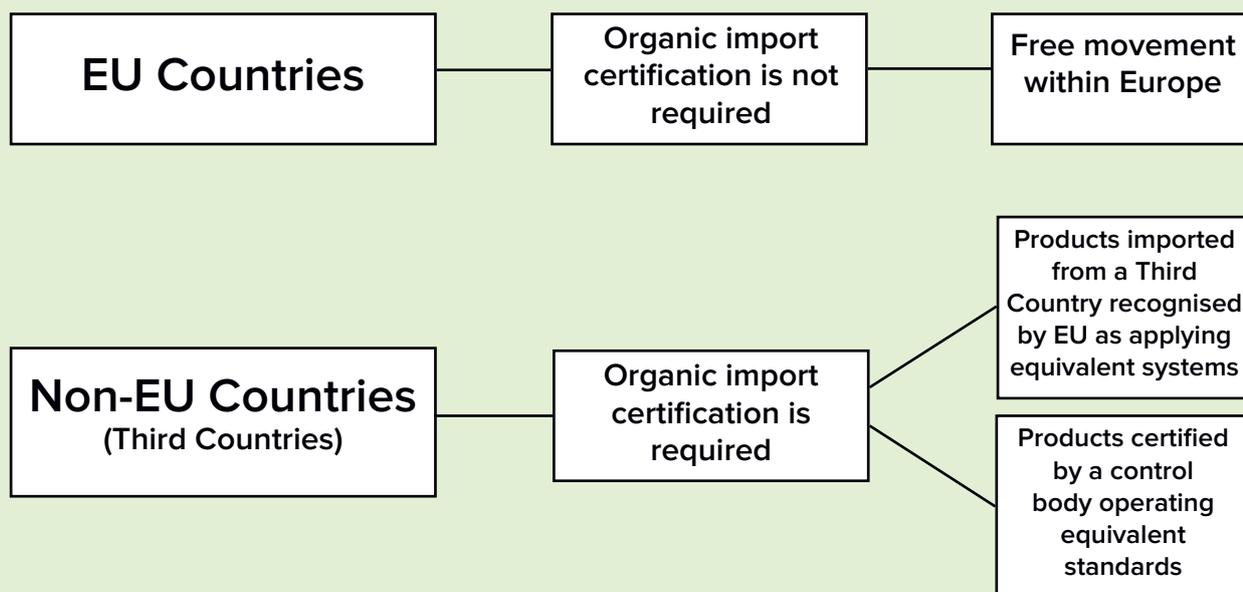


An Introduction to Organic Certification for Importers

EC Regulations (EC) No. 834/2007, (EC) No. 1235/2008 and its amends, controls the import of organic products into the EU. These Regulations specify the procedures under which importers and processors must operate. This technical leaflet explains what is involved and which operations may need additional inspection requirements for importing organically.

Organic Importing System



Note: Non EU Countries are referred to as 'Third Countries'

Imports from EU Countries/Member States

Importers bringing organic goods into the UK from other EU member states are currently not required to register as an organic importer due to the treaty provisions governing free movements of goods within the EU. However, they may require organic certification under a different scope (e.g. storage and distribution) of EC Regulations (EC) No. 834/2007. Please see OF&G Technical Leaflet TL218 for further information.

The European Economic Area and Switzerland

The European Economic Area countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) apply EU law on organic production and are treated as if they were EU Member States. Switzerland is similarly recognized but under a separate trade agreement. An EC Certificate of Inspection is not required for Switzerland.

Imports from outside the EU

The office and processing/storage sites used by importers bringing organic products into the UK from outside the EU require inspection and organic certification in every case. Anyone contravening this requirement in the UK could be subject to prosecution by Trading Standards.

Imports from outside the EU can fall under one of three systems:

System 1 – Country is recognised as equivalent:

Some Third Countries have been approved by the EU commission as having organic production standards and operating procedures equivalent to those in force in the EU. These are called 'Equivalent Third Countries'

System 2 – Control Body is recognised as equivalent:

Where a control body (listed in the amended organic importing regulations) is recognised as operating equivalent standards certifies the organic products.

Each Control Body on the list (see the organic importing regulations and its amending Regulations, above) can certify certain product categories from certain countries. An importer will need to remain certified with a UK Control Body, such as OF&G, and also arrange for a EU Certificate of Inspection (COI) for each consignment that is imported to be presented to the Port Health Authority at the point of entry into free circulation within the EU.

An up to date list of 'Equivalent Third Countries' and 'Equivalent Control Bodies' can be obtained from the EUR-Lex website <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>

TRACES NT (Trade Control and Expert System)

On 19 October 2017 the TRACES Electronic Certificate of Inspection (e-Col) system was fully introduced for all products being imported into the European Union from a Third country. Any importer bringing organic products into the EU from a Third Country must now be registered on TRACES NT and complete an e-Col using this system.

If you are not registered it is likely that the port authorities will not permit your products to enter the UK. **Without a stamped EC Certificate of Inspection your product cannot be processed or marketed as organic.**

Before you can register your company you must be certified by an organic control body and the control body will need to validate your TRACES registration.

To register on TRACES NT please go the the link: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/tracesnt/> and complete the relevant sections.

The COI must be issued within TRACES by the importer and validated by your control body.

At present the original COI must be printed and validated by the issuing control body. This certificate must then be

presented with the imported organic product to the relevant Member States authority - generally the point of entry Port Health Authority. *(No electronic signature is possible for the moment in TRACES)*

Port Health Authority will validate the electronic COI within TRACES but must also stamp and sign the paper version. *(No electronic signature is possible for the moment in TRACES)*

The first consignee will validate the electronic COI within TRACES and will also sign the paper version *(No electronic signature is possible for the moment in TRACES)*

The original certificate has to be kept by the importer and be available for viewing by OF&G/Defra.

Freight Forwarders

If you are a freight forwarder you will need to register on TRACES as an operator. However if you are not organically certified with an organic control body your registration must be validated by the Port Health Authority.

Labelling

Organic goods packed and labelled abroad, must carry the identifying mark of the organic certifier in the exporting country (This mark may be the name and/or logo and/or code as appropriate). Additional labelling requirements are detailed in EU regulation (EC) No. 889/2008; for further information please contact the office.

Achieving Organic Farmers & Growers' organic certification

- Contact OF&G for an application pack or download one from the website;
- Return the completed application form together with the appropriate fee;
- Undergo an organic inspection. (This is a review of the administrative and physical systems in place, to ensure that organic requirements can be complied with);
- Take action to correct any non-compliances raised by the inspector or the certification officer reviewing the inspection report.

Once the above stages have been completed to the satisfaction of the certification officer, the importer will be registered as a licensee, a Certificate of Compliance will be issued and Defra will be notified.

The Certificate of Compliance lists the types of products that have been approved. Other products cannot be imported until specific approval has been gained and they have been added to the Certificate of Compliance by OF&G.

Organic requirements are in addition to other statutory requirements

Statutory information is for guidance only and is correct at time of going to print