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Import risk review for dairy products for human consumption

Frequently Asked Questions

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry recently released the second draft report for the *Import risk review for dairy products for human consumption* (dairy review). Following the release of the first draft report, there have been considerable changes to some of the recommended risk management measures and a second draft report is being released for public consultation of these changes. Although new risk management recommendations for the import of dairy products have been made, the dairy review is still a draft report and current import conditions remain in place until the review is finalised.

The department has received numerous questions from different stakeholders about the review. This document provides a summary of answers to these questions.

What are the proposed timings for implementation of new biosecurity measures for dairy products imported for human consumption?

The second draft report consultation period opened on 18 April 2024. After the consultation period closes on 17 June 2024, all feedback received will be considered and a final report will be developed. The final report will be published on the dairy review page on the department's website. Once the dairy review has been finalised, there will be a transition period for the implementation of the new biosecurity measures. The transition period has not been confirmed but is expected to be a minimum of 12 months.

Are we able to apply now for alternative measures for case-by-case assessment?

No case-by-case assessment will be conducted until the dairy review is finalised. The department is not encouraging importers to apply for alternative measures for case-by-case assessment until the final report is released. A large amount of detail will be required for a case-by-case assessment, which will be time consuming for the exporter, the competent authority, and the department.

How can importers apply for a case-by-case assessment after the review is finalised?

If an importer would like a product to be assessed for equivalence against the import conditions in a case-by-case assessment, the request to the department must come from the competent authority in which the dairy product is manufactured and exported. This is the governmental authority of the exporting country that has the responsibility for ensuring or supervising the implementation of animal health and welfare measures, international veterinary certification and other standards and recommendations.

The competent authority will need to provide the department with evidence that they have sufficient oversight to ensure that the products meet our import conditions and that any animal biosecurity risk is

adequately managed. The competent authority will also need to provide the department with the necessary information about the supply chain, including that from the manufacturing facility such as the source ingredients, heat treatments and other manufacturing processes. The assessment may be resource intensive depending on the product and may require an in-country verification visit.

Will you be updating current import conditions for dairy?

Country freedom conditions for lumpy skin disease are currently recommended to be removed in the second draft report for dairy products for human consumption. These recommendations are still a draft and must undergo a public consultation period prior to finalisation of the review, after which new risk management conditions can be put in place. Engagement with stakeholders is an important part of the risk assessment process. Consultation aims to seek stakeholder views on technical issues relevant to the risk assessments, including proposed risk management. It provides an opportunity for stakeholders to notify the department of issues that may arise from the proposed changes to risk management before they are implemented.

What will the proposed changes mean for dairy availability?

In almost all cases the proposed changes will have no effect on the availability of dairy products currently imported, and the intent is that most dairy products that can meet current import requirements will likely remain eligible. Some dairy products currently not permitted to be imported into Australia could become eligible under the proposed changes, subject to them meeting biosecurity measures to manage the risk.

Has the dairy review addressed biosecurity measures for raw milk cheese?

Under imported food legislation, imports of raw milk cheese must be covered by a foreign government certificate under a government-to-government certification arrangement.

Before a foreign government certificate can be established, the Imported Foods section of the department assesses whether Australian food safety requirements can be met. The Animal Biosecurity section of the department is consulted during the assessment process to ensure that any animal biosecurity requirements can be met.

The assessment process for setting up this arrangement is not within the scope of the dairy review. Any questions relevant to the import of raw milk cheese will be forwarded to the Imported Foods section for their knowledge. Further information about importing raw milk cheese can be found on the department's [website](#).

What does it mean now that butter is no longer considered separately from other dairy products?

Unlike other dairy products, currently imported butter only requires risk management for foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), which is that butter must be sourced, manufactured and exported from countries on the department's [FMD-Free Country List](#). This means that there is no specific disease management for butter imported from countries affected with lumpy skin disease (LSD), sheep and goat pox (SGP) and peste des petits ruminants (PPR). This was based on the position in the 1999 dairy import risk analysis (IRA) that butter was unlikely to be fed to ruminant animals.

As part of the dairy review, the underpinning assumptions and science for having separate biosecurity requirements for butter from FMD-free countries were reviewed. The review identified that it is common practice for dairy products to be repurposed as stockfeed. For this reason, the review proposes

that butter should no longer be considered separately from other dairy products and that the risk management measures that apply to other dairy products (excluding cheese) should also apply to butter. This means that proposed risk management measures for LSD will apply for butter made from milk from cattle and water buffalo, and the proposed risk management measures for PPR and SGP will apply for butter made from milk from sheep and goats.

This change will mean that importers will need to apply for a standard dairy permit rather than a cheese and butter permit for importing butter into Australia. These changes will not occur until after the review has been finalised, and stakeholders will be notified of the transition period.

It is unlikely that this change will affect the eligibility of most currently imported butter, as most butter is being imported from countries that are not affected by diseases requiring specific risk management.

What is the basis for the minimum requirements (section 4.1), and what does this mean?

The dairy review has recognised that foods imported for sale in Australia must comply with the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (the code). Some aspects of the code provide significant value in managing the biosecurity risk of animal diseases, such as:

- implementing documented food safety programs for dairy primary production, collection, transportation, and processing,
- sourcing milk only from healthy animals,
- processing requirements of milk and dairy products (e.g. high-temperature short-time (HTST) pasteurisation of milk and specific processing requirements for cheese), and
- notification of food business operations to authorities.

The draft report refers to these as the 'minimum requirements'. One of the recommendations of the review is that a number of animal diseases identified as hazards in imported dairy products (listed in Appendix A) are managed specifically and solely by the minimum requirements. For diseases that cannot be managed solely by the minimum requirements, additional risk management measures are proposed (e.g. FMD, LSD, SGP, PPR, and scrapie).

How the minimum requirements will be operationalised and the level to which they need to be verified will be finalised with the final report.

Does the milk need to be heat treated before any other processing takes place to meet biosecurity requirements?

The 1999 dairy import risk assessment (IRA) recommended that any heat treatment that is part of a risk management measure should be applied to the milk before any other processing takes place (e.g. for cream, heat treatment is applied to whole milk before separation of the cream; for a curd that is subsequently cooked, the heat treatment is applied to the milk before setting of the curd).

Since the 1999 dairy IRA was published, information from import permit applications for some types of dairy products have demonstrated that heat treatment is not always applied to the milk before any other processing takes place. This has been considered in the review and proposes that the required heat treatment can be applied to either the milk or the dairy ingredients during processing. The heat treatment must be a moist heat treatment, meaning it must be applied to the product before it is dried.

What will the process be for approval of manufacturing countries and supply chains?

Approval of manufacturing countries or supply chains for imported dairy products would only be required for countries that are affected by diseases that require risk management. The assessment process for this will be developed along with the final report.

The level and detail of the assessment required will be risk-based. For example, an assessment for a highly processed dairy product such as condensed milk may not require as in-depth assessment compared to a dairy product that has undergone minimal processing such as yoghurt. End use of the product would also be considered during the assessment.

The assessment will be a government-to-government process and would require cooperation from both the manufacturing facilities intending to process dairy products for export to Australia and the competent authority. A desktop assessment and in-country verification visit may also be required.

More information

Learn more about the [Import risk review for dairy products for human consumption](#).

Email animalbiosecurity@agriculture.gov.au.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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