

Imports Market Access Assurance

Any country wishing to export animals and products of animal origin (including food) into the Great Britain must apply for and be approved for market access by the United Kingdom (UK) Government.

Granting approval to export animal products to Great Britain

Any country wishing to export animal products (including food) into Great Britain must first be approved to do so by the United Kingdom (UK) Government. Only competent authorities (not food business or trade bodies) are able to apply for approval to export animal products to Great Britain.

To import animal products into Great Britain, certain food safety and public health conditions must be met (other conditions need to be satisfied, for example relating to animal health):

1. The exporting country must have an effective national food safety control system in place to assure that exports to Great Britain are produced to our standards and have been assessed and approved by Great Britain.
2. The exporting country must have a residue control plan in place which has been assessed and approved by Great Britain.
3. Once a country has been approved, any establishment wishing to export has to be approved by the competent authority of that country.

To apply for or amend a market access approval, competent authorities must in the first instance email Defra at ukassurance@defra.gov.uk.

Cross-government approach

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) is the UK central competent authority for trade in agri-food products. The UK Office is responsible for the cross-Government co-ordination of market access assessments.

FSA's role

The Food Standards Agency ensures food and feed safety and public health are duly considered in the cross-Government market access decision making process. To ensure that imported food remains safe and consumers can be confident that the food they buys is what it says it is.

The FSA established two teams (Imports Market Access Assurance and International Trade Audit & Assurance), drawing on expertise from across the Agency, to work with Defra. The FSA evaluates market access requests for animal products in relation to public health risks (Defra assess animal health risks). The FSA does so to provide assurance that any country applying for market access to export food into Great Britain has appropriate national food safety control systems in place, and that these controls are applied appropriately. This provides assurance that food exported from other countries meets Great Britain's robust food safety standards.

The FSA also monitors countries already authorised to export food into Great Britain for signs of potential issues with a country's national food safety control system and will act where appropriate.

The assessment process

A robust cross-Government process is in place to assess market access requests from trading partners. Where necessary, an in-country verification audit may be conducted to confirm an exporting country's sanitary and phytosanitary regulatory and assurance systems are being implemented effectively.

On completion of the market access assessment Defra publishes the final audit report on GOV.UK. The report contains the observations made during the in-country verification audit along with any proposed recommended actions to be taken by the applicant country. Also published is the response from the applicant country with details of any corrective or preventative actions to be undertaken following the audit.

Following the audit outcome, taking into account any corrective or preventative actions planned by the exporting country, a decision on whether to grant market access is considered.

FSA market access recommendations to Defra

The FSA provides written recommendations on market access approvals to Defra for our areas of competence (food safety and public health) to feed into the cross-Government decision-making process. FSA's recommendations to Defra will be published below.

Recommendations to Defra

June 2023

[FSA recommendation on import controls on beef and poultry meat and meat products from Brazil](#), agreeing with the decision to lift enhanced import controls on beef and poultry from Brazil and to lift the restriction on Brazil to list poultry and beef establishments for export to Great Britain.

FSA recommendations for audit to the UK Office

As part of its ongoing food safety assurance monitoring activities, the FSA may propose to the UK Office that an audit is performed of the systems of food safety control in countries already exporting to the UK. FSA's recommendations to the UK Office are listed below.

Recommendations to the UK Office

April 2023

[FSA recommendation to audit the system of food safety controls in Poland](#), to assess the detection and management of Salmonella in poultry meat and poultry meat products exported to the UK from Poland.