

Q&A – GB Risk Targeted Plant Health Import Inspections

What plant health checks are carried out on imported consignments?

- Documentary, identity and physical (inspection) checks are carried out on regulated consignments of plants, plant products and other objects imported from non-EU countries.
- From 1 January 2021 plant health checks are also being carried out on consignments of regulated plants, plant products and other objects imported from EU member States, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.
- Under the agreed phased approach, higher risk goods from EU member States, Switzerland and Liechtenstein are subject to documentary, identity and physical checks from January 2021. Documentary checks on other regulated plants, plant products and other objects from EU member States, Switzerland and Liechtenstein will commence on 1 January 2022; with identity and physical checks applied from March 2022.

How is the frequency of identity and physical checks determined?

- The highest risk items (regulated from January 2021) are those assessed as presenting a significant risk of introducing harmful pests and diseases into GB from the EU.
- They include plants and products where there is concern about the disease situation in the EU (e.g. Xylella and plane canker).
- These risk-based checks are in line with WTO/SPS principles and consistent with our obligations under the EU Withdrawal Act, where we needed to ensure that requirements and processes in retained EU law were corrected so that they are operable at a UK level and focused on UK risks.

Do reduced levels of import checks on some consignments pose a risk to biosecurity?

- The highest risk items (those assessed as presenting a significant risk of introducing harmful pests and diseases into GB) are subject to 100% documentary, identity and physical checks.
- The level of identity and physical checks on other commodities is based on an assessment of the risk presented by the import of different plants and goods from different origins.

- Levels of inspection are kept under review and can be adjusted to reflect any changes in the risk situation.

Will all consignments imported from the EU be inspected? Why aren't all high priority imports from the EU being inspected? Is it appropriate to charge for all imports when only a proportion are being inspected?

- The highest risk commodities from the rest of the world are subject to 100% documentary, identity and physical checks. The level of identity and physical checks on other commodities is based on the risk presented by the import of different plants and goods from different origins.
- This risk assessment and risk management approach also applies to goods from the EU from 1 January 2021 and consequently, high-risk items are subject to import checks to protect GB biosecurity.
- For consignments eligible for reduced levels of physical checks a proportionally reduced fee is applied to every imported consignment.

Are we discriminating against non-EU imports? Is there a risk of WTO challenge from non-EU countries?

- The highest risk commodities from the rest of the world are subject to 100% documentary, identity and physical checks. The level of identity and physical checks on other commodities is based on the risk presented by the import of different plants and goods from different origins.
- This risk assessment and risk management approach has also applied to goods from the EU since 1 January 2021 and consequently, high-risk items are subject to import checks to protect GB biosecurity. Import checks on lower risk goods from the EU are being phased in over 14 months.
- These risk-based checks are in line with WTO/SPS principles and consistent with our obligations under the EU Withdrawal Act, where we needed to ensure that requirements and processes in retained EU law are corrected so that they were operable at a GB level and focused on GB risks.

Why are some seeds considered to be high priority plants and attract a 100% check?

- The highest risk commodities from the rest of the world are subject to 100% documentary, identity and physical checks. The level of identity and physical checks on other commodities is based on the risk presented by the import of different plants and goods from different origins.

- This risk assessment and risk management approach also applies to goods from the EU from 1 January 2021 and consequently, high-risk items are subject to import checks to protect GB biosecurity.
- High-priority plants are those that pose the greatest potential risk to GB biosecurity. Seeds which are not intended for final users, and which are to be used for commercial propagation, pose a higher risk than those intended for final users.