



Circular 1/2024

1 October 2024

Notice to all Organic Control Bodies, Importers, First Consignees and Exporters

Responsibilities of importers and first consignees

Further to Circular 2/2023, DAFM as the Competent Authority wishes to reiterate the Obligations on Importers and First Consignees for organic imports from third countries.

Importers and first consignees are required to check that there is a valid and endorsed Certificate of Inspection (COI) for each consignment, whereby the status of the COI is ‘Issuing Body Declaration Signed’ before the consignment leaves the country of export.

Importers are responsible for completion of Box 20 (Prior Notification) of the COI. The date and time of the consignments arrival in the country of import should be entered.

An advance notification of arrival must also be submitted to DAFM via the Import Notification Inspection System (INIS) Portal. Please note if commodities require both a COI and a CHED you will need to create two separate applications on the portal, in addition to an organic application for the COI a separate CHED application is also required. Portal Link [agfood.ie:Individual Login \(agriculture.gov.ie\)](http://agfood.ie:Individual Login (agriculture.gov.ie)). See Circular 3 of 2022 for more information on using this portal.

Importers and first consignees should be aware that following receipt of advance notification, DAFM, as Competent Authority, carries out relevant checks and completes Box 30 of the COI, declaring whether the consignment is:

- Clearable – whereby the product is free for circulation as organic
- Clearable as conventional – whereby the consignment is released for free circulation as conventional, **NOT as organic**
- Not clearable – Consignment cannot be released for free circulation in the **EU**

There is an obligation on the first consignee (company listed in box 24), as set out in Annex III (6) of Commission Regulation 2018/848, to complete box 31 of the COI, to certify that:

1. The COI has been validated by the Competent Authority (Box 30)
2. The consignment is in appropriate packaging or container, closed in a manner preventing substitution
3. There is identification on the consignment that includes details of the exporter and other marks and numbers that identify the lot with the certificate of inspection



The first consignee declaration should not be signed until the goods are received. Signing the first consignee declaration before the goods are received may delay the clearance of goods through customs controls.

Goods cannot be sold as organic until such time as the Certificate of Inspection status is as First Consignee Declaration Signed (Box 31).

The importer must retain the certificate for a period, not less than two years, and make available on the request of the organic control authority or the control body.

Where goods are found to have been sold as organic in the absence of a COI or where a COI is not at First Consignee Declaration signed stage, this will result in issuance of a non-compliance may result in the suspension or withdrawal of the importer's organic license.

Non-used COIs

Where a COI has been generated in the country of origin, but not actually used for export to the EU, these **must** be deleted off TRACES.

Equivalence to Compliance

In Box 2 of the Certificate of Inspection, it must indicate which procedure pursuant to regulation 2018/848 the product is being imported under:

- Compliance (Article 46)
- Equivalent third country (Article 48)
- Equivalent control authority or control body (Article 57)
- Equivalence under a trade agreement (Article 47)

The recognition of equivalence a third country under Article 48 will expire on 31 December 2026

Exports to the UK

As you may be aware, scheduled border checks for organic goods entering GB from the EU, EEA and Switzerland were due to come into force on 1 February 2025, using the manual system currently used for organic imports from the rest of the world.

DEFRA announced on 13 September that it intends to extend the derogation on the requirement for Certificates of Inspection for organic goods entering GB from the EU, EEA and Switzerland **from 1 February 2025 to 1 February 2027.**

This means there will be **no change** to the current situation. Imports from EU, EEA and Switzerland will continue under current arrangements. Imports from other countries and customs territories are unaffected by this change and will continue to require COI checks as

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they do now, under the current system. Other checks on organic goods, that are not organic specific, are unaffected.

Please find the link to the relevant information in the UK website:

[Importing organic food to the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

For further information on Imports please refer to circulars available on Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Website: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/fc7c8-organic-farming/#circulars>

Yours sincerely

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