

News article

SPS Agreement - UK food and drink legislation is aligning with EU law

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Topics

Food regulation & safety

International trade

EU alignment: What you need to know

The UK government is planning to align UK food and drink legislation with EU law.

In March 2026, the government published updated guidance setting out the EU agri-food legislation it expects will apply in the UK once the Agreement is finalised. The deal is intended to ease trade with the EU – our largest trading partner – and will change the rules for the sale of food and drink on the UK market.

Although this development has been on the radar for trade and regulatory teams for some time, we know that for many businesses, this may be the first time the implications are becoming clear.

To help understand the requirements, we're sharing the key information every food and drink business needs to be aware of and how FDF can help you navigate these changes. FDF members can help you navigate these changes.

Who does this impact?

The Agreement will change UK laws and therefore every UK food and drink business needs to check if they need to change any aspects of their production. This includes business who only sell in the UK and do not export.

What is the scope of the Agreement?

The recent guidance on the scope of the UK-EU 'SPS Agreement' – the title the government is using – makes very clear that this is much broader than simply a trade deal on animal and plant health. In fact, it covers a wide range of food safety and standards legislation.

From a regulatory perspective, the government has circulated a list of 'legislation in scope'. This is a high-level EU food law list that companies will need to align with, and it is a useful start.

But, of course, the devil will be in the details. The list will only be finalised once the negotiations have concluded, and it's important to note that the Agreement means that the UK will adopt all current EU regulations and their many amendments, as well as all future EU changes related to these pieces of legislation.

FDF Detailed Amendments List

To support members' regulatory mapping and action plans for EU alignment, we have developed a member-only detailed overview table that expands on the 'legislation in scope' and presents a more comprehensive list of the hundreds of pieces of relevant EU food legislation (i.e. regulations, directives and their amendments from 2021 to date).

Member-only: Detailed Amendments List

If you're not a member, you can see an [extract of the Amendments List here](#)

When will UK food and drink law change?

By mid-2027 (the exact date is still to be confirmed), all UK businesses will need to be ready to fully align with EU rules on the production, sale, and trade of plants and animal products. They will also need to comply with all EU food safety and standards rules by this date.

Our priority when speaking with the government is pressing the importance of sell-through provisions and appropriate transition periods, to ensure that our members' time, money and products aren't wasted. However, it seems likely that for the majority of these changes, the date for compliance is now set as mid-2027.

This agreement

- is wider than simply a trade agreement with the EU
- applies to all UK food and drink businesses, even if they don't export to the EU
- changes UK domestic rules to align with those in the EU, impacting imports to the UK
- will implement EU rules on the production, sale and trade of plants and animal products, alongside EU agri-food safety and standards, into UK law
- includes all amendments to the listed EU laws in scope, as well as all future changes

What practical plans should I make now?

The government's key advice is that every business in the agri-food sector should start to prepare for the changes now. It is clear that there are far-reaching impacts on all UK food manufacturers and their supply chains.

Preparations should include planning any necessary changes to suppliers (including those from outside the EU), audits and contracts, specifications, formulations and recipes, digital and IT systems, compliance and regulatory, label artworks and packaging, and manufacturing and production.

How can I keep up to date?

All companies should sign-up to [Defra alerts](#) to receive new guidance as it becomes available

FDF members can

Check you are represented on [our committees](#), as this is where the majority of technical updates will be shared:

- International Trade Committee
- Food regulation & safety committees ,
including: Food Safety, Food Contact Materials, Food Ingredients/Additives, and Residues and Contaminants

Review our member only resources:

- FDF Detailed Amendments List of 'Legislation in Scope' of UK-EU SPS Agreement
- FDF Overview of Defra's UK-EU SPS Agreement Announcement
- SPS Updates from FSA/FSS on Market Authorisations & Defra on Pesticides
- FDF SPS Trade Resource and Issues Tracker
- Regulatory toolkit,
multiple food law trackers mapping and comparing GB and EU food legislation (e.g. food additives & contaminants)

Not a member?

Join FDF to unlock regulatory and trade resources, so you can confidently navigate and stay ahead of EU agri-food law alignment.

FDF members help shape the future of food and drink, benefiting from our advocacy, thought leadership and regulatory and technical advice while accessing the latest industry data and analysis.

Get in touch with our [Membership team](#) to see how membership can benefit your business.

Find out more



Trade Snapshot Q3 2025

Our Q3 2025 trade snapshot shows food exports to the EU have dropped by almost a quarter (23.4%) over the last five years when compared to the same period prior to Brexit.

[Read the report](#)

[Webinar](#)



Why care about the SPS deal? A guide for non-exporting food businesses

The SPS deal will demand some technical and manufacturing changes, which could be expensive and time-consuming. Join this webinar for an understanding of what these changes will be and how you can prepare a compliance plan.

[Register now](#)



Member only

Regulatory toolkit

As a key resource for SPS UK alignment to EU food law, this toolkit helps members map and compare food law developments in GB and EU legislation through several regulatory trackers.

Find out more