



Buyer requirements for fresh pineapples

Buyer requirements are all the requirements you can expect from your EU buyer. They can be divided into two groups: legislative and non-legislative requirements that are related to food safety, environment and to social issues. GlobalGAP, MRL norms and increasingly social requirements are the first standards that should be met when starting a relation with volume retailers (super or hypermarkets), especially in Western and Northern EU countries. In addition, quality requirements must be met during the first export trials, otherwise the business relation can end abruptly.

This module gives an overview of the:

1. Legislative requirements in your country
2. Legislative requirements in the EU
3. Non-legislative requirements
4. Product packaging, labels and tags

1. Legislative requirements in your country

According to the Exporters' Directory by FAGE (Federation of Associations of Ghanaian Exporters – www.fageplus.com or <http://www.gepcghana.com/exporters.php>), pineapple consignments are inspected by the Plant Protection and Regulatory Services Directorate of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. The consignment is checked on the following:

- Quality, Condition and Grade
- Size
- Storage and Product Temperature
- Condition of Load and Packaging
- Labelling
- Others

As minimum requirements for export markets the pineapples must be:

- Whole
- Fresh
- Sound
- Clean
- Free of pests
- Practically free of damage caused by pests
- No pronounced blemishes
- Free from sunburn
- Free from any foreign matter
- Free of abnormal external moisture
- Free from chemical residue.



Loading on vessel

A *Phytosanitary Certificate* is issued to cover each consignment that is passed for export. See further in [this downloadable document](#).

Other Checks by Customs Division of Ghana Revenue Authority will be conducted on the consignment to certify that it was produced in Ghana and that it complies with the origin requirements for those goods in the Generalised System of Preferences for goods to be exported. The checks include the following:

- Marks and numbers of packages
- Number and kind of packages; description of goods
- Origin criterion
- Gross weight or other quantity
- Number and date of invoices.

A Generalised System of Preferences Certificate of Origin is issued to cover the consignment that is passed for export. See also [here](#).

2. Legislative requirements in the EU

When the pineapples arrive at the first port of entry, there are the following checks:

EU import checks. Pineapples, being plant products that are imported from developing countries must pass through designated Border Inspection Posts (BIPs) where they are subjected to a series of checks. If passed they are allowed access to circulate freely to other member states.

Phytosanitary Certificate. Compulsory plant health checks are carried out on all plants and plant products coming from non-EU countries in which pineapples are included. The certificate that was issued in your home country is double-checked to ensure the consignment is free from harmful organisms.

Legal requirements are to guarantee consumer safety preventing that substances that are dangerous to health enter the EU. If your pineapples do not meet these requirements they are not allowed on the EU market and you (or your trade partner) run the risk to get a penalty (up to € 70,000) if consumers make an official complaint. Food scandals in Europe underlined the importance of (legislative) requirements by supermarkets, grocery retailers and particularly by discounters being under a severe control from Ministries of Health.

Consequently, legal requirements that focus on hygiene, traceability and maximum residue levels for certain pesticides and contaminants that can be present in your pineapples have been put in place to guarantee the safety to EU consumers.

EU food legislative requirements are:

- **The General Food Law** ([Regulation \(EC\) 178/2006](#)) which prohibits the introduction of unsafe food to the EU market. Food imported into the EU must comply with the relevant requirements of food law. This regulation also defines **traceability** and the ability to trace and follow food, feed, and ingredients through all stages of production, processing and distribution. Importers are similarly affected as they will be required to identify from whom the product was exported in the country of origin.
- **Hygiene of foodstuffs** ([Regulations \(EC\) 852/2004](#); [853/2004](#); [854/2004](#)). being based on the HACCP principles.

EU legislation restricting pesticides and contaminants in EU food are:

- **Maximum residue levels (MRLs)** in foodstuffs (Regulation (EC) 396/2005) that limits the level of pesticides in all food, including pineapples.

In establishing an MRL, the EU takes into account GAP (good agricultural practices) recommendations, data on consumer residue intake and the physico-chemical and biological properties of the chemical.

- Contaminants in food ([Regulation \(EC\) 1881/2006](#)).
- Microbial contamination of foodstuffs ([Regulation \(EC\) 2073/2005](#)).

Legislation on the fresh fruits and vegetables sector:

- Quality standards for the marketing of fresh fruits and vegetables ([Regulation \(EC\) 2200/96](#)).

More details can be found at <http://www.cbi.eu/marketinfo> - select 'Fresh fruit and vegetables' and 'EU Buyer Requirements' or you can download the following document from [here](#). You can also look at the [EU Helpdesk](#)

European quality standards

What generally happens is that importers will expect that their suppliers meet the basic EU requirements in terms of quality standards. As far as exotic fruits are concerned, there are presently no specific EU quality standards.

This means that there is no European regulation that sets the basic quality standards for imported pineapples. Therefore, the quality of fruits imported into Europe must comply with the EC general standard set by the regulations 1221/2008 and 543/2011. These regulations set rules at four different levels:

- Minimum requirements in terms of quality.
- Minimum requirements in terms of maturity and ripeness.
- Tolerances in terms of size.
- General indications concerning labelling.

Basically, the imported pineapples should be at least intact, clean and sound practically free from pest damage, abnormal external moisture, internal browning and they should be in a condition to withstand transport and handling.

Even if there is no specific EU regulation for pineapples, there exist two international quality standards, which are:

- **The Codex quality standard for pineapples**, which is considered to be a 'world' standard.
See - <http://www.codexalimentarius.org/standards/en/>
- **The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) standard**, which is more specific to the EU importing countries.
You can download these standards, including classification, from:

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trade/agr/standard/fresh/FFV-Std/English/49Pineapples_2012.pdf

<http://www.unece.org/ece/trade/398-pineapplesexplanatorybrochure.html>

Buyers generally take into account the Codex or the UNECE standards when setting their own quality specifications that are more restrictive (when it comes to tolerances) than the standards set by the UNECE or the Codex.

Some photos from the trade magazine Fruitrop give some examples of quality defects in pineapples – see Annex 1.

Difficulty with cooling process in Africa

It has been proven through various studies that the sooner fruits or vegetables originating from African countries are cooled or pre cooled, the better the cooling process improves the overall quality of the fruits as well as its shelf life. However, very few West African exporters have access to cooling or pre-cooling systems before exporting their fruits.

Because the pineapple industries are more developed (and important) in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, exporters will have easier access to these cooling facilities. So most of the fruits originating from these two countries are more likely to be pre cooled.

However, in countries like Benin or Togo, this is unfortunately not the case. The main reasons are that pineapple exports are not very well developed and - more importantly - the absence of good water supply, class 1-quality products and a good infrastructure.

3. Non-legislative requirements

The various food scare scandals in the 1990s, have forced EU supermarkets and distribution channels to developed various private standards that aim to echo their cautiousness when sourcing and selling a product.

Additional requirements or 'non-legislative' requirements are set by companies or organisations in order to comply with customer expectations and to enhance the company values.

As food safety, environmental and social issues are a growing concern among consumers and bad practices of agro-multinationals being more monitored by NGOs, activity groups and the media, non-legislative requirements are expected to become legislative in the near future. Non-legislative standards put a special emphasis on *traceability* so that consumers have a guarantee that everything has been done properly, thus avoiding risk.

Food safety requirements

GlobalGAP is the most important non-legal requirement for entering the EU market. It is an initiative or a management system from the industry to promote *good production practices* in the agricultural sector to ensure food safety.

GlobalGAP combined with the EU norm regarding allowed MRLs is a standard requirement by the big EU food retailers (supermarkets, hypermarkets and discounters). Some retailers set standards being more stringent by requiring their suppliers to comply with residue levels below EU regulations (Germany and UK). See further at www.globalgap.org

Additional safety standards and certificates (hygiene protocols)

There are different additional standards that are used in the UK, Germany and some other Western EU countries, which are:

- **HACCP – certificate.** HACCP is globally recognized and lets your customers know that your products are safe for consumption. Having a functional HACCP system and certificate can enhance the marketability of your products in the international marketplace. See further at <http://asq.org/cert/haccp-auditor>
- **BRC.** In the UK, buyers are likely to ask you to meet the British Retail Consortium (BRC) standard being a widely applied safety and quality standard. See further at www.brcglobalstandards.com
- **SQF.** On the European mainland buyers may want you to comply with the Safe Quality Food Program (SQF) from the SQF Institute (www.sqfi.com).
- **IFS and GFSI.** The International Food Standard (IFS), specifically for German and UK retailers. See www.ifs-certification.com/index.php/fr

Social requirements

In addition to GlobalGAP and MRL norms, supermarket increasingly will ask you how your company can comply with social requirements and your ethical credentials (see next section). The main standards here are:

BSCI (Business Social Compliance Initiative) works with rules according to their own Code of Conduct for social responsibility that you must implement in your

GLOBALG.A.P



value chain to use their logo. Examples of rules are: no discrimination, fair remuneration, workers health and safety, no child labour, protection of the environment and ethical business behaviour. Requirements about social compliance will be a challenge to export to the EU market. Please note that there are variations for different parts of Europe. See further at www.bsci-intl.org

ETI. In the UK, there is the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), which is an alliance of companies, trade unions and voluntary organisations. They work in partnership to improve the lives of poor and vulnerable workers across the globe who make or grow food and consumer goods. See also at www.ethicaltrade.org



Considerations for action:

GlobalGap

- Check the website http://www.globalgap.org/uk_en/ on what the good agricultural practices include for the pineapple sector, how you can obtain a certificate, application (by whom), procedures and so on.
- Discuss details with your importer or trade partner.

Additional safety standards (hygiene protocols)

- Ask your importer in the UK, Germany or other EU countries what the specific implications of the EU food law mean for your business and to what extent is really worth your investment.

Social requirements

- Anticipate and check if you're ready for the growing demand in relation to social compliance by conducting a self-assessment on the BSCI website at <http://www.bsci-intl.org/>
- More information on the Ethical Trading Initiative can be found at <http://www.ethicaltrade.org/>

For more on (non-) legal requirements, check the related documents on <http://www.cbi.eu/marketinfo>.

Rainforest Alliance is an international non-profit organization that works with certified farms to conserve biodiversity, to ensure the long-term economic health of forest communities and to ensure sustainable livelihoods.

In order to achieve Rainforest Alliance certification (green frog seal), you must meet rigorous standards designed to protect ecosystems, safeguard the well-being of local communities and improve productivity. In this respect, your production methods have to be audited by an accredited auditor who should assure that your product, process or service is in conformity with their standards. See further at www.rainforest-alliance.org



Other social standards in the pineapple sector

These requirements often relate to the basic standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO). It lays down principles on what is perceived as the most important labour issues including basic safety conditions for workers and no use of child labour or forced labour.

Examples of social requirements:

- ILO standards dealing with the right to union membership and to negotiate; non-discrimination; forced labour; minimum age; working hours; equal remuneration; minimum wages; and occupational health and safety (required by most (large) companies e.g. Chiquita, Fyffes, Dole).
- Participation in industry initiatives or international certification schemes with additional and/or stricter social standards than the ILO basic standards (required by e.g. Chiquita [Rainforest Alliance], Dole [ETI], Del Monte [ETI]).



- Fair Trade companies, with special attention to workers' rights and benefits (required by companies focusing on the fair trade niche market). Fair trade is a strong brand in the EU market as well as Fair for Life (www.fairforlife.org). Your company and vision must comply with the principles of fair pricing, no middlemen, transparency, good registration of company processes and good care for labour conditions. One of the companies that started exporting organic, pre-cut and ready-to-eat fruit salads (convenience food) is Blue Skies, which operates in Ghana, Egypt and Brazil (<http://www.bsholdings.com>).



Ethical credentials

Compliance to any of these private standards and their related certificate gives you as an exporter more credibility to buyers. However, it can be costly. On the other hand, it increases your chance to supply to importers or wholesalers selling to supermarkets or to wider distribution network. It also gives you a competitive advantage to pineapples (MD-2) from Costa Rica being criticized.

Improvement of labour conditions and transparency

The large scale pineapple industry has been criticized for bad labour conditions, low payment to workers/small holders, gender and immigrant discrimination and poor working conditions on plantations and packing plants in Costa Rica. In addition, the environment was seriously affected by agrochemical inputs, including contamination of drinking water.

The research done by Consumers International also concluded that the auditing, certification and corporate codes of conduct put in place by foreign retailers were not sufficient to make the poor social and environmental conditions in Costa Rica more acceptable.

Big western companies were using their buying power to pressurize margins with Costa Rican workers receiving 4% of a pineapple's retail value, while EU retailers received 41%. These practices had its consequences in the whole value chain.

This implies a good opportunity for West African exporters who can demonstrate the transparency and sustainability in their value chain.

Some proposed measures for improvement were:

- The adoption of Sustainable Production Systems (SPS)
- Distribute value and power along the supply chain more fairly.
- Set up of an effective and collaborative framework
- An ongoing dialogue between all supply chain players
- A more transparent and accountable supply chains to grant consumers access to information on how their pineapples are produced.

More information can be found at <http://www.consumersinternational.org> (select 'our work' and 'food').

Requirements for organic pineapples.

Organic certification according to the EU Regulations is a prerequisite for any producer wishing to export organic produce to the EU market. Organic certification requires you as a producer to adopt certain environmental standards.

For organic pineapples, you will have to follow certain production methods, which are laid down in [EU legislation \(EC\) 834/2007 and \(EC\) 889/2008](#). You must refrain from using synthetic inputs and for certified pineapples, you can ask higher prices, but you will also have to incur certification costs. The organic market is changing rapidly with high price volatility and the yield will be less.



Preferred suppliers

Supermarkets increasingly buy fruits and vegetables from a group of preferred suppliers. Preferred suppliers need to be approved and follow specific quality norms and regulations that are set by the retailer. Supermarkets often work with longer term framework contracts with one or two of the preferred suppliers.

Every week or two the price and exact volume is determined within the framework contract. Some discount retailers like Aldi and Lidl ask all preferred suppliers to send in their offer every 1 or 2 weeks to increase competition and lower prices.

Differences in requirements by the big EU retailers

GlobalGAP with the EU norms on MRLs, is the standard currently required by volume retailers especially in among UK, German, Dutch, Scandinavian and Swiss retailers. Particularly because the big food retailers operate on a much larger scale and in larger geographic areas. In addition, consumers in Western and Northern EU countries are more 'certification sensitive' than in other EU countries.

Still flexibility in requirements in Southern and Eastern EU countries

In Southern EU countries (France, Spain and Italy), there is still some flexibility as smaller grocery retailers are more represented leaving room to discuss these issues with importers selling to small grocery retailers. Therefore, these countries provide more opportunities for West African exporters. Also in Eastern EU countries the non-legislative requirements are not as strict as in other EU countries.

The inconsistencies in supermarket's own requirements

Research by COLEACP in 2013 among EU importers revealed that:

UK multiples are demanding about product quality and social criteria. However, they seem less 'obsessed' (sic) by MRLs.

Tesco commands in their 'Nature's Choice scheme' more stringent food safety and quality conditions than in the EU requirements. Environmental issues are more important in their scheme than social issues. Whereas *Sainsbury's* regards social issues important by selling only fair-trade bananas. This means that each multiple defines their own regulations and labelling.

Scandinavian supermarkets require ETI (Ethical Trade Initiative) or BSCI certification with ethical audits. Whereas they are more flexible about packaging transferring taste or odours on the shelf (organoleptic quality)

German super and hypermarkets want clean products following the pesticide residue scandal uncovered by Greenpeace, in which *Lidl* was ranked worst. Now *Lidl* only allows fruit with a maximum of 30% of the allowed EU norm (100%) of the the authorised MRLs. In addition, *Lidl* limits the use of max. 4 different pesticides and want to know their names. *Edeka* and *Rewe* allow 70%.

If you should be able to engage in a business relation with *Lidl* this means a serious restriction of pesticides being limited to 'clean areas', i.e. not near cotton fields where pesticides are used and sprayed over to the pineapple field of your smallholders.

To harmonize the overload of ethical, social and environmental criteria, labels and standards created by different retailers, there is a need for a '**Social G.A.P.**'. A new consistent strategy on EU level that is linked EU legislation and a unified recognised label will be necessary to prevent scepticism among consumers and in trade.

More information can be found in the report 'Profile of the European Exotic and tropical fruit and vegetable market from [COLEACP \(2013\)](#).

4. Product packaging, labels and tags

Important packaging requirements for each of the four pineapple varieties were already mentioned in the Module 'Product characteristics for fresh pineapples'. Boxes used for transport of pineapples are made of cardboard. They contain 4 up to 14 pineapples depending on the variety. To minimize damage, each box has one layer of pineapples. Fresh pineapples are traded with and without crown. Vibrations and shocks during transport can cause bruises and this, combined with temperature changes, can result in decay of the fruits. There is still a very small volume of pre-packed fresh pineapple being done in West African countries.

Complaints about packaging

Most complaints from by EU buyers regarding pineapples from West African countries concern the irregular colour of fruits, irregular quality and - most of all - the bad packaging. This is not always up to what buyers expect from pineapples, especially because they are higher in price than pineapples from other developing countries.

Opportunities for you as a West African exporter lies in an improvement of the overall quality of fruit, but particularly in improving the packaging. This is vital for its visual impact and it will positively influence the buyers' as well as the consumers' purchasing decisions.



Information on boxes by Bomarts

Each box (see photo right) must have a minimum of information related to the fruits and origin. The minimum requirements to be mentioned on the box are:

- Name and address of the exporter
- Name of the product if the content is not visible
- Name of the variety
- Origin of the produce
- Class or grade
- Size expressed in weight (net and/or gross).

Taking into account the volume of fruit sold through supermarkets, it is becoming more usual for pineapples to have a lace collar attached (to the crown if there is one), which provides pricing information for the supermarkets in the form of a bar code. Often the importer will request that bar codes should be attached to the fruit (see below). This used not to be common in the airfreight trade but nowadays more producers meet this requirement. Sometimes a cutting instruction, serving suggestion or promotional message is added on the collar.



Information on boxes by Dole



Consumer package (lace collar)

This survey was compiled for CBI by **Source** in collaboration with Thierry Paqui

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ANNEX 1 - QUALITY DEFECTS OF PINEAPPLES

CLOSE-UP **FRUITROP**



