

What are the EU marketing standards?

The EU marketing standards for fresh horticultural produce, which form part of the EU marketing rules, apply at all stages of the marketing chain. For example, at import, export, from the grower's holding, at wholesale, retail markets, greengrocers and supermarkets.

They are intended to make sure that fresh produce offered to the consumer is accurately labelled, of acceptable quality and that unsatisfactory produce is kept off the market.

EU marketing standards define minimum quality requirements for fresh horticultural produce, this means, what is sound, fair and marketable. The minimum quality requirements for both the specific and general marketing standards state that products must be:

- Intact.
- Sound (for example, not rotten, severely bruised or damaged).
- Clean.
- Practically free from pests.
- Practically free from damage caused by pests affecting the flesh.
- Free of abnormal external moisture.
- Free of foreign smell or taste.
- Sufficiently developed/ripe, but not overdeveloped/overripe.

Products covered by the specific marketing standards must meet the additional minimum quality requirement of 'fresh in appearance', and be marketed in the following classes, as set out in the relevant specific marketing standard:

- Extra Class - Superior quality produce.
- Class I - Good quality produce.
- Class II - Reasonable quality produce.

Products covered by the specific marketing standards cannot be sold for fresh consumption unless they meet the relevant standards/quality classes.

Produce which does not meet at least Class II cannot be sold for fresh consumption. Products which do not meet the requirements of the specific marketing

standards but which still meet the general marketing standard can be sold only if clearly labelled 'intended for home processing' or equivalent.

Products must be labelled at all stages with the name and full address of the packer/dispatcher and the country of origin (in full). The labels on those products covered by specific marketing standards must also show the quality class of the produce, and if required by the relevant standard, the variety or type, size, and weight or number/count in the boxes. At retail, this applies only to pre-packed products. There are also some specific rules for mixed horticultural produce.

At retail, loose products must display a label giving the full country of origin (abbreviations are not acceptable). Products covered by the specific marketing standards must also give the quality class and variety/type (read the relevant standard). Retail pre-packs must show all the information required by the particular standard (read the relevant standard).

What products are covered?

The EU marketing standards apply to most fresh horticultural produce.

Almost all fresh products must meet the general marketing standard, but the following important products are covered by the more particular specific marketing standards:

- Apples.
- Citrus fruit (including oranges, soft citrus and lemons).
- Kiwi fruit.
- Lettuces (including curled and broadleaved endives).
- Peaches and nectarines.
- Pears.
- Strawberries.
- Sweet peppers.
- Table grapes.
- Tomatoes.

The following products are excluded from the EU marketing standards:

Potatoes, chilli peppers, sweetcorn, olives, capers, wild mushrooms, sweet potatoes, yams, coconuts, Brazil nuts, cashew nuts, bitter almonds, pecans, pistachios, macadamia nuts, pine nuts and all shelled nuts (that is, without their shells), ripened bananas, saffron, ginger, sugar cane and peanuts.

This is not a complete list, if you need more information call your local Horticultural Marketing Inspector.

You can also find copies of the general and specific marketing standards and the relevant EU and UK legislation on GOV.UK by searching for 'marketing standards'.

What are the benefits of the EU marketing standards?

For the consumer:

They ensure that consumers can make an informed choice and pay a fair price.

They ensure standardisation of the quality and presentation of produce for sale, by providing accurate labelling, making sure that consumers are informed and not misled. For example, the full, correct country of origin must always be shown.

They provide value for money throughout the distribution chain, by making sure that all involved receive a fair return, providing a sustainable UK industry.

For the trader:

They improve the efficiency of distribution and international trade by allowing consistent produce to be traded all over the world. This helps promote fair competition throughout the marketing chain.

They provide consistent quality, grading and labelling which allows produce to be bought without being seen. This also provides a guarantee of the produce when being bought by telephone or the internet.



For the grower:

They make sure that produce is traded fairly, with a consistent and detailed system of quality, grading and labelling.

They help to improve the returns to growers for good quality produce, by preventing unfair competition from poor quality produce, or produce falsely claimed to be of a higher quality than it is.

They help make horticultural companies more sustainable, by improving the competitiveness of their produce over other suppliers from home and abroad.

The Horticultural Marketing Inspection Prices Unit collects and collates market price information. This includes the calculation of unit values for use at customs clearance, by HM Revenue & Customs, and the collection of wholesale market prices for use by both Defra and EU statistics departments. The latest wholesale market prices are available at

www.defra.gov.uk/statistics/foodfarm/farmgate/commodity

How does HMI make sure that the EU marketing standards are met?

The EU marketing standards apply in each EU country (Member State). RPA's Horticultural Marketing Inspectorate supports the fresh produce industry to meet the requirements of the standards in England and Wales, under domestic legislation.

At all stages of distribution, RPA Horticultural Marketing Inspectors check produce to make sure it meets the requirements of the standards. If it does not, the owner or responsible person will need to take remedial action to make sure the produce does meet these standards. This may involve, for example, removal from sale, re-labelling, re-sorting, sending it for industrial processing, for animal feed, dumping, or taking advantage of the home processing derogation.

RPA Horticultural Marketing Inspectors visit premises where products covered by the EU marketing standards are traded or distributed, including ports, airports, growers' holdings, pack-houses, distribution depots, supermarket distribution depots, wholesalers, supermarkets, greengrocers, retail markets and farm shops. These visits are made according to a risk based approach, which means that those who regularly meet the EU marketing standards requirements receive fewer visits.

RPA Horticultural Marketing Inspectors will always introduce themselves when arriving at premises. They are there to help, and are committed to providing good customer service. They will treat you

with respect, and expect you to do the same.

RPA will not tolerate threatening or abusive behaviour towards its staff, either verbally, physically or in writing, and will take whatever action is necessary (including legal action) against any person who is involved in threatening or abusive behaviour.

Traders can be prosecuted under The Marketing of Fresh Horticultural Produce Regulations 2009 (as amended) if they display, offer for sale, deliver or market horticultural produce in any way that does not meet the EU marketing rules.

Imports:

Products covered by a specific marketing standard, which are imported into the UK from a country outside the EU (third country) must be accompanied by a 'certificate of conformity'. This also applies to a 1% random sample of general marketing standard products at import point. These certificates can be obtained from a Defra computer system known as PEACH. You can find more information at www.ehmipeach.defra.gov.uk.

RPA Horticultural Marketing Inspectors check that the EU marketing standards for unripened (green) bananas are met at the point of import. Importers of green bananas need to consider these marketing rules.

How can I get more information?

For more advice contact your local Horticultural Marketing Inspector. For contact details or for more information about all relevant regulations and marketing standards visit GOV.UK and search for 'marketing standards' or,

Telephone: 0345 607 3224

Email: hmi-tdc@rpa.gsi.gov.uk

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This document updates and revises guidance to take account of significant regulation changes due to the implementation of EU Regulation 543/2011 and the application of The Marketing of Fresh Horticultural Produce Regulations 2009 (as amended).

European Union (EU) Marketing Standards for Fresh Horticultural Produce

