

Plant products (not fruit/vegetables) & vegetarian products

General information

Imports of plant products and vegetarian foods 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. This information sheet covers plant products like chickpeas, kidney beans, tofu, peas, beans, pulses and mycoproteins such as quorn, soy products such as textured vegetable protein (TVP), millet, sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds. For tea and coffee imports this information sheet applies alongside Trade Information Sheet No 5 titled 'Drinks'.

Please also see Trade Information Sheet No 8 titled '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. For further information please contact the Rural Payments Agency on 0191 226 5050 or by email at: Trader@rpa.gsi.gov.uk

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. 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

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 on our website <http://food.gov.uk/enforcement/yourarea/>

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 please contact the Food Hygiene Policy Team by email at foodhygiene.policy@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Pesticides

For information on pesticides safety levels contact Health & Safety Executive's (HSE) Chemicals Regulation Directorate (CRD) 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 import restrictions/requirements that can apply to plant products or vegetarian products. 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/highrisknonpoao

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 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/foodindustry/imports/banned_restricted/aflatoxinreg11522009 as well as the FSA's webpage on Mycotoxins at:
<http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/chemsafe/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 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>

Melamine contamination of soya and soya products, and ammonium bicarbonate, from China*

Food products containing soya and soya products intended for nutritional use of infants and young children are not allowed to enter the European Community from China. Food products for human consumption containing soya and soya products, and consignments of ammonium bicarbonate for food use, may be subjected to documentary, identity and physical checks, including laboratory analysis, on arrival to the UK from China. Food business operators must give prior notice to the port of entry prior to arrival, and will be liable for all costs incurred. For further information please contact Richard Burden on 020 7276 8893 or by email Richard.Burden@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

* This includes products from Hong Kong and Taiwan which either enter China, or were originally from China. Products imported directly from Hong Kong or Taiwan are not affected.

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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