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# Importing food

## 1. Overview

Most food and drink products imported from the EU have no restrictions.

Most regulations are for food and drink (<http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/imports>) that are imported from countries outside the EU. In this case you may need:

- health certificates
- import licences

## 2. Organic produce

How you import organic food depends on which country you are importing it from.

### Imports from the EU

You can import organic produce from the EU as long as your supplier is registered with an EU organic certification body.

Download 'List of bodies or public authorities in charge of inspection provided for in article 15 of regulation (EEC)' (PDF, 94 KB)

([http://exporthelp.europa.eu/update/requirements/ehir\\_de12\\_01v001/de/auxi/de\\_list\\_inspection\\_bodies.pdf](http://exporthelp.europa.eu/update/requirements/ehir_de12_01v001/de/auxi/de_list_inspection_bodies.pdf))

An organic certification body is an independent organisation that has standards for its members that meet or exceed government regulations.

### Imports from outside the EU

You can import certain organic products from countries that are covered under 'equivalence agreements' - this means they have no import restrictions.

The countries that have equivalence agreements with the UK are:

- Argentina
- Australia
- Costa Rica
- India
- Israel

- Japan
- New Zealand
- Switzerland

Not all products will be covered by equivalence agreements. Call the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) helpline if you are unsure whether a product is covered by an agreement.

### **Defra Helpline**

Telephone: 08459 335 577

Find out about call charges (<https://www.gov.uk/call-charges>)

For countries not covered by equivalence agreements, you must:

- apply for approval from Defra (<http://www.defra.gov.uk/forms/2011/03/30/ob11-organic-products/>) before importing
- be registered with an EU Organic Certification Body
- have a Certificate of Inspection for the food you want to import

## **3. Genetically Modified foods**

Genetically Modified (GM) foods are not grown commercially in the UK. The GM foods you can import are varieties of the following:

- oilseed rape
- soybean
- cotton-seed oil
- maize
- sugar beet

You can search for authorised GM foods on the European Commission website.

([http://ec.europa.eu/food/dyna/gm\\_register/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/dyna/gm_register/index_en.cfm))

There is detailed guidance on labelling and other issues relating to GM foods from the Food Standards Agency (FSA). (<http://www.food.gov.uk/safereating/gm/>)

## **4. Food import controls**

Certain foods are considered high risk and harmful to public health, for example if they cause illness. There are special rules and certificates that you may need to reduce this risk to public health when importing these goods.

As the foods that are considered harmful can change, you need to find out about the current import controls (<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/importing-high-risk-foods>) from the Food Standards Agency (FSA).