

## How European Union laws affect fresh produce trade

Laws have a major influence on the fresh produce trade. The European Union already enforces the highest standards for food safety worldwide. Now, suppliers must also comply with new rules for sustainable imports.



Many of these new European laws originate from the Green Deal and also affect non-European suppliers. European trading partners are concerned that Brussels is making trade more difficult, trying to achieve its goals of being climate-friendly and producing food without harming the environment.

But, for the European Union, it would be impossible to set new rules for the industry and not expect other countries to comply as well. Therefore, suppliers must prepare for these changes.

### Reducing pest control chemicals

One of the most impactful proposals for the fresh fruit and vegetable trade concerns the sustainable use of pesticides. This proposal focused on establishing global rules for the maximum amount of pest control chemicals allowed in and on food, also known as maximum residue levels (MRLs).

The proposal included banning imported food if it was shown to contain traces of substances not allowed in the European Union. However, the EU withdrew the proposal, as the chemical industry and the industrial agriculture lobby strongly opposed it.

Despite this, the trend to reduce the amount of pest control chemicals in food continues.



### What are the rules?

The European Union has strict rules on plant health, MRLs and contaminants. For example, all fruits and vegetables need a phytosanitary certificate. This certificate proves that fresh produce does not contain harmful organisms. Bananas, coconuts, dates, pineapples, and durian do not need this certificate.

Hot water treatment for mangoes is not mandatory but is often necessary to prevent fruit fly infestations.

Pest control chemicals are not the answer when phytosanitary certification is desired. Permitted MRLs for fresh fruits and vegetables change frequently.

It should be noted that European supermarkets are stricter than EU laws on pesticide residues. European Union standards were recently updated. For example, supermarkets reduced the maximum allowable levels of the chemical cadmium for several fruits, including berries, citrus fruits, pineapples, mangoes, and bananas.

## Fresh produce monitoring

In 2023, the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) reported 791 alerts of food risk problems. When regular problems occur with supplier countries, authorities will increase official controls or take emergency measures.

Some fresh produce is more at risk of having traces of pest control chemicals in or on it. According to Regulation 2019/1793 (revised May 2024), high-risk products include fresh peppers (capsicum), beans, and exotic fruits and vegetables.

The European Union also controls the following products more frequently, depending on the country of origin. For example: 30% of oranges and peppers from Egypt; 10% of passion fruit and passion fruit from Colombia; 50% of peppers from the Dominican Republic; 50% of chilies from Uganda; and 10% of beans and 20% of chilies from Kenya.

*\*Based on information from the [European Union's Center for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries](#) (CBI).*

