EU Marketing standards explained

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EU marketing standards, goals and impacts explained, with links to sector standards

Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products and repealing Council Regulations (EEC) No 922/72, (EEC) No 234/79, (EC) No 1037/2001 and (EC) No 1234/2007

Update

This summary provides background information on EU marketing standards, their goals and impacts, with links to all current sector standards.

Background

Objectives of marketing standards

The EU's rules on the organisation of the common market for agricultural products includes a section on marketing standards (Arts. 74–92).

The primary goals of EU marketing standards are to:

- help improve the quality of products and financial returns to growers by reducing false quality claims that may lead to unfair competition
- provide consumers with adequate and transparent information so they can make an informed choice and pay a fair price
- facilitate the efficient operation of markets with a supply of standardised, good quality products – consistent grading and labelling provides guarantees to operators.

Content of marketing standards

Marketing standards establish rules regarding product characteristics and other requirements that must be met for both EU-produced and imported products to enter the EU market. Marketing standards may include rules on (Art. 75(3)):

- technical definitions, designation and sales descriptions
- classification criteria, e.g. grading into classes, weight, sizing, age and category

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- indication of species, plant variety, animal race or commercial type
- presentation, labelling, packaging, marking, year of harvesting
- criteria such as appearance, consistency, conformation (shape/structure), product characteristics, percentage water content
- specific substances, e.g. quantitative content, purity, identification
- type of farming and production method (sustainable production)
- coupage (combinations) of must and wine
- frequency of collection, delivery, preservation and handling, conservation methods/temperature, storage and transport
- indication of place of farming/origin
- restrictions on the use of certain substances and practices
- specific use.

Sectors

Marketing standards have been developed for the following sectors:

- Eggs: Commission Regulation (EC) 589/2008
- Eggs for hatching and farmyard poultry chicks: Commission Regulation (EC) 617/2008
- Fruits and vegetables (fresh and processed): Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/892 and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 543/2011
- Bananas: Commission Implementing Regulation 1333/2011
- Poultry meat: Commission Regulation (EC) 543/2008
- Meat of bovine animals aged 12 months or less: Commission Regulation (EC) 566/2008
- Hops and hop products: Commission Regulation (EC) 1850/2006
- Butter: Commission Regulation (EC) 445/2007
- Dehydrated preserved milk: Council Directive 2001/114/EC
- Olive oil: Regulation (EU) 29/2012
- Wine: Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/934

Fruit – specific standards

Under Commission Implementing Regulation 543/2011, specific standards have been set out in Annex I, Part B for:

- Apples
- Citrus fruit
- Kiwifruit

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- Lettuces, curled leaved and broad-leaved endives
- Peaches and nectarines
- Pears
- Strawberries
- Sweet peppers
- Table grapes
- Tomatoes

The "Breakfast Directives"

Before the 2007 Regulation establishing the common market, differences in national laws across EU Member States prevented some products from being traded easily across the EU. To remove these obstacles to trade, the EU adopted harmonised Directives that became known as the "Breakfast Directives":

- Coffee and chicory extracts: Directive 1999/4/EC
- Cocoa and chocolate: Directive 2000/36/EC
- Sugars: Council Directive 2001/111/EC
- Fruit jams: Council Directive 2001/113/EC
- Dehydrated preserved milk: Council Directive 2001/114/EC
- Fruit juices: Council Directive 2001/112/EC
- Honey: Council Directive 2001/110/EC

Impact of marketing standards

An evaluation of EU marketing standards (European Commission 2020) concluded that these standards:

- had successfully contributed to improving the quality of agricultural and food products
- generally provided consumers with adequate and transparent information
- were welcomed by businesses as standardisation and quality improvement help to remove barriers to trade within Europe and reduce transaction costs in business-to-business relationships
- added significant value to international private standards due to their (in effect) mandatory nature and demanding quality requirements.

The evaluation identified some outstanding problems due to different approaches to enforcement in relation to: egg production and the ban on "non-enriched" (unfurnished) cages; use of dairy terms in the marketing of plant-based products; and blending of olive oils with other vegetable

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oils. It also identified new issues including keeping up with changes in technology and consumer preferences, and addressing food waste.

Impacted products

apples, citrus, kiwifruit, lettuces, peaches, nectarines, pears, strawberries, sweet peppers, table grapes, tomatoes, vegetables, poultry, eggs, dairy products, olive oil, bovine meat, hops, milk, wine, coffee, cocoa, sugar, jam, dehydrated milk, fruit juice, honey

Timeline

The Commission is expected to put forward a proposal in the fourth quarter of 2022 to update current marketing standards, taking better account of sustainability considerations, and responding to changing consumer preferences and technological innovations.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

Raising standards can jeopardise developing country exporters with lower technical capacities, leading to trade being diverted to developed countries (Nes & Ciaian 2021).

For those that have the necessary capacity, applying standards can mean investment and technology adoption, which can enhance the quality of produce and lead to greater coordination in the supply chain (Nes & Ciaian 2021), and can enhance market access.

Resources

European Commission (2020) Commission Staff Working Document Evaluation of marketing standards (contained in the CMO Regulation, the 'Breakfast Directives' and CMO secondary legislation).

European Commission (2021) Inception Impact Assessment on the Revision of EU Marketing Standards.

Nes, K. & Ciaian, P. (2021) Marketing standards for food products: A review of literature.

For an overview of all EU import requirements, visit Access2Markets, My Trade Assistant.

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Sources

Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013

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