

UK-EU SPS Agreement - Information for Businesses

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Businesses urged to take simple steps for smoother trade with the EU

On 19 May 2025, the UK government and the European Union (EU) agreed to pursue a new Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement. This, together with the Windsor Framework, will make it easier, cheaper and more predictable for goods to move not just between the UK and the EU, but also within the UK itself, including smoother movements from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

This agreement covers the trade, production and movement of plants, animals and their products; food and feed safety; broader nutrition-related areas such as food supplements, fortified foods, food for specific groups, nutrition and health claims, and nutrition labelling; wider agrifood rules related to food labelling, organics, key agri-food marketing standards and compositional standards; as well as regulation of pesticides and biocides.

Who these changes will apply to

The SPS Agreement will apply differently across sectors. The main groups likely to be in scope of these are:

- Farmers and primary producers – changes to animal health, plant health, feed, pesticides and their respective maximum residue levels, and veterinary medicine maximum residue limits.
- Food, feed and drink businesses – changes to hygiene rules, food law, additives, pesticide maximum residue levels, marketing standards, labelling and food contact materials.
- Hauliers and logistics providers – changes to movement requirements for animals, plants and SPS goods.
- Importers and exporters of SPS goods – changes to certification, checks, official controls and digital systems.
- Pesticide and biocide manufacturers and suppliers – changes to pesticide and biocide active substance approvals, plant protection product (PPP) and biocide authorisations, and PPP maximum residue levels.
- Retailers and wholesalers – changes to consumer information, compositional standards, traceability, labelling and sourcing requirements.
- Seed, plant and horticultural suppliers – changes to plant health, reproductive material and plant passporting.

- Veterinarians – changes to residue limits and veterinary medicines.

For some rules, there has been little divergence with the EU and the change you will see in your business will be minimal. For others, there will have been divergence since EU Exit and you may need to make changes. Starting in May, we will provide more detailed guidance for businesses.

When these changes will apply

It is our intent that the agreement will take effect in mid-2027. We want every business in the agri-food sector to start getting ready now. This includes those that do not currently trade with the EU. While the timeline is ambitious, the reward is worth the effort.

We've been listening to businesses since last May and understand the concerns raised about how the new agreement could affect them. We know that some businesses require longer to adjust to the new arrangements, and we will work with them to ensure a smooth transition. We want to ensure that every business, whatever their size or circumstances, has the time and support they need to adjust and be ready to take full advantage from day one.

Now is the time for businesses to start to take simple steps to start getting ready - by connecting with trade bodies and signing up for Defra email alerts. We will provide detailed guidance and support starting in May 2026 so that businesses are ready to take full advantage from day one. Practical steps businesses can take can be found in the What businesses can do now section.

Benefits

These changes will deliver practical benefits for businesses and consumers:

- Businesses will save money. Those trading with the EU, both exporters and importers large and small, will benefit from less money spent on complex paperwork at the border. Export Health Certificates, which can cost up to £200 per consignment, will no longer be required. Routine border checks by Port Health Authorities that currently apply to dairy, fish, eggs and red meat imports will be removed, reducing fees, costs associated with queuing and lowering the risk of spoilage.
- Trade will flow faster. Fresh produce will reach supermarket shelves more quickly. Supply chains will become more resilient, strengthening food security here and in Europe. And for the first time since Brexit, goods will move freely between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
- New markets will be unlocked. Trade in products such as fresh sausages and burgers, certain types of shellfish and seed potatoes will resume, opening up the EU market for these goods and supporting British businesses to expand their production. Consumers on both sides of the Channel will have greater access to the high-quality products they value.

Many small and medium-sized businesses stand to gain from this. The costs of paperwork and certification have hit smaller exporters hardest, with many abandoning EU trade entirely because the complexity outweighed the benefits. The deal creates new opportunities for those businesses that import food products for processing or wholesale before selling them on. By sweeping away these barriers, we're reopening a vital market for all of these firms — enabling those trading with

the EU to grow with renewed confidence and reduced cost.

The agreement will benefit businesses of all sizes and ease pressure on consumer food price inflation. The new deal will save businesses time and money, and open up opportunities for growth for large and small importers and exporters across the country, helping put British produce back on tables around the world.

What this means for your business

UK businesses will need to meet EU rules within the scope of the agreement, whether trading with the EU or serving only the UK market. All businesses, including small and medium enterprises in the food and farming sectors – and related industries such as retail and processing – may need to make operational changes to ensure they comply.

This may, for example, include changes to:

- Processing methods
- Certification and labelling
- IT systems

High-level information on the EU rules with which businesses will need to align and which businesses these will apply to are provided below. In order to help businesses prepare, we are sharing a list of regulations that we expect to be in scope.

For some rules, there has been little divergence with the EU and the change you will see for your business will be minimal. For others, there will have been divergence since EU Exit and you may need to make changes. Starting in May, we will provide more detailed guidance for businesses.

A Call for Information has been launched to help ensure that future guidance reflects what businesses need.

We will provide this information in a variety of forums and formats that suit your needs – including detailed written guidance, checklists, webinars, mailing lists and a dedicated online tool.

Furthermore, we will establish a new stakeholder advisory board to gather insight and advice from businesses and make sure that regular, two-way dialogue is encouraged throughout the process. We want your input to make that support as effective as possible.

Rest of World Goods

Checks on Rest of World imports will continue to require routine inspections at Border Control Posts. While we expect to remove most routine checks on EU imports, the level of checks for most Rest of World goods is expected to align with those applied by the EU to Rest of World imports.

The government anticipates an increase in check rates for certain Rest of World commodities. Further information on the implications of an SPS Agreement for Rest of World imports will be provided in due course.

Call for Information

Defra has launched a Call for Information to understand the impact of the agreement and what support and guidance businesses need to prepare for the changes affecting SPS goods.

The Call for Information will help us to identify what information businesses require, the timing of that information, and any areas where further support would be useful. Findings will be used to develop practical guidance for businesses of all sizes ahead of the new requirements coming into effect.

Complete the six-week Call for Information (CFI) on Citizen Space.

What businesses can do now

While we develop detailed support and guidance, businesses can take simple, sensible steps to start getting ready. You can:

- Engage with your relevant trade body or industry association – they will be key partners in providing sector-specific guidance and many are already working with government to help their members prepare.
- Engage with your supply chain to understand any changes that may apply to them.
- Sign up for Defra email alerts, follow Defra on LinkedIn and join our mailing list – to receive the latest information on negotiations, implementation timelines, and details of guidance and support available.
- Respond to the Call for Information – and share your views on what support your business needs to prepare.
- If you are a Small or Medium Enterprise (SME) you may wish to get additional support from other government agencies, for example:
 - Department for Business and Trade: Ask our export support team a question - Contact [Business.gov.uk](https://business.gov.uk) support
 - Food Standards Agency: Regulated products application guidance

Engage with us

We will work together with industry and Devolved Governments so that businesses of all sizes — from farmers and food manufacturers to hauliers and retailers — are ready to reap the benefits from day one. Businesses will be kept informed through regular engagement and updates as negotiations progress.

Once negotiations conclude later this year, additional support will be available following the forthcoming UK-EU Summit including through:

- publication of sector-specific guidance, explaining required changes and outlining the most important actions that businesses need to take.
- opportunities to engage directly in virtual webinars and workshops.
- Regular newsletters and business bulletins

If you require any further support or have additional questions, please sign up to our mailing list.

Defra and other government departments will make use of existing relationships with trade bodies and stakeholder networks to ensure traders receive timely and accurate information. Details of relevant engagement opportunities will be shared through newsletters and business bulletins over

the weeks and months ahead.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-eu-sps-agreement-information-for-businesses>