

News article

How the SPS Agreement will affect your business

25 March 2026

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UK food and drink law is changing and it will affect all businesses - even those that don't trade with the EU.

The UK government is negotiating a new Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement with the EU that will remove some post-Brexit trade barriers by aligning parts of UK food and drink legislation with EU law.

On 9 March, government published updated guidance setting out the EU legislation it expects will apply in the UK once the Agreement is finalised. While the deal is intended to ease trade with the EU – our largest trading partner – the requirements will apply to *all* UK food and drink businesses, regardless of whether you export to the EU or only sell within the UK.

In simple terms, this means UK food and drink legislation will change.

Although this development has been on the radar for trade and regulatory teams for some time, we recognise that for many members – particularly those focused on the UK market – this may be the first time the implications are becoming clear. With that in mind, 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.

SPS - What is it?

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

From a regulatory perspective, government has circulated a list of UK-EU SPS 'Legislation in scope'. This is an initial highlevel EU food law list that companies will need to align to, and is a useful start.

But, of course, the devil will be in the detail. The list will only be finalised once the negotiations have concluded, and it's important to note that the Agreement means that we will adopt all current EU regulations, as well as all future EU changes related to these pieces of legislation. There have also been separate announcements on regulated products and pesticides.

What are the timings?

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 government is pressing the importance of realistic transition periods and sell through provisions, 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.

How can I keep up to date?

Government's key advice is that every business in the agri-food sector should start to prepare for the changes now. This could include plans to change suppliers (including suppliers from outside the EU), audits and contracts, digital and IT systems, compliance and regulatory, labelling and packaging, and manufacturing, production and formulations.

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**

Review our member only resources:

- **UK-EU SPS Agreement updates from FSA/FSS and Defra on plant protection products**
- **Defra guidance on UK-EU SPS Agreement and next steps**
- **Trade resources**
- **Regulatory toolkit**

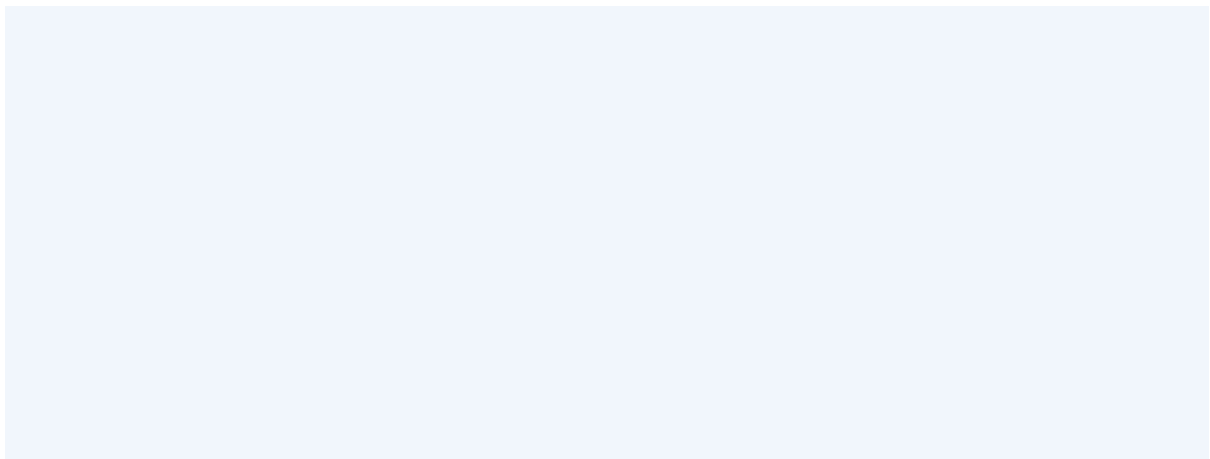
Sign-up to [Defra alerts](#) to receive new guidance as it becomes available.

You can also complete Defra's [call for information](#) before 9 March 2026.

Get in touch

Feel free to get in touch with our [trade](#), [regulatory](#) or [membership](#) teams directly if you have any questions.

Find out more





Be a part of something bigger

Our members help shape the future of food and drink, working with us to formulate industry positions, while benefiting from expert regulatory and technical guidance.

FDF membership



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



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.

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