

FOOD RETAIL GREEN LANE

WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM UNDER THE OLD PROTOCOL?

Under the old Protocol, agri-food goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland would have faced full European Union third country checks and controls, meaning:

- Every lorry would be stopped on arrival in NI to have their identity and supporting documents checked.
 - Up to 30% of lorries would be then held for even longer for additional physical checks, if they are carrying animal origin products like meat and cheese; or up to 100% if they carried plants, fruit and veg or plant products;
 - Individual certificates (each signed by a vet or plant health official) would be needed for each type of product in a load, which for one retailer would mean around 1500 certificates per week, costing £150 per certificate.
- A complete ban on chilled meat preparations from Great Britain, like Lincolnshire sausages, Easter lamb joints with rosemary and any chilled meats.
- Full EU standards – animal, plant, public health, marketing, organics and wine – required for all goods.

Whilst current temporary easements - particularly STAMNI - have overcome many of these challenges, it was a temporary scheme that was not agreed with the EU and it required all members to meet EU standards in full.

Northern Ireland is dependent on Great Britain grocery retail supply to maintain choice, availability and supply of food to consumers. This would be at risk under the old Protocol, with associated costs passed on to consumers.



WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED IN THE AGREEMENT?

- We have secured an expansion of the green lane for UK food retailers: the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme. Supermarkets, wholesalers, hospitality and catering companies and those providing food to public services (e.g. schools, hospitals) will all be able to use the green lane.
- Removed the requirement for costly health certificates needed for individual food products.
- Radically reduced checks - ID checks reducing from 100% now to 5% by 2025 and the requirement for up to 100% physical checks replaced with a purely risk-based and intelligence-led arrangement.
- Removed bans on British products moving to NI, including supermarket staples such as chilled Lincolnshire sausages, chilled pigs in blankets, chilled chicken in garlic butter, Scottish Haggis, black pudding and cake whitener.
- Replaced EU laws with UK public health, marketing and organics standards for retail goods remaining in the UK.
- Secured access for important rest-of-world origin agri-food into NI as part of the simplified scheme.

Overall the solution protects the most significant and critical parts of GB-NI agri-food trade - grocery retail supply - ensuring NI consumers can continue to access the goods they need, protecting internal UK trade even where our food health standards diverge.

We have also protected North-South supply chains for agri-food goods going for further processing in Northern Ireland. Operators in those sectors are those with the greatest levels of integration on the island of Ireland and have made clear that they would prefer to use the red lane to maintain those links.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

Businesses moving grocery retail from GB to NI will be eligible for the green lane - the Northern Ireland Retail Movements Scheme - which consists of:

- **Broad and dynamic membership:** All 1500 members of STAMNI will be automatically enrolled to the green lane, and retailers, wholesalers, those moving goods for food service, hospitality and public institutions such as schools and prisons will soon be able to join the scheme via a simple online form.
- **Simplified Processes:** Traders will only need to complete a single, digitised certificate per lorry movement, providing routine commercial data, rather than multiple certificates per load. This will be overseen by UK Authorities who will approve certificates on a routine basis for trusted traders who demonstrate consistent compliance.

- **UK public health, marketing and organics standards will now apply** for goods moved to Northern Ireland through the green lane. This means that certain products banned in the EU (e.g. titanium dioxide, which is widely used in foods such as yoghurt or iced cakes), will be able to move smoothly in products into NI. It also removes the threat of bans on chilled meats, like sausages, which have only moved under STAMNI with separate, additional certificates. No separate certificate will be required in future.
- **Maintain the biosecurity of animal and plant health on the island of Ireland:** Businesses in NI will continue to comply with the same animal and plant health standards as they do currently, which will allow GB-origin goods to flow smoothly into NI whilst preserving the integrity of the island of Ireland's single epidemiological status.
- **Phased approach to labelling** There will be phased reduction in identity checks as new 'Not for EU' labelling requirements come on stream for goods for sale in NI, starting from October 2023 with meat, meat products and minimally processed dairy products like fresh milk and cream. This will continue until July 2025 when all relevant products will be marked across the UK. Shelf stable products like bread, pasta and confectionery will not be labelled. We will provide financial support to businesses through this process. These labelling requirements will not apply for NI producers selling across the UK into Northern Ireland.
- **Continued supply of important retail goods from the rest of the world secured**, like Colombian avocados, melons from Costa Rica and New Zealand lamb.

IMPLEMENTATION

- The Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme will come into force this Autumn 2023.
- Further guidance on the operational and delivery implications of the changes will be provided well in advance of this date to allow businesses to prepare.
- We will consult and work with business over the coming months ahead of implementing any changes required by these arrangements.

SUMMARY OF PROCESS

The key steps in the process required by both traders and competent authorities are set out below.

NI Retail Movement Scheme for movements of retail bound SPS goods

