

Drinks

General information

Imports of drinks which do not contain products of animal origin 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 such drinks and beverages.

There are different, stricter rules covering the import of drinks that are made from animal products from countries outside the EU. They must come from establishments that have been approved to UK or EU standards. Examples of these are drinks made with milk or milk products (like 'Nesquik' or smoothies) or with egg products (like advocaat or eggnog).

The import of these types of drinks is regulated by the Trade in Animals and Related Products (TARP) (England) Regulations 2011, and similar regulations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Imports may only enter the UK/EU through approved Border Inspection Posts (BIPs) where they will be checked to ensure they comply with the relevant animal and public health conditions. 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).

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/>

Alcoholic drinks

For information on:

- the labelling and ingredient listing of alcoholic drinks
- marketing standards for spirit drinks (which include specific labelling and compositional requirements)
- EU and domestic Wine policy

please contact DEFRA on 0845 933 5577 or by email at defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Energy/Sports drinks

Some energy drinks may contain ingredients which might be considered as medicines. Products like this where claims are made for the treatment or prevention of disease, or which are administered to restore, correct or modify physiological functions, fall within the definition of a medicine.

Your local Trading Standards Office should be contacted in the first instance. After reviewing this information, if it becomes evident that the product would not fall under the Food regulations and it is a medicinal product then you should contact the Medicines Borderline Section of the Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) on 020 3080 6000 or by email at info@mhra.gsi.gov.uk

Advertising nutrition and health claims

For information on advertising nutritional and health claims on foods, please contact: DH customer service centre at <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/contact-dh> or 020 7210 4850.

Preservatives, food colourings, sweeteners and flavourings

Some drinks may contain preservatives, food colourings, sweeteners or flavourings. Although these may be approved by the food authority in the country of origin, some of them may not be approved in the EU or may have different permissions e.g. lower maximum levels of use, or only permitted in a small number of products. For information on food flavourings, sweeteners, food 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

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 for imports please contact the Health & Safety Executive's Chemicals Regulation Directorate (CRD) at: <http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/guidance/industries/pesticides>

Soft drinks and Fruit juices

If the product is using a trademark name, such as 'Root Beer' please contact the Information Centre at the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) by telephone 0300 300 2000.

Water

For information on the requirements for bottled water, please contact DEFRA on 0845 933 5577 or by email at defra.helpline@defra.gsi.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

The permitted level of benzoic acid in soft drinks in the EU is 150 mg/l, imported drinks that exceed this level do not comply with EU requirements. Brominated Vegetable Oil (BVO) is not a permitted food additive in the EU. Calcium disodium EDTA (E385) and Erythorbic acid (E315) are not permitted food additives in drinks.

There are some other import restrictions/requirements that can apply to drinks and beverages of which importers need to be aware. These are as follows:

Southampton colours

The FSA has asked the UK food industry for a voluntary withdrawal of: Sunset yellow (E110), Quinoline yellow (E104), Carmoisine (E122), Allura red (E129), Tartrazine (E102), Ponceau 4R (E124). If a product is labelled and contains one, or more, of the six specified colours they will require a warning on the label as required by Article 24 and Annex V of Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 to indicate that the colours may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children. This followed a study commissioned by the FSA and conducted by Southampton University (between 2004 and 2007) to see if these colours had any effect on children's behaviour. Since July 2010 foods containing any of the six colours have to be labelled with the following additional information: "name or E number of the colour(s) may have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children" (annex V of Regulation EC 1333/2008).

Coca leaf tea from South America

It is illegal to import products made from coca leaf. For further information please contact the Direct Communications Unit at the Home Office by email at publicenquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Hoasca tea from Brazil

Hoasca tea from Brazil is used for religious purposes. There are restrictions with regard to the import of this tea. For further information please contact the Direct Communications Unit at the Home Office by email at publicenquiries@homeoffice.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

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

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Helpline: 020 7276 8018

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