
Imported food requirement: Soft cheese

Recent Updates

Date	Location	Information
November 2009	Section 3.2	Clarification of verification of recognised assurances/certification.
17 August 2009		Remove requirement for monitoring grated cheese, clarification of soft cheese definition.
1 July 2009	All	Layout revised

1.0 Scope

1.1 The purpose of this Imported Food Requirement is to provide administrative guidance to a Food Act Officer (FAO) as to the matters they may take into consideration when determining whether they have been satisfied by a person who imports food into New Zealand that the food complies in all respects with-

- (a) All relevant provisions of the Food Act 1981; and
- (b) All relevant provisions of any regulations made pursuant to the Food Act 1981; and
- (c) All applicable food standards.

Nothing in this Imported Food Requirement limits the powers of a FAO appointed under the Food Act 1981.

1.2 Legislative requirement: [Food \(Prescribed Foods\) Standard 2007](#)

- Products covered under the scope of these requirements are Prescribed Foods for the purpose of import into New Zealand (Section 11P, Food Act 1981).
- No person may import these products into New Zealand unless that person has satisfied an officer that the food complies.

1.3 This Imported Food Requirement sets out clearance options and procedures for importers of prescribed foods that an importer may follow when aiming to satisfy a FAO that the food complies with the Food Act 1981.

1.4 These clearance options and procedures apply in addition to and after a prescribed food has gained clearance from MAF Biosecurity New Zealand. Importers should check those requirements at: [MAF Biosecurity New Zealand](#).

1.5 Products include: Cheeses including:

- Soft cheeses
- The following cheese varieties:

Blue cheese Brie Butterkase Camembert Cottage Coloummiers	Cream or Creamed cheese Harzer Kase Limburger Ricotta Romadur Saint Paulin	Any other cheese with a moisture content greater than or equal to 50% or moisture % fat-free basis greater than or equal to 67%.
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1.6 Products excluded:

- Raw milk cheeses
- Liquid cheeses
- Cheese flavourings
- Grated cheese
- The following Hard and Semi-hard cheese varieties:

Amsterdam Cheddar Cheshire Colby Danablu Danbo Edam Edelpilzkase Egmont Emmental manufactured from pasteurised milk Esrom Extra Hard Grating	Feta (< 50% moisture) Frieze (Frisian) Fynbo Gouda Gruyere manufactured from pasteurised milk Gudbrandsdalsost Havarti Herrgardsost Hushallsost Leidse (Leyden) Mainser	Kase Maribo Mozzarella (< 50% moisture) Norvegia Parmesan Provolone – unsmoked Provolone – smoked Romano Samsøe Svecia Stilton Tilsiter
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1.7 [Tariff codes targeted](#)

1.8 Food safety hazard: pathogenic bacteria, specifically *Listeria monocytogenes*.

1.9 Import permitted with conditions from: All countries.

- Soft cheese products imported into New Zealand from Australia are not subject to NZFSA import clearance requirements. Importers do not need to apply for a Single Use

Permit for clearance. This applies to food produced in Australia and to food imported into Australia.

2.0 Importer Clearance Options

2.1 The clearance options and procedures in this Imported Food Requirement apply to **soft cheese** and are in addition to clearance requirements detailed in the [Import Clearance Procedure](#).

2.2 Importers must also meet the requirements of the Food (Importer Listing) Standard 2008 and the Food (Importer General Requirements) Standard 2008. Importers should also read and understand the [Food Importer Standards Guidance](#) before sourcing products to import.

2.3 For **soft cheese**, importers have a responsibility under the Food (Importer General Requirements) Standard 2008 to ensure imports are of minimal risk for contamination by pathogens. Good manufacturing practices can greatly reduce the likelihood of the contamination by pathogens.

2.4 The following three options are available to importers when they are aiming to satisfy a FAO that the food complies with the Food Act and can therefore be cleared:

Option 1 - Acceptance of recognised assurances / certification

For **soft cheese** products, recognised assurances / certification may be accepted

- Norway – Imports of products manufactured and exported from Norway must be accompanied by agreed certification from KIM (Kontrollinstituttet for Meierprodukter).
- European Union - Animal and Public Health Certificate.

Requirements to be met: Certification is required with each consignment.

Option 2 - Clearance sampling and testing on arrival in New Zealand

In the absence of recognised assurance / certification or a multiple release permit (MRP), **soft cheese** products are sampled and tested in New Zealand.

Products will be tested for *Listeria monocytogenes*.

Sampling and testing is to be in accordance with [NZFSA's sampling and testing protocol](#).

Option 3 - Multiple Release Permits (MRPs)

MRPs are issued for imported food products that are:

- Inadvertently captured by the tariff codes monitored by the NZFSA.
- From particular suppliers under an arrangement agreed to by the importer and NZFSA.

Importers wishing to apply for a MRP should contact the Advisor (Food Service, Sale and Import) in the NZFSA Approvals Group at (04) 894 2500 or email approvals.fssi@nzfsa.govt.nz to discuss their situation prior to completing a MRP application form.

3.0 Clearance Procedures

3.1 Documentation checks

All consignments accompanied by NZFSA recognised assurances / certification from the relevant competent authority are subject to 100% documentation checks.

3.2 Physical inspections

Verification of recognised assurances/certification

Recognised assurances/certification may be verified by physical inspection of the consignment. Consignments imported with assurances or certification are verified by identity check and/or sampling and testing at intervals.

- The standard rate used to verify assurances/certification which applies to most prescribed foods is 1 in every 20 consignments where consignments are more frequent than 20 in a six month period. Where consignments are less than 20 in a six month period, they are verified every six months.
- Imports with certification from the European Union (EU) are verified at 1% rate (1 in every 100 consignments).

3.3 Clearance sampling and testing on arrival in New Zealand

Sampling and testing should be in accordance with [NZFSA's sampling and testing protocol](#).

Samples:

- Samples should be taken for each product type, eg, type of cheese, size, etc.
- 5 samples per lot for microbiological analysis.
- Each lot sample must weigh at least 100g.
- Individual units or packets should be sampled if these are available.

- The laboratory may composite up to 5 samples of approximately equal weight per lot for *Listeria*.

Clearance criteria: The following criteria should be used when deciding if a consignment captured by these requirements is safe to be released:

- Nil tolerance for *Listeria monocytogenes*.

Reject criteria:

- FAO may REJECT lots that test positive for *Listeria monocytogenes*.
- FAO may reject any untested lots in the consignment.
- Procedures for rejected lots and untested lots are described in [NZFSA's sampling and testing protocol](#).

3.4 Multiple Release Permit (MRP)

For holders of an MRP, the import agent will use the permit number to clear the products. Holders of an MRP should maintain an agreed imported food surveillance (sampling and testing) programme for the products covered by the MRP.

3.5 Management of non-compliant consignments

When clearance cannot be given because of non-compliance with import requirements, all determinations on disposition of non-complying consignments should be made in full consultation with NZFSA (or a representative nominated by NZFSA). This will facilitate appropriate corrective action and communication with relevant entities.

3.6 Contact details for border clearance agency

First stop for importers seeking more information.

Central Clearing House

NZFSA Verification Agency

Level 1, 96 New North Road, Eden Terrace, Auckland

PO Box 3540, Eden Terrace, Auckland

Email: imported.food@nzfsa.govt.nz

Fax: 09 909 6208

Phone: 09 909 6210 or 09 909 6211

To be notified of changes and updates to NZFSA's website, including import requirements, go to the [NZFSA website Notifications page](#).

4.0 Tariff Codes Targeted

Prescribed foods are targeted at the border using the New Zealand Customs tariff code system.

A tariff code is a number used for Customs purposes to classify goods. An import agent or customs broker may be able to assist with interpretation of the tariff code.

Importers who are importing **soft cheese** under tariff codes not listed below should notify NZFSA Central Clearing House. CCH will notify NZFSA of the need to review the tariff codes targeted.

Inadvertent captures

As the tariff classification system is not designed specifically around the imported food regime, some food products may be inadvertently captured by the targeted tariff codes listed. If this is the case, products will not be subject to the sampling and testing protocol outlined in these requirements. Importers may apply to NZFSA for a multiple release permit (MRP) to facilitate clearance.

Products classified with the following tariff codes are captured under this requirement:

Tariff codes targeted for Soft Cheeses	
0406 Soft cheeses	
0406.40.00.00L	Blue-veined Cheese
0406.90.00.01G	Other Cheese in Tins
0406.90.00.39D	Other Cheese Other