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Importing food of animal origin from EU Member States (also applicable for imports from **Norway** and for fishery products from **Iceland**)

This document is an integral part of the import regulations published on the website of the Federal Veterinary Office (FVO) - for full information see www.bvet.admin.ch ("website" in the following text).

[For products not intended for human consumption (e.g. "waste" from food production or egg or milk products for the manufacture of pet food or for technical purposes) the regulations on importing animal by-products are applicable].

1. Basic principles valid for all imports

Please first read the "General rules for importing live animals and animal products into Switzerland" on the website > Import.

After the scope of the bilateral agreements was broadened to encompass the area of food legislation, various new and revised ordinances came into effect on 1.1.2006, which serve to harmonise Swiss food laws with those of the EU. You will find the applicable laws and ordinances at <http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/81.html#817> and also a few important articles of law in the annex of this document (not available in English).

As soon as equivalence between Swiss and EU law is also recognised and implemented for cross-border traffic of food of animal origin, the FVO will no longer be directly involved in the implementation of legislation relating to the importing of foodstuffs from the EU. The conditions relating to food law / hygiene in cross-border traffic are then in principle the same as those which apply when transporting foods within Switzerland.

When animal diseases occur, the responsible authorities in the country of origin ensure that the additional guarantees and restrictions which are effective for trade between EU Member States (including the animal health rules laid down in Council Directive 2002/99/EC) are also applied in the shipment of food of animal origin to Switzerland. Only if a disease were to "run out of control" would Switzerland formally take protective action of its own.

The products must come from "EU-approved" facilities (establishments) – except composite foodstuffs, for definition see at the relevant chapter. These facilities (establishments) must be licensed for unrestricted intracommunity trade by the responsible authorities in the country of origin, see link "Lists of approved establishments in the EU" on the website >import > food of animal origin.

For importing foods of animal origin by private travellers, special rules apply to some extent, see the appropriate page on the website >Import >imports for personal use and the website of the customs authorities www.zoll.admin.ch > (in German:) Informationen an Private.

For **consignments in transit** through the EU, the "third-country import regulations" of Switzerland apply. These regulations for importing products from the EU apply only if the foods have been imported into the EU beforehand in accordance with regulations and cleared by customs.

2. Permits / import documents / inspections

Importers of foods of animal origin from the EU do not need approval (any longer) or permits from the FVO. But in order to trade in food (and this also includes the import of food), businesses must be announced to the relevant cantonal authorities and possibly approved – depending on the exact nature and volume of their activities as laid down in Swiss food law - see also the annex of this document.

For importing food of animal origin from the EU, no veterinary certificates are needed (any more). The commercial documents and products must show that the products originate from “EU-approved facilities (establishments “with an “EU number”). They must include at least the following information: type and quantity of the products, addresses of the consigning and/ or manufacturing establishment as well as the address of the consignee. If applicable the special requirements set to the transport conditions have also to be indicated. The commercial documents have to accompany the consignments to the (first) place of destination and to be kept there for at least 3 years.

NB: A general import licence from the Federal Office of Agriculture (FOAG) is required for importing meat from many animals species, see www.blw.admin.ch (in German) >Themen > Ein- und Ausfuhr >Versteigerung / Einfuhrbestimmungen für Fleisch und Schlachttiere. The same office is also responsible for allocating import quotas.

For the import and transit of various foods (caviar and other products of sturgeon or products of certain wild animals, such as bears) from animal species listed in Annexes I-III of the Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), a licence in conformity with species conservation laws is required for each individual consignment.

Import controls see website > border veterinary checks – TRACES, for products from protected animal species also > import conditions conservation of species (“trade in wild flora and fauna”).

Customs-related or any other import regulations that do not fall within the veterinary field must also be taken into account - see website of customs authorities www.zoll.admin.ch (in German) >Zollinformationen Private and >Zollinformation Firmen.

3. Information

Addresses, telephone and fax numbers can be found on www.bvet.admin.ch >Import > sub-page links – addresses.

Questions concerning customs clearance must be settled with the customs authorities.

Questions on food legislation and the importing of foods of non-animal origin must be addressed to the Federal Office of Public Health, see www.bag.admin.ch .

The cantonal laboratories (cantonal chemists) are responsible for questions on the implementation of food laws, e.g. on labelling, declarations or threshold values, see www.kantonschemiker.ch .

Questions concerning the general import licence or on the allocation of customs quotas should be put to the Federal Office of Agriculture, Principal Division for Production and International Affairs, Imports and Exports Section, Mattenhofstrasse 5, 3003 Bern. The FOAG is also responsible for the agricultural declaration ordinance. This regulates the obligation to declare products that are produced using methods which are banned in Switzerland. An information sheet on the implementation of the ordinance can be found on www.blw.admin.ch >Topics >Import.

4. Annex: extracts from important articles of the Swiss Food Act

(The Swiss laws are only available in French, German and Italian. However, since the content of the food laws corresponds to the equivalent legislation of the EU, this Annex has not been translated into English)

The laws and ordinances with regulations on hygiene, labelling and promotion, residues (foreign substances) and additives and also regulations for individual product categories can be found at <http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/81.html#817> (in German, French and Italian).