

Food standards



Staying as close as possible to EU food standards will help address issues of cost, safety, quality, certainty, consumer confidence and trade relationships. There is an opportunity for the UK to establish a new Food Act that clearly sets out the vision for better food, farming and fishing. However, this could be hindered by devolution and the division of responsibility for food standards.

THE SITUATION IN 2021

The deal announced in December 2020 is best summarised as a 'Canada-type' deal, with no tariffs but border checks still taking place. There is also provision for the application of tariffs should the agreement be breached. Northern Ireland remains subject to EU rules and border issues may arise.

What has changed?

- » The UK is now free to determine its own imports control system. An effective and robust system will need to be in place to minimise the risk from food scares and incidents.
- » The Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES) is no longer part of the UK's information-sharing toolkit and will be replaced with the Import of Products, Animals, Food and Feed System (IPAFFS).
- » Defra has issued guidance outlining allowances for food products sold in the UK to be non-compliant for a limited time and these should be referred to when giving advice.
- » The new Trade and Agriculture Commission will review prospective deals and advise the government about what issues it may raise relating to standards.

Issues to be resolved

- » The internal markets legislation attempts to address the potential issues of divergence within the UK but raises political concerns.
 - » The position with regard to many of the practical implications of the Northern Ireland protocol is still unclear.
 - » There are some short-term provisions, for example regarding the continued use of organic logos, which need to be finalised.
 - » The UK government has decisions to make on which standards to apply in order to trade most effectively. The UK could have different standards in play for different markets following other international models.
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