

Minutes of the first meeting of the Working Group on Organic Products established under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on 12 June 2024

The EU co-chair welcomed participants to the meeting. The provisional agenda as published in advance was adopted for the meeting. Both parties made an opening statement, as part of which the UK noted that due to the Pre-Election Period they would not be commenting on UK policy where doing so risks prejudicing the views of a future government.

Point 2 – Adoption of the Rules of Procedure for the Working Group on Organic Products

The parties adopted the Rules of Procedures for the Working Group on Organic Products, attached to the minutes.

Point 3 - Update on planned/ongoing organics legislative developments

In view of the upcoming elections, the UK reserved the position with regard to future legislative developments. UK emphasised that if new regulations continue to be drafted a full public consultation would be held. UK would intend to notify the WTO of the consultation, so that trading partners have the opportunity to comment. UK would also notify trading partners of any changes to regulations which is long established practice in line with international obligations.

The EU provided an update on regulatory developments, which included new rules on labelling of organic pet food, the revision of the list of products and substances that can be used in organic production and an amendment to the model of certificate. The EU also informed on the preparatory work for the approval of the first list of Control Bodies recognised under the compliance regime.

Point 4 – Review of Annex 14 TCA implementation issues

Both parties agreed on a common understanding on the scope of the equivalence agreement in organics under Annex 14 TCA, which covers organic products produced or processed in the territories of the parties.

The EU presented a case-study of out-of-scope goods. UK thanked EU for information and requested to be sent the details of those cases. UK reiterated their commitment to ensuring regulatory compliance.

UK flagged that the same requirements would be enforced on goods from EU, EEA and Switzerland from 1 February 2025, as part of the implementation of Certificates of Inspection (COIs) discussed in point 5. The parties agreed to ensure that the respective Competent Authorities, organic certifiers and stakeholders are aware of the terms provided for in the organic regulations and the TCA.

The EU welcomed the UK annual report for 2023 and informed about the preparation of its report for 2023.

Point 5 – Introduction of UK requirement for Certificates of Inspection (COIs) for EU products imported to GB from 1 Feb 2025

The UK confirmed that the requirement for Certificates of Inspection for organic exports to the UK from the EU, EEA, and Switzerland was waived until 1 February 2025. After that date, a certificate will be required in a manual process, pending the introduction of electronic certification.

The UK flagged their intention to host webinars and training sessions on the changes and noted concerns from businesses about lack of awareness. UK urged EU certifiers and operators to prepare for the new COI requirements and offered to run webinars. The EU requested timely information and adequate preparation on the introduction of the new requirements and agreed to support the UK in raising awareness with Member States. UK agreed to share information when available. UK invited also EU certifiers and operators to contact them with any questions.

Point 6 – State of play of exchanges on irregularities

Both parties recognised the need for irregularities to be addressed promptly to safeguard the integrity of organic production. The parties agreed to follow up the matter in writing.

The EU acknowledged ongoing technical issues with UK access to older irregularities cases on OFIS and is working on a solution.

Point 7 – Actions and next steps

The parties agreed on at least annual meetings of the Working Group, with the UK to host next year, supported by technical discussions as needed and continuing to update each other on policy changes in accordance with the relevant TCA provisions.

Point 8 – Any other business

No AOB point was raised.

Annex 1 – Participants of the first meeting of the Working Group on Organic Products established under the EU-UK TCA

UK Delegation

- UK Co-chair of the Working Group on Organic Products
- UK government Officials from DEFRA, FCDO, DBT
- Scottish Government Officials
- Northern Ireland Executive Officials
- Welsh Government Officials

EU Delegation

- EU Co-chair of the Working Group on Organic Products
- EU Officials from AGRI, SG, TRADE
- EU Member States

Annex 2 – Agenda

**First meeting of the Working Group on Organic Products
established under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union
and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

Brussels, 12 June 2024, 14h30 – 17h00

1. Opening remarks and adoption of the agenda
2. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure for the Working Group on Organic Products
3. Update on planned/ongoing organics legislative developments
4. Review of Annex 14 TCA implementation issues
5. Introduction of UK requirement for Certificates of Inspection (COIs) for EU products imported to GB from 1 Feb 2025
6. State of play of exchanges on irregularities
7. Actions and next steps
8. Any other business

Annex 3 – Rules of Procedure

Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Working Group on Organic Products

Rules of Procedure

Rule 1

Chair

The Union and the United Kingdom shall notify each other of the name, position and contact details of their respective designated Working Group co-chairs. A co-chair is deemed to have the authorisation for representing, respectively, the Union or the United Kingdom until the date a new co-chair has been notified to the other Party.

A co-chair may be replaced for a particular meeting or a part thereof by a designee. The co-chair, or his or her designee, shall notify the other co-chair and the Secretariat of the Working Group of the designation as early as possible. Any reference in these Rules of Procedure to the co-chairs shall be understood to include a designee.

Rule 2

Secretariat

The Secretariat of the Working Group shall be composed of an official of the Union and an official of the Government of the United Kingdom. The Secretariat shall perform the tasks conferred on it by these Rules of Procedure, under the supervision of the relevant Committee.

The Union and the United Kingdom shall notify each other of the name, position and contact details of the official who is the member of the Secretariat of the Working Group, respectively. This official is deemed to continue acting as member of the Secretariat for the Union or for the United Kingdom until the date either the Union or the United Kingdom has notified a new member.

Rule 3

Meetings

Each meeting of the Working Group shall be convened by the Secretariat at a date and time agreed by the co-chairs. Where either the Union or the United Kingdom has made a request for a meeting, the other Party shall give due consideration to such a request and reply within 30 days.

The Working Group shall hold its meetings alternately in Brussels and London, unless the co-chairs decide otherwise.

By way of derogation from the second paragraph, the co-chairs may agree that a meeting of the Working Group be held by video conference, teleconference or in hybrid form.

Rule 4

Participation in meetings

A reasonable period of time in advance of each meeting, the Union and the United Kingdom shall inform each other through the Secretariat of the intended composition of their respective delegations and shall specify the name and function of each member of the delegation.

Where appropriate the co-chairs may, by mutual consent, invite experts (i.e. non-government officials), to attend meetings of the Working Group in order to provide information on a specific subject and only for the parts of the meeting where such specific subjects are discussed.

Rule 5

Documents

Written documents on which the deliberations of the Working Group are based shall be numbered and circulated to the Union and the United Kingdom by the Secretariat.

Rule 6

Correspondence

The Union and the United Kingdom shall send their correspondence addressed to the Working Group via the Secretariat. Such correspondence may be sent in any form of written communication, including by electronic mail.

The Secretariat shall ensure that correspondence addressed to the Working Group is delivered to the co-chairs and is circulated, where appropriate, in accordance with Rule 5.

All correspondence from or addressed directly to the co-chairs shall be forwarded to the Secretariat and shall be circulated, where appropriate, in accordance with Rule 5.

Rule 7

Agenda for the meeting

For each meeting, a draft provisional agenda shall be drawn up by the Secretariat. It shall be transmitted, together with the relevant documents, to the co-chairs no later than five days before the date of the meeting.

The provisional agenda shall include items requested by the Union or the United Kingdom. Any such request, together with any relevant document, shall be submitted to the Secretariat no later than seven days before the beginning of the meeting.

No later than three days before the date of the meeting, the co-chairs shall decide on the provisional agenda for a meeting.

The agenda shall be adopted by the Working Group at the beginning of each meeting. On request by the Union or the United Kingdom, an item other than those included in the provisional agenda may be included in the agenda by consensus.

The co-chairs may, by mutual consent, reduce or increase the time periods specified in the first, second and third paragraphs in order to take account of the requirements of a particular case.

Rule 8

Minutes

Draft minutes of each meeting shall be drawn up by the official acting as member of the Secretariat of the Party hosting the meeting, within seven days from the end of the meeting, unless otherwise decided by the co-chairs. The draft minutes shall be transmitted for comments to the member of the Secretariat of the other Party. The latter may submit comments within five days from the date of receipt of the draft minutes.

The minutes shall, as a rule, summarise each item on the agenda, specifying where applicable:

- the documents submitted to the Working Group;
- any statement that one of the co-chairs requested to be entered in the minutes; and
- operational conclusions adopted on specific items.

The minutes shall include as an annex a list of participants setting out for each of the delegations the names and functions of all individuals who attended the meeting.

The Secretariat shall adjust the draft minutes on the basis of comments received and the draft minutes, as revised, shall be approved by the co-chairs within 28 days of the date of the meeting, or by any other date agreed by the co-chairs.

Once approved, copies of the minutes shall be signed by the members of the Secretariat and transmitted to the Union and the United Kingdom, as well as to the supervising Committee. The co-chairs may agree that signing and exchanging electronic copies satisfies this requirement.

Rule 9

Confidentiality

Unless otherwise decided by the co-chairs, the meetings of the Working Group shall be confidential.

If the Union or the United Kingdom submits information that is confidential or protected from disclosure under its laws and regulations to the Working Group, the other party shall treat that information received as confidential.

The co-chairs may decide to make provisional agendas public before the meeting of the Working Group takes place. The co-chairs may also decide to make the minutes of the meeting public following their approval in accordance with Rule 8.

Publication of documents referred to in the third paragraph shall be made in compliance with both Parties' applicable data protection rules.

Rule 10

Languages

The working language of the Working Group shall be English. Unless otherwise decided by the co-chairs, the Working Group shall base its deliberations on documents prepared in English.

Rule 11

Expenses

The Union and the United Kingdom shall each meet any expenses they incur as a result of participating in the meetings of the Working Group.

Expenditure in connection with the organisation of meetings and reproduction of documents shall be borne by the party hosting the meeting.

Expenditure in connection with interpretation to and from the working language of the Working Group shall be borne by the party requesting such interpretation.

Rule 12

Reporting

The Working Group shall inform the supervising Committee of its meeting schedule and agenda sufficiently in advance of meetings, and shall report to this Committee on the results and conclusions of each meeting.