

Annex 2: Port Controls

Products of animal origin (POAO)

European Directive 97/78/EC requires that all consignments of animal products from Third Countries imported into the European Union (formerly the European Community) receive a documentary, identity and, as appropriate, physical check under the responsibility of the Official Veterinary Surgeon (OVS) or Official Fish Inspector (OFI) before being cleared for free circulation in the EU. These checks must be carried out before customs clearance is given and the importer is responsible for bearing the cost of these checks. Special provisions are made to permit the transshipment of foods. A list of products that require veterinary checks is laid down in Commission Decision 2007/275/EC together with details of composite products and foodstuffs that are exempt from such requirements. POAO should only be presented at BIPs (Border Inspection Posts) that have the relevant approval for the type of product concerned. It should be noted that checks on fish eggs should be carried out at live animal BIPs whereas live fish and aquaculture products for direct human consumption should be checked at a product BIP.

Directive 97/78/EC requires the person responsible for the load to ensure that all products of animal origin are presented at a BIP approved for that product. The person responsible for the load must notify the OVS or OFI at the BIP in advance of the arrival of the consignment. In addition, there should be a system of manifest checks in place to ensure that all relevant consignments of POAO have been properly declared. The consignment should then be presented to the BIP "without delay" upon landing in the UK.

All products including those POAO imported in mixed loads must be moved to the BIP facility together with the relevant health documents and suitable arrangements should be in place to prevent their removal until the veterinary checks have been completed. All physical and identity checks, except for seal checks must take place at an inspection facility and be conducted in such a manner as to avoid the possibility of cross contamination. There are statutory requirements for certain documents to always be maintained at the BIP and for returns on BIP activities to be submitted to the import and EU Trade Team of Defra.

Documentary Checks

Every consignment of POAO from a third country intended for import must have a documentary check to ensure that the notification and the veterinary health documents agree, and that the documents meet the requirements of the appropriate EU or national rules for the product concerned. Detailed rules for documentary checks are laid down in Annex I of Regulation (EC) No 136/2004. The documentary check should be carried out in the inspection centre where the consignment is held - not a remote office outside the BIP facilities. Certificates which accompany consignments must be written in English or include an English translation, be legible, original and unaltered. A documentary check should be carried out on all consignments unless transshipment to another BIP takes place under Article 9 of Directive 97/78/EC in less than the minimum time intervals laid down in Commission Decision 2000/25/EC.

The importer should be offered an authenticated copy of the certificate. If the import is refused due to lack of compliance with EU requirements the certificate should be over-stamped to the effect that EU entry is not permitted. It can be helpful to use a checklist

when carrying out documentary checks. An example checklist can be found in Appendix D (CVED checklist) of the BIP Manual, produced by Defra. This can be accessed using the link: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13557-bipmanual-100823.pdf>. Care should be taken to ensure that all the required elements of the documentary check are included and that, if used, the checklist is fully completed. Where a checklist is used to record the outcome of checks and is then used as evidence to support signing of a Common Veterinary Entry Document (CVED) by someone who wasn't present at the inspection then it must be signed and dated by the officer who carried out the checks.

Identity Checks

The OVS/OFI should carry out an identity check at the BIP on consignments of POAO imported from third countries with a few exceptions. An identity check involves checking that the stamps, official marks, official labelling and/or health marks on the product or its packaging match with those recorded in the documents for the consignment. Containers will need to be opened so that these can be seen and the check should not be restricted to boxes immediately visible by the container door. In certain circumstances it is acceptable to undertake a seal check only - failure of which can lead to the rejection of the consignment.

Where a consignment is not transported in a sealed container or the OVS/OFI does not consider a 'seal check only' is appropriate, the container or other means of transport should be opened and the OVS/OFI should carry out a visual inspection of the packages to check that the description matches that on any document with the consignment. Identity checks should be carried out at approved inspection facilities but seal numbers may be checked at an alternative and suitable place if agreed with the DC or DARD at the BIP.

Selection of consignments/parts of consignments should be done by the inspection team at the BIP - not in advance by shippers or whilst still partially loaded on carriers. Some identity checks should include packages taken from throughout the load: this may require a full or partial turnout of the container.

Physical Checks

OVS/OFI have powers to carry out any checks they deem to be appropriate in cases where they suspect that veterinary legislation has not been complied with or there is some other doubt about the consignment or its destination. There may be occasions where it will be necessary to request, for a limited period, a higher level of checking on certain products from certain third countries (e.g. as a result of an outbreak of disease in that third country). In these circumstances, each BIP registered as eligible to handle the product in question will be notified by DARD in writing of any temporary increase on the level of checking required. Council Directive 97/78/EC requires that 100% documentary, identity and physical checks should be carried out on consignments. However, it also provides for a Decision to be made to derogate certain products from this requirement and reduced levels of physical checks at prescribed percentages are provided for under Decision 94/360/EC. The detailed requirements for physical checks are outlined in Annex III to the Directive.

Physical checks should be carried out on randomly selected consignments at approved BIP inspection facilities. Selection of consignments/parts of consignments should be

undertaken by the inspection team at the BIP - not in advance by shippers or whilst still partially loaded on carriers. Some physical checks should be done on packages taken throughout the consignment: this will require a full or partial turnout of containers. Sampling procedures are laid down in Annex II to Regulation (EC) No 136/2004 laying down the procedures for veterinary checks at EU BIPs on products from third countries. BIPs should submit samples to: public analysts appointed by the local authority for food or feed analysis, Health Protection Agency Food, Water and Environmental Microbiology laboratories for food examination or, where appropriate, other laboratories accredited for specific analytical techniques.

Completing the CVED

The CVED is a certificate issued by an OVS/OFI confirming that veterinary checks have been carried out. The CVED is produced via the TRACES (Trade Control and Expert System) system and must only be signed by the authorised OVS/OFI. The CVED is a veterinary certificate and should comply with all the EU and Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) standards of certification. It must be on a single sheet of paper and must be fully completed including the relevant product CN codes. An importer or his representative is required to notify the DC of the impending arrival of a consignment and this may be achieved by completion and electronic transfer to the BIP of Part 1 of the CVED. The OVS/OFI may permit pre-notifications to be made via the manifest if all the details contained in Part 1 of the CVED are included in the manifest. Telephone notifications are not acceptable.

The OVS/OFI must record on the CVED which of the checks have been carried out. For example if the consignment has received only documentary checks and identity checks, the boxes for these checks should be marked and the box for physical check left blank. Once completed, Part 2 of the CVED should be signed and the official stamp of the BIP applied. A copy of the CVED must be retained at the BIP. The CVED shall accompany the consignment/part consignment as long as it remains under customs supervision or in the case of import as far as the first destination inland where it must be retained for one year.

There are certain circumstances where foods are passed through the BIP but are not subject to the normal veterinary checks regime and completion of the CVED is different. Some examples include: movement to ships' stores or directly to a vessel; transits; head-on, non-gutted frozen tuna and; by-products for pet food or manufacture of pharmaceutical or technical products.

Requirements for BIPs

The facilities at a BIP must be maintained at a satisfactory standard and sanctions exist where they are deemed to fall short of EU requirements. The following summarises the main structural requirements for BIPs:

- 1) **Location:** The BIP inspection facilities must be located in the immediate vicinity of the point of entry and be in an area designated by the customs authorities. For railways the BIP can be at the first station designated by the competent authority.
- 2) **Size:** The BIP must be sufficiently large to enable checks to be carried out on the number of consignments passing through. Copies of approved plans for the BIP should be available in the BIP. Other than BIPs with a limited throughput of one

category of product there should be separate facilities for changing, unloading, inspection and storage for products for human consumption and those not for human consumption.

- 3) **Facilities:** A BIP must have adequate hygienic facilities and storage areas dedicated to veterinary checks. The BIP must be constructed so that the hygiene requirements and any temperature requirements appropriate for the product concerned set out in the Hygiene Regulations can be met. Consideration needs to be given to the construction materials used to ensure that the structure is easily cleanable and does not have dirt traps, gaps etc that could result in contamination of consignments for inspection. The inspection area or office facilities should include a fridge/freezer for holding of samples awaiting transmission to the laboratory or retained reference samples. The BIP should have a documented maintenance plan, as it is important that the fabric of the BIP is kept in a satisfactory condition. Requests for maintenance and outcomes should be documented for audit. Water supplies should be tested every 6 months for potability and a pest control programme should be in place.
- 4) **Equipment:** BIPs and inspection centres must have a PC provided on which TRACES can be accessed. Passwords must be kept up-to-date so that access is possible. Where messages are to be sent by TRACES and the system does not function then fax facilities may be used as an alternative. For information on specific equipment requirements at BIPs and inspection rooms, please refer to the Defra BIP manual. This can be accessed at the link below:
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/animaltrade/imports/bips/pdf/bipmanual.pdf>

Products failing veterinary checks

If the consignment fails the veterinary checks for any reason then the OVS/AO will serve a notice to have the goods destroyed or re-dispatched outside of the European Union under the POAO (TCI) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (as amended). The main rejection notices used by BIPs for animal products are:

- Regulation 21 – Products that fail vet checks.
- Regulation 23 – Products containing unauthorised substances and excess residues.
- Regulation 24 - Consignments and products illegally introduced.
- Regulation 25 – Products dangerous to animal or public health.
- Regulation 26 – Other serious or repeated infringements

These notices require that goods must either be re-dispatched outside the EU from the BIP of arrival (by the same means of transport by which they arrived i.e. by sea if arrival by sea, by aircraft if arrival by aircraft), or be destroyed in accordance with the Animal By Products (Enforcement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011

The CVED is completed to show that the import has been refused, the reason for refusal and information on re-dispatch or destruction of the consignment. Accompanying documentation is endorsed as “rejected and non-conforming goods” and held by the BIP. Where the consignment is re-dispatched, other EU BIPs are notified by TRACES to prevent illegal re-introduction of the consignment. TRACES, is the Commission veterinary computer system, which is used to notify authorities of certain consignments of animals and animal products and also to generate the CVED. If re-dispatch is chosen by the importer, they have 60 days to comply otherwise the authorised officer may take

charge of the consignment and destroy it. The enforcement option may be restricted to destruction only in cases where there is a risk to human or animal health. When goods are rejected they should be destroyed in accordance with the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 as soon as possible at the nearest appropriate facility. In effect this will be an incinerator or rendering plant that has an appropriate permit that allows for disposal of such products, issued under the Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999 or the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Transits to Non- EU destinations

Consignments may be permitted to transit EU territory (i.e. travel through EU territory to a destination outside the EU) provided they meet the following conditions:

- Products must originate in a country which is, in principle, able to send the same type of product to the EU and meet the animal health conditions for import into the EU.
- Entry into, and exit from, the EU must be via a BIP and transit must not exceed 30 days.
- The person responsible for the load (importer/agent) must agree to dispose of the products should they return to the EU following rejection by the authorities in the country to which they are being sent. A written undertaking to this effect must be provided at the BIP of entry. Without this, permission to transit will be refused. This undertaking is included in the CVED.
- Containers or vehicles must be sealed.
- BIPs of entry and exit must be approved to handle the category of product transiting the EU.
- The BIP of entry must notify the BIP of exit of the transit via the TRACES system, or fax where TRACES is not available. The BIP of exit will notify the BIP of entry when it has left EU territory. If this fails to happen an investigation would ensue.
- Entry for transit will not be permitted if veterinary certification or documentation is not available. Documentary and identity checks will be carried out. Physical checks will also be carried out if the OVS/OFI at the BIP suspects irregularities or has reason to believe that the consignment poses a risk to animal or human health. A CVED should be completed and indicate the Third Country of destination.

If an entry BIP has not received confirmation that a consignment has left the EU after 30 days, the entry BIP should contact the exit BIP first to check that the consignment has not been exported. If the consignment has disappeared, the OVS/OFI at the entry BIP must inform HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and the Imports and EU Trade Team in Defra, Tel: 020 7238 2017 or by e-mail (iah-imports@defra.gsi.gov.uk).

Trans-shipments to another Member State

Certain consignments arriving at a seaport or airport BIP can be transhipped to another BIP at which some or all of the veterinary checks will be carried out. These provisions

relate only to consignments which do not leave the Customs area of the port, of the first BIP of arrival and leave by the same means of transport.

At the time of arrival, the person responsible for the consignment must notify the OVS/OFI of the estimated time of unloading and the BIP of destination.

Checks are carried out depending on the time spent at the BIP of entry. If it is transhipped but stays within the HMRC area of the seaport for less than 7 days or the airport for less than 12 hours, no check is required. If it is held for between 7 days and 20 days at a seaport or between 12 hours and 48 hours at an airport it must be subjected to a documentary check. If it is held for longer than this, full veterinary checks must be carried out.

If the OVS/OFI considers it is necessary, full checks may be carried out at any stage.

Storage of consignments that do not conform to EU import requirements

EU law allows for consignments of animal products that do not meet EU import requirements, but are intended for ships' stores or for non-EU destinations, to be stored in specially approved premises on EU territory. This is subject to strict conditions and under official veterinary control to ensure that EU conforming goods cannot be contaminated. EU law also provides that Member States may decide on animal or public health grounds not to permit such storage on their territory. The UK along with several other Member States has decided not to allow the storage of such products. The UK therefore has no approved premises for these consignments.

Record keeping at BIPs

BIPs are required to keep records of all consignments presented for veterinary checks and the outcome of those checks. Copies of CVEDs and associated Health Certificates are required to be kept for 3 years. For rejected consignments, BIPs are required to keep a record of the reasons for rejection and how consignments were disposed of, including details of re-dispatch, if applicable. The BIP is required to keep a record of all the samples taken, the tests requested and the results of those tests.

Every month, BIPs send a report to Defra on the numbers of samples taken including information on country of origin, product and reason for sampling/details of analysis. Information on the number of consignments handled by product category and by country of origin, the numbers rejected and the reason for rejection and the numbers of documentary, identity and physical checks is available via the TRACES system.

Safeguard Measures

Import conditions are laid down in EU legislation but this can take some time to amend. EU legislation therefore allows emergency safeguard measures to be taken where there is a serious outbreak of disease or where other circumstances are liable to present a serious animal or public health risk. They provide a rapid and flexible system for dealing with situations that require urgent action, or are developing rapidly.

The Commission may introduce these measures, or if the Commission has not yet acted, individual Member States may implement measures provided they communicate the action taken to the Commission and other Member States. Safeguard measures may apply to all or part of a country, suspend imports of all or particular products and set special conditions for imports of all or particular products.

Safeguard measures, whether national or EU, are implemented in the UK by Emergency Declarations made under regulation 61 of the POAO (TCI) Regulations or the OFFC Regulations for FNAO and the similar provisions in English, Scottish and Welsh law. Declarations may be modified or revoked by a further declaration. When a declaration is issued copies and an explanatory letter are sent to enforcement bodies and trade interests and copies are posted on the Defra and FSA websites. Failure to comply with the provisions of a declaration is an offence.

POAO not subject to veterinary checks

There are some products specifically excluded from the requirement for veterinary checks by EU legislation:

- Certain personal imports from outside the EU which form part of the travellers' luggage/small consignments sent to private persons provided:
 - They are for human consumption.
 - They are not meat or milk products (which are banned) – However meat and milk products from Croatia, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Iceland are allowed (up to 10kg combined of meat and dairy products are permitted)
 - They do not exceed 2kg total per person of powdered infant milk, infant food or special foods required for medical reasons
 - They do not exceed 20kg of fresh or prepared fishery products, or processed fishery products – or the weight of one fish (if higher)
 - They do not exceed 2kg combined of other POAO such as honey, eggs, egg products, bivalves, snail meat, reptile and insect meat and frogs' legs
 - Products which are imported with prior authorisation by DARD as trade samples or for exhibitions provided they are not to be marketed.
 - Products which are imported with prior authorisation by DARD for particular studies or analyses provided they are not for human consumption.

In GB enforcement responsibilities for personal imports rests with HMRC Officers. In Northern Ireland this responsibility rests with DARD.

Third Country military supplies destined for UK or EU bases are NOT exempt from veterinary checks.

Composite products containing a limited percentage of POAO

A composite product is a foodstuff containing both processed products of animal origin and products of plant origin. Composite products containing less than 50% of processed egg and egg products, honey, fish and fishery products and bivalve molluscs may come from any non EU countries (unless subject to a prohibition under a EU safeguard measure) and are not required to come from an approved establishment listed on the Commission website for POAO imports. Such composite products should be: shelf stable at ambient temperature, clearly identified as for human consumption and securely packaged or sealed in clean containers. Composite products containing less than 50% of processed milk, must meet all of the conditions above and the milk product content must come from an EU approved country.

For animal health purposes, DARD may authorise the import of certain composite products containing a small amount of POAO as an ingredient, by issuing a General Import licence.). Composite products are defined in Article 2 (a) of Commission Decision 2007/275/EC concerning lists of animals and products to be subject to controls at border inspection posts under Council Directives 91/496/EEC and 97/78/EC. This definition reads: “a foodstuff intended for human consumption that contains both processed products of animal origin and products of plant origin and includes those where the processing of primary product is an integral part of the production of the final product.” Moreover, Article 4 of this Decision covers composite products subject to veterinary checks and Article 6 has derogation for certain composite products and foodstuffs. Annex II also lists specific products which are excluded.

This can be an area that is detailed and technical, hence case by case judgements are needed to establish if a composite product should be classed as POAO or not. A good example is dessert mixes containing dairy powder that may or may not be classified as a composite dairy product. If this type of product is encountered and you are unsure how to deal with it, please contact FSA in NI/DARD for further advice.

There are also some products that are not included in Commission Decision 2007/275/EC and are therefore not subject to veterinary checks. Again for animal health purposes these products are subject to licensing control by DARD

The import controls in the OFFC Regulations (Northern Ireland) (and parallel legislation in England, Scotland and Wales) will apply to composite products which are outside the veterinary checks regime.

Feed and Food Not of Animal Origin (FNAO)

As a general rule, FNAO is subject to random checks and may normally enter through any port. However, FNAO of “known or emerging risk” specified in Annex I to Regulation (EC) No 669/2009 (as amended) or those subject to EU safeguard measures under Article 53 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 such as FNAO susceptible to aflatoxins as specified in Article 1 of Regulation (EC) No 1152/2009 are subject to enhanced import controls.

The legislation controlling FNAO imported from non-EU countries into the UK is Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 on official controls which is enforced by the Official Feed and Food Controls (Northern Ireland) 2009 (as amended) (OFFC Regulations). All DCs (whether or not they have seaports, airports and ERTS in their Districts) are responsible for enforcing these regulations. As well as FNAO, these controls also apply to composite products which are outside the Veterinary Checks regime at BIPs by virtue of the provisions of Commission Decision 2007/275/EC.

General requirements for importing FNAO are that relevant food must comply with EU Law. The Food Hygiene Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 (as amended) provide for the execution and enforcement of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004. The OFFC legislation gives enforcement officials discretion to examine consignments.

Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 requires systematic documentary checks, random identity checks and where appropriate, physical checks.

Systematic documentary checks do not imply 100% checking of commercial documents but there should be risk-based planned arrangements in place.

Identity checks similarly, not all consignments require an identity check but there should be risk-based arrangements in place.

Physical checks might include: checks on the food itself, checks on the means of transport, checks on the packaging, checks on the temperature controls, organoleptic testing, and chemical or microbiological examination, or any other checks necessary to verify compliance with EU feed and food safety requirements. Such checks may also take into account any guarantees that the Competent Authority (CA) of the third country has given and which have been assessed by the Commission. The frequency of physical checks should take into account, the risks associated with the product and the history of compliance demonstrated by the Food Business Operator (FBO). The arrangements and follow up actions should be set out in relevant service policies and procedures.

Physical checks should be carried out under appropriate conditions inclusive of standards of hygiene and at a place with access to appropriate control facilities allowing investigations to be conducted properly. Samples should be handled in such a way as to guarantee both their legal and analytical validity.

FNAO failing official controls checks

If a consignment fails to comply with food safety requirements, then the officer, following discussions held with either the importer or importer's agent acting as the importer's representative, may serve a notice under regulation 31 of the OFFC Regulations to have the goods either: destroyed, subjected to special treatment, re-dispatched outside the European Union, or used for other purposes. It also provides for non-compliant goods that have been placed on the market to be monitored or, if necessary, for the officer to order the recall or initiate withdrawal of the goods before being subject to the above measures.

Where the authorised officer allows for re-dispatch, there is a 60 day period to comply. If the re-dispatch does not take place, the consignment should be destroyed, unless a delay is justified.

Products of known or emerging risk

Products of known or emerging risk from certain countries are specified in Annex I of Regulation (EC) No 669/2009 and are subject to the enhanced import controls provided for by Article 15(5) of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004. Such products may only enter the EU through Designated Points of Entry (DPEs) following pre-notification and will be subject to the documentary checks and identity and physical checks as specified in the Annex. On completion of the required checks, the official inspector will complete, stamp and sign a Common Entry Document (CED) which will accompany the consignment inland to the first destination.

Products susceptible to aflatoxins

Certain products from specific countries are set out in Article 1 of Regulation (EC) No 1152/2009 and may only be imported into the EU via Designated Points of Import (DPIs). Here they will be subject to documentary, identity and, where necessary, physical checks. On completion of the import controls a CED is issued and must accompany the food to its first destination inland. Please note there is a requirement that the First Point of Introduction to the EU carry out documentary checks in accordance with article 7 of Regulation (EC) 1152/2009.

Deferred examination

Regulation 26 of the OFFC Regulations allows for the examination of consignments of FNAO to be deferred by an enforcement officer at the point of entry and undertaken by another DC. Deferred examinations may be considered where the DC at the point of entry has a valid reason why an examination needs to be deferred, but it is likely to be in exceptional circumstances only. Deferral can be requested by the DC at the point of entry or the importer, although the decision rests with the authority at the point of entry. The preferred option is to have the goods inspected at the point of entry. It should be noted that this procedure is not available for POAO or FNAO subject to enhanced import controls.

Organic Products

In implementing the recent Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007, Commission Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008 provides that before a consignment of organic products from a third country can be released into free circulation, a Certificate of Inspection (COI) for Import of Products from Organic Production for each consignment must be submitted to and endorsed by the designated authority at the point of entry of the Member State through which the products enter the EU. The Commission Regulation sets out the requirements for completing and obtaining endorsement of the COI.

In GB the designated authority is the PHA or LA, whilst in NI it is the DC. DC officers will be required to check that the import is authorised by Defra and that all the details on the Certificate of Inspection match the information held on a database of import authorisations before endorsing the Certificate of Inspection and allowing the consignment to enter free circulation. The term 'organic' is used to describe crops grown without the use of most "artificial" fertilizers or pesticides and in a way that emphasizes crop rotation, making the most of natural fertilizers and ensuring that the fertility and biological activity of the soil is maintained. Animals are kept in ways which

minimise the need for medicines and other chemical treatments. Processed foods are prepared with limited additives and processing aids.

To ensure that products are 'organic', an inspection system has been set up. All operators (producers, processors and importers) dealing with organic products are required to be registered with an organic inspection body (in the UK this is Defra). The inspection bodies carry out physical inspections of the premises at least once a year to ensure that the operator is complying with the organic standards.

Many consumers choose to buy organic produce because it has been produced without "artificial" fertilizers or pesticides, or because they want food which has been produced in what they regard as a more sustainable way. The price premium attached to organic produce - sometimes up to a third more than for conventional produce - provides a temptation for producers, importers, suppliers, retailers, etc. to try to sell conventionally-grown products as organic. There are no tests which can be carried out on produce to determine whether it is organic, although there are tests which can determine whether prohibited pesticides and fertilizers have been used.

The Council and Commission Regulations are therefore primarily a consumer protection and anti-fraud measure to ensure that consumers can buy organic produce confident in the knowledge that they have been produced to certain standards, despite the country from which they originate.

Organic Imports – Articles 32 and 33 of (EC) No 834/2007 detail the rules for the importation of organic products from third countries, in addition the previous system of Member States issuing import authorisations is to continue until 1 January 2013 at the latest. For the importation of organic produce into the EU three systems will initially operate, depending on the third country from which the goods are imported.

The provisions of Article 33 of (EC) No 834/2007, allow for the European Commission to recognise that some third countries operate production rules and a system of inspection equivalent to those operating within the EU.

To date, nine countries have been approved as having equivalent production rules and inspection system. These are:

- Argentina;
- Australia;
- Costa Rica;
- India;
- Israel;
- Japan;
- New Zealand;
- Switzerland; and,
- Tunisia

Certain specified produce, set out in Commission Regulation (EC) No.1235/2008, as amended, from these countries may be brought freely into the EU and marketed as organic, provided it has been inspected and certified by one of the approved inspection bodies. Importers do not need an import authorisation from Defra for these products. These details are set out in Annex III of Regulation 1235/2008.

Article 33 of (EC) No 834/2007 also sets out provisions for the second system. Certain specified produce, from certain specified countries, certified as organic by certain specified Control Bodies as set out in Annex IV of Commission Regulation 1235/2008 may be brought freely into the EU and marketed as organic, provided it has been inspected and certified by one of those approved inspection bodies.

The transitional rules under the Council Regulation allow produce from third countries not specified in Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1235/2008, as amended or certified by a Control Body listed in Annex IV of that regulation, to be brought into the EU and marketed as organic, provided prior authorisation has been obtained from the CA in a member state as required by Article 19 of Regulation 1235/2008. Defra is the Central Competent Authority (CCA) which grants these authorisations for products to be imported into the UK.

A COI will need to be produced by the third country inspection body for every consignment of organic produce no matter which system is used. Because a COI needs to be endorsed before organic produce is released into free circulation, importers of organic produce are required by UK legislation to give advance notice in writing of the arrival of a consignment.

- For consignments arriving by air, advance notice of at least six hours (during the working day of the DC office) must be given.
- For consignments arriving by any other means (sea, train or road) notice of at least 24 hours must be given.

When the consignment arrives at the point of entry, the DC officer will check the COI that accompanies the consignment. Each DC has been provided with access to the secure Defra website and database of Import Authorisations. DCs will need to access this website to check whether an import authorisation has been granted under Article 11(6) to the importer. They will check that boxes 1 to 15 of the COI have been fully completed and that the details on the authorisation match those on the COI.

If the DC is satisfied that the Certificate is complete and matches the information on the database they can endorse the COI and release the consignment for HMRC clearance. If the Certificate is incomplete, or the DC Officer is not satisfied that any amendments have been endorsed by the body issuing the Certificate, the Certificate should not be endorsed and the consignment will be the subject of a Movement Control notice and will not be released.

If the DC officers are content that the COI is complete and correct, they must endorse the **original** COI in Box 17. This must be done prior to allowing the consignment to be released into free circulation.

The DC officer must fill out the following:

- The name of the Member State (in this case, the UK).
- Details of the Import Registration (type, number, date and office of the customs declaration).
- Date of endorsement.
- They must sign and stamp the box with an official stamp.

Following endorsement of the COI, the consignment may be released for HMRC clearance. The original COI will be sent to the first consignee, either with the consignment or by post.

Movement Control System - If problems are encountered when verifying the COI or the consignment and the Certificate cannot be endorsed, the consignment will not be released for HMRC Clearance and a Movement Control notice or, where appropriate, a Consent to Movement notice will be served by /DC.

There are a number of reasons why there might be problems with the COI which may mean the consignment will be held. These could include:

- The original COI not being present when the consignment arrives
- The COI is not written in English
- The COI has not been fully completed;
- Uncertified amendments having been made to the COI;
- The information on the COI does not match the information on the Defra organic imports database;
- The COI has been completed by the wrong certifying body, or has the wrong inspection body mentioned.

There are a number of reasons why there might be problems with a consignment which may mean it must be held by the DC. Most commonly, it may be that the products and/or quantities do not match the COI.

If there are problems which mean the COI cannot be endorsed, a Movement Control notice will be served by the DC officer to the importer, or whoever is responsible for the consignment.

The notice will specify:

- the consignment affected;
- the provisions of the Regulations in respect of which the officer has reason to believe there has been a failure to comply;
- the practicable steps needed to lift the movement restrictions or the course of action to be taken;
- that the consignment must not be moved without the written consent of a /DC officer.

A consignment under movement control will be labelled or marked to show that it is subject to this control.

There is a Right to Appeal against this notice. In the first place this appeal should be to a Senior Official of the DC concerned. In the event that the matter cannot be resolved, it can be referred to the Defra Organic Imports team: 020 7238 5777 or preferably at (organic.imports@defra.gsi.gov.uk).

The consignment may be permitted by DC to be moved to a warehouse or other storage facility under the supervision of an appropriate party, most usually the DC in whose area the storage facility/warehouse is located, but only after a Consent to Movement notice has been issued by DC. This procedure is often utilised to reduce demurrage costs at the port/point of entry in cases where the certificate of inspection is delayed or where the consignment is to be relabelled to remove/obscure all organic references on the packaging, in cases where the organic certificate is unavailable. In such cases DC at the point of entry would only permit movement of the consignment if the appropriate DC agrees to supervise the consignment whilst it is in their area. If the DC is unable to supervise the consignment, due to staffing considerations / resource implications, the DC would refuse to issue a movement consent notice and the consignment would remain under movement control conditions at the port/point of entry.