Updated Commission guidance on Official Controls Regulation

Published by AGRINFO on 06 Dec 2024

European Commission publishes new version of guidance on Official Controls Regulation

Commission Notice on the Implementation of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Official Controls Regulation)

Update

The Commission Notice explaining the Official Controls Regulation (OCR) has been updated to include a specific chapter on official controls of imported goods. These give detailed explanations on the documents required, types of checks carried out, and actions that can be taken when goods are found to be non-compliant with EU law, and should help exporters to understand and prepare for official controls.

What is changing?

The European Commission has updated its Notice on the OCR, a comprehensive guide explaining how official controls are carried out. The guide details documentation and certification, sampling and testing, implications of non-compliance, and control fees.

The new version clarifies some specific issues including:

- e-commerce (2.1.1, p.15)
- listing of operators (2.1.2, p.18)
- methods and techniques for official controls: inspections and audits (2.1.3, p.19)
- exports from non-EU countries to the EU (2.4, Chapter V, p.44)
- official certification (2.6, Chapter VII, p.66)
- enforcement actions in case of infringement (4, Title VII, p.74).

The new Chapter V is particularly relevant to AGRINFO partners. It explains in detail the procedures and requirements in relation to border controls, including the following.

- Consignments and accompanying documents (2.4.1, p.44; 2.6, p.66): who must sign certificates, how many certificates are required per consignment, and what to do in the case of mixed consignments.

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*

- Transit or transhipment in non-EU countries (2.4.1.2, p. 45): what certification is required when products pass through different countries in transit on their way to the EU. It explains in which situations new health certificates must be issued (e.g. when animal products are unloaded, stored, or processed).
- Controls at border control posts (2.4.1.5, p.47): the different steps and actions required by operators in relation to official controls, how competent authorities decide on the risk of products, and the implications for operators.
- Types of checks: (2.4.1.6, p.49): the different types of checks undertaken by EU control authorities: documentary, identity, and physical.
- Incorrect CN codes (2.4.2.3, p.54): actions and requirements when operators indicate the incorrect customs CN codes of consignments.
- Non-compliance detected before release for free circulation (2.4.3.1, p.55): options for operators if non-compliance is established before goods enter the EU.
- Non-compliance detected after release for free circulation (2.4.3.2, p.57): consequences and options for operators when goods already in the EU are non-compliant.

Why?

The EU has published the new Notice in order to give updated guidance, address practical challenges, and clarify provisions based on feedback from EU Member State control authorities. Greater clarity should lead to more consistent application of official controls across the European Union.

Timeline

There are no changes foreseen in how official controls are carried out under the Official Controls Regulation 2017/625. This guidance aims to clarify and harmonise the process.

What are the major implications for exporting countries?

Exporters in non-EU countries sometimes find that different approaches are taken by competent authorities and Border Control Posts in different Member States. The discussions and clarifications in this document should help reduce this variation and increase certainty for exporters.

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*

Recommended Actions

Exporters are advised to use this guidance to help them prepare for possible controls at the EU border and avoid delays or penalties. The guidance will also help decide what actions can be taken if a consignment is to be found to be non-compliant.

Background

Regulation (EU) 2017/625 – the Official Controls Regulation (OCR) – establishes a comprehensive framework for the performance of official controls and other official activities to ensure compliance with EU rules on food and feed safety, animal health and welfare, plant health, and plant protection products. Adopted on 15 March 2017, the Regulation aims to harmonise control procedures across Member States, enhance transparency, and safeguard public health, animal welfare, and the environment while facilitating trade within and outside the EU.

In 2022, a first set of clarifications was published in Commission Notice 2022/C 467/02. Since then, the Commission has continued discussions with Member States and stakeholders in relation to other OCR provisions. This new revision of the first Commission Notice adds new elements of clarification, while the elements of the earlier Notice remain unchanged.

A Commission Notice is an official document issued by the European Commission to provide guidance and to clarify how specific EU Regulations should be applied. It explains legal provisions, offers practical examples, and promotes consistent interpretation across Member States, but it is not legally binding like a Regulation or Directive.

Resources

Commission Notice (2022) on the Implementation of the Official Controls Regulation

Regulation (EU) 2017/625 on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection products

Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety

Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1715 laying down rules for the functioning of the information management system for official controls and its system components (the IMSOC Regulation)

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*

Sources

Commission Notice (2024) on the Implementation of the Official Controls Regulation

Visit the AGRINFO website to view the latest AGRINFO Update newsletters and search the database.

Disclaimer: *Under no circumstances shall COLEAD be liable for any loss, damage, liability or expense incurred or suffered that is claimed to have resulted from the use of information available on this website or any link to external sites. The use of the website is at the user's sole risk and responsibility. This information platform was created and maintained with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents do not, however, reflect the views of the European Union.*

Copyright © **COLEAD 2026,** *AGRINFO is funded by the European Union and implemented by COLEAD.*