



FOOD IMPORTER INFORMATION PACK

Based on requirements as at June 2025

DISCLAIMER

While the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has made every effort to ensure that the information in this guide is complete, MPI is not liable for loss resulting from reliance on the guide or any errors or omissions in it. This guide is not legal advice.

You're registered as a food importer: now what?

It can take some time to be ready to import food. By registering, you've taken the first key step.

This guide gives you an overview of the other things you need to do. Refer to it as you work through all the steps.



Note: Your importer registration is linked to your business and not the food itself. This means you can generally import food under this registration if you can meet the requirements outlined in this document.

Your duties as a registered food importer

As a registered food importer, you need to make sure your food is "safe and suitable". You must meet requirements under the [Food Act 2014](#), which includes:

- making sure the food you bring into New Zealand is safe and suitable
- keeping it safe, for example during storage and transport
- keeping records that allow you to trace and recall products
- supplying details about consignments of food to border officers
- meeting requirements in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, including labelling products correctly and making sure all ingredients are allowed.

Renew your registration every year

It is your responsibility to renew your registration annually before the date of expiry.

MPI will send reminder emails six weeks and two weeks prior to expiry.

These emails will include instructions on what you need to do to renew. Follow all the steps mentioned to allow us to process your renewal as efficiently as possible.

Contact approvals@mpi.govt.nz if you want to:

- Make updates to your food importer registration
- Ask any questions about your registration.

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Overview of the steps to importing food

Tick off the steps below as you complete them.



Register as a food importer

- ☒ Get a New Zealand Customs client code
- ☒ Register as a food importer with MPI



Assess the food you want to import

- Check the food is safe and suitable
- Check the food can meet the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code
- Check the food can be labelled correctly before sale
- Check your supplier produces safe and suitable food
- Confirm and record your assessment



Meet your responsibilities as a food importer

- Meet New Zealand legislation
- Arrange safe and suitable storage and transport
- Keep records for traceability
- Have a recall plan in place
- Test your recall plan regularly



Meet border requirements

- Check if your products need food safety clearance
- Check your products meet biosecurity clearance requirements
- Check New Zealand Customs Service requirements
- Know the intended use of your food
- Use Trade Single Window (TSW)



Ready to import

Once you're sure you can meet all the importing requirements, you're ready to go on the MPI side of things!

Don't forget to check any non-MPI requirements you may need to meet. These could include:

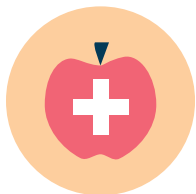
- New Zealand Customs requirements
- commercial arrangements for your consignment
- check that your overseas supplier is meeting the compliance requirements in their own country.

If you plan to re-export the goods, also check for any specific requirements that apply to re-exporting.



Assess the food you want to import

Different foods have different risks. You need to assess **each** food you want to import, to ensure it will be safe and suitable and meet New Zealand requirements. You must do this **before** you import the food. To find more information, check out the [safety and suitability assessment information](#) on the MPI website.



Check the food is safe and suitable

The food must be produced, preserved, packaged, and stored hygienically- free from harmful biological, chemical, or physical hazards.

It shouldn't show signs of decay, disease, dirt, or spoilage.



Check the food can meet the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code

Food products must meet the [Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code](#) (the Code). The Code has requirements for processing aids, additives, contaminants, novel foods and microbiological hazards. You'll need to check that your food meets all the requirements before you can sell it in New Zealand.



Check the food can be labelled correctly before sale

Your food does not need to have full New Zealand compliant labelling before it can be imported. However, you will need to know what is in your food so it can be labelled correctly before it is **sold** in New Zealand. This includes knowing the ingredients, nutritional information, allergens, and if it makes any health or nutritional claims. If it has a foreign language, make sure you have an English translation so you can correctly label it in English.

You can find guidance documents and information about labelling your food products on the [MPI website](#). Our labelling guides include handy checklists to work through your labels.



Check your supplier produces safe and suitable food

Check that your overseas supplier is meeting the compliance requirements in their own country, and check what systems or certifications your supplier has that shows you they can make safe food. You'll also need to consider their food safety compliance background, such as if they have been involved in a recall or food safety incident. You might like to sign a contract with them that specifies the food safety measures they will follow.



Confirm and record your assessment

As a result of your assessment, you must confirm that the food will be safe and suitable for sale in New Zealand. If your assessment shows a food isn't safe and suitable, you can't import it.

You must keep the information used in your assessment for at least 4 years and have it available if a food safety officer or verifier wants to see it.

Remember to



Assess each new food before you import it

Assess the safety and suitability of each new food you plan to import, before you import it. Similar foods from the same manufacturer can be assessed together if differences don't create new hazards.



Keep your assessment up to date

Use specific and current information for your assessments. If there are changes in ingredients, processing, labelling, or packaging, make sure to reassess the food's safety and suitability, and update your records.



Meet your responsibilities as a food importer

As a registered food importer, you have responsibilities under the Food Act 2014. Read more about these below. To find more information, check out the [responsibilities of a registered food importer](#) on the MPI website.



Meet New Zealand legislation

Check you and your products meet the food safety requirements that apply, e.g. [Food Act 2014](#), [Food Regulations 2015](#) and the [Food Notice: Requirements for Registered Importers and Imported Food for Sale](#).

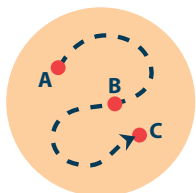


Arrange safe and suitable storage and transport

You'll need to [store and transport your imported food safely](#), protecting it from pests, damage, environmental conditions and contamination.

Any food that is unsafe must be clearly identifiable and isolated from other food, so it is not mistakenly released for sale.

Remember you will need to hold food that is waiting for border clearance. Food cannot be sold or distributed for consumption until it has been released through the border.



Keep records for traceability

You'll need to [keep records](#) that allow for your food to be traced, from the supplier you bought it from to who you sold it to (unless they are the final consumer).

This information must be accurate, legible and kept for at least 4 years. You must be able to easily access these records if a food safety officer asks to see them.



Have a recall plan in place

Sometimes things go wrong and you might need to recall food you have imported and sold. You'll need to have procedures in place that you can follow if this occurs. These procedures will need to include notifying MPI as soon as possible about your recall. See our [Food recall guidance for businesses](#) web page for further information.



Test your recall plan every year

You'll need to carry out regular simulated (mock) recalls testing the effectiveness of your traceability and recall procedures.

Simulated recalls need to be done at least 12 months after your last simulated recall, or 12 months after a successful genuine recall. [Find out how to do a simulated recall](#).



Meet border requirements

When you import your food, it will be checked at the border to confirm it is meeting importing requirements.

Check if your products need food safety clearance

Some foods are “of regulatory interest” and require food safety clearance checks at the border. These foods include some dairy products, fruit, meat, seafood, nuts, seeds, and spices.

To gain food safety clearance you may need to provide specific documents, such as an official certificate, or the food may need to be sampled and tested.

You’ll need to check if your food needs food safety clearance and make sure you can meet the clearance requirements, before you import it. [Check the imported foods that require food safety clearance.](#)

Check your products meet biosecurity clearance requirements

Most foods also need biosecurity clearance at the border. Biosecurity requirements are detailed in documents called import health standards (IHS). Some products can only be imported from specified countries named in an IHS. [Search the Import Health Standards.](#) For plant and plant product imports, you can use the [PIER search tool](#) as a starting point to identify your import requirements and the right Import Health Standard (IHS).

New Zealand Customs Service

NZ Customs requirements also apply to imported food but are not managed by MPI. Contact the New Zealand Customs Service to find out about duties, taxes, and tariffs. For more information on the import entry process, visit the [NZ Customs website](#).

Know the intended use of your food

When your food is imported, you will need to declare the [intended use](#) in the import entry. There are several codes that may apply depending on what will happen to the food once it is in New Zealand. The common codes for food for sale are:

- **HC** – Sale for human consumption
- **FP** – Further processing for human consumption
- **RE** – Import for re-export.

You need to know or inform your agent of the intended use of your product so it can be declared correctly.

If you import food for personal use, trade samples or for laboratory analysis, there are [intended use codes for these available here](#).

Use Trade Single Window

[Trade Single Window](#) (TSW) is the electronic system where import entries are submitted for their information to be checked by border agencies like MPI and Customs.

Your import entries will need to be made in this system, and this is how you will communicate with MPI about the entry status of your imported food. You can use this system yourself or you can have an agent or broker do this for you.

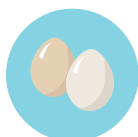


More information

Sector-specific importing guidance:



[Dairy](#)



[Eggs](#)



[Poultry](#)



[Meat](#)



[Pork](#)



[Seafood](#)



[Processed food](#)



[Fresh fruit and vegetables](#)



[Seeds, grains, and nuts](#)



[Honey and bee products](#)



[Supplemented Foods](#)



[Wine and beverages](#)



[Organics](#)

If your product is not shown here please contact:
foodimporteradvice@mpi.govt.nz

For more information please see our [importing food and beverages](#) page on the MPI website.

Helpful resources

[Food importing guidance](#) – resources to help you understand and comply with New Zealand's food safety rules.

[Food Safety Rules](#) – a tool to assist in identifying the specific NZ food safety regulations your business may need to comply with. Please note, this tool does not cover all possible rules and regulations.

[Subscribe to 'Food importer news'](#) – our quarterly newsletter will keep you informed on food importer responsibilities, upcoming changes to food requirements, and current events such as recalls related to imported food.

[Subscribe to MPI](#) – Subscription topics are grouped under consultations, media releases, email updates, and newsletters. Tick as many as you want to subscribe.



Find [guidance documents and information](#) about labelling your food products.

Customs brokers and freight forwarders

Customs brokers can manage the import entry clearance process for you and help guide you through the requirements. Many freight and transport companies have in-house brokers, but if you need help finding one, the [Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders Federation \(CBAFF\)](#) can assist.

Fees and charges

In addition to the registration fee you have already paid, there may be additional costs.

To find out more about fees and charges, click on your product category as linked above.

Who to contact



Who to contact at MPI

Food Importer Advice

If you have general questions about food safety you can contact [Food Importer Advice](#):

- complete the [online form](#)
- email foodimporteradvice@mpi.govt.nz

Make sure you tell us a bit about your product such as the end use, where you want to import from and your question, so we can give you the right advice. Our response time is usually within 3 working days.

Biosecurity advice

If you have any questions about biosecurity requirements, email:

- plantimports@mpi.govt.nz for plants and plant-based products.
- animal.imports@mpi.govt.nz for all animal products, these include honey, meat, fish and seafood, dairy and eggs.

Food Act enquiries

If you have any questions about compositional requirements such as additives, ingredients or labelling requirements, email foodactinfo@mpi.govt.nz

MPI Approvals

Email approvals@mpi.govt.nz if you want to make changes to your food importer registration or renew your registration.

Exporter Help

If you have general questions about exporting you can contact [Exporter Help](#):

- complete the [online form](#)
- email exporterhelp@mpi.govt.nz
- call us on 0800 67 44 90

All other general enquiries

For general enquiries email info@mpi.govt.nz or call 0800 00 83 33.

Other agencies to know

New Zealand Customs Service

You'll need to work with New Zealand Customs to get import clearance. www.customs.govt.nz

Industry bodies

Most primary sectors have an [industry body](#) that you can join. An industry body can support its members on a range of issues and advocate for your sector.

Hiring a food consultant

You may need some extra help from an independent consultant to make sure you are following all the food safety rules for your business.

Got feedback about this resource?

We'd love to hear from you! Email foodimporteradvice@mpi.govt.nz

