

Alternatively you can access their webpages at UK.GOV via the following link:
<https://www.gov.uk/plant-health-controls>

Potatoes

Potatoes and potato seeds can carry pests and diseases, so there are strict rules about importing them into the UK from non-EU countries. APHA is responsible for plant-health requirements relating to imports. For more information please contact APHA on 01904 405 123 or by email at planthealth.info@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Radiation

Some fruit and vegetables must comply with a European Commission Regulation concerning maximum permitted levels (MPLs) for radiocaesium contamination, as laid down in Council Regulation (EC) 733/2008.

For further information on this EC Regulation please contact Chris Thomas on 020 7276 8733 or by email at christopher.thomas@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

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 The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), Information Centre Room 10-2, Market Towers, 1 Nine Elms Lane, London, SW8 5NQ on 020 3080 6000 or by email at info@mhra.gsi.gov.uk

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 can be found at:
http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/imports/banned_restricted/japan

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