

Food from within the European Union

Food from other European Union (EU) Member States is in free circulation and therefore is not subject to UK border checks. With the introduction of the Single Market on 1 January 1993, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) ceased to have responsibility for enforcing import controls on food from other EU countries. This led to free movement of all trade between EU countries, including food products for human consumption. The same applies for food from non-EU countries which is in free circulation within the EU. To put it simply, these products are not covered by any import legislation.

EU Member States:

The 28 EU Member States are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus*, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

* Please note that the whole of Cyprus is part of the EU, though goods from areas not under effective control of the Republic of Cyprus are treated as non-EU imports.

However, like all food produced in this country, and free circulation food imported from other EU countries, all food products for human consumption must meet the general food safety requirements of Article 14 of EC General Food Law Regulation (EC) No 178/2002. In general, this prohibits food being placed on the market if it is unsafe, that is if it is either:

- injurious to health, or
- unfit for human consumption

Food brought into the UK also has to meet Regulations introduced under the Food Safety Act and food businesses must apply Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) based procedures. The HACCP system is generally considered a useful tool for food business operators to control hazards that may occur in food.

Also food (including that of animal origin, food not of animal origin, and food containing both products of plant origin and processed products of animal origin) brought into the UK must comply with the requirements of Commission Regulation (EC) No 853/2004. This is to ensure that food under your control has satisfied the relevant hygiene requirements at all stages of production, processing and distribution. Here is a link to the Commission's guidance on these regulations:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/international/trade/interpretation_imports.pdf

Food placed on the UK market can be checked by local authorities for compliance with food safety and hygiene standards, whether it is produced in the UK, other EU Member States or in a non-EU country. In the UK, food safety and food standards checks are carried out by qualified environmental health practitioners and trading standards officers employed by local authorities. Non-compliant food products can be removed from the food chain.

For information on the requirements for food labelling, please contact the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on 0845 933 5577 or by email at defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

If you intend to set up a business in the UK to sell food, that activity has to be registered under Regulation (EC) No 852/2004. You will need to get in touch with the environmental health office of the local authority where you intend to set up your business. They are in the best position to determine whether legislation applies according to individual circumstances. To locate your local Environmental Health Department in the UK please go to:

<http://food.gov.uk/enforcement/yourarea/>

Further guidance on food hygiene requirements and how to set up a food business can be found at the links below:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/hygieneguidebooklet.pdf>

<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/startingup0310a.pdf>

Food establishments selling products of animal origin (POAO)

There are strict rules within the EU for selling any foods that are or that contain any POAO. Amongst other requirements, this will require certification of the product and the premises that produce the product being licensed by the EU.

To confirm that the EU establishment supplying you is fully licensed for distributing red meat, meat products (including sausages, meat pizzas, meat pies), dairy products (including milk, butter, cheese, yoghurt, cream) eggs, poultry meat, wild game, insects, grubs, unusual meat (including reptiles, alligators) or honey, 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).

To confirm that the EU establishment supplying you is fully licensed for distributing gelatine, please check with the EU website, which can be accessed below:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biosafety/establishments/list_en.htm

Fishery Products

To confirm that the EU establishment supplying you is fully licensed to distribute fishery products or bivalve molluscs or their products please check with the EU website. The address is: http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biosafety/establishments/list_en.htm. Further information on bringing into the UK fishery products and bivalve molluscs from other EU countries is available on our website at

http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/imports/want_to_import/fisheryproducts/

If you wish to bring into the UK live fish intended for human consumption from another EU Member State, please contact the Fish Health Inspectorate at the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) on 01305 206 700 or by email at fhi@cefasc.co.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>

Food hygiene

For general enquiries on food hygiene please contact the Food Hygiene Policy Team by email at foodhygiene.policy@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Alcohol from the EU

If you wish to bring into the UK any alcoholic products from other EU countries, you will need to contact HMRC as you may need to be registered with them as a 'Registered Excise Dealer and Shipper' or as an 'Occasional Importer'. Please contact HMRC on 0845 010 9000 and choose option 4 for 'Excise and Customs' enquiries.

Imported Food Team, Food Standards Agency, 1st Floor Zone B, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6NH
Email: imported.food@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk
Helpline: 020 7276 8018

February 2015