

Imported Food

Did you know that when you import food commercially, you must comply with regulations that apply to specific products and also more general rules about things such as labelling and additives? Failure to comply with UK and EU hygiene and safety rules could cause delay in shipments, increase costs and require action to be taken by enforcement authorities.



If you import food commercially from another EU state, this is officially not an import and will not be subject to inspection at the port. This is because there is free move-

ment of goods within the EU, and the same food safety standards are applied across all member states.

However if you import food commercially from **outside of the European Union (EU)**, you need to be aware of the legal requirements. Meat products for example can only be imported from a country approved to export that type of product to the European Union. In addition they must be accompanied by animal health and public health certification, come from EU-approved premises and enter the EU through a Border Inspection Post where veterinary checks must be carried out. These controls are in place to protect human and animal health within the EU, for example to protect member states against the risk of avian influenza.

And it's not just foods of animal origin that are controlled. Some plants and plant products are prohibited from entering this country. Others are restricted and must be accompanied by a phytosanitary ('plant

health') certificate, which is issued by the Plant Health Authority in the exporting country. These measures exist to prevent the introduction into, and spread within, the EU of serious pests and diseases of plants and plant produce (including fruit).



If you import foods from outside the EU it is essential that you comply with these requirements. Failure to do so can put plant, animal and human health at risk and result in your consignment being destroyed. More information on control of imported foods is available on the FSA website at <http://www.food.gov.uk/enforcement/imports/>

Personal imports



If you wish to bring food back to the UK from another country for your personal consumption only, you need to be aware of what you are permitted to bring and in what quantity.

You can bring back a reasonable amount of any food from a country within the EU.

If you are travelling outside the EU you can bring back a reasonable amount of foods not of animal origin. Meat, meat products, milk and milk products generally

may not be brought into the UK as personal imports from outside of the EU, although there are a few exceptions. Up to 1kg each of fishery products, shellfish, eggs, egg products or honey is allowed for personal use from certain approved countries.

The general rule is 'If in doubt, leave it out'. More information on personal imports can be found on the Defra website at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/illegali/default.htm>