AGRINFO Guide: Temporary increase of o■cial controls of food imports

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AGRINFO has published guidance on the potential impacts of temporary increases of o■cial controls for foods entering the EU market

Temporary increase of o■cial controls of food imports – Regulation 2019/1793: An Introduction

Update

The European Union (EU) can temporarily set stricter requirements for foods to enter the EU market if it identifies potential risks to public health due to contaminants or pesticide residues in imported products. This Guide describes the many potential impacts of these temporary measures, and the actions that authorities, sectors, and operators in exporting countries should take to avoid increased official controls.

The Guide is available in English, French, and Spanish.

About temporary increased official controls

When the EU identifies potential risks to public health due to contaminants or pesticide residues in imported food, it can temporarily set stricter requirements for that food to enter the EU market (Regulation 2019/1793). Depending on the severity of the risk, the EU may introduce one of two options to target the food and country of origin concerned:

- increase the frequency of o■cial controls of imports at the EU border, or
- increase the frequency of o■cial controls of imports at the EU border and require the exporting country to put in place additional checks that involve sampling, testing, and certification of each consignment before export.

The EU, in consultation with EU Member States, increases o■cial controls on the basis of information from various sources, including reports of contaminants or pesticide residue exceedances identified by Member State authorities; audit reports from the European Commission; and other information provided by Member States and exporting countries.

Decisions also take into account factors including the nature of the risk, and the trade volume of the food concerned. Increased o■cial controls can have major practical impacts on a■ected sectors, including:

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- negative impact on the quality of goods due to delays
- increased costs related to sampling, testing, and trade disruption
- di■culties in accessing the testing and expertise needed to address underlying problems and allow continued trade
- damage to a country's or sector's reputation and longstanding business relationships.

The trade impacts can also be significant, with increased o■cial controls leading to:

- significant disruption or even discontinuation of exports to the EU
- loss of EU market share
- a shift in EU demand to other countries that are not a■ected by increased controls
- longer-term impacts on trade even after temporary measures are reduced or lifted.

The systems in place in the exporting country for communicating and taking action to address risks can be crucial in determining whether the EU decides to increase o■cial controls. To reduce the risk of increased o■cial controls, authorities and operators in exporting countries should:

- carry out systematic and regular monitoring of information provided by the EU on interceptions at EU border controls due to contamination and pesticide residues
- put in place communication systems to keep up-to-date on changes to EU rules
- operate e■ective national monitoring programmes to test for contaminants and pesticides
- ensure communication among operators, and between operators and authorities, for information sharing and rapid response to identified contamination risks.

This short Guide is intended to help businesses and competent authorities navigate EU rules; it is not intended to serve as a comprehensive basis for ensuring compliance. Authorities and operators in exporting countries should carefully read and apply the relevant legislation referred to in the Guide.

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