



Dear Sir/Madam,

Consultation on Short-term Changes to Plants for Planting Import Inspection Fees in England and Wales

I am writing to invite views on whether to introduce short term changes to certain plant health fees in England and Wales¹, in response to stakeholder concerns. In the absence of support to make these changes, a wider fees review will consider changes for the future.

Since January 2021, imports of plants for planting from the EU² have been subject to import controls, including documentary, identity and physical checks, and have attracted the associated plant health fees since 1 June 2021. Plants from the EU, intended for final users, are currently subject to physical and identity checks at a frequency of 5-10% , compared to 100% for plants not intended for final users. Concerns have been raised by some stakeholder groups that this may result in EU finished plants benefiting from a cost advantage over plants imported for finishing in GB. For example, a tomato plant finished in the EU would be subject to 10% checks (and a 10% fee, c. £20), whilst imported tomato plants intended for finishing in GB would be subject to 100% checks (and a 100% fee, c. £200).

To address these concerns, we have reviewed options aimed at eliminating the differential in inspection fees for finished and non-finished plants. We are now seeking views on whether to switch to a flat rate fee (where all imported plants for planting will be subject to the same fee regardless of intended use), for some or all categories of plants for planting, or to continue to use the current fees. More detail on the proposal is provided in the attached paper.

In response to stakeholder requests, we have focused on a proposal which could be implemented in the short term (ie by July 2022), and while we can consider additional/alternative ideas and proposals, these would require fuller consideration, as part of a wider review of fees methodology. Given that any changes would be a temporary measure pending a fuller review, we are interested to know whether or not there is a strong level of support across the sectors affected to make such a change in the short term.

¹ To note: in Scotland there is a similar but separate fees structure

² EU should be read as including Liechtenstein and Switzerland for the purposes of this note

All responses should be sent to planthealth@defra.gov.uk by 4th February 2022.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be made available to the public on request, in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental information Regulations 2004.

If you do not wish your response, including your name, contact details and any other personal information, to be publicly available, please say so clearly in writing when you send your response to the consultation. Please note that if your computer automatically includes a confidentiality disclaimer, this will not count as a confidentiality request. Please explain why you need to keep details confidential. We will take your reasons into account if someone asks for the information under freedom of information legislation. However, we cannot guarantee that we will always be able to keep those details confidential.

Yours sincerely,

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