

**leatherhead
food research**

part of SAGENTIA REGULATORY

UK: what applies now and what to watch out for

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Agenda

Health and nutrition

- HFSS latest
- SDIL
- Energy drink
- Mandatory healthier food targets and reporting (HFTR)

Sustainability

- DRS logo
- Forest risk commodities

New technologies

- Gene-edited food
- Cell cultivated foods

UK-EU Relationship

- SPS agreement

Health and nutrition



Advertising restrictions of less healthy product



Regulation strict limits on advertising of **identifiable HFSS** (High Fat, Salt, Sugar) products

2004/2005 NPM to determine HFSS status
Foods scoring ≥ 4 and drinks scoring ≥ 1



In force from January 2026, banning TV advertising of HFSS foods before 9pm and all paid-for online ads



ASA Guidance: Identifiable HFSS Products (guidance on when branding and creative elements make an HFSS product identifiable)



Food businesses should assess not only whether an HFSS product is shown, but whether it remains identifiable through brand assets or marketing context



Advertisers cannot bypass HFSS rules if an HFSS product remains identifiable through branding, packaging or other brand assets



The ASA considers the advert's overall impression, especially its appeal to children

Nutrient Profiling Models (NPM)

Replacing 2004/05 Nutrient Profiling Models (NPM) with the 2018 NPM, Technical Guidance.

IMPACT:

This makes the calculation stricter in several key areas:

- Free sugars replace total sugars
- Salt replaces sodium
- Fibre gains greater weight in 'C' points
- Lower energy thresholds apply for 'A' points' deductions

Consultation on [Proposal](#) (closed in June):

- How to apply the new NPM to the existing advertising and promotions restrictions
- Timescales for implementing this change (introduce an implementation period of 12 months)

Free sugars

- All added sugars in any form
- Sugars in honey, syrups and nectars
- All sugars naturally present in fruit and vegetable juices, purées, powders and pastes, extruded fruit and vegetable products, and similar products in which the structure has been broken down

Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) tax changes

The government sets out to modernise the UK Soft Drinks Industry Levy incentivising soft drinks producers to reduce sugar content.

Manufacturers of currently exempt high-sugar beverages would face new compliance obligations, reformulation to avoid higher tax.



So what?

- Lower the sugar threshold for the SDIL from 5g to 4.5 g of total sugar per 100ml
- Remove the exemption for milk-based drinks
- Remove the exemption for milk substitute drinks if they have added sugars
- Plain, unsweetened milk and milk-alternative drinks are not and will not be included



Timeline

- Policy paper in July 2026
- HMRC guidance published soon
- Businesses given until **1 January 2028** to reduce sugar in their drinks

“The reforms will reduce average per-person calorie purchases by 0.3 kcal per day”

Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) - the UK's leading independent economics research institute.

High-caffeine drink sales restriction in future

Proposal encouraging lower-caffeine reformulation and signals continued scrutiny of products marketed to children.



So what?

- Sales of high-caffeine energy drinks (>150 mg caffeine/litre) will be restricted
- Age restriction under 16
- Retailers, online and vending operators, must implement age-verification controls
- Fines up to £2,500



Timeline

- Draft legislation is expected in autumn 2026
- Ban will apply from April 2027



Mandatory healthier food targets and reporting (HFTR)

The [Healthier Food Targets and Reporting \(HFTR\)](#) framework is part of the UK Government's 10-year health plan. It aims to improve population health by requiring food businesses to report on the healthiness of their food sales.



So what?

Two-phases

1. Supermarkets & restaurants will be required to publicly report their sales data categorised by 'healthiness'
2. Following the data collection in phase 1, targets will be set for businesses to increase the proportion of healthier food sales.



Timeline

- The government recommitted to introducing HFTR in June
- It is intended to be completed in this parliament (e.g. by 2029)



Sustainability



Forest risk commodity regulation update

It prohibits companies with global turnover over £50 million from using agricultural commodities not produced in line with local laws in their country of origin.



So what?

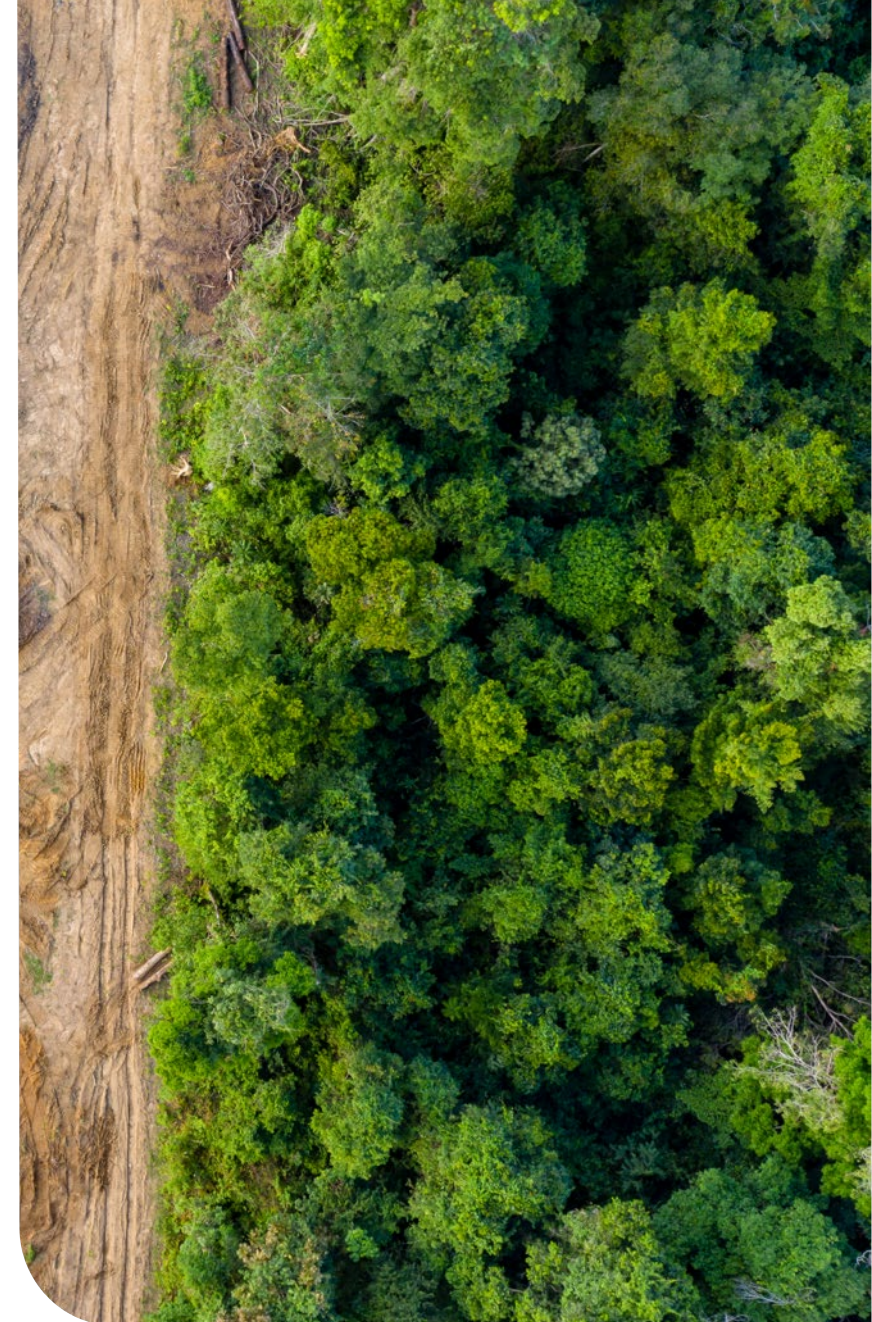
- In GB, it introduces due diligence requirements for certain forest-risk commodities (cattle, cocoa, palm oil, soya and derived products are regulated)
- Requires in-scope businesses to submit annual compliance reports
- Confirms products have been produced in accordance with local laws



Timeline

June: The UK intends to align deforestation requirements closely with the EUDR.

Consultation will run later this year, with legislation expected in 2027.



Deposit return scheme and logo

England, Scotland and Northern Ireland

- **Exchange For Change** delivers the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)
- Launches 1 October 2027
- Includes single-use drink container: metal cans and PET plastic bottles (150ml to 3 litres)
- Excludes glass container

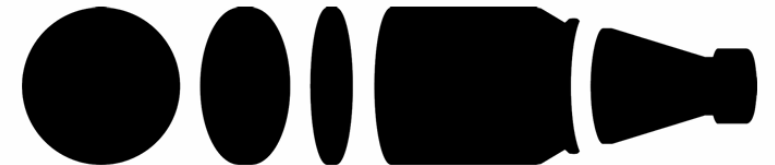
Wales

- Separate Deposit Management Organisation (DMO) appointment
- Includes **glass** container
- Glass drinks containers are exempt from specific labelling rules for an initial four-year transition period running from October 2027 to 30 September 2031, before full deposit and reuse rules apply

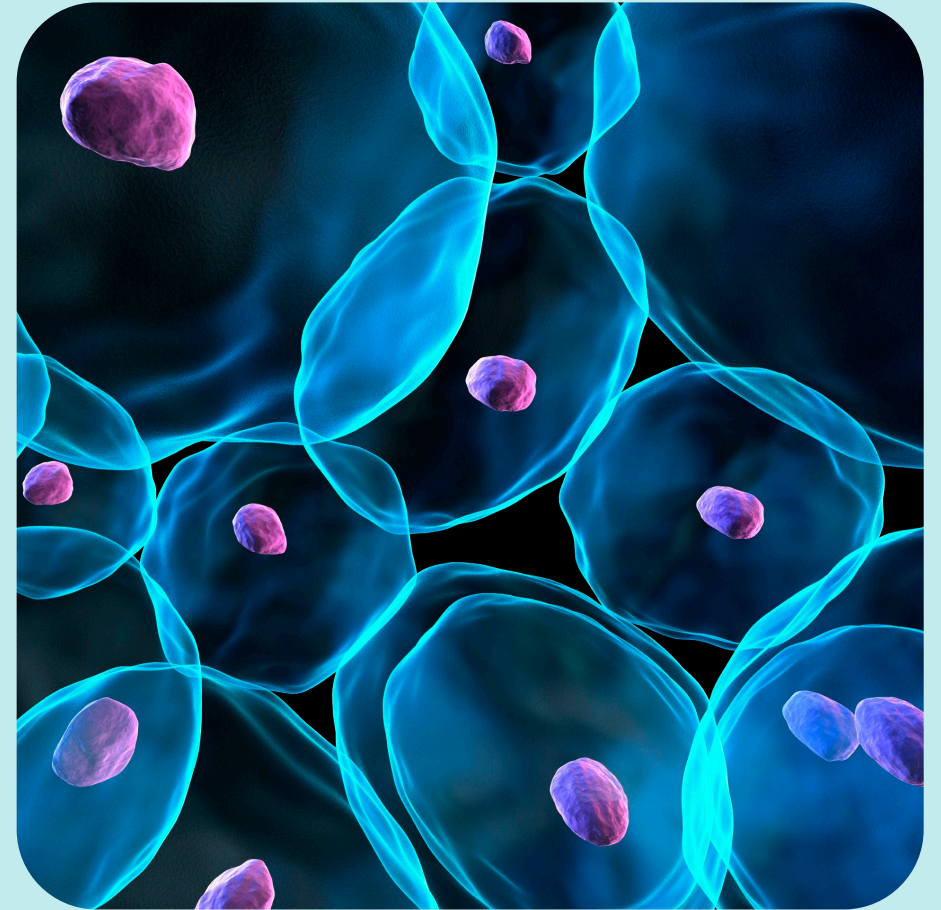
DRS logo

The bottle–can–coin logo messages:
Container → Return → Value

The icon is to be on all in-scope PET, aluminium and steel drinks containers from **1 October 2027**.



New technologies

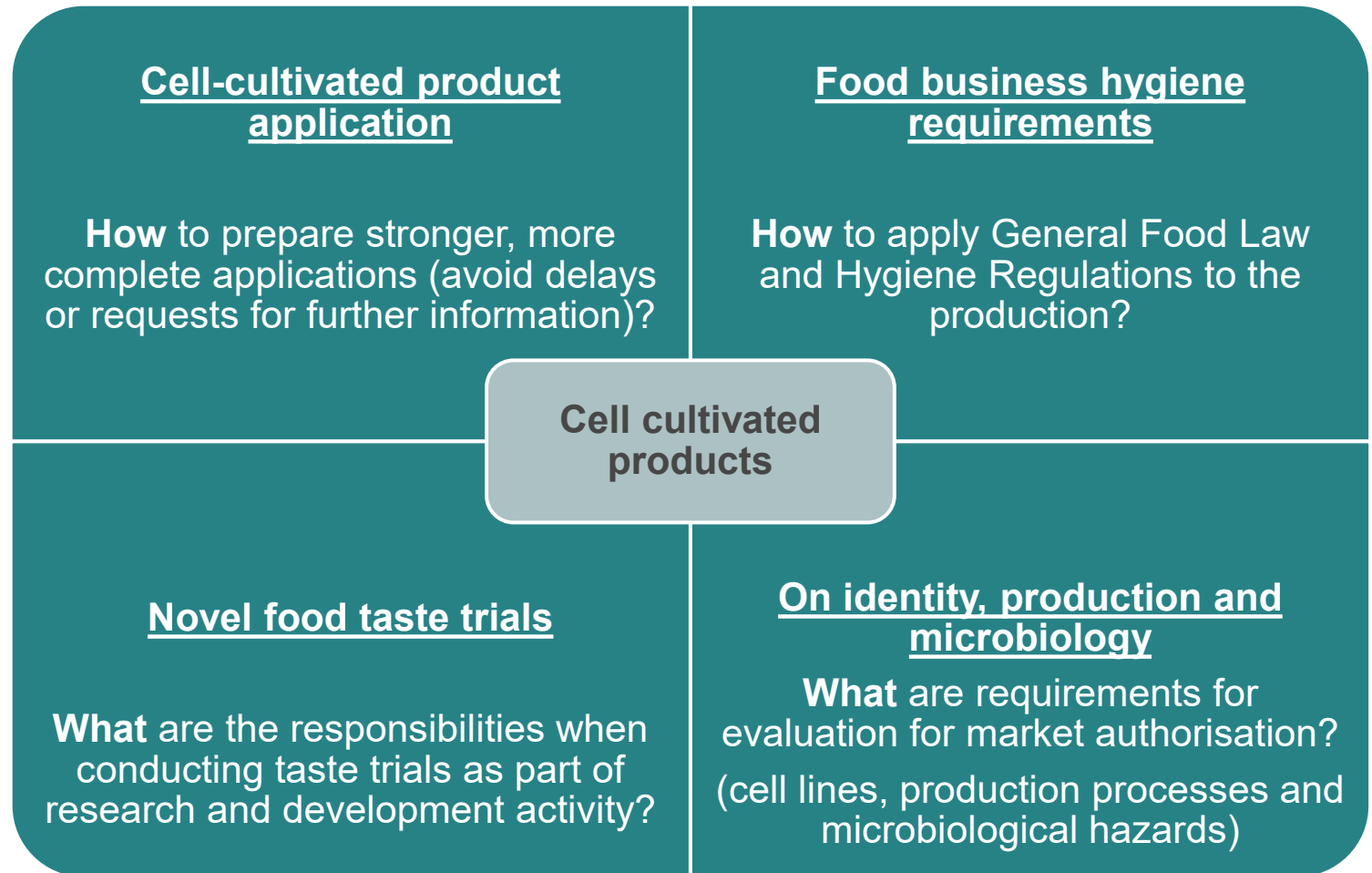


Cell cultivated products

Cell-cultured foods are regulated as novel foods in the UK and require pre-market authorisation from the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

The UK is advancing its regulatory framework through the **Cell-Cultivated Products Sandbox Programme**.

In July 2026, the FSA and Food Standards Scotland published four guidance documents to support the safe development and authorisation of foods produced from animal cells.



Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023

In force since **13 November 2025**.

The first precision-bred crop, a [gene-edited barley](#), was approved in April. The barley is for animal feed – not food.

[Precision breeding register: notices and decisions - GOV.UK](#)

High Court case (May 2026) – ruling

The Minister misunderstood his legal powers regarding labelling and traceability, meaning the policy may need to be revisited.

Monitor how Defra responds to the judgment potentially reopening discussions on mandatory labelling and supply chain traceability measures.

It could lead to new or revised labelling and traceability obligations in the future.



UK-EU relationship



EU-UK trade, Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement in progress

The proposed SPS agreement aimed at creating a common framework for food safety, animal health, plant health, and related agri-food regulations.

The goal is to reduce trade barriers that emerged after Brexit.



So what?

- UK–EU SPS negotiations launched in 2025 to ease agri-food trade
- Aims to remove SPS certificates and pursue **dynamic alignment** with EU rules
- Simplifies trade by reducing paperwork and routine border checks



Timeline

Due to leadership change in the government timeline is changed.

Intention is that the agreement takes effect in Mid-2027.



SPS guidance – what it means

You will need to follow relevant EU rules for food standards, safety, labelling and regulated products.

Business address	UK or EU food business operator address can be used when marketing food for the GB, NI or EU markets
Regulated products	GB food authorisations will cease to apply, and EU authorisations will apply in GB in their place
Compositional standards	Breakfast Directive 2024/1438 jams: • permitting concentrated fruit juice as an ingredient • increases the minimum amount of fruit per 1,000g of finished product • ‘reduced sugar’ minimum of 30% less sugar than a full sugar product)

Guidance

- Logistics, hauliers and trade intermediaries
- Organics sectors
- Food production, plants, animals and associated sectors
- Genetic technologies
- Fish and shellfish
- Animal breeding regulation (Zootech)
- Border control post and control point operators
- Horticulture industry
- Food manufacturing, processing and standards
- [SPS agreement: preparing your business - GOV.UK](#)

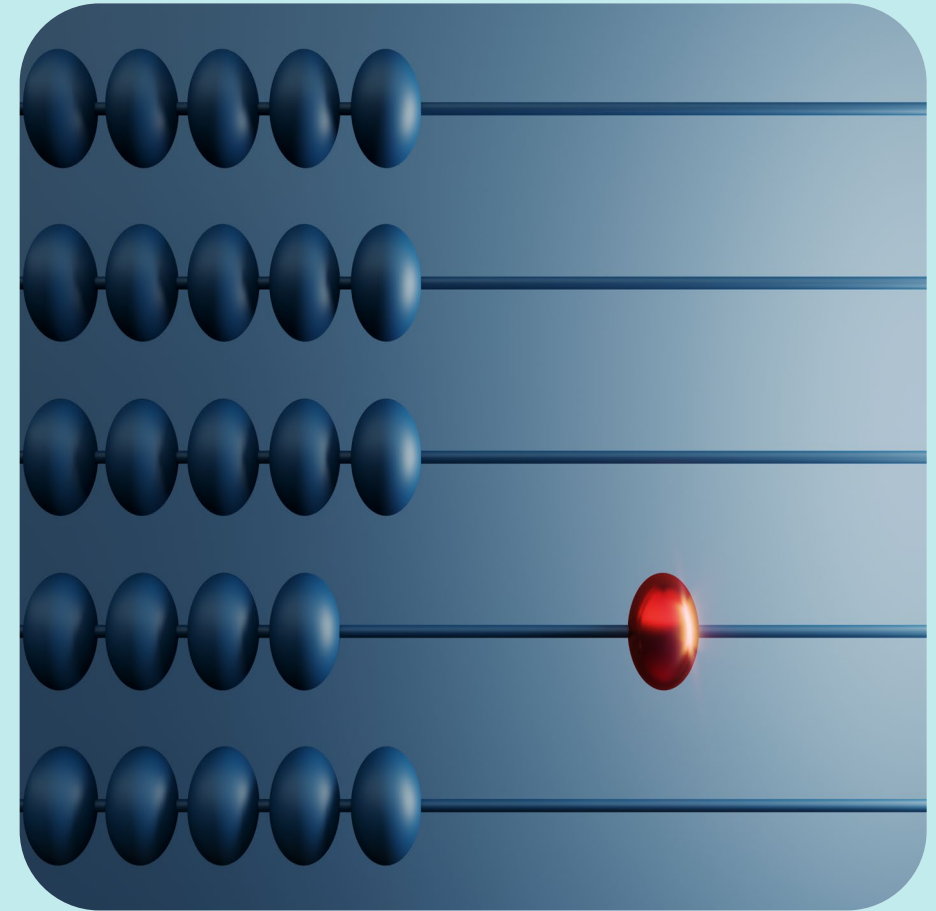
Impact of the UK–EU SPS Agreement on the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme (NIRMS)

Impact area	Today	SPS Agreement
Border checks	 High	 Low
Certification costs	 High	 Low
Supply chain delays	 Moderate	 Reduced
Importance of NIRMS	 High	 Reduced

- If the SPS Agreement is implemented, NIRMS becomes less critical
- Many of the SPS barriers could be removed, making GB-NI trade simpler, faster and cheaper - although businesses may need to comply with a greater degree of EU SPS alignment

Top take-aways

- ❖ Several health- and nutrition-related regulatory trends are influencing the food and beverage regulatory landscape
- ❖ Compliance requires UK-specific monitoring, not EU copy-across at the moment
- ❖ Future UK-EU SPS Agreement will impact product formulation



Questions?

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