

Marketing requirements for seeds and plant propagating material

If you want to export seeds or plant propagating material to the EU you must comply with the EU marketing standards regarding identification, quality and harmful organisms. They are designed to protect the user as to ensure the correct information, health and quality of the material.

Besides, the EU has a system to protect plant variety rights in which a breeder may be granted a single intellectual property right operative throughout the EU. This system is implemented and applied by the Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO). This European system coexists with national plant variety protection systems in the EU countries.

You may also check the [EU plant health requirements](#) and [GMO legislation](#) that also applies to seeds and plants.

EU marketing requirements

Registration: For a variety to be registered in the EU, it needs to be tested for distinctness, uniformity, stability and, for agricultural crops, value for cultivation. A variety should be known under the same name in the entire EU.

Certification: Certification and inspections guarantee the identity, health and quality of seeds and propagating material before marketing - whether they come from inside or outside the EU.

Marketing: Seed and propagating material are marketed in:

- different marketing categories;
 - homogenous lots where lots are identified for traceability reasons;
- Specific requirements for packaging, sealing, labelling and documentation apply.

Equivalence: Seed harvested outside the EU may only be marketed in the EU if it offers the same guarantees as officially certified EU seed. The seed's identity must be ensured throughout its production and marketing. Seed sampling, fastening and labelling of containers can be carried out under official supervision of the competent authorities based on the OECD rules. EU legislation ([CELEX 2003D0017](#)) lists the countries complying with EU requisites and establishes the conditions on the equivalence for field inspections and seed production to be carried out in these countries concerning seed characteristics, examination, identification, control, marking and packaging.

Moreover, some countries have been approved as with equivalent official checks on practices for the maintenance of varieties than the European ones. These countries are listed [Decision 2005/834EC](#).

Product-specific marketing requirements

Beet seed

Only officially **certified** beet seed can be sold in the EU. The EU certification ensures the quality of beet seed. It includes field inspection, seed sampling, testing, and labelling. Marketing is with reference to the variety.

Seed must fulfil the criteria in [Directive 2002/54/EC](#) for:

- field production and seed purity;
- identity and plant health;
- special requirements on e.g. polyploidy, monogermity and segmentation for the marketing categories: pre-basic, basic and certified seed.

Certification is carried out by the EU national competent authority or the business itself under that authority's official supervision.

Certification conditions:

Crops	Seeds
Previous cropping Identity and purity of variety Minimum distances from neighbouring pollen sources	Disease status Analytical purity Germination rate

The EU [Standing Committee on Seeds & Propagating Material for Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry & Vine](#) applies this legislation.

Oil & fibre plants

Only officially **certified** seeds of oil & fibre plants can be sold in the EU. The EU certification ensures the quality of oil and fibre seed for 14 species. It includes field inspection, seed sampling, testing, and labelling. Marketing is with reference to the variety.

Seed must fulfil the criteria set out in [Directive 2002/57/EC](#) for:

- field production and seed purity;
- identity and plant health;
- specific requirements for the marketing categories: pre-basic, basic, commercial and certified seed.

Certification is carried out by the EU national competent authority or the business itself under that authority's official supervision.

Certification conditions

Crops	Seeds
Previous cropping Identity and purity of variety Minimum distances from neighbouring pollen sources Presence of harmful organisms	Identity and purity of variety Analytical purity Germination rate Content of seed of other plant species Presence of harmful organisms

The EU [Standing Committee on Seeds & Propagating Material for Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry & Vine](#) applies this legislation.

Cereal seeds

Only officially **certified** cereal seeds can be sold in the EU. The EU certification ensures the quality of cereal seed for 15 species or crossings. It includes field inspection, seed sampling, testing, and labelling. Marketing is with reference to the variety.

Seed must fulfil the criteria in [Directive 66/402/EEC](#) for:

- field production;
- seed purity and identity;
- plant health;
- specific requirements for the different marketing categories: pre-basic, basic and certified seed .

Certification is carried out by the EU national competent authority or the business itself under that authority's official supervision.

Certification conditions

Crops	Seeds
Previous cropping Identity and purity of variety Minimum distances from neighbouring pollen sources Presence of harmful organisms	Identity and purity of variety Analytical purity Germination rate Content of seed of other plant species Presence of harmful organisms e.g.

	<i>Claviceps purpurea</i>
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The EU [Standing Committee on Seeds & Propagating Material for Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry & Vine](#) applies this legislation.

Fodder plants

Only officially **certified** fodder plant seeds can be sold in the EU. The EU certification ensures the quality of grass and legume seeds of 55 fodder plant species and crossings. It includes field inspection, seed sampling, testing, and labelling. Marketing is with reference to the variety.

Seed must fulfil the criteria in [Directive 66/401/EEC](#) for:

- field production;
- seed purity and identity;
- plant health;
- specific requirements for the different marketing categories: pre-basic, basic and certified seed.

Certification is carried out by the EU national competent authority or the business itself under that authority's official supervision.

Certification conditions

Crops	Seeds
Previous cropping Identity and purity of variety Minimum distances from neighbouring pollen sources Presence of harmful organisms	Identity and purity of variety Analytical purity Germination rate Content of seed of other plant species Presence of harmful organisms

The EU [Standing Committee on Seeds & Propagating Material for Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry & Vine](#) applies this legislation.

Seed potatoes

Only officially **certified** seeds can be sold in the EU. The EU certification ensures the quality of seed potatoes. It includes field inspection, seed sampling, testing, and labelling. Marketing is with reference to the variety.

Seed must fulfil the criteria in [Directive 2002/56/EC](#) for:

- health and quality standards e.g. the presence of blackleg and common scab ;
- seed identity;
- requirements for minimum size.

The EU [Standing Committee on Seeds & Propagating Material for Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry & Vine](#) applies this legislation.

Fruit propagating material and fruit plants

Only officially **certified** propagating material and plants can be sold in the EU. The EU certification ensures the quality of fruit plant propagating material and fruit plants of 23 genera and species. They can only be marketed in the EU if certified as: pre-basic, basic, certified or qualifying for *Conformitas Agraria Comunitatis*.

Seed must fulfil the criteria in [Directive 2008/90/EEC](#) for:

- identity;
- quality;
- plant health.

The rules also cover batch separation & marking, identification of varieties and labelling.

Suppliers must ensure that their material meets the legal criteria. Only suppliers approved by their national authorities can sell their material in the EU.

Your seeds, propagating or planting material may only be marketed in the EU if they offer the same guarantees as those produced in the EU.

The EU [Standing Committee on Seeds & Propagating Material for Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry & Vine](#) applies this legislation.

Vegetables seeds and plants

Vegetable seeds

Seed of registered vegetable varieties can only be marketed once officially examined and certified. In some cases, seed of a category not officially certified can be checked as meeting the legal requirements.

The EU certification ensures the quality of vegetable seed of 36 species. Seed must fulfil the criteria in [Directive 2002/55/EC](#) for:

- registration;
- certification;
- seed purity and identity.

Before marketing in the EU, vegetable varieties must be listed in the [Common catalogue](#) based on EU national catalogues. Only distinct, stable and sufficiently uniform varieties are accepted.

Suppliers must ensure that their material meets the legal criteria.

Vegetable propagating & planting material

Vegetable propagating and planting material must fulfil the criteria in [Directive 2008/72/EEC](#) for:

- quality and purity of the crop;
- varietal characteristics;
- the used propagation system.

Specific rules for rootstocks and other parts of plants are also developed.

The EU [Standing Committee on Seeds & Propagating Material for Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry & Vine](#) applies this legislation.

Vine

The EU certification system for marketing material for the propagation of the vine is explained in [Directive 68/193/EEC](#). Vine varieties must first be judged as distinct, uniform and stable before they can be listed in the catalogues of officially accepted varieties for marketing in the EU.

[EU list of varieties of vine propagation material](#)

Before it is marketed, vine propagation material must be officially examined and **certified** as: basic, certified or standard material. The legislation also regulates batch separation, packaging, sealing/marketing and labeling.

Certification conditions

Crops	Seeds
Varietal identity Varietal purity Health (presence of harmful viral diseases)	Varietal identity Technical purity Health (presence of harmful viral diseases) Grading and quality

The EU [Standing Committee on Seeds & Propagating Material for Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry & Vine](#) applies this legislation.

Ornamental plants

Seeds and propagating material of ornamental plants **can only be marketed in the EU** if:

- substantially free from harmful organisms that may affect its quality as propagating material;
- for propagating material - having satisfactory vigour and dimensions;
- for seed - having satisfactory germination.

Suppliers are responsible for the quality of their products. Before entering the EU, the material has to meet legal criteria such as:

- batch separation & marking;

- accurate identification of varieties if needed;
- labelling.

The EU [Standing Committee on Propagating Material of Ornamental Plants](#) applies this legislation.

Forest material

Quality reproductive material in forestry suited to the site where it is planted is essential for the forests' stability, resistance to disease, adaptation, productivity and diversity.

Forest reproductive material can only be marketed if:

- it belongs to one of the four categories Directive 1999/105/EC specifies;
- the basic material (the trees from which reproductive material is harvested) is approved.

Basic material is officially approved and inspected regularly. The quality criteria vary depending on the category. There are also criteria relating to species purity in lots of fruit and seed.

There is an [EU list](#) so that the scheme operates smoothly throughout the EU.

National registers contain the details of approved basic material including data on areas or geographic location - essential for determining if a particular material is suitable for a site.

After harvesting, a master certificate is issued with a unique register reference for information and traceability.

See also:

- [Forestry strategy](#)
- [Sustainable forest resources](#)

Requirements for Genetically Modified (GM) plants and seeds

The EU legislation ([CELEX 32001L0018](#)) requires GM seed varieties to be approved and authorised in the EU before they are marketed in the EU.

Authorisation is only granted if a positive scientific assessment has concluded that no unacceptable risks to the environment or human health is likely to appear.

All GM seeds have to be labelled as such.

Control

The compliance with the marketing requirements can be checked by the EU authorities at any stage of the distribution chain (e.g. customs clearance, distributors warehouses, wholesalers or retailers outlets ...).

Further information

[EU marketing of seeds and plant propagation material](#)

[Guidance documents, legislation and database on the protection of plant variety rights in EU](#)

[Seed certification](#)

Last update on: January 2013. Please check the [Export Helpdesk](#) for updated information

How to export to the EU?

Check it at www.exporthelp.europa.eu

