

European Union import conditions for poultry and poultry products

Import rules in the European Union (EU) for poultry and poultry products are fully harmonised. On behalf of all EU Member States, the European Commission is the sole negotiating partner for all non-EU countries in questions relating to import conditions for these products.



The Commission's Directorate- General for Health and Food Safety establishes import rules for poultry and poultry products. By following these rules non-EU countries can guarantee that their exports of such products to the EU fulfil the same high standards as products from EU Member States - not only with respect to hygiene and all aspects of consumer safety, but also regarding their animal health status.

Importation of poultry and poultry products into the EU are subject to veterinary certification - which is based on the Commission's recognition of the competent (veterinary) authority of the non-EU country.

This formal recognition of the reliability of the competent authority is a pre-requisite for the country to be eligible and authorised to export poultry and poultry products to the EU. Legally legitimate and adequately empowered competent authorities in the exporting country must ensure credible inspection and controls throughout the production chain, which cover all relevant aspects of hygiene, animal health, animal welfare and public health.

Parties and private businesses which are interested in exporting poultry and poultry products to the EU must first contact their competent authority which, in turn, will communicate with the Commission.

Criteria

Non-EU countries of origin must be included on a positive list of eligible countries. The main criteria for the non-EU country to be listed and therefore eligible to export to the EU are:

- The exporting countries must have a competent authority which is responsible throughout the food chain. The authority must be empowered, structured and resourced to implement effective inspection and guarantee credible certification that the relevant veterinary and general hygiene conditions are met.

- The country or region of origin must fulfil the relevant animal health standards. This implies that the country should be a member of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and should meet that organisation's standards and reporting obligations. In addition, approved countries have to notify within 24 hours outbreaks of avian influenza and Newcastle disease, including also important changes in their health situation, to the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety of the European Commission and must submit virus isolates to the EU Reference Laboratory.
- Countries wishing to export live poultry to the EU must have in place adequate avian influenza surveillance programmes. When a country is applying a vaccination policy against avian influenza, certain imports into the EU from that country may be permitted under specific conditions.
- The competent authority (veterinary service) in the country must ensure effective enforcement of all necessary animal health controls.
- Imports into the EU are only authorised from approved establishments (e.g. breeding establishments, other holdings, hatcheries), which have been inspected by the competent authority of the exporting country and found to meet EU requirements. When it signs the export health certificate, the authority is certifying that it provides the necessary guarantees, carries out regular inspections of the approved establishments and takes corrective action, if necessary..
- The competent authority must have at its disposal one or more laboratories that comply with certain minimum requirements, ensuring sufficient capability for disease diagnosis.
- The competent authority must also guarantee that the relevant animal and public health, as well as hygiene requirements are met. EU legislation contains specific requirements for holdings, establishments and poultry products. These provisions are aimed at ensuring good health of animals and high standards at preventing any contamination of the product during processing.

Request for authorisation to export poultry and poultry products to the EU

The competent authority of a non-EU country must submit a written request to the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety of the European Commission to export poultry and poultry products to the EU. The request should contain confirmation that the authority can fulfil all relevant legal provisions to satisfy EU requirements. Upon receipt, the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety then sends a general and/or product-specific questionnaire to the competent authority which should be completed and returned. The completed questionnaire(s) will provide information on relevant national legislation on animal health and food hygiene, structure of the competent authorities etc.

Residues of veterinary medicines, pesticides and contaminants

The exporting country must implement a residue monitoring plan to verify that poultry and poultry products (e.g. eggs) intended for export to the EU, comply with EU requirements – i.e. do not contain residues of veterinary medicines, pesticides and contaminants which exceed maximum residue limits/levels set in the EU. Residue plans must be submitted annually, approved by the Commission and the

country listed accordingly. If the plan is not approved by the Commission, poultry products may not be imported into the EU regardless of the non-EU country's compliance with other public health or animal health requirements. More information can be found on the webpages indicated below.

Salmonella control

A Salmonella control programme must be in place to comply with EU requirements to provide equivalent guarantees for imports of certain poultry commodities. The equivalent guarantees of the importing country must be submitted and approved by the Commission. More information can be found on the webpages indicated below.

Audits by the Commission

If the evaluation of the information provided in the various questionnaires is positive and the residue monitoring plan is approved, an audit by the Commission's Health and Food Audits and Analysis Directorate may be carried out to assess the situation on the spot. Such an audit is necessary to confirm compliance with the above requirements. It is the basis of establishing confidence between the Commission and the competent authority of the exporting country. The Directorate may carry out further audits to monitor the situation on the spot from time to time.

Country listing – the process

Based on the evaluation of the written guarantees on compliance with EU rules given by the exporting country and, if necessary, on the outcome of the audit on the spot carried out by the Health and Food Audits and Analysis, the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety will propose the authorisation of the country for the animals or products concerned, the specific animal health conditions under which imports from that country will be permitted and the list of approved establishments in the exporting country. These are then discussed with representatives of all EU Member States.

If the Member States have a favourable opinion on the proposal, the European Commission adopts a legal act to list the country, with any specific import conditions which may apply.

Lists of eligible establishments can be amended at the request of the exporting country and are made available for the public on the internet here: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/sanco/traces/output/non_eu_listsPerActivity_en.htm. When proposing amendments to the establishment list, the competent authorities of the exporting countries are guaranteeing that the establishments conform with, and operate according to, EU legislation.

Inspection of imported poultry and poultry products at the EU Border

Poultry and poultry products entering the EU are inspected at Border Inspection Post(s) where Member States' official veterinarians ensure the imported consignments fulfil the requirements provided for by EU legislation. Note that animals of a lower health status than the one in the EU cannot transit through the EU.

More detailed information on:

Import conditions: https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/international_affairs/trade_en

Import conditions for poultry and poultry products (includes the questionnaire for the authorisation of imports) into the EU: https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/international_affairs/trade/poultry_en

Residue monitoring: https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/chemical_safety/vet_med_residues_en

Salmonella control: https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/biosafety/food_borne_diseases/salmonella_en

EU veterinary border control: https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/vet-border-control_en

Official controls on imports: https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/official_controls/legislation/imports_en

Food hygiene: https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/biosafety/food_hygiene_en

EU Trade Helpdesk: <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/tradehelp/>

Food hygiene legislation: https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/biosafety/food_hygiene/legislation_en