NAVIGATE INSIGHTS • NO. 06 • NOVEMBER 2026

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Europe is reopening

A UK-EU deal is set to remove most of the certificates and checks that have slowed food trade since Brexit. This guide shows what changes, what it is worth to you, and how to be ready.

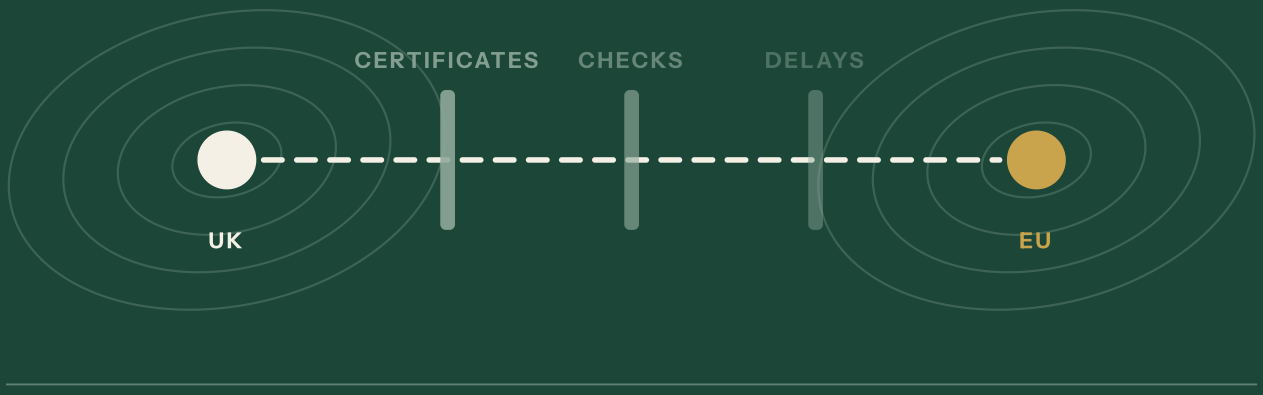

Illustration: the checks between the UK and EU coming off

£20,800

a year in certificates alone, at up to £200 each, for two chilled loads a week to the EU. Under the deal most food exports would not need one.

Navigate example from UK government figures, May 2026

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Navigate

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Strategic consultancy for UK food and drink

What changes for food trade

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The UK and EU are close to a deal that removes most of the paperwork and checks on food trade added after Brexit. The government aims for it to start in mid-2027.

	TODAY	UNDER THE DEAL
Export health certificates	Needed for each consignment of animal products, signed by a vet. Can cost up to £200 each.	• No longer needed for most agri-food goods.
Routine border checks	Dairy, fish, eggs and red meat face routine checks by port health authorities.	• Routine checks removed for most agri-food goods.
Products shut out	Fresh sausages and burgers, certain shellfish and seed potatoes cannot be sold into the EU.	• Back on sale to EU customers.
Food rules	UK sets its own food rules.	• UK follows EU rules on hygiene, additives, pesticide residues, labelling and food contact materials.

Source: UK government, UK-EU SPS agreement: information for businesses, updated 28 May 2026. Final terms are still being negotiated.

UP TO

£200

per consignment for an export health certificate today.

UK government, May 2026

START DATE

Mid-2027

is the government's aim. Some industry reports say it could be 2028.

UK government; trade press, Nov 2026

NOT COVERED

Wine

is expected to stay outside the deal, the government told Parliament.

As reported, 17 Nov 2026

TODAY'S COST

What Europe costs you now

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The certificate fee is the visible part. The bigger costs are usually time, delay and the orders you stopped taking. Before you plan for the deal, work out what trading with Europe costs you today.

THE COST OF SENDING FOOD TO THE EU TODAY

EXAMPLE: TWO CHILLED LOADS A WEEK

1	**Certificates** 2 loads a week × 52 weeks × up to £200	**up to £20,800**
2	**Vet and admin time** Booking inspections, preparing paperwork, fixing errors	Your figure
3	**Waiting at the border** Driver hours, missed delivery slots, refrigeration	Your figure
4	**Shelf life lost** Days in transit that come off the life the customer sees	Your figure
5	**Small orders turned down** Mixed loads that were not worth the paperwork	Your figure

Illustration. The certificate cost uses the government's "up to £200". Your volumes and costs will differ.

THE QUESTION TO ASK

Which EU customers and products did you stop chasing because the paperwork wasn't worth it?

IT WORKS BOTH WAYS

If you buy ingredients from the EU, routine checks on those come off too. That can mean cheaper, faster supply, and a second look at suppliers you dropped.

Who gains, and what to watch

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Not every business gains equally, and the deal brings obligations as well as savings. The trade-off is that the UK follows EU food rules in the areas the deal covers.

WHO STANDS TO GAIN MOST

Chilled and fresh products

Where days at the border cost the most shelf life.

Occasional exporters

For whom mixed loads and small orders were not worth the paperwork.

Sausage, burger and shellfish makers

Whose products were shut out of the EU altogether.

Buyers of EU ingredients

Who face fewer checks on what they import.

WHAT TO WATCH

New rules to follow

EU rules on additives, pesticide residues, labelling and food contact materials. Check recipes and packs.

Tougher checks elsewhere

The government expects more checks on some goods from outside the EU.

EU competitors

It gets easier for EU suppliers to sell into UK retailers too.

The date

Mid-2027 is the aim. Plan for later and treat earlier as a bonus.

The first to be ready will have the first conversations with EU buyers.



The government asked businesses for evidence on what the deal should cover. Detailed guidance for each sector is being published as terms are settled.

WHAT TO DO

Be ready on day one

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THIS MONTH: FIVE STEPS

1 List your EU trade today

Products, customers, routes and volumes, including any you stopped.

2 Put a cost on the friction

Certificates, vet time, delays and lost shelf life. That is the prize.

3 Check the rule changes

Which recipes, labels or packs might change under EU rules? Start with your top sellers.

4 Talk to customers and distributors

Tell EU buyers you are planning for it. Ask what they would order without the paperwork.

5 Plan for a date range

Build the plan for mid-2027, with a version that works if it slips to 2028.

EU readiness check

Seven things to know before the deal starts.

- [ ] Which products go to the EU, and how much
- [ ] Certificates per year and their cost
- [ ] Typical days from factory to EU customer
- [ ] Recipes and packs affected by EU rules
- [ ] EU customers lost or turned down since 2021
- [ ] EU suppliers you could use again
- [ ] Who in the business owns the plan

Decide now which EU customers you want once the paperwork goes.

The months before the start date are the time to build relationships, check recipes and packs, and plan capacity.

SOURCES (opened 20 November 2026): UK government, UK-EU SPS agreement: information for businesses, first published 9 Mar 2026, updated 28 May 2026 (gov.uk); Defra, UK-EU SPS agreement call for information (consult.defra.gov.uk); FSA Board, update on the SPS programme, Sept 2026 (gov.uk); trade press on timing and wine, Nov 2026 (WSTA, Vinetur). Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

GET IN TOUCH

Talk to us. The first call is free.

We are Tom Baker and Amanda Wright. Between us we have 50 years in UK food and drink businesses, most recently at board level. If any of this guide sounds like your business, book a call.



FIRST CALL, FREE

An hour on Teams about your pressures and plans. We will tell you plainly whether we can help.



AN HONEST VIEW

Whether we can help, or more scoping, still free, if it isn't clear yet. We work from the data you already have.



THE WAY THAT FITS

Fixed fee, shared savings or a monthly retainer: we agree the way of working that suits you best.

Amanda Wright

CO-FOUNDER & COO

Hands-on food and drink director with 25 years across procurement, supply chain and operations, most recently at board level, managing up to £300m of direct spend.

Tom Baker

CO-FOUNDER & CFO

Board-level finance and strategy director with 25 years in food and drink. Turnarounds, acquisitions and investments delivered across the UK and Ireland, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- The two directors you meet are the two who do the work.
- No supplier commissions and no software to sell.
- We report what we find, including what you may not want to hear.

Our success is linked to yours.

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