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F&V imports from EU down significantly in Q1

UK imports from EU fall by around 15 per cent, while overall food and drink exports almost halve as traders feel effects of Brexit and Covid-19



Brexit and Covid have disrupted trade in both directions

Britain's imports of fruit and vegetables from the EU dropped by around 15 per cent in the first three months of 2021 and are expected to fall further when full checks are implemented at the UK border in January 2022.

This was the news from the Food and Drink Federation, which released its trade figures for the first quarter of the year.

Of the UK's top 10 products imported from the EU from 2019 to 2021, vegetables dropped 13.9 per cent, fruit 15.7 per cent and wine 20 per cent.

Products of animal origin were also heavily impacted, with large falls in imports of EU pork, cheese, chicken and beef.

Overall, UK food and drink imports from

the EU were down 10 per cent, driven by a number of factors related to Covid-19 and Brexit. These include the continued closure of the UK's hospitality sector, stockpiling in late 2020, reduced demand for ingredients as a result of the decline in exports to the EU, and import substitution, FDF said.

This fall in imports is set to increase, according to the trade body, when full border checks are implemented at UK ports from the start of next year.

There was also a large drop in trade with the EU on the exports side. The UK does not export fruit or vegetables in large volumes generally, but trade was seriously affected in other products.

All of the UK's top 10 products exported to the EU fell significantly in value from 2019 to 2021, with whisky dropping 32.3 per cent, chocolate 36.9 per cent and lamb and mutton 14.3 per cent.

Dairy products have been most severely impacted. Compared to 2020, exports of milk and cream to the EU have fallen by more than 90 per cent, and exports of cheese by two thirds in the same time period.

Total food and drink exports fell 47 per cent as a result of the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 and post-Brexit changes to the UK's trading relationships, FDF said.

Exports to the EU were down by £2 billion compared to the first quarter of 2019, with shipments to nearly all EU member states falling significantly.

Dominic Goudie, head of international trade at FDF, said: "The loss of £2bn of exports to the EU is a disaster for our industry, and is a very clear indication of the scale of losses that UK manufacturers face in the longer-term due to new trade barriers with the EU."

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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"We set out a plan to mitigate these impacts by boosting support for exporters, and this was backed by the Trade and Agriculture Commission. The government must stop prevaricating and get behind these proposals to help exporters that have been shut out of trading with the EU."

Sales to Ireland were down by more than two thirds, while sales to Germany, Spain and Italy declined by more than half since Q1 2020.

By contrast, there has also been a return to strong growth in exports to East Asia, where there is strong demand for high-quality UK food and drink.

In Q1 2021, exports to China (+28.2 per cent), Hong Kong (+3.7 per cent), Japan (+6.2 per cent) and South Korea (+18.5 per cent) were all above the levels seen in Q1 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic triggered the early closure of hospitality sectors.

The UK's top three non-EU markets, US (11 per cent), China (five per cent) and Singapore (three per cent), now account for 19 per cent of the UK's total exports, a figure of £713m.

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