

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO
THE FISHERY PRODUCTS (OFFICIAL CONTROLS CHARGES) (ENGLAND)
(AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2019

2019 No. 1474

1. Introduction

1.1 This explanatory memorandum has been prepared by Food Standards Agency and is laid before Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

2. Purpose of the instrument

2.1 The Fishery Products (Official Control Charges) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 provides for the execution of powers and enforcement, in England, of Articles 78 to 84 of Regulation (EU) No. 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.

2.2 It amends the Fishery Product (Official Controls Charges) (England) Regulations 2007 SI 3392 concerning payment by food business operators to local food authorities of a contribution towards the costs of carrying out hygiene inspection and analyses in respect of fishery products caught in their natural environment and landed directly in England from:

- Member States
- EEA States other than Member States
- Greenland, and
- Third countries

3. Matters of special interest to Parliament

Matters of special interest to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments

3.1 The urgent timescale of this instrument and the dissolution of Parliament for the General Election has meant that it has not been possible to lay these instruments in Parliament before they come into force.

3.2 The Official Controls Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2017/625) comes fully into force across the EU on 14 December 2019 and revokes the existing framework legislation for official controls across the agri-food chain. The consequences of delaying this legislation in order to lay it in Parliament would be severe.

3.3 Not having the Statutory Instrument to enforce the Official Controls Regulation in force on 14th December 2019 would leave England without a legal framework to enforce food and feed safety laws. This would put public health at risk, undermine business and consumer confidence, and risk market access to the EU.

3.4 Furthermore, not having the Statutory Instrument in force would be a failure to meet our legal obligations as an EU Member State.

Matters relevant to Standing Orders Nos. 83P and 83T of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons relating to Public Business (English Votes for English Laws)

- 3.5 As the instrument is subject to negative resolution procedure there are no matters relevant to Standing Orders Nos. 83P and 83T of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons relating to Public Business at this stage.

4. Extent and Territorial Application

- 4.1 The territorial extent of this instrument is limited to England only. Separate, parallel legislation is being prepared in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

5. European Convention on Human Rights

- 5.1 As the instrument is subject to negative resolution procedure and does not amend primary legislation no statement is required.

6. Legislative Context

- 6.1 Regulation (EU) 2017/625 sets out a framework of requirements for the competent authorities in Member States which have responsibilities for organising and performing official controls and other official activities to verify compliance with agri-food chain legislation. The Regulation broadens the scope of the original official food and feed controls Regulation (EC) 882/2004 to cover plant health and animal by-products legislation (and other agricultural areas such as plant protection products and organic production) in order to introduce a more consistent approach to official controls along the entire agri-food chain and to that effect it repeals and amends a number of pieces of EU legislation. In addition, the Regulation provides for a number of empowerments to set out in Commission tertiary legislation more detailed rules for the performance of official controls and other official activities.
- 6.2 Most of the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 clarify and simplify existing requirements and aim to introduce a more risk-based approach to controls. Therefore, existing enforcement arrangements in the UK are generally already in line with the new requirements.
- 6.3 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is the Central Competent Authority (CCA) responsible for checks carried out on compliance with feed and food law, including imported feed and food in England. The new EU Regulation will apply across the European Union from 14 December 2019. This is part of a wider initiative to harmonise and simplify existing EU legislation and to establish a more integrated approach to official controls in all areas across the agri-food chain.

7. Policy background

What is being done and why?

- 7.1 Amendments to the domestic legislation are mechanical in nature to update the existing references to reflect the provisions of Regulation (EU) No. 2017/625. This will ensure that the UK is compliant with EU law and avoids disruption of trade with other member states.

8. European Union (Withdrawal) Act/Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union

8.1 This instrument does not relate to withdrawal from the European Union or trigger the statement requirements under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act

9. Consultation outcome

9.1 The FSA held a six-week consultation on the overarching Regulations and draft Impact Assessment between 28 August to 11 October 2019. The consultation response document will be published in January 2020.

9.2 37 consultation responses were received in England (7 from businesses and associations, 25 from individuals or consumer groups, 5 from public bodies). Most respondents acknowledged the need for government intervention. Some respondents raised concerns that the identified familiarisation costs for Enforcement Authorities had been underestimated as well as concerns over the time permitted for consultation. The FSA acknowledges these concerns and has taken account of stakeholder views on the familiarisation cost in the Final Impact Assessment.

9.3 Although generally in support of the Regulations, stakeholders raised concerns about the timing of implementation and the amount of consultation. Concerns were also raised over insufficient consultation on the charges element in relation to meat plants, the potential flexibilities for Official Veterinarians and that not all of the potential impacts have been identified. The FSA acknowledges these concerns, however, more meaningful consultation was constrained due to a number of factors, including ongoing EU negotiations on the tertiary legislation and uncertainty in relation to implications for EU Exit. The FSA plans to have discussions with stakeholders on the charges element.

10. Guidance

10.1 The legislation largely affects the authorities responsible for enforcing food and feed law. Arrangements are in place to update existing guidance, but this will not be completed until after the legislation comes into effect on 14 December 2019. This is not expected to cause a problem for feed and food authorities as the FSA do not collect charges for fishery products.

11. Impact

11.1 There is no significant impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies as most businesses will not experience any material changes in the way official controls take place and/or are currently delivered. The only expected impact on business is a one-off familiarisation cost (such as reading and understanding the legislation) for affected food and feed business operators in the amount of £0.1m (or a one-off cost of £40 for each affected business). Over a 10-year appraisal period this translates to an Equivalent Annual Net Direct Cost to Business (EANDCB) of £0.02m.

11.2 The only expected impact on the public sector is a one-off transition cost of £0.05m, which is the cost of familiarisation to enforcement authorities involved in carrying out official controls and enforcement under the new EU Regulations.

11.3 A full Impact Assessment assessing the impacts on England, Wales and Northern Ireland, is submitted with this memorandum and published alongside the Explanatory Memorandum on the legislation.gov.uk website.

12. Regulating small business

- 12.1 The legislation applies to activities that are undertaken by small businesses but has not introduced any new requirements or burdens.
- 12.2 Small and micro businesses comprise more than 90% of the UK food industry sector. EU legislation applies to food businesses regardless of size but can be applied in a risk-based and proportionate manner to reflect the activities undertaken by businesses of different sizes and natures. The FSA makes every effort to identify the impacts and to minimise burdens on small and micro businesses where possible and advises a proportionate approach in its guidance for local authority enforcers.
- 12.3 No significant burdens on business have been identified and this regulation is not expected to have any disproportionately negative impact on small business. Therefore, no specific action is proposed to minimise regulatory burdens on small businesses from this legislation.
- 12.4 The changes made to the legislation will provide continuity in the official controls for all food and feed businesses.

13. Monitoring & review

- 13.1 A statutory review clause is included in the Regulation.

14. Contact

- 14.1 Liz Stretton at the Food Standards Agency email: liz.stretton@food.gov.uk can be contacted with any queries regarding the instrument.
- 14.2 Catherine Bowles Deputy Director for EU and International Strategy at the Food Standards Agency can confirm that this Explanatory Memorandum meets the required standard.
- 14.3 Jo Churchill at the Department for Health and Social Care can confirm that this Explanatory Memorandum meets the required standard.