



POSITION PAPER

The UK's SPS Agreement with the EU



What is it?

- On 19th May 2025, the UK and the EU agreed to negotiate a common sanitary/phytosanitary area (SPS Zone) as part of a wider EU-UK Reset.
- The SPS agreement aims to bring the UK back into the EU's Plant Health regime, following 'dynamic alignment' with EU Plant Health regulations, eliminating the need for plant health certification and physical checks at the border.

Why does it matter to Horticulture?

- The EU is the UK's closest trading partner, with half of the £1.2bn plants and trees sold annually in the UK imported from the EU with the Netherlands acting as a hub.
- Supply chain costs have significantly increased since Brexit, particularly in 2024, with some businesses absorbing up to 25% higher costs and facing increased administrative burdens.
- UK exports have been reduced by nearly half due to prohibitions on exporting certain plants and trees to the EU.
- The border has become a place of delays and frustration, with disjointed systems, increased costs, difficult transportation routes and where businesses are paying the price..
- The UK was a leading expert in the EU's Plant Health regime pre-Brexit, and there has been little divergence in plant health legislation since Brexit.

Biosecurity

- Biosecurity is a key priority, but re-entering the EU's plant health regime will allow the UK to respond to risks from within the EU, establish its own targeted biosecurity regimes and remove risks introduced to supply-chains by new border operations.
- A balanced approach is critical, that is proportionate, and risk based. A reset needs to deliver balance and remove unnecessary burdens.

Key asks for Negotiators and Policy-Makers

1. **Urgency** in implementing the agreement to ease burdens on businesses trading plants between the EU and the UK 10 (?).
2. Ongoing **consultation and ensure** horticultural business experts are involved throughout negotiations and implementation, to maximise the reset opportunity.
3. Clear, useable and early **guidance and transition support** for businesses to understand changes, adaptation requirements and minimise disruption.
4. Sustain a **pre-notification scheme** that works for traders and Government plant health agencies alike.
5. **Mandatory homogenised plant passports** for all plants moving in trade throughout the UK & EU to ensure competence and traceability (systems?).

About UK environmental horticulture

The Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) represents around 1400 UK businesses, including growers, retailers, suppliers, and landscapers who collectively deliver the gardens, green spaces, and green infrastructure that delivers for the economy, environment, climate change adaptation, flood resilience and our health and wellbeing.

Each year, the environmental horticulture sector delivers £38bn to GDP and supports 722,000 jobs.

Contact

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