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Information regarding the import of agricultural products

First, you need to know the customs tariff number of the product you are importing. If you do not know the number, contact the [Federal Office for Border and Customs Security](#) or consult the online customs tariff list at www.tares.ch. Once you know the tariff number, the following information will be of use to you. Please read the information in its entirety.

General import permits (GIPs)

A permit is required for the import of many agricultural products (these products are listed in [Appendix 1 AIO¹](#)). These permits, known as general import permits (GIPs), are issued by the Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG) on application by individuals, legal entities and companies that are resident or have their head offices in Switzerland. To apply for a GIP, visit [eKontingente](#) online. GIPs for individual products are issued by [réservesuisse](#).

GIPs are issued free of charge, are valid indefinitely and are non-transferable. A GIP entitles you to import agricultural products and is a prerequisite for inclusion in various quotas. However, a GIP does not automatically give you the right to import a product at the lower quota tariff (QT) or duty free; for this, you must be allocated a quota share or have an agreement for use of a share. Some products do not require a GIP (see overview on page 4).

The FOAG may, on request, exempt certain imports from compulsory GIPs, e.g. for exhibitions and similar events. Quantities of up to 20 kg may be imported without a GIP under an out-of-quota tariff (OQT) rate.

Customs quotas

[Customs quotas](#) are issued for many products and product groups such as meat, sausages, fruit, vegetables, potatoes, sheep, cattle and dairy products. An importer who has a quota share may import the corresponding items at the lower quota tariff rate or duty free. Any importer who does not have a quota share must pay the out-of-quota tariff (OQT), which is considerably higher. Goods may be imported at the OQT at any time and in unlimited quantities. **Please note, however, that the OQT may be extremely high.**

¹ Ordinance on the Import of Agricultural Products (Agricultural Import Ordinance, AIO), [SR 916.01](#). Exceptions from compulsory GIPs are covered in Section 5, in [Appendix 1](#) or in ordinances that specifically refer to product market regulations.

Some customs quota allocation processes:

Auctions

Auctions are announced in advance on the FOAG website; subscribers receive a newsletter by email (to subscribe, visit the eKontingente portal). Participants may submit up to five bids before the bidding deadline. At the auction, quota shares are allocated in descending order from the highest bidder. The [results of the auction](#) are published on the FOAG website.

GIP holders who have bought a quota share at an auction will receive written confirmation and an invoice for the amount bid.

Market share ('Comparative figures', 'Imports')

To allocate the quota share, QT and OQT (and in individual cases the purchase of domestic products) for previous years are determined and allocated in the form of percentage shares. Regulations concerning each product can be found in the product information sheet.

First come, first served

The quota shares are allocated from the date specified in the ordinance according to the order in which applications are received by the FOAG, i.e. on a first come, first served basis. The allocation procedure continues until all shares have been allocated.

First come, first served at the Swiss border

The quota is opened on the date specified in the ordinance. Goods may be imported as long as the quota has not been filled. The determining factor is the time of the customs declaration, which is why the quotas are managed by the customs office (balances can be found at quota.bazg.admin.ch).

eKontingente

You can transfer your quota shares to other authorised parties on the [eKontingente](#) portal. You can also view current tenders, view and allocate quota shares, check whether you have received quota shares and declare the purchase of domestic products. You can also subscribe to various newsletters and manage your data.

Customs declarations, areas of responsibility, self-checking

When importing agricultural products, it is compulsory to file a customs declaration with e-dec. The party obliged to make the declaration must indicate the GIP number of the importer and the recipient or the trader in the declaration. An electronic check is then made to confirm that the GIP number tallies with the name given. When goods are declared under a quota, it is also checked whether the permit holder has a sufficient quota share. Customs declarations that do not meet one or more of the requirements are not accepted. **The importer is responsible for submitting a correct customs declaration, ensuring that the auction price has been paid and that the agricultural product can be imported at the quota tariff rate.**

Overview

Product group	Type of quota allocation	GIP required?	Available on eKontingente?
Products made from pomaceous fruit	FCFS SB	Yes	Yes
Fruit for making juice and distilling	FCFS SB	Yes	Yes
Meat	Auction, PDP	Yes	Yes
Poultry	Auction	Yes	Yes
Meat products and sausages	Auction	Yes	Yes
Chicks and young domestic fowl	None	Yes	No
Fresh fruit and vegetables	IMP, MS	Yes	Yes, incl. %
Powdered milk and butter	Auction	Yes	Yes
Various dairy products ('yoghurt quota')	FCFS O	Yes	Yes
Other dairy products	None	Yes	No
Cheese	None	No	No
Fruit-tree saplings	FCFS SB	No	No
Seed corn and seeds	None	No	No
Cut flowers	None	No	No
Bull semen	None	Yes	No
Frozen vegetables	IMP, PDP	Yes	Yes
Wine (unadulterated red and white wine) grape must	FCFS SB	Yes	No
Grape juice and fresh wine grapes for pressing	None	+ Swiss Trade Wine Inspection registration	No
Beef cattle	Auction	Yes	Yes
Pig, sheep and goat breeds	FCFS O	Yes	Yes
Potato products (fully processed)	Auction	Yes	Yes
Potato products (semi processed)	FCFS SB	Yes	Yes
Seed potatoes and potatoes for processing	PDP	Yes	Yes
Potatoes for consumption	MS, Auction	Yes	Yes
Eggs (for consumption and for processing)	FCFS SB	No	No
Egg products	None	No	No
Equines	FCFS SB	No	No
Raw cereals	None	Yes, upon request	No
Bread cereals	FCFS SB	réserve suisse	No
Durum wheat	None	réserve suisse	No
Animal feed	None	réserve suisse	No
Coffee	None	réserve suisse	No
Rice	None	réserve suisse	No
Cooking oils and fats	None	réserve suisse	No
Sugar	None	réserve suisse	No

Key:

FCFS SB	First come, first served at the Swiss border (in order of customs declarations)
FCFS O	First come, first served at FOAG (in order of applications received)
MS	Market shares (imports + domestic purchases)
PDP	Purchase of domestic products
IMP	Imports