UK/EU SUMMIT EXPLAINER: UK-EU SPS AGREEMENT

OVERVIEW

- The UK-EU Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement sets out new arrangements for trade in food, agricultural goods, animals and plants. The Agreement will make it easier and cheaper to move many products between the UK and the EU, supporting British exporters and helping to ease pressure on food prices The interplay of the Agreement with the Windsor Framework will also make it easier and less costly to move goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.
- This deal will boost our economic growth. This deal is worth up to £5.1 billion a year when compared to projected levels in 2040, increasing UK GDP by up to 0.14%. By cutting red tape and reducing trading costs, the deal helps to ease pressure on food prices.
- The Agreement upholds our high food and feed safety standards and will reduce costs and red tape for exporters by:
    - Removing the requirement for Export Health Certificates for goods moving between the GB and the EU, saving UK businesses up to £200 per certificate, as well as removing these certification requirements for GB-NI movements;
    - Removing the requirement for phytosanitary certificates, saving businesses around £25 per certificate and at least £127.60 per load in inspection fees;
    - Eliminating time consuming SPS border checks on goods such as dairy, fish and meat;
    - Reopening the EU market for British products including fresh sausages, burgers, seed potatoes and molluscs;
    - Removing certain other requirements under the rules in scope, including Certificates of Inspection (CoIs) for organic products.
- Taking pets on holiday into the EU will be easier and cheaper. Instead of getting an animal health certificate each time you travel, you will be able to get a multiuse pet passport.
- The deal will strengthen our biosecurity by providing access to real-time information on emerging risks and enabling closer cooperation with the EU. At the same time, we will retain the ability to take targeted action to protect the UK's borders where there is a clear biosecurity threat.
- This Agreement will function on the basis of dynamic alignment, with the UK and EU applying the same rules, at the same time, on an ongoing basis. Where we dynamically align, the UK will have an early decision-shaping role on EU rules in development. This is essential for ensuring that UK interests are reflected, and that the Agreement can function effectively.
- The agreement will apply from 1 March 2028 subject to UK and EU procedures, with targeted transition arrangements in limited areas. The Government will work with businesses and producers to help them prepare and to take advantage of the improved trading arrangements.

BACKGROUND

- Since the UK left the EU, GB-EU trade has been subject to additional checks, paperwork, and other requirements. Paperwork and checks have also been required for agri-food and plants moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. UK agrifood exports to the EU have fallen by 32.5% since 2019.

KEY OUTCOMES

SCOPE

- The Agreement creates a Common Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Area, under which the whole of the UK and EU will have the same rules in areas covered by the Agreement.
- The Common SPS Area will cover rules on animal health and breeding, plant health and plant reproductive material, antimicrobial resistance in animals, food and feed safety, animal welfare, fishery products, broader nutrition-related areas such as food supplements, fortified foods, food for specific groups, nutrition and health claims and nutrition labelling, wider agri-food rules related to food labelling, organics, key agri-food marketing standards and compositional standards, and regulation of pesticides and biocides. It will not cover wine and spirits.
- The Common SPS Area does not include the EU's Common Fisheries Policy or fisheries management rules, meaning the UK will retain autonomy in these areas. Under the Agreement, fisheries products caught by EU vessels outside UK waters will be able to be sold on the GB market in line with EU minimum marketing size requirements.

EXCEPTIONS

The UK and EU have agreed exceptions to alignment in the following areas:

- **Live Exports Ban:** The UK will continue to ban the export of livestock and horses for fattening or slaughter outside the British Islands, allowing us to uphold our high animal welfare standards.
- **Pet Smuggling:** We will introduce our own measures to tackle pet smuggling including stricter rules to ban dogs and cats that are under six months old or heavily pregnant being brought to Great Britain. These measures will be subject to tightly controlled exemptions, including for genuine EU pet owners, and be reviewed after five years. These measures will support our wider work to end puppy smuggling.
- **Precision Bred Plants:** To support innovation and growth in food and farming,England's precision breeding framework will remain in place until July 2028, when the EU's new genomic technique framework for plants takes effect. Businesses will be able to continue marketing precision bred products under England's regulatory framework until October 2029. The arrangements apply to precision bred plants and to food and feed produced from them.

SAFEGUARDING BIOSECURITY THROUGH ACCESS TO EU AGENCIES, SYSTEMS AND DATABASES

- The Agreement gives the UK access to relevant EU agencies, systems and databases. This includes the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO) and biocides-related elements of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). This will allow the UK and EU to exchange expertise, scientific and technical information, and will support our biosecurity by allowing us to respond to risks at the earliest possible stage and coordinate action across the UK and EU.

TERRITORIAL SCOPE

- The Agreement will apply to the United Kingdom with respect to Great Britain, and to the Crown Dependencies (the Bailiwick of Jersey, the Bailiwick of Guernsey and the Isle of Man).

NORTHERN IRELAND

- The interplay of the SPS Agreement and the Windsor Framework will ensure that the benefits will be extended to Northern Ireland.

- For the vast majority of agri-food goods, plants, and agricultural machinery moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, traders will no longer need regulatory certificates, such as phytosanitary, export health or animal health certificates, nor routine checks or additional paperwork. This will make it easier and less costly to move goods within the UK internal market.

- The NI Plant Health Label Scheme will no longer be required for goods movements, as a result of the SPS deal with the EU.

- The NI Retail Movement Scheme will no longer be required for the vast majority of goods as a result of the SPS deal with the EU. It will remain in place to provide any necessary access for moving goods that are subject to targeted transition arrangements in GB.

- Where GB remains unaligned with EU rules, notably on wine marketing standards and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, arrangements will be in place to extend the current flexibilities within the Windsor Framework. This will ensure traders can continue to supply the NI market with these goods.

TRANSITION TO THE NEW ARRANGEMENTS

- The EU and UK have agreed that goods already on the Great Britain market when the deal is applied can continue to be sold and used in GB, even if non-compliant with EU rules. This will minimise disruption to businesses, reduce food waste and ensure continued supply of goods. The NI Retail Movement Scheme will remain in place to provide any necessary access for moving goods that are not aligned with EU requirements to NI during the transitional arrangements.

- For **Novel Foods** we have agreed temporary arrangements that will allow continued production of three types of products which are only authorised in Great Britain until October 2029, as long as they were authorised before the Agreement applies: cell-cultivated products, products produced by precision fermentation, and cannabidiol foods. This will support the progress that UK businesses have made in these highly innovative foods.

- For **pesticides**, transitional arrangements have been agreed depending on the status of the products. Farmers will get between 9 and 21 months for final use-up, depending on the pesticide. This includes the continued use of pesticides containing cinmethylin, pydiflumetofen and isoflucypram, pending an EU decision on approval for use. We have secured transition and sell-through arrangements to give growers and businesses time to adapt and avoid unnecessary waste. Food and feed treated with pesticides in line with current GB rules will be permitted to continue to be harvested and sold on the GB market after the Agreement is applied. We will maintain any necessary access to the NI Retail Movement Scheme to support transition. The UK and EU have also agreed that Assam tea imports subject to current GB rules on maximum residue levels may continue for an additional 12 months after the Agreement is applied, to ensure continuity of supply to consumers.

- For **biocides**, businesses will benefit from varying targeted transitional arrangements that provide additional time to move to the EU's regulatory framework while maintaining continuity of supply of products on the GB market for up to 42 months after the Agreement is applied. A 6-month transition period has been agreed for placing certain treated articles on the GB market.

- For **organic products**, we have agreed a 12-month transition period after the Agreement is applied for the changes required to organic poultry housing and to organic egg production. Organic goods already on the market when the Agreement is applied, as well as goods covered by this transitional arrangement, will not be restricted to GB and will be able to be sold in the EU without the need for certificates of inspection.

IMPLEMENTATION

- This Agreement, including the detailed domestic legislative changes needed, will be implemented through the European Partnership Bill and a programme of secondary legislation.

- To support GB businesses, we will legislate for early access to EU food and feed market authorisations and health and ID marks. We also intend to legislate for some early alignment measures on pesticides and biocides. The details of these measures remain subject to legislative processes.

- Businesses are encouraged to begin preparing by referring to guidance on GOV.UK and signing up for updates. The Government will continue to engage closely with industry, providing updates and tailored communications to help organisations understand forthcoming changes and prepare for implementation.

- The agreement will apply from 1 March 2028 subject to UK and EU procedures, with targeted transition arrangements in limited areas