Single-use plastic packaging for fresh produce

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EFSA calls for information on impact of single-use plastic packaging ban for fresh fruit, vegetables, and herbs in quantities of less than 1.5 kg

Call for data on unprocessed fresh produce packaging: European Food Safety Authority

Update

Regulation 2025/40 on Packaging and Packaging Waste (PPWR) bans single-use plastic packaging for quantities of fresh fruit and vegetables less than 1.5 kg, such as nets, bags, trays, and containers, sold in the European Union (EU) from 1 January 2030. The European Commission will provide detailed guidelines by February 2027, including a list of exempted packaging.

The Commission has requested a scientific opinion from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) that will inform the development of these guidelines.

Impacted products

Edible vegetables, roots, tubers; edible fruit, nuts, peel

What is changing?

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is preparing a scientific opinion on the implementation of a ban of single-use plastic packaging for packaged fresh fruit, vegetables, and herbs in quantities of less than 1.5 kg. It seeks documented information from operators (e.g. food business operators, national food authorities, research institutions, and academia). In particular, EFSA is looking for information on the:

- most common way of selling fresh, unprocessed fruit and vegetables and the reasons for small portion packaging
- main plastic and/or alternative packaging systems used for quantities < 1.5 kg
- potential limitations or disadvantages of alternative packaging material compared with plastic packaging in terms of the microbiological quality and/or safety of the products

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- handling practices that would be required across supply chains to ensure microbial safety and quality, and/or to protect products from mechanical damage if moving to bulk or alternative packaging
- microbiological hazards and spoilage micro-organisms that are most relevant for the safety and quality of the fresh unprocessed fruit and vegetables and the factors influencing microbiological contamination or growth.

The EFSA survey Call for data on unprocessed fresh produce packaging closed on 30 January 2026.

Why?

From 1 January 2030, single-use plastic packaging will be prohibited for fresh fruit and vegetables of less than 1.5 kg (e.g. nets, bags, trays, and containers) (Regulation 2025/40, Annex V(2)). Paper-based packaging containing more than 5% plastic is included in the ban.

Only two exemptions are currently foreseen, where:

- such packaging is needed to avoid water or other fluid loss, microbiological hazards, physical shocks, or oxidation
- there is no other way to separate organic and non-organic fruits and vegetables at the point of sale.

The European Commission will provide more detailed guidelines on how to apply this packaging ban by 12 February 2027. These guidelines will include a non-exhaustive list of authorised single-use plastic packaging that prevents water and turgidity loss, microbiological hazards, physical shocks, or oxidation.

The Commission has requested EFSA to provide a scientific opinion that will inform the development of these guidelines. EFSA will estimate impacts related to microbial (foodborne pathogens and spoilage micro-organisms) cross-contamination, survival, and/or growth due to the ban on single-use plastic packaging for unprocessed fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs. It will assess different types of packaging (single-use plastic packaging, wooden and cardboard crates, boxes, and bags with less than 5% plastic) used during distribution and retail, and compare them to a situation where no packaging is used. The assessment is limited to packaging in a standard (unmodified) atmosphere, and to unprocessed fresh fruits and vegetables. Aspects related to chemical hazards in packaging materials will *not* be considered by this scientific opinion.

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Timeline

EFSA will provide the scientific opinion by 30 November 2026.

The Commission guidelines will be made available by 12 February 2027.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

Exporters to the EU of packaged fresh fruit and vegetables must comply with the new rules limiting the use of single-use plastic packaging for packaged products of less than 1.5 kg from 1 January 2030.

Each EU Member State may introduce more exemptions, in addition to those listed in the Commission's February 2027 guidelines. The different national applications of the rules between the 27 EU Member States will have to be closely monitored.

Background

Regulation 2025/40 (PPWR) sets new EU rules on packaging and packaging waste, including design and waste management. This Regulation establishes new rules for all packaging and packaging waste made of any material, aiming to:

- avoid and reduce packaging waste, and stimulate reuse
- make all packaging on the EU market recyclable in an economically viable way
- increase the recycling of packaging materials, especially plastic, and their reuse.

These rules will apply from different dates. For more information see New EU packaging rules explained.

Resources

Regulation (EU) 2025/40 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 December 2024 on packaging and packaging waste, amending Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 and Directive (EU) 2019/904, and repealing Directive 94/62/EC

Request to EFSA for a scientific opinion on the implementation of point 2 of Annex V of Regulation (EU) 2025/40 on Packaging and Packaging Waste. EFSA-Q-2025-00456

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Sources

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