

Prepare for Brexit – December 2020

Welcome to the final Prepare for Brexit document of 2020 created specifically for the potato sector. As with previous countdown documents, this is to inform the industry of the pressing matters affecting the sector in the run up to and immediately after the end of the Transition Period.

3rd Country Equivalence

Discussions have been ongoing with the European Commission on the subject of 3rd Country equivalence for plant reproductive material, plant health prohibitions and changes to the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Seed potatoes: Exports will not be possible from the UK to the EU or Northern Ireland from 1st January 2021 until 3rd Country Equivalence is granted. The EU has confirmed that they will not accept the case for a permanent change to the prohibition on seed potatoes. This is on the grounds that there is no agreement for GB to be dynamically aligned with EU rules in the same way that Switzerland is. Discussions on the 3rd country equivalence will remain open, but nothing is expected to happen until later in 2021.

Ware potatoes: On a more positive note, the EU have voted in the PAFF committee on lifting the prohibition on ware potatoes for export to the EU and Northern Ireland. This will allow the export of ware potatoes from the UK to the EU and Northern Ireland from 1st January 2021.

DEFRA Webinars for traders of plants and plant products between GB and the EU/NI

In the run up to the end of the Transition Period, Defra held several plant and plant product focussed webinars to outline the impending changes. In each webinar DEFRA outline the steps and documentation required at the conclusion of the Transition Period. The webinars are now available to replay and links are provided below.

- Imports of plants and plant products, EU to GB webinar held on the 30th November: <https://youtu.be/0uqp0MvIGfU>
- Exports of plants and plant products, GB to EU webinar held on the 1st December: <https://youtu.be/P3ivEJYrZq0>
- Internal movement of plants and plant products within GB webinar held on the 25th November: <https://youtu.be/kf23JMBidYU>

General export and import information: DEFRA are continually updating their Q&A section which can be viewed on the plant health portal [here](#)

Northern Ireland

At the end of the transition period, the Northern Ireland Protocol will take effect. The Protocol is a practical solution to avoid a hard border with Ireland whilst ensuring the UK, including Northern Ireland, leaves the EU as a whole.

The latest government guidance on the importing and exporting plants and plant products between Great Britain and Northern Ireland was published last week. As previously

mentioned, seed potatoes are still prohibited for export to Northern Ireland but the movement of ware potatoes is now possible. [Importing and exporting plants and plant products from 1 January 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

AHDB have produced a briefing document outlining the EU exit policy changes affecting potato trade with Ireland and Northern Ireland: <https://ahdb.org.uk/news/eu-exit-policy-changes-affecting-trade-with-ireland-and-northern-ireland>

In addition, AHDB have also created a document on the Potato trade with the island of Ireland and what sectors may be most at risk on EU exit: <https://ahdb.org.uk/news/trade-with-the-island-of-ireland-and-what-sectors-may-be-most-at-risk-on-eu-exit>

Northern Ireland Movement Assistance Scheme

A new support service for traders and businesses is now live. The UK Government have launched the Movement Assistance Scheme (MAS), to help traders and businesses meet new requirements for moving animals, plants and associated products from Great Britain to Northern Ireland after the transition period ends.

Please find a link to UK Government Guidance and Support on the Movement Assistance Scheme in respect of moving agri-foods to Northern Ireland: [Movement Assistance Scheme](#)

Wood Packaging Material

A further change will take place in shipping arrangements from the UK to the EU from 1st January with all Wood Packaging Materials (WPM) moving between the UK and the EU required to meet ISPM15 international standards by undergoing heat treatment and marking. All WPM may be subject to official checks either upon or after entry to the EU.

Essentially, all wooden packaging materials such as pallets and crates must comply with the ISPM15 guidelines. This certification, declaring wooden pallets have been heat-treated and are free from pests and fungus, is key to preventing the spread of foreign species.

Until now, any pallets used in the shipping of goods to countries within the EU were exempt from this requirement – any pallet could be used or reused when exporting goods. But from January, all wooden pallets, crates, boxes etc. used to export outside of the UK be certified and comply with ISPM15. Contact your supplier or [TIMCON](#) if you need more advice about moving WPM from 1st January 2021.

UK – Egypt Agreement

In December, the UK Government signed an agreement with Egypt to strengthen political and trade ties between the two countries. The agreement establishes a political and economic partnership between the UK and Egypt, including a comprehensive free trade area. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-egypt-associationagreement>

In effect this is a roll over deal, so will replicate the access afforded under any EU-Egypt Association Agreement.

EU Exit Food Hub

AHDB is also a partner in the EU Exit Food Hub which provides a wealth of specific guidance to our sector. Please find a direct link to the EU Food Hub; <https://euexitfoodhub.co.uk/>