



HM Government

UK TRANSITION

Logistic Hubs

High level guidance

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Introductory guidance for the establishment and operation of Agri-Food Logistics Hubs

This guidance sets out key information covering the potential role, function and establishment of logistics hubs.

What is a logistics hub?

Logistics hubs are commercial operations that provide a central location point for services to get goods from England, Scotland and Wales to the European Union and to Northern Ireland. (There may be circumstances in which logistics hubs can work for non-EU countries, but hub operators need to consult their certifiers to be confident that they can meet the certification requirements for the particular country.)

Logistics hubs are commercial operations run by logistics companies – on behalf of Food Business Operators exporters or plant /plant products –and not by government.

All exporters to the European Union must be listed on the European IT system TRACES NT.

A logistics hub could be used to consolidate multiple batches of product from different suppliers into a single consignment, which can then be covered by a single Export Health Certificate or phytosanitary certificate. *It is this consolidation of loads into a single consignment that turns an export operation into a logistics hub. It may also include single supplier loads which comprise multiple products picked or supplied by an exporter.*

Goods could include:

- Products of Animal Origin, e.g. meat and composite products, fish and fishery products, and shellfish
- Plants and plant products

TOP TIP *Logistics hubs are different from certification hubs. Certification hubs provide centralised certification services – and may allow consolidation of loads – but do not provide any further logistics facilities. Logistics hubs provide both certification and logistics services*

What services could a logistics hub provide?

- Access to transport to collect and move goods into the European Union and to Northern Ireland
- Potentially, help with completing and processing Export Health Certificates (EHC) and phytosanitary certificates
- Access to a Certifying Officer for POAO through commercial agreements and arrangements with Local Authority Certifiers
- Access to a Plant and Health Seed Inspector
- Grouping together of multiple consignments
- Customs brokerage services

TOP TIP *Logistics hubs do not have to be all the same; it is up to the hub operator to decide which services are provided at each location*

Who is involved in logistics hubs?

Hub Operator (Logistics provider)

A hub operator is a company that runs hub processes and coordinates with exporters and certifiers.

Hub Supplier (Exporter, Processor etc.)

A hub may receive goods from a Food Business Operator (FBO). Or the hub may have a direct relationship with the exporter e.g. with a fishing vessel, or plant supplier. Supply chains can involve multiple FBOs before the goods arrive at the approved (or registered in the case of composite products) food establishment from which they will be dispatched to the country of destination.

Certifying Officer

Products Of Animal Origin (POAO)

The Export Health Certificate for meat, meat products, dairy, and most products of animal origin (POAO), including composites, for human consumption must be signed by a suitably qualified Official Veterinarian (OV).

Fish, fishery products, shellfish, and products that have an egg component which requires certification (only the egg part component needs certifying):

The Export Health Certificate for fish and fishery products and shellfish for human consumption must be signed by an appropriately designated Certifying Officer (CO), which can be an Official Veterinarian (OV) or a Local Authority Food Competent Certifying Officer (FCCO).

Plants and plant products

A Plant Health and Seed Inspector (PHSI) would need to be present to inspect goods and issue a phytosanitary certificate so that plants and plant products could then be exported. To set up a logistics hub, the hub operator would need to coordinate well in advance with the appropriate authority (either APHA in England/Wales or SASA in Scotland) to ensure that they would be able to get access to PHSIs for their potential requirements.

Competent Food Authority

Local Authorities will approve most establishments, subject to the premises meeting the relevant requirements in regulation for the relevant products, but some are registered by the Food Standards Agency, again, subject to the premises meeting the relevant requirements.

For meat and fish the establishment being used as a logistics hub must meet the [regulated standards](#) and this approval is given by the relevant Local Authority. This is unless it is an establishment requiring veterinary control, then approval is given by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) or Food Standards Scotland (FSS).

- See the Annex on [What is an approved food establishment](#) for a full list of premises and approvers.

How do logistics hubs help the certification process?

**** SPEED UP BORDER PROCESSES****

**** CENTRAL POINT FOR EXPORTS ****

**** EXPERT STAFF IN ONE LOCATION ****

Possible benefits:

- Consolidation of commodities into a single consignment could reduce the number of Export Health Certificates (EHC) and phytosanitary certificates (PCs)
- Guaranteed access to a Certifying Officer for POAO through the hubs commercial arrangements
- Checking documentation before dispatch
- Subsequent speedier progress through a reduction in the number of identity checks that will be needed at EU border controls on consolidated consignments
- The potential for one Export Health Certificate/Phytosanitary Certificate/Common Health Entry Document (CHED) to be needed per consignment which is ultimately destined for multiple locations.
 - **IMPORTANT:** This approach is only possible where the hub can name a single legal destination on the CHED / EHC/PC through which the consignment can move; e.g. a logistics hub in the EU.

NEED TO KNOW: *Logistics hubs must still meet the same export requirements as other exporters sending goods to the European Union and Northern Ireland, and to non-EU countries*

Products Of Animal Origin (POAO): How does a hub work?

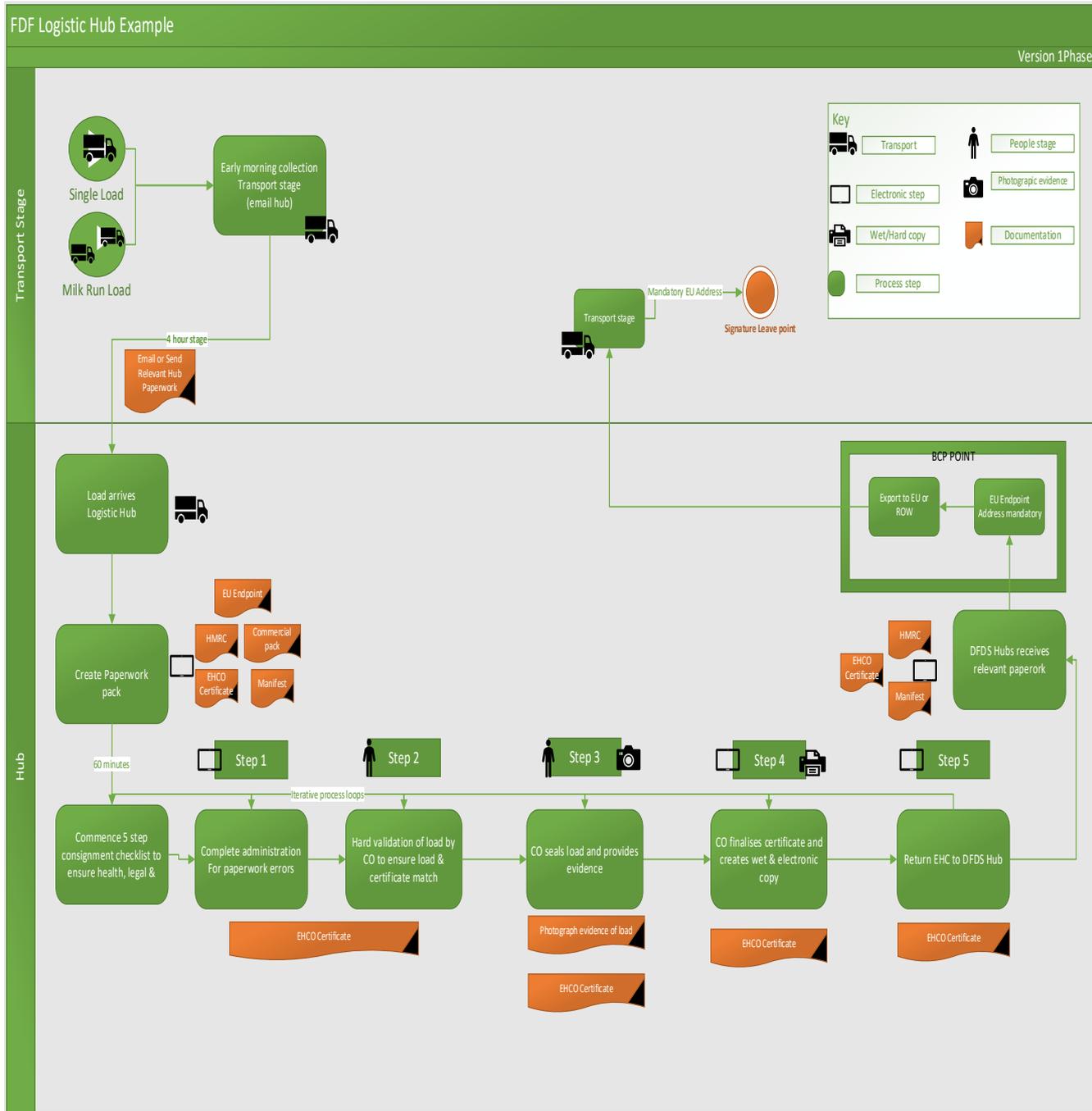
1. The logistics hub acts as a receiver, handler, storage provider and/or consolidator of the goods, as permitted by its approved food establishment status.
2. The logistics hub operator does not have to be the freight forwarder but is expected to operate as the exporting agent on behalf of the exporter in most cases for logistical reasons and to provide the resource to facilitate certification.
3. Goods which arrive at logistics hubs that have undergone a production process must have come from approved food establishments.
4. Sometimes goods may arrive at a logistics hub directly from primary production facilities (e.g. a registered fishing vessel), in which case the supporting information required is limited to commercial information that can be verified by the Certifying Officer at the logistics hub. Additional information may be required to confirm vessel hygiene status.
5. Goods arriving at logistics hubs must be accompanied by the relevant supporting attestation(s), details of the products, and supplier declarations as required. Support attestations must be acceptable to the Certifying Officer issuing the Export Health Certificate. (*See Top Tip below.*)
6. Certifying Officers at logistics hubs use this supporting information to certify and issue of Export Health Certificates.
7. Having received a batch of product at a logistics hub, or other premises away from the premises of origin, with the relevant supporting information, it may be possible for the hub to consolidate a number of batches of product into a single consignment, which would be covered by a single Export Health Certificate (EHC). This could cover:
 - multiple product lines of the same commodity type (e.g. composite products) from the same supplier; or
 - multiple batches of the same commodity type (e.g. fishery products) from different suppliers.
8. Following dispatch from the logistics hub to the country of destination, the goods will have to be checked at the Border Control Post¹ of first arrival into the EU, or a point of entry into Northern Ireland. (Or a point of entry into non-EU countries if relevant.)

TOP TIP Details on the certification on Products of Animal Origin (POAO) at hubs can be found here:

<http://apha.defra.gov.uk/external-operations-admin/library/documents/exports/ET197.pdf>

¹ Border Control Posts and points of entry vary in the types of goods they can receive. Logistics hub operators should check that the goods they are dispatching to the EU or Northern Ireland will be accepted at their chosen Border Control Post or point of entry.

Example of a logistics hub operation



Products Of Animal Origin need to know

It is possible to certify both meat and fish at a hub, but specific cold stores and inspection areas – or adequate means of separation - are needed for each which are approved by the local authority for each product.

- Certification of all Products Of Animal Origin can be undertaken by a suitably qualified Official Veterinarian. Products Of Animal Origin covers both meat and fish.
- Fish / fishery products and products [only requiring certification for fish and/or egg content](#) can be certified by a suitably qualified Official Veterinarian or by a Food Competent Certifying Officer (FCCO).
- Meat and fish certification follows [existing guidance enabling certification](#) away from the point of dispatch.
- Exporting or moving fish from the UK - [How to export or move fish for human consumption from the UK.](#)
- Fishing and exporting seafood products from 1 January 2021 - [Support for commercial fishers, merchants and exporters.](#)
- If needed, [find a professional to certify export health certificates](#)
If you cannot find what you need contact:
CSCOneHealthOVTeam@apha.gov.uk

Plants and plant products

1. A logistics hubs could be used as a receiver, handler, storage provider and/or consolidator of plants and plant products.
2. Phytosanitary certification would need to be done by Plant Health Inspectors, or if exporting produce or cut flowers could be performed by authorised individuals operating under the [PHEATS²](#) scheme.
3. Extensive consultation with either APHA (the Animal and Plant Health Agency) in England and Wales, or SASA (Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture) in Scotland would be necessary to ensure appropriate access to plant health inspectors to service demand and to ensure a hub would be viable.
4. Inspections would need to occur within a suitable covered building. Although this would not need approval by the Local Authority, you would need to consider physical and operational practices to ensure biosecurity is maintained and to limit the likelihood for cross contamination. Extensive consultation with APHA or SASA would be needed.
5. You would need to consider how you will ensure traceability of products, to ensure action can be taken in the event of disease or pest contamination.
6. Following dispatch from the logistics hub to the country of destination, the goods will then be checked at the Border Control Post of first arrival into the EU, or a point of entry into Northern Ireland³.
7. Consideration should be given as to how the consignments are packed ensuring that goods that are more likely to be checked are easily and readily available in the consignment.
8. You would need to consider the business and operational agreements established with customers if products are rejected at an EU BCP or logistics hub or rejected through cross contamination.

TOP TIP *All you need to know about PHEATS can be found here:*

<https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/resources/pheats-hompage/>

² The **P**lant **H**ealth **E**xports **A**udited **T**rader **S**cheme is for the exports of fruit, vegetables and cut flowers and is designed to facilitate export trade while ensuring the requirements of the importing country can be met.

³ Border Control Posts and points of entry vary in the types of goods they can receive. Logistics hub operators should check that the goods they are dispatching to the EU or Northern Ireland will be accepted at their chosen Border Control Post or point of entry.

Top tips for hubs use

If using a logistics hub for your goods, you should consider the following:

- What services will you require from a hub. For example, will you require customs brokerage services as well export health certification?
- What supporting information is required to accompany the goods to the hub? If a Food Business Operator you should consult your Certifying Officer early in the process to establish what supporting attestations will be acceptable to the CO at the hub and their availability to provide them.
- If exporting plants and/or plant products establish what information will be needed to certify plant products; e.g. information on growing season inspections etc.
- What will be the hub operator's cut-off times for providing supporting information, and how this will fit with your business model and timelines for production as well as your customers' timelines for receipt of your products.
- How will rejected consignments be addressed by the hub business model?

If using a hub, check these lessons learned on the top 5 issues causing the reworking of Export Health Certificates

1. **Schedule:** is the correct one attached?
2. **Supplier Declaration:**
 - a. is it attached?
 - b. Is it correct?
3. **Seal Number:** is it correct?
4. **Country of Destination:** is it correct?
5. **Batch Number:** is it correct and does it match the product?

What do I need to consider if I want to set up a logistics hub?

Operational considerations

The first consideration is what goods the logistics hubs will process and whether this is a continuation of the business or an extension. There are different certification requirements for meat, fish and plants. If a hub operator wants to diversify, they need to check the specific requirements. For example, if a fish hub wants to start processing meat then the hub operator needs to put in place the processes and facilities required.

However, the following points as a minimum should be considered when establishing a hub, no matter which goods are being processed:

- There is no central government authorisation required to operate a hub, but site/premise approval may be required from Local Authorities/Food Standards Scotland/Food Standards Agency.
- Consider the available infrastructure.
- Consider the site or premise [approvals required](#).
- Put processes in place to ensure accurate information is received from the exporter in the correct format, and establish processes to deal with incomplete or inaccurate information.
- Ensure that clear timelines are provided to the exporter for the receipt of information. The importer must notify the Border Control Post (BCP) in advance of your arrival. Check with the BCP to find out how much notice you must give. This is normally 24hr in advance of arrival, but notification periods vary.
- Ensure that commercial terms and the scope of any liabilities are provided to clients, for example where products are delayed or rejected on arrival at Border Control Post.
- Consider the availability of certifiers – ensure engagement occurs at the earliest opportunity with either the local authority and/or Official Veterinarians (which are always sourced privately), and certifiers. Consider the availability of Plant Health Seed Inspectors.
- Consider the requirements the Official Veterinarian /Local Authority may require access to, such as inspection facilities and IT facilities (for example on-site printers, Wi-Fi access to amend Export Health Certificates etc).
- Consider the maximum trade volumes and the operational hours, as this may impact on resource and demand for certifiers.
- Consider charging structure, business arrangements and staffing requirements.
- Consider the products to be certified (e.g. meat/fish/plants).
- There is no licensing requirement to operate a logistics hub, but Local Authority approval is needed for the operation of cold storage and freezer.

- Approval is needed to join the Groupage Export Facilitation Scheme (GEFS) scheme⁴, which covers certain Products Of Animal Origin including meat and fish, with the exclusion of products such as fresh meat and raw milk.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/export-groups-of-products-of-animal-origin-to-the-eu-or-northern-ireland>

Location, infrastructure and resources

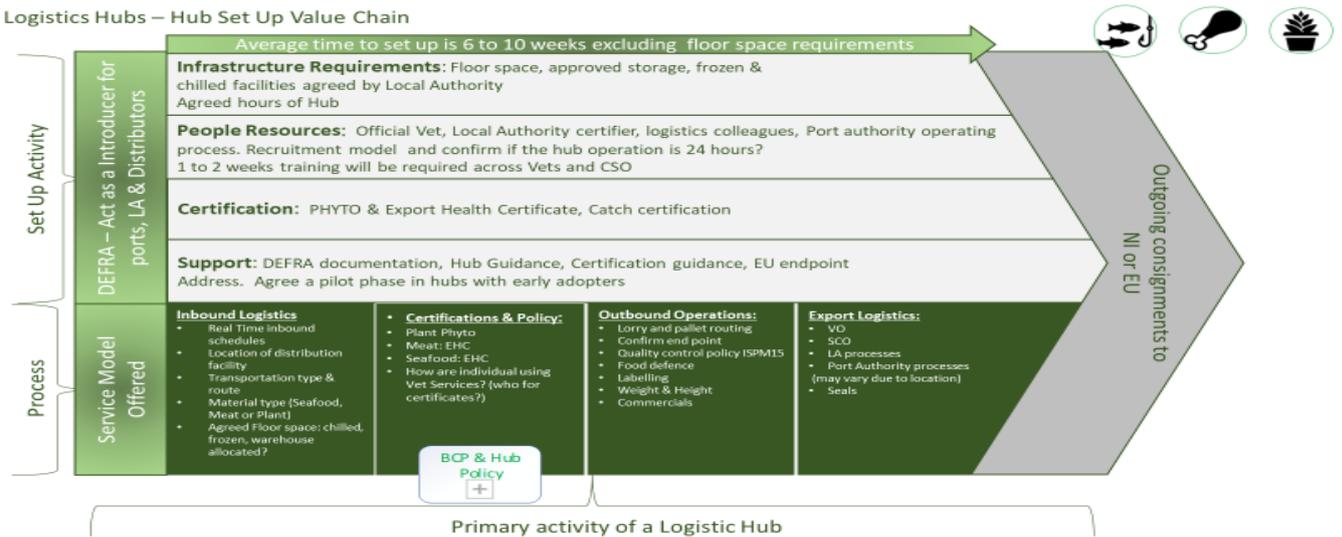
The geographical positioning of a hub is a *commercial* decision. A wide variety of locations may be considered to carry out certification. This can include existing cold storage facilities and warehouses (for more information see the Approved Food Establishments section on the [Food Standards Agency](#) or [Food Standards Scotland](#) websites). Some Local Authorities may be able to help you identify commercial properties in their districts.

Business operational models, financial models are linked to limiting factors such as certification capacity. However, likely considerations are:

LOCATION CONSIDERATIONS	INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES
Physical infrastructure availability - can use be made of existing logistics infrastructure?	Fish/meat – approved premises: cold storage/freezer Plants – covered storage For plants the facilities needed for plant inspections will reflect the physical requirements needed to carry out physical inspections of the loads, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking facilities • Suitable buildings to allow offloading and inspection • Waste disposal • Return goods to exporter procedures • Inspection areas with appropriate lighting • Separation of non/inspected commodities, and those that do not meet the requirements for exports
Access to transport networks	
Access to certification services	Fish/meat: Official Veterinarian (OV) / Food Competent Certifying Officer (FCCO) Plants: Plant Health and Seed Inspector (PHSI)
Local industry – can a hub be located close to local industry, for example within a fish market?	
Routes to market – can a hub be positioned in a location that minimises additional deviation from the normal route to market?	Logistics infrastructure
Staff and access to training resources	Administrative resources (including SPS and Customs)

Steps involved and Timelines

Logistics Hubs – Hub Set Up Value Chain



NEED TO KNOW Some logistics hubs may take longer to set up. This could be because they are large or complex. Or additional staffing may be needed such as regulatory officers, which may take longer than 6-10 weeks to get in place

Annex - What are approved food establishments⁵?

ESTABLISHMENTS APPROVED BY:	FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY OR FOOD STANDARDS SCOTLAND
Require veterinary control and are approved by the FSA	<p>slaughterhouses</p> <p>cutting plants</p> <p>game handling establishments</p> <p>wholesale meat markets (where available)</p> <p>some meat preparations, minced meat, meat products or other processing if applicable</p>
ESTABLISHMENTS APPROVED BY:	LOCAL AUTHORITIES
Meat	<p>cold stores that are re-wrapping and re-packaging meat</p> <p>minced meat establishments</p> <p>meat preparations establishments</p> <p>mechanically separated meat establishments</p> <p>meat products processing plants</p> <p>rendered animal fats and greaves processing plants</p> <p>treated stomachs, bladders and intestines processing plants</p> <p>gelatine processing plants</p> <p>collagen processing plants</p>
Fish and shellfish	<p>live bivalve molluscs (LBMs) establishments including dispatch centres and purification centres</p> <p>establishments working with fishery products using factory and freezing vessels, processing plants, fresh fishery products, auction halls, wholesale markets</p>
Animal produce establishments	<p>raw milk and dairy products</p> <p>eggs and egg products, including packing centres, processing plants, liquid egg plants</p>

⁵ <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/approved-food-establishments>
<https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/publications-and-research/publications/approved-premises-register>

Find out more about logistics hubs

If you are interested in setting up a logistics hub then please contact traders@defra.gov.uk for more information.