

# Plant Health – Import Requirements Review Q&A

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## Cabinet Office Top Lines on Review Announcement

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- The remaining import controls on EU goods will not be introduced from July 2022. We want to ensure that businesses and their customers are supported through ongoing supply chain disruption and cost of living pressures. It would not be right to make changes at the moment that could inadvertently create further risks within critical supply chains.
- Leaving the EU has given us a unique opportunity to take back control of our borders in order to boost trade while protecting the security of people and the health of our environment – we will design a global import controls regime that is simple, efficient, and safe to use, and which is best suited to our own needs. We will target the end of 2023 as the revised delivery date for our controls regime.
- We are now faced with a range of new challenges from ongoing supply chain disruption as a result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine - and wider cost of living pressures.
- This has led us to conclude that, before we make any further changes to controls, we need to implement these improvements together with a proportionate, risk-based approach to controls to avoid serious disruption to our critical supply chains and at our ports.
- We want to minimise disruption to industry in the long term and ensure we are supporting supply chains. The government has always planned to make major improvements to the UK’s border, harnessing the use of technology and data, as part of our Border Strategy and ensuring that our controls are proportionate to risk. We will engage with businesses on the future implementation of controls to ensure that any future controls are implemented in the most streamlined way, minimising burdens on business.

## Plants-Specific Top Lines on Review Announcement

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- Since 1 January 2021, GB has operated its own sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regime, which is focused on addressing the risks it faces. This regime includes risk-based import checks of plants, plant products and other objects to avoid the introduction of harmful plant pests and diseases. These risk-based checks are in line with WTO/SPS principles and consistent with our obligations under the EU Withdrawal Act.
- The UK Government took the decision to introduce SPS checks in phases to protect GB biosecurity whilst maintaining the efficient trade in goods such as plants and plant products. Therefore, checks of high-priority plants and plant products, which pose the greatest potential risk to GB biosecurity, started at Places of Destination from 1 January 2021.
- The strict controls introduced in January 2021 and 2022 on the highest risk imports of plants and plant products from the EU will continue to apply, to safeguard the UK’s biosecurity.
- We constantly review whether further safeguards are needed and have a scientific process to assess the changing threats to plant biosecurity. For example, on 29 April 2022, we

introduced new safeguards to strengthen our import measures against the threat of Pine Processionary Moth in response to recent interceptions on trees imported from France. Pine Processionary Moth poses a serious risk to pine and cedar trees and presents a threat to human and animal health.

- The remaining import controls on EU goods will not be introduced from July 2022. Further controls will be introduced in 2023. We will publish a Target Operating Model in the Autumn (2022) that will set out how and when we will introduce an improved global regime of all border import controls. It will be based on a further assessment of risk and will harness the power of data and technology. We will target the end of 2023 as the date when this new controls regime will be delivered.
- We will set out in more detail in the Target Operating Model, but our new approach to controls will aim to create a seamless new 'digital' border, where technologies and real-time data will cut queues and smooth trade. This new approach will ensure that we implement controls for plants and plant products in a way which supports businesses.
- As part of the Government's review of global border controls, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will be conducting an in-depth feasibility review of moving high-priority plants and plant products to Border Control Posts. The details of this review will be published in the autumn.
- Plants and plant products eligible for trade continue to move freely in both directions, with no significant issues reported. It has not been necessary to make use of surge capacity or other contingency resources so far since 1 January 2021, when new import and export controls came in for GB-EU trade.
- Performing checks of high-priority plants at Places of Destination has afforded flexibility to businesses as they have adjusted to the new requirements for EU imports, minimising friction at the border, while protecting GB biosecurity.

## Q&A

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### Import Review Reasoning

#### **What import checks have been delayed?**

The Government announced on 28 April 2022 that the remaining import controls on EU goods, including plants and plant products, will no longer be introduced this year. Instead, traders will continue to move their goods from the EU to GB as they do now.

The rest of the controls which were planned for introduction from 1 July 2022 are no longer going ahead. This means:

- Import checks of high-priority plants and plant products will no longer be moving to Border Control Posts (BCPs) and will continue to take place at Places of Destination (PoDs).

- [‘Regulated and notifiable’](#) produce and cut flowers will not be subject to import checks from July and will not need to be accompanied by a PC.
- Low-risk (Article 73) goods will no longer require pre-notification and will not need to be accompanied by a PC from July.
- Marketing Standards and organic import requirements for imports from the EU will no longer need to be applied from July 2022.

Controls introduced in January 2021 and 2022 on imports of plants and plant products from the EU, will continue to apply to safeguard the UK’s biosecurity. Further information on these controls can be found on the [Plant Health Portal](#).

We want the process for importing plants and plant products to be safe, secure and efficient and we want to harness innovative new technologies to streamline processes and reduce frictions.

Moving forward, our engagement with industry will be guided by these objectives and will build on existing work already taking place, including on the UK Single Trade Window – a new digital platform that will help traders to move goods globally more easily.

Further details are available on the [Plant Health Portal](#), and in the [official ministerial statement](#).

### **Why did you delay the next stage of import controls?**

We are now faced with a range of new challenges from ongoing supply chain disruption as a result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and wider cost of living pressures.

This has led us to conclude that, before we make any further changes to controls, we need to implement these improvements together with a more proportionate, risk-based approach to controls to avoid disruption to our critical supply chains and at our ports.

We want to minimise disruption to industry in the long-term and ensure we are supporting supply chains. The government has always planned to make major improvements to the UK’s border, harnessing the use of technology and data, as part of our Border Strategy and ensuring that our controls are proportionate to risk. We will engage with businesses on the future implementation of controls to ensure they are implemented in the most streamlined way, minimising burdens on business.

British businesses are rightly focussing on their recovery from the pandemic and dealing with ongoing supply chain disruption. This decision is intended to support those efforts and avoid introducing new administrative requirements which might risk disruption at port at this point.

Further details are available on the [Plant Health Portal](#), and in the [official ministerial statement](#).

### **Does this mean that import controls will now be coming into force in 2025 (to align with the border strategy)?**

We will publish a Target Operating Model in the Autumn that will set out how and when we will introduce an improved global regime of all border import controls. It will be based on a further assessment of risk and will harness the power of data and technology. We will target the end of 2023 as the date when the new controls regime will be delivered.

**Are you delaying the next stage of import controls because the government isn't ready?**

No. The infrastructure we needed was ready on time as planned and IT systems have been working effectively. Now is the right time to revisit what controls are required and when and how they should be introduced so that we avoid disruption to our critical supply chains and at ports.

**What are you doing to ensure that stakeholders are aware of and will be ready for the next revised phase of import controls?**

Since the Written Ministerial Statement that announced the review of phase three import controls, we have been communicating these changes to stakeholders through a variety of channels. A banner has been placed on all our import pages on the Plant Health Portal that links to a page announcing the change and linking to the Written Ministerial Statement. We have also sent out a dedicated newsletter to key stakeholders. We have held a stakeholder update with the National Farmers' Union, Fresh Produce Consortium and the Horticultural Trades Association. Colleagues from across our service delivery bodies (e.g. the Animal and Plant Health Agency, and the Forestry Commission) have been updating individual operators too.

Our priority is to ensure that businesses understand the requirements and continue to safeguard the UK's biosecurity. We are planning various stakeholder engagement activities over the coming months to explain the changes to import requirements that will now be happening in 2023.

**The government has spoken about being a world leader when it comes to borders – this is surely hampering that?**

The UK government is working towards a global risk-based biosecurity regime for all imports, which harnesses the benefits of digitisation, makes the best use of available data and the latest technology to ensure we maintain and enhance our world class biosecurity standards.

**Surely this places us well behind the curve when compared to our trading partners – many of whom have stricter import checks in place? Why are we not keeping pace with them?**

We will design a global import controls regime that is simple, efficient and effective and which is best suited to our own needs. We will harness the benefits of digitalisation, make best use of data and adopt the latest technology to ensure we maintain and enhance our world class biosecurity standards. We will work with our trading partners, encouraging them to reciprocate, so that UK exporters can enjoy the same benefits.

**Surely it's not fair that we allow goods into this country check free but countries we trade with, including the EU, insist we complete lengthy paperwork and meet stringent standards to export to them?**

Leaving the EU has given us a unique opportunity to take back control of our borders in order to boost trade while protecting the security of people and the health of our environment – we will design a global import controls regime that is simple, efficient and effective and which is best suited to our own needs. We will work with our trading partners, encouraging them to reciprocate, so that UK exporters can enjoy the same benefits.

## Existing Checks

### **Will the checks that were introduced in January 2021 and January 2022 still apply?**

This decision **does not affect** existing controls that were introduced in January 2021 and January 2022. This means:

- If you import high-priority plants and plant products, you will still need to obtain a Phytosanitary Certificate (PC) and provide pre-notification before your goods arrive in GB. Import checks of these goods will continue to happen at Places of Destinations (PoDs).
- If you import '[regulated and notifiable](#)' produce and cut flowers, you will still need to pre-notify your good before they arrive in GB.

This decision **also does not affect** the proposed changes to the [frequency of checks](#) and [fees](#) which apply to EU and Rest of World (RoW) goods. These will continue to be implemented from July 2022.

Further details are available on the [Plant Health Portal](#), and in the [official ministerial statement](#).

### **What will the Common Health Entry Document (CHED) requirement be from the end of June?**

You should continue to pre-notify imports of High-Priority plants and plant product as you do now. Physical and ID checks will remain at a Places of Destination. Likewise, the pre-notification requirements introduced on 1 January 2022 for regulated and notifiable plants and plant products will also continue. There will be no new requirements to pre-notify imports of 'regulated' (Article 73) goods from 1 July 2022.

### **Will the delay announcement affect the changes to the frequency of checks and fees for Rest of World (RoW) goods?**

This will not affect the proposed changes to the [frequency of checks](#) and [fees](#) which apply to EU and Rest of World (RoW) goods. These will continue to be implemented from July 2022 in line with the respective public consultations.

## Financial Impacts

**You say that not bringing in these controls will save businesses up to £1 billion in annual costs.**

**How have you calculated this figure?**

We have estimated the volumes of imports and worked with businesses to establish the range of costs involved in the additional controls such as the preparation and submission of safety and security declarations and health certificates. We have also calculated the cost of clearance facilities, time spent on the completion of paperwork and waiting times whilst detail is prepared and controls are carried out.

A global risk-based approach, digitisation, harnessing the use of data and technology for controls will reduce costs.

**What about companies who have spent money getting ready – have they wasted their money?**

We are now faced with a range of new challenges from ongoing supply chain disruption as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine – and wider cost of living pressures.

Of course, when we left the European Union, we embarked on a new chapter for this country as a fully independent and sovereign United Kingdom in full control of our border and free to design how it operates. One change necessitated by our exit from the EU was the need to conduct customs and biosecurity controls on goods imported from the EU – controls which have been phased in after the end of the transition period.

We will target the end of 2023 as the revised date for our new controls regime to be delivered.

**How much money have you wasted?**

It is important to remember that we are now faced with a range of new challenges from ongoing supply chain disruption as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine – and wider cost of living pressures. Global supply chains are under immense pressure, and it is right that HMG works to address these difficulties.

When we left the European Union, we embarked on a new chapter for this country as a fully independent and sovereign United Kingdom, in full control of our border and free to design how it operates to ensure that we deliver the greatest benefit for the UK. One change necessitated by our exit from the EU has been the need to conduct customs and biosecurity controls on goods imported from the EU – controls which have been phased in after the end of the transition period.

To support ports in getting ready for these changes, in July 2020, the Government announced a £705 million funding package for border infrastructure, jobs and technology to ensure that Great Britain's border systems would be fully operational when the UK exited the EU. The new funding included £470 million to build the port and inland infrastructure needed to ensure compliance with new border procedures and controls, including the £200 million Port Infrastructure Fund and £270 million

for inland infrastructure. A number of these facilities are already being used to implement controls brought in at the start of 2022.

## Staffing Impacts

**What does this mean for the hundreds of APHA Plant Health and Seed Inspectors recruited to undertake these checks? Are you making them redundant, or will they be sat around doing nothing until the new controls come in?**

We will continue to work with individual Port Health Authorities and local stakeholders to assess the impacts of this decision.

## Biosecurity

**Why are plant health checks important? Have we made any interceptions since they have been introduced?**

The strict controls introduced in January 2021 and 2022 on the highest risk imports of plants and plant products from the EU will continue to apply, to safeguard the UK's biosecurity, as will existing controls on non-EU imports.

We constantly review whether further safeguards are needed and have a scientific process to assess the changing threats to plant biosecurity. For example, on 29 April 2022, we introduced new safeguards to strengthen our import measures against the threat of Pine Processionary Moth in response to recent interceptions on trees imported from France. Pine Processionary Moth poses a serious risk to pine and cedar trees and presents a threat to human and animal health.

Risk-based import controls are internationally recognised as a critical component of an effective biosecurity regime – protecting us from pest and disease and underpinning our status as one of the world leaders in biosecurity.

Since 1 January 2021 GB has operated its own sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regime, which is focused on addressing the risks it faces. This regime includes risk-based import checks of plants, plant products and other objects to avoid the introduction of harmful plant pests and diseases. These risk-based checks are in line with WTO/SPS principles and consistent with our obligations under the EU Withdrawal Act.

High plant health and biosecurity standards keep harmful pests and diseases, like *Xylella fastidiosa*, out of the UK, benefiting both the horticultural trade and the environment in the long term. Since plant health controls on high-priority plants and plant products imported from the EU to GB were introduced on 1 January 2021, 94 interceptions of harmful organisms have been made, which all had the potential to lead to a damaging outbreak in GB.



These include:

- Phytophthora ramorum, which can infect many plant species and has had a devastating impact on larch plantations in the UK, and Tobacco whitefly, which can spread many damaging viruses, affecting salad and other UK crops.
- Management of Phytophthora ramorum outbreaks in the UK cost £23 million between 2009 and 2014, with an annual spend on managing the impacts of Phytophthora estimated at approx. £1.5million per year since then.
- Tobacco whitefly is one of the most economically important agricultural and horticultural pests in the world, due in part to its adaptability, extreme host plant range and capacity to vector more than 110 plant pathogenic viruses. It is not established in the UK but has the potential to be a major pest of glasshouse salad crops such as tomato and cucumber. This is because of the risk of transmission of viruses such as Tomato yellow leaf curl virus (TYLCV) and Cucurbit yellow stunting disorder virus (CYSDV). If tomato plants are infested at an early stage, the disease may lead to total yield loss due to failure of fruit formation.
- Xylella is one of the most dangerous plant bacteria worldwide, causing a variety of diseases, with huge economic impact for agriculture, public gardens and the environment. Recent research estimates the economic cost of this disease in the EU could top £20bn. It is present in a number of EU member states and is getting closer to the UK. It is now known to be in France, Italy, Portugal and Spain.
- Only in the last few weeks, we have confirmed a finding of the Pine Processionary Moth on infested trees from France. This is a pest with serious human, animal and plant health consequences, and we can see how difficult it would be to control if it became established, through our experience with its relation, the oak processionary moth, which is now present in London and the surrounding areas.

In addition, hundreds of other instances of non-compliance have been identified e.g. incorrect health declarations on accompanying phytosanitary certificates. These cases demonstrate the importance of effective import controls to safeguard commercial plant production, protect food supply, and avoid the serious impacts on our natural environment which pest/disease outbreaks can lead to.

In addition to intercepting consignments which do not comply with requirements prescribed in our import conditions, import inspections are also important in monitoring the efficacy of export systems more generally in countries of production, and in providing intelligence on new and emerging potential threats, which need to be assessed to determine when and how import requirements need to be updated. For example, findings of Tomato mottle mosaic virus on seeds imported from the EU are contributing to an assessment of the level of risk associated with this pathogen and whether it should be regulated in future.

The UK has some of the highest plant health and biosecurity standards in the world, and we have been clear we will not compromise on these standards. They are integral to supporting and protecting the horticultural industry overall as well as sustaining our food supply and natural environment.

### **What impact does delaying import controls have on the UK's biosecurity?**

Since 1 January 2021, the UK put in place strict biosecurity controls on the highest risk imports of plants and plant products from the EU. These controls will remain in place, and we are able to respond to changes in biosecurity risk.

The UK government is working towards a global, risk-based biosecurity regime for all imports, which harnesses the benefits of digitisation, makes the best use of available data and the latest technology to ensure we maintain and enhance our world class biosecurity standards.

We have established mechanisms and measures to protect our biosecurity where we have particular concerns and evidence about pest or disease risk.

We constantly review whether further safeguards are needed and have a scientific process to assess the changing threats to plant biosecurity. For example, on 29 April 2022, we introduced new safeguards to strengthen our import measures against the threat of Pine Processionary Moth in response to recent interceptions on trees imported from France. Pine Pensionary Moth poses a serious pest of pine and cedar trees, and also presents a threat to human and animal health.

### **Doesn't postponing the introduction of these import checks put our own biosecurity at risk?**

Since 1 January 2021, the UK put in place strict biosecurity controls on the highest risk imports of plants and plant products from the EU. These controls will remain in place, and we are able to respond to changes in biosecurity risk.

The UK government is working towards a global, risk-based biosecurity regime for all imports, which harnesses the benefits of digitisation, makes the best use of available data and the latest technology to ensure we maintain and enhance our world class biosecurity standards.

We have established mechanisms and measures to protect our biosecurity where we have particular concerns and evidence about pest or disease risk.

We constantly review whether further safeguards are needed and have a scientific process to assess the changing threats to plant biosecurity. For example, on 29 April 2022, we introduced new safeguards to strengthen our import measures against the threat of Pine Processionary Moth in response to recent interceptions on trees imported from France. Pine Processionary Moth poses a serious risk to pine and cedar trees, and also presents a threat to human and animal health.

### **Disease outbreak could seriously harm the economy – is it worth the risk in postponing the introduction of checks?**

Disease outbreaks can have devastating impacts on the economy and maintaining our biosecurity is a key priority for Defra.

Since 1 January 2021, the UK put in place strict biosecurity controls on the highest risk imports of plants and plant products from the EU. These controls will remain in place, and we are able to respond to changes in biosecurity risk.

We constantly review whether further safeguards are needed and have a scientific process to assess the changing threats to plant biosecurity. For example, on 29 April 2022, we introduced new safeguards to strengthen our import measures against the threat of Pine Processionary Moth in response to recent interceptions on trees imported from France. Pine Processionary Moth poses a serious pest of pine and cedar trees, and also presents a threat to human and animal health.

**Isn't it just a matter of time before we see a disease outbreak in the UK given that we aren't checking incoming goods?**

Since 1 January 2021, the UK put in place strict biosecurity controls on the highest risk imports of plants and plant products from the EU. These controls will remain in place, and we are able to respond to changes in biosecurity risk.

We constantly review whether further safeguards are needed and have a scientific process to assess the changing threats to plant biosecurity. For example, on 29 April 2022, we introduced new safeguards to strengthen our import measures against the threat of Pine Processionary Moth in response to recent interceptions on trees imported from France. Pine Processionary Moth poses a serious risk to pine and cedar trees, and also presents a threat to human and animal health.

**Are we able to respond to a disease outbreak?**

We have powers to deal with non-compliant goods and those that pose a biosecurity risk.

We have established mechanisms in place to stop product from being exported to GB from areas with a known pest or disease risk. We can also use safeguarding measures to protect our biosecurity where we have particular concerns and evidence about pest or disease risk. We still have powers to check and seize non-compliant products and deal with any pest or disease risk identified.

The Defra Generic Contingency Plan describes how the Plant Health Service in England will manage outbreaks of plant pests. In particular, it covers the physical and human resources that are required for an outbreak response and describes the outbreak management process. It is designed primarily for use by staff in Defra, APHA and FC, who are involved in planning for outbreaks of plant pests in England, and for those who are involved in the outbreak response.

Pest specific response plans prepared by Defra and the Forestry Commission describe how the plant health service for England will respond to outbreaks of certain high-risk pests where additional measures over and above those set out in the overarching Defra contingency plan for plant health in England are required. Further information can be found on the [Plant Health Portal](#).

## Personal Imports

### **Are there any changes to personal imports considering the delay?**

Since 1 January 2021, imports of high-priority plants and plant products (including plants for planting) from the EU, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland have needed a phytosanitary certificate (PC). This applies even when moving plants in personal baggage, car or van from the EU to GB for personal use, such as planting in your garden. A PC must be obtained from the plant health authority of the country you are travelling from, who will need to inspect your plants to ensure they are free from pest and diseases before they can enter GB.

Your plants may also need checks when you arrive in GB. We encourage you to contact the plant health authorities in GB, who will be able to assist you further. Further information can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Other controls, which were planned for introduction from July 2022, are no longer going ahead.

## BCPs and Control Points

### **Will compensation be offered to those operators who have invested to become a designated Control Point ready for 1 July 2022?**

We are aware that some operators have already invested to become a designated Control Point (CP) ahead of 1 July 2022. CPs are an important component of our border control regime and will continue to be so in the future.

### **Does the new strategy remove the need for BCP infrastructure?**

To support ports in getting ready for the need to conduct customs and biosecurity controls on goods imported from the EU, in July 2020, the Government announced a £705 million funding package for border infrastructure, jobs and technology to ensure that Great Britain's border systems would be fully operational when the UK exited the EU.

The new funding included £470 million to build the port and inland infrastructure needed to ensure compliance with new border procedures and controls, including the £200 million Port Infrastructure Fund and £270 million for inland infrastructure. A number of these facilities are already being used to implement controls brought in at the start of 2022. We will target the end of 2023 as the revised introduction date for our controls regime.

### **Will we still see 24-hour operation models going ahead in an altered version at some ports?**

We will be reviewing Border Control Post (BCP) cover ahead of the publication of our Targeting Operating Model in the autumn of 2022 which will set out our strategy going forward.

## Sevington Soft-Launch

### **Will the Sevington Soft-Launch be going ahead now that the July controls have been moved?**

Following the announcement about the changes to July 2022 import controls, Defra will not be proceeding with the soft launch of Sevington Border Control Post (BCP). Those who have registered their interest already, will receive further communications about this stand-down.

Testing new facilities and processes remains a priority ahead of any changes to import requirements, and we would like to reassure you that further testing will be put in place once we have a more detailed timeline of delivery.

## IT Systems

### **Are plant and plant product importers still going to be moved from PEACH to IPAFFS now that the July controls have been moved?**

Defra will continue to transition importers of plants and plant products who are using PEACH, over to IPAFFS throughout 2022. We will look to expand the transition in the early summer and will be communicating a more detailed timeline shortly.