

European Union import conditions for poultry and poultry products

Import rules in the European Union (EU) for poultry and poultry products are fully harmonised and the European Commission acts as the competent authority on behalf of the 28 Member States. The European Commission is the sole negotiating partner for all non-EU countries in questions relating to import conditions.



The European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety is responsible for food safety in the EU. Our import rules seek to guarantee that all imports 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 recognition of the competent veterinary authority of the non-EU country under EU legislation.

This formal recognition of the reliability of the competent veterinary authority is a pre-requisite for the country to be eligible and authorized for import into the EU. Legally legitimate and adequately empowered 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.

All interested parties and private businesses should contact their competent authority and communicate with the EU via this channel.

Criteria

Non-EU countries of origin must be on a positive list of eligible countries. The main criteria for imports to the EU are:

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

- 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, under specific conditions certain imports may be permitted.
- Adequate veterinary services must ensure effective enforcement of all necessary health controls.
- Imports 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. The authority provides the necessary guarantees and is obliged to carry out regular inspections.
- The veterinary authorities must have at its disposal one or more laboratories that comply with certain minimum requirements, ensuring sufficient capability for disease diagnosis.
- The national authorities must also guarantee that the relevant animal and public health, as well as hygiene requirements are met. The 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

The national authority of a non-EU country must submit a formal request to the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety of the European Commission to import 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.

After the request is received the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety will send out a questionnaire to the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) of the country applying for authorisation, which should be completed and returned. This questionnaire can also be found on the webpages indicated below. The completed questionnaire can of course be submitted together with the initial request.

Residue monitoring

A monitoring system must be in place to verify compliance with EU requirements on residues of veterinary medicines, pesticides and contaminants. The residue monitoring plan of the exporting country must be submitted and approved by the EU Commission. 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 EU Commission. More information can be found on the webpages indicated below.

Inspection by the Commission's Food and Veterinary Office (FVO)

If the evaluation of the residue monitoring plan and the questionnaire is positive, an inspection by the Commission's Food and Veterinary Office is carried out to assess the situation on the spot. Such an inspection is necessary to confirm compliance with the above requirements. It is the basis of establishing confidence between the EU Commission and the competent authority of the exporting country. The FVO also will carry out further inspections to monitor the situation on the spot from time to time.

Authorisation of the exporting country

Based on the results of the inspection and the guarantees given by the exporting country, the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety proposes the authorisation of the country for the animals or products concerned, the specific animal health conditions under which imports from that country will be authorised and the list of approved establishments in the 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 authorise the country, with the specific import conditions.

Lists of eligible establishments can be amended at the request of the exporting country and are made available for the public on the internet. The competent authorities of the exporting countries give the guarantee that they conform to, and operate according to EU legislation, when proposing amendments to the establishment list.

Controls at the EU Border Inspection Post(s)

Poultry and poultry products entering the EU are inspected at a Border Inspection Post(s) where Member States' official veterinarians ensure they fulfil all the requirements provided for in the EU legislation. Animals of a lower health status than the one in the EU can also not transit through the EU. More information can be found on the webpages indicated below.

More detailed information on:

Import conditions: http://ec.europa.eu/food/international/trade/index_en.htm

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

Residue monitoring: http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/chemicalsafety/residues/third_countries_en.htm

Salmonella control: http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biosafety/salmonella/index_en.htm

EU border control: http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/bips/index_en.htm

The food hygiene legislation:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/biosafety/hygienelegislation/index_en.htm

Export Helpdesk – online helpdesk managed by DG Trade:

<http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/index.htm>