

Detailed guide: Import wood, wood products or bark from non-EU countries

You must meet UK landing requirements if you're importing regulated wood material in order to prevent the introduction of harmful pests.

Find out which wood and timber materials are regulated.

Depending on the tree species from which the wood was sourced, the associated pest or disease risk, the wood product type and the country of origin, you must meet a number of phytosanitary (plant health) requirements and get the product verified by a phytosanitary certificate, which should be issued in the country of export.

Register for trading in controlled material

As imports of regulated material must undergo a plant health inspection upon arrival before being released, you or your agent must be registered with us and notify us in advance of landing.

[Download the form to apply for registration.](#)

Contracts with your supplier

Once your material lands in Great Britain (GB), it's your responsibility. To avoid difficulties, delays or financial loss caused by breach of the landing requirements, we strongly advise that you or your agent include a clause in the supplier's contract to ensure that they meet landing requirements, and are bound to meet any costs incurred as a result of any failure to do so.

Notification and import inspection

You or your appointed agent must [complete a Notice of Landing form, which you must use to arrange a timber import inspection.](#)

You cannot land material unless you give advance notice of at least 4 working hours to an inspector for air cargo, and 3 working days for any other case.

Notification of landing and import inspection are statutory requirements. If you fail to comply then you may get a fine, and the clearing of your consignment will be delayed.

Import documents

You must present phytosanitary documents to an inspector, within 3 days of any wood or timber material landing, except in the case of material imported

by post, in which case you must fix certificates to the outside of the package.

You must accompany each consignment with either a phytosanitary certificate alone or with another phytosanitary certificate for re-export (where appropriate), or an industry or mill certificate.

The Customs document relating to each consignment of relevant material must include:

- a statement that it contains produce of phytosanitary relevance
- the reference number of the phytosanitary certificate, phytosanitary certificate for re-export or the industry certificate
- the registration number of the importer/agent

Phytosanitary certificates

These certificates state that the controlled material:

- has been officially inspected in the country of origin (or country of dispatch)
- complies with statutory requirements for entry into GB
- is free from quarantine pests and disease
- is substantially free from other harmful organisms

Phytosanitary certificates for re-export

You must provide these if, after a phytosanitary certificate has been issued in the country of origin, the consignment has been stored, repacked or split in another third country before being exported to GB.

Industry and mill certificates

Under arrangements agreed between the EU and the plant protection organisations in Canada and the US, the Forestry Commission has adopted GB derogations that allow for the use of industry and mill certificates instead of phytosanitary certificates for kiln-dried and heat-treated material.

Plant health inspection

All imports of regulated material must be inspected and cleared by a plant health inspector. These inspections are entirely independent of any checks by Border Force or HMRC.

Plant health inspectors usually operate Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (although local arrangements may be in place). Our objective is to inspect goods either on the day we're notified that they're ready for examination, or on the next working day.

You should aim to provide as much notice as possible if you want your goods to be cleared quickly. Customs clearance won't be given until the satisfactory completion of a plant health inspection.

Point of entry

Plant health checks are made at approved points of entry into GB. To gain approved status, a port or airport authority must provide certain minimum conditions necessary to ensure that inspections can be carried out efficiently and safely and, in the event that it becomes necessary, relevant material can be treated or destroyed.

Key points to note:

- for containerised material, it takes time for port operators to bring material forward for inspection, open the container doors and conduct fumigant gas checks, etc
- port operators will charge for these commercial consignment handling services
- inspectors will only perform inspections if it's safe to do so

Approved places inland

Plant health legislation provides for approved traders to gain Forestry Commission and HMRC clearance at inland inspection premises instead of at a point of entry.

Eligibility for approved premises status depends on the ability of the applicant to meet certain minimum standards set independently by HMRC and the Forestry Commission. We require a safe working environment for inspectors, with adequate lighting and space to look at every piece of material, if required.

In the absence of fumigant gas-checking facilities supported by trained operators for containerised material, the inspector is likely to insist that containers be devanned at your risk and cost.

Key points to note:

- eligible sites must conform to HMRC's definition of 'temporary storage area' – there will be a cost associated with becoming approved as a 'temporary storage area', and you should discuss the implications of this directly with HMRC
- eligible sites must meet our plant health requirements
- approved places of inspection will be subject to an annual review by us

Documentary, identity and plant health checks

Inspections are required to determine whether:

- the consignment or lot is accompanied by the required certificates, alternative documents or marks, and that these are properly completed (documentary check)
- in its entirety, or on one or more representative samples, the consignment or lot consists of or contains the wood, wood products or other objects as declared on the required documents (identity check)

- in its entirety or on one or more representative samples, including the packaging and (where appropriate) the transport vehicles, the consignment or lot or their wood packaging material, complies with the requirements laid down in the Plant Health legislation (plant health check)

Documentary check

The inspector will examine the relevant document to ensure it complies with the regulations. Subject to agreement between EU Member States, it's possible for consignments to be subjected to a documentary check only in the Member State of first entry into the EU, with the identity and physical checks being carried out in the Member State of destination. This must be arranged in advance and the customs and plant health authorities in both Member States must agree this arrangement, either on a case-by-case basis or on general terms (for example, for one kind of commodity, or a named importer).

The person responsible for the consignment in the Member State of first entry into the EU must complete a Plant Health Movement document in the form set out in the [Plant Health \(Forestry\) Order 2005](#).

Before inspection of the relevant material when it arrives in GB, you must be in receipt of a Plant Health Movement document, otherwise the material won't be released.

Identity checks

If you import wood and wood products, you must meet certain identification requirements. The material must agree with the description given in the documentation accompanying it (for example, phytosanitary certificate or officially approved industry certificate, ship's manifest or shipping specification sheets) so that it can't be confused with any other material. For example, lot or bill of landing numbers on the packs must be listed on the phytosanitary or industry certificate.

Plant health checks

The inspector will carry out an examination of all or a representative sample of the consignment to ensure it complies with the appropriate special requirements, such as whether it's bark-free or has been treated in some way (eg kiln dried). If the wood has been kiln dried or heat treated, it must be clearly marked with 'KD' or 'HT' or another internationally recognised mark.

Wood from unidentified tree species

Any wood, including wood packaging material or dunnage, from unidentified tree species will be subject to control at the discretion of an inspector.

If you declare the wrong volume

It's a statutory requirement that phytosanitary certificates accurately

describe the volume of material to which they relate. Sometimes certificates declare types of wood not subject to inspection. Where it's possible to identify the volume and identity/lot/numbers of material from the certificate, we won't demand a fee for that part of the consignment. However, if it's not possible to segregate uncontrolled goods, we'll need to inspect the whole consignment and will charge accordingly.

Inspection fees

You or the person or organisation notifying us of the need for an inspection – or presenting the phytosanitary certificates to us – will be held responsible for the payment of fees unless you make special arrangements for payment. A Certificate of Clearance (forms PHF28) will be issued when we receive payment for an inspection.

Fee payment options

Inspection fees include separate charges for documentary, identity and plant health checks:

Type of check	Volume	Fee
Documentary checks	Per consignment	£7.20
Identity checks	For each load of up to 30m ³ , forming part of the consignment contained in one truck, railway wagon, or comparable container – per consignment	£7.20
Identity checks for bulk loads	Less than 100m ³	£7.20
Identity checks for bulk loads	100m ³ or more	£14.40
Plant health checks	Per consignment of wood (other than in the form of shavings, chips or sawdust) – up to 100m ³	£31.20
Plant health checks	Per consignment of wood (other than in the form of shavings, chips or sawdust) – over 100m ³ , each additional m ³ or part thereof	£0.25
Reduced frequency of inspection plant health checks of Acer saccharum* (hard maple, sugar maple or rock maple)	Up to 100m ³ originating in Canada	£23.40
Reduced frequency of inspection plant health checks of Acer saccharum* (hard maple, sugar maple or rock maple)	Above 100m ³ originating in Canada – for each additional m ³ or part thereof originating in Canada	£0.20
Plant health checks – per consignment of isolated bark and wood in the form of shavings, chips or sawdust	Up to 25,000kg	£31.20

Type of check	Volume	Fee
Plant health checks – per consignment of isolated bark and wood in the form of shavings, chips or sawdust	Above 25,000kg – each additional 1,000kg or part thereof	£0.49

Maximum inspection fee – £98

NOTE: goods can be subject to reduced levels of physical inspection set by the European Commission and are based on risk (ie on a random sample of consignments rather than each one).

Where inspections are permitted at ‘approved places inland’, you will be charged a fee of £30 (based on an average 1.5 hours’ additional travel required to perform an inland inspection) in addition to the fees detailed above.

Certificate of Clearance (PHF28)

On satisfactory completion of the inspection, the inspector will issue a Certificate of Clearance (form PHF28), which you must present to HMRC together with the normal customs entry declaration. You must also declare that the consignment contains produce of phytosanitary relevance.

Inspection fail – remedial action

If you haven’t met the landing requirements, you’ll be required to take remedial action. The inspector may also take samples from the material for analysis at Forest Research. Where this is considered necessary, you’ll be served a Statutory Notice prohibiting the removal of the consignment while remedial action or tests are completed.

Any remedial work, which may involve destruction, re-export or treatment, must be carried out to our specification, and satisfaction and under our surveillance. We will charge for this additional monitoring work.

In certain instances, for example where the work required has not been carried out by the due date, we may do the work ourselves, or contract another person to do it and charge accordingly. Where treatment of the material is appropriate, we won’t issue a Certificate of Clearance (PHF28) until we’re satisfied that the material has been treated to the required specification, and poses no further risk to plant health.

Charge for remedial work

Due to the variable factors involved (for example, the size of consignment, the volume affected, and the type of remedial treatment required), the charge is time-based as follows:

- the first hour, including travelling and office time – £37

- each 15 minutes or part thereof thereafter -£9.25
- if office time is required after a site visit – £9.25

We aim to keep this cost to a minimum by remaining onsite only long enough to ensure that treatment is being carried out properly and to its specification. However, it will be necessary to inspect the material on completion of the treatment to ensure that it has been effective. Where possible, we plan for these visits to coincide with the notified timing of treatment. It will be important, therefore, to ensure that you keep us informed of any changes to agreed arrangements.

The fee for this monitoring work becomes due on completion of the remedial work and must be paid before a Certificate of Clearance (form PHF28) is issued. Alternatively, you'll be issued with an invoice which you may pay through your credit account, if you have one, or by BACS or cheque.

Offences

You can be found guilty of a range of offences, such as making false statements to procure a phytosanitary certificate. The full range of offences can be found in [Part 9 of the Plant Health \(Forestry\) Order](#). If you're found guilty of an offence under the Order then you shall be liable to a fine of any amount (see the [Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2015](#), which came into force on 11 March 2015).

Read

[Importing wood, wood products and bark](#)
(PDF, 551KB, 44 pages)

for more information.