

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: UK Government Releases Guidance on Proposed Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement with EU

Country: United Kingdom

Post: London

Report Category: Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety, Country/Regional FTA's, Trade Policy Monitoring

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Report Highlights:

On May 28, the United Kingdom's Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs published guidance to prepare for a potential UK-EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement. In summary, the guidance (expected to enter into force in mid-2027) indicates the agreement reinstates the EU's legislation governing food, feed safety, and agricultural production in the UK. One exception, subject to ongoing negotiations, appears to be whether the UK's precision breeding legislation will be retained. Additionally, whether or not the agreement will allow for a transition period for UK producers to comply with these changes is unclear. The UK government did confirm that an SPS agreement with the EU will result in increased inspection rates of certain Rest of the World (i.e., non-EU) imports.

Background

On May 28, 2026, the UK government [published](#) guidance on business preparation for its anticipated SPS agreement with the EU, targeting implementation by mid-2027. While negotiations remain ongoing, the guidance introduces 10 sector-specific readiness frameworks covering areas such as organics, genetic technologies, food manufacturing, and animal breeding. It coincides with initial findings from the UK government's March–April 2026 call for information. Final legal provisions, exemptions, and transitional arrangements are expected at the second annual UK-EU Reset Summit, now scheduled for July 22, 2026.

Key Highlights for Businesses

Trade Facilitation (EU ↔ GB)

- Goods entering Great Britain (GB) from the EU—or Northern Ireland from GB—will no longer require export health certificates, phytosanitary certificates, ISPM15 markings, or Northern Ireland plant health labels.
- Routine SPS border checks will end for dairy, fish, eggs, meat, plants, and plant products moving from the EU into GB or from GB into Northern Ireland.

Novel Foods & Contaminants

- GB novel food authorizations will cease; some products (e.g., those containing edible insects) will require reformulation or market withdrawal.
- New and revised maximum levels will apply for contaminants including PFAS, heavy metals (lead, cadmium), mycotoxins, and plant toxins.

Composite & Rest-of-World Imports

- Composite products from non-EU countries entering GB will require an export health certificate if they contain meat or require chilled/frozen transport; shelf-stable or meat-free composites will require a new private attestation document.
- Inspections on certain rest-of-world imports will increase to align with EU levels, including some goods not currently subject to routine inspection.
- Phytosanitary certificates will be required for all rest-of-world plant and plant product imports.

Plant Health & Pesticides

- EU plant passports will replace UK plant passports; EU pest categorizations will be adopted.
- Active substances and pesticide maximum residue levels (MRLs) will align dynamically with EU rules; some pesticide products may be withdrawn or have uses limited.
- Plant breeders may list varieties in either an EU member state or GB's national catalogue, with cross-recognition between the GB Variety List and the EU Common Catalogue.
- Export of seed potatoes will resume.
- Import checks on plants and plant products from the EU into GB will cease, though some post-import checks will remain.

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) & Precision Breeding

- GB will align with EU 'GMO' rules; authorizations will revert to EU single market processes.
- Precision breeding remains subject to ongoing negotiations.

Organics

- All UK businesses must follow EU organic rules regardless of whether they trade with the EU, including updated labeling with the EU organic logo.
- Changes apply to organic livestock producers (e.g., poultry housing, breeder flock standards) and organic pet food producers (new compositional and processing standards).

- Importers of organic goods from rest-of-world countries must use the EU's TRACES NT system for certificates of inspection.

Animal Products & Feed

- Export health certificates remain required for live animals, germinal products, and animal products traded with non-EU countries.
- GB will align with EU import check rates for animals and animal products from non-EU countries.
- Existing GB feed additive authorizations will be replaced by EU authorizations.
- GB will align with EU controls on high-risk food and feed of non-animal origin (EU Regulation 2019/1793), requiring pre-notification to a designated border control post and submission of a Common Health Entry Document (CHED-D).

Customs

- Existing customs controls remain unchanged; the SPS agreement is not a customs agreement.

Next Steps

- Details on exceptions and transition periods: **Summer 2026**
- Checklists and practical tools: **Autumn 2026**
- Target implementation date: **Mid-2027** (subject to negotiations)

Stakeholder reaction

The National Farmers' Union (NFU) of England & Wales welcomed the guidance as a positive first step towards helping farmers and growers understand the changes that the UK-EU SPS agreement will bring. However, it noted that farmers would need more detailed information to help them to plan and adapt their businesses to the coming changes. The NFU also highlighted its continued attempts to lobby for any plant protection products that will be withdrawn under the agreement to be given reasonable use-up periods.

The Food & Drink Federation (FDF) accepted the proposed deal would cut costs in the long run, but warned ministers that firms needed at least 2 years to adapt. Businesses will have to make changes to their supply chains and operations because of the likely rapid realignment with EU food law, with the FDF estimating around 400 regulations to be within scope of changes.

The reaction from the Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC) challenged the UK government's characterization of the impact of the SPS deal as a 'simplification', describing it instead as a "transfer of burden", representing a "structural asymmetry – one that eases trade with the EU at the direct expense of supply chain resilience elsewhere". The FPC statement notes how the released guidance confirms that the UK will align with EU SPS rules on imports from the Rest of the World. FPC highlights how this means in practice "hugely increased inspections on certain Rest of World imports, additional phytosanitary certification requirements, expanded pre-notification obligations, additional reporting and compliance systems, and potential new post-import checks and operational delays". FPC contends that the UK "already operates a proven, proportionate, and science-based SPS regime, one that was consciously designed after Brexit, on the advice of our own scientific authorities, to be risk-led and evidence-based". What is now being proposed, it suggests, is "to replace that system with a more bureaucratic, protectionist, method-based alternative – not because the evidence demands it, but because political alignment at all costs with the EU has become the objective".

Attachments:

No Attachments.