

Minutes of the third Trade Specialised Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade, 18 October 2023

The UK co-chair welcomed participants to the meeting. The provisional agenda as published in advance was adopted for the meeting. Both parties made an opening statement.

Item 2 – Marking and labelling

The EU provided an update on plans for their Digital Product Passport, work on Packaging and Packaging Waste and the Farm to Fork strategy. The EU and UK agreed to continue engagement on these topics through Trade and Cooperation Agreement structures.

The UK provided an update on key developments, since the Trade Specialised Committee last met, on its domestic regime for goods across key sectors, including medical devices. The UK noted the importance of collaborative working to ensure both UK and EU manufacturers have the necessary information and guidance to trade in both jurisdictions.

Item 3 – Conformity assessment

The UK presented an update on engagement with conformity assessment bodies, progress on delivery and an update on market capacity.

The EU presented an update on EU conformity assessment facilities and development with machinery regulations.

Item 4 – Product safety

The EU shared an update on the EU General Product Safety Regulation, highlighting new requirements for economic operators and the intention to improve safety of online marketplaces.

The UK shared an update on the UK Product Safety Review, which is also considering what action to take against the sale of unsafe and non-compliant products via online marketplaces, as well as digitisation and the introduction of electronic product labelling, and reviewing regulations to focus on a hazard-proportionate approach.

Item 5 – Technical Barriers to Trade sectoral working groups

The EU shared that the draft rules of procedure for working groups established by the Trade and Cooperation Agreement have been endorsed by the Council of the European Union on 16 October.

The UK welcomed this, noting that the UK looks forward to the groups meeting soon - where the rules of procedure could be adopted - and starting their work to support the Trade Specialised Committee.

Item 6 – Motor vehicles and parts (Annex 11)

The UK outlined upcoming changes to the GB approval scheme and technical requirements, noting it will become mandatory for all new models of passenger and goods vehicles bought to market from February 2024. The EU and UK recognised the importance of regulatory cooperation through the Working Group on Motor Vehicles and Parts.

Item 7 – Medicinal products (Annex 12)

The EU set out changes to regulations of pharmaceuticals, focused on timely access to quality medicines, fostering innovation and improving sustainability, amongst other objectives.

The UK welcomed the adoption of the rules of procedure for the working groups, noting its importance for medicinal products to allow regulatory exchange, including on good manufacturing practice.

The two Parties agreed that further pharmaceutical related matters can be discussed in more detail at the meetings of the Working Group on Medicinal Products.

Item 8 – Chemicals (Annex 13)

The UK provided an update on recent regulatory developments related to REACH, Classification, Labelling and Packaging and Persistent Organic Pollutants. The UK also welcomed the engagement earlier this year with the EU in the context of the UN harmonised system and opportunities for future regulatory cooperation provided for under the Chemicals Annex.

The EU shared updates on the process of a comprehensive review of its Regulation on Classification, Labelling and Packaging that is currently being negotiated by co-legislators and is expected to be adopted by summer 2024.

Item 9 – Organics (Annex 14)

The EU provided a regulatory update, which included new rules on labelling of organic pet food and new production rules for insects for feed and food. Moreover, EU informed about the changes with respect to the model of certificate of inspection for imports of organic food.

The UK provided a regulatory update, including the extension of non-organic derogations until 2026. The UK welcomed the opportunity to continue engagement with the EU and welcomed the progression to establish the Working Group on Organic Products. The EU and UK agreed to continue discussions to improve exchange of information, in particular on the list of approved control bodies.

The UK and EU welcomed recent technical exchanges on organic equivalence, confirming that letters between the EU and UK have been exchanged to confirm the intended agreement on equivalence. Both parties will work closely on next steps to confirm equivalence ahead of 31 December 2023. The UK and EU agreed that this would support trade in organics.

The UK confirmed that the requirement for Certificates of Inspection for EU organic exports to the UK was waived until 1 February 2025. Both the EU and UK recognised the need for irregularities to be addressed promptly to safeguard the integrity of organic production. The EU is exploring technical solutions to solve issues encountered by the UK in accessing the OFIS Organic Farming Information System.

Item 10 – Trade in wine (Annex 15)

The UK outlined its domestic wine policy proposals and consultation process. The rationale underpinning the proposals was to remove restrictions, boost sustainable growth, support consumer confidence and reduce carbon emissions.

The EU underlined the impact that the planned review may have on trade in wine and reminded of Trade and Cooperation Agreement provisions in relation to labelling and preferential trade as well as the Withdrawal Agreement commitments on Geographical Indications protection.

Regarding the review clause under Article 7 of Annex 15, the UK and the EU outlined their respective measures taken including the EU's planned use of digitisation and the UK's removal of VI-1 certificates. Considering the deadline under Article 7, the parties agreed to close the review exercise. The UK underlined the value of continuing discussions on steps to reduce unnecessary barriers to trade in wine between the Parties, going beyond those already foreseen in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and encouraged the EU to consider further action on certification requirements for imports of GB origin wine. The EU reminded that no implementation issue was identified so far in relation to wine provisions under Annex 15.