

# Food & Drink Product Approval FAQ's

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## How do I get products approved and added to my trading schedule?

To add a new product to your trading schedule, or update an existing product, please send the following to [food.drink@soilassociation.org](mailto:food.drink@soilassociation.org):

1. A MIPS or SIPS (multi or single ingredient production specification form).
2. Draft labels for retail sale products.

3. Non-GM declarations forms for any non-organic additives or processing aids and supporting information (if required – See below question ‘When do I need to submit non-GM information’ for further details). You can download non-GM declaration forms [here](#).
4. Natural flavouring non-GM declarations and full specifications for each non-organic natural flavouring you wish to use. You can download the natural flavouring & non-GM declaration forms [here](#).
5. Supplier certificates for any ingredients where the Soil Association have additional sourcing requirements to meet our higher standards. Please check the [Sourcing organic ingredients annex](#) of our standards for more information on these ingredients.

## When do I use a MIPS or a SIPS?

### Please use a SIPS for:

- Single ingredient products, that you store, handle, pack, import or trade. For example, apples, lentils, spinach powder;
- Or, a multi-ingredient, pre-packaged, product that is already certified and you only handle, store or wholesale, with no further processing, packing or labelling undertaken. For example, an already certified retail packed chocolate bar or wine.
- Please note, multiple ‘single-ingredient’ or ‘finished’ products can be listed on a single SIPS form.

### Please use a MIPS (which lists the component ingredients) if:

- The product is a multi-ingredient product for which you are responsible for sourcing the component ingredients, either to manufacture for your own business, or to contract manufacture on behalf of another company.
- If you are responsible for sourcing the component ingredients but subcontract the manufacture to another company or [‘Contracted Symbol User’ \(CSU agreement\)](#).
- If a CSU sources the component ingredients on your behalf and applies the SA symbol.

### Please submit a MIPS or SIPS for all new products to be added to your trading schedule or if you are making changes to:

- The overall composition of the product (% of ingredients).
- The ingredients/processing aids themselves.
- Suppliers of additives, processing aids or natural flavourings.
- Suppliers of ingredients where the SA have higher standards than the GB organic regulations. [Check the 'sourcing organic ingredients annex'](#).

### Which form do I use if I am a brandholder and use another company to make this product for me?

If you are a brandholder and subcontract the manufacturing of a product to another **Soil Association certified licensee**:

- If the subcontracted manufacturer sources the ingredients themselves, makes the product, and sells it to you as a finished product, then they must first submit the product to be approved using a MIPS form. Once the product has been approved and added to their trading schedule, you can submit the **finished product** using a SIPS form, listing the contract manufacturer as the supplier on the form. Alternatively, both the MIPS and SIPS from each company can be submitted simultaneously. The product will be approved on both accounts once the MIPS is approved.
- If you are responsible for sourcing the component ingredients yourself, before subcontracting the manufacture to another business and supplying the ingredients to them, then you must first submit the product to be approved using a MIPS form, and once approved on your trading schedule, the contract manufacturer will submit a SIPS form for the product to be listed on their trading schedule as 'contract manufacture of x'. Equally, you can submit the MIPS/SIPS at the same time, but the product will only be approved on both once the MIPS has been approved.

\*It is the responsibility of the company sourcing the ingredients to submit the MIPS, as they will have the information for each individual supplier of component ingredients. Then, the other company can submit a SIPS, so the person responsible for sourcing does not have to share the individual supplier information.

If you are a brandholder and subcontract the manufacturing of a product to a company certified by a **different certification body**:

- As above, if the other company is responsible for the sourcing and manufacture, they will need the product approved by their certification body first. You can then submit a SIPS for the finished product.
- If you source and supply the ingredients to the subcontracted manufacturer, please submit a MIPS to have it approved on your schedule first. Then, they can have the manufacture approved by their certification body.

If the subcontracted manufacturer is certified by a different certification body but will be applying the Soil Association symbol to products on your behalf, please refer to [this question](#).

## When do I need to submit non-GM information?

You will be required to submit non-GM information for any high-risk additives, processing aids and non-organic agricultural ingredients, and for any non-organic natural flavourings used in your products.

### Additives, Processing aids and non-organic agricultural ingredients

Some additives, processing aids and non-organic agricultural ingredients are a potential GM risk because they are derived from crops that can be GM or are made using processes that sometimes involve GMOs.

For ingredients that are marked as requiring Non-GM declaration forms in Section 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 of the [GB Standards](#) or [NI Standards](#) you will be required to submit a non-GM declaration form, completed by the supplier of the ingredients, within the last 12 months. You can access the forms [here](#). If you are in Northern Ireland, please ensure you complete the Northern Ireland Non-GM declaration form.

If you are certifying the product to SA higher standards, then you will also need to provide the supporting non-GM information. The type of supporting information required will depend on the ingredient. Please refer to the SA non-GM declaration form for details of the supporting information required for the ingredient in question. You can download the form [here](#).

### Non-organic natural flavourings

For each non-organic natural flavouring you wish to use you will need to submit a natural flavouring & non-GM declaration form completed by the supplier within the last 12 months. You can access the forms [here](#).

If you are certifying the product to SA higher standards, and if the natural flavouring contains any high-risk ingredients, then you will also be required to provide supporting non-GM information. For example, if the natural flavouring contains Ethanol which is made by fermentation, then we would require supporting information that the micro-organism used in the fermentation process is not GM.

If you are in Northern Ireland organic regulation 2018/848 applies and has different flavouring requirements, so please ensure you complete the NI natural flavouring non-GM declaration form.

## What information should be on my label?

Please refer to our latest retail and bulk labelling guidelines [here](#).

Please note that all retail labels must be submitted to us for approval by a certification officer before going to print.

## What if I change the composition of a product?

If the composition of a product changes (for example weights of ingredients or new ingredients introduced), please submit a new MIPS and label for review to [food.drink@soilassociation.org](mailto:food.drink@soilassociation.org).

## What if I want to make changes to my trading schedule?

Requests to change product names or to de-list products on your trading schedule can be emailed to [food.drink@soilassociation.org](mailto:food.drink@soilassociation.org) and these changes will be actioned.

Please note if you are changing the product name on the retail label for the product then the amended label must also be submitted for our review.

## What is the difference between an SA and GB standard licence?

An 'SA standard' licence is for products which meet Soil Association Organic Standards. The SA standards cover the GB's organic regulations (Retained Regulation No. 834/2007 & 889/2008) **and include some additional, higher standards** in some key areas e.g. livestock production, GM, additives and packaging - this makes Soil Association Certification's standards recognised as amongst the highest in the world.

A 'GB standard' licence covers products certified to the GB's baseline organic regulations (Retained Regulation No. 834/2007 & 889/2008).

## When can I use the Soil Association symbol?

If you have an SA standard licence and your product meets the SA higher standards. For any product where you have an SA licence and label the product yourselves, or another SA licensee labels it on your behalf, the SA symbol must be used on product unless it fits an exemption as outlined in GB Standards [5.8.8](#)/NI Standards [5.8.8](#).

You may use products and ingredients that are certified to other organic standards; however, some will have to be checked to verify that they meet Soil Association additional sourcing requirements so that the Soil Association symbol can be used. These extra requirements may relate to any stage of the supply chain, including the primary production on farms. You must seek approval before using an ingredient/product where additional sourcing requirements apply. For ingredients which have additional sourcing requirements, please see this [annex](#).

## Does the labelling of products listed on an SA Processor license have to bear the Soil Association symbol?

You must use the Soil Association symbol on Soil Association certified products that are retail packed and contain 95%-100% organic ingredients. This applies to products that you label, or another Soil Association licensee labels on your behalf.

You do not have to use the SA symbol if:

- the product/label meets an exemption laid out in section 5.8.8 of [GB Standards](#) or [NI Standards](#)

Or;

- You are sourcing a fully finished, retail packed product that does not bear the SA symbol and you are not further processing the product in any way (eg. relabelling/repacking), and all the ingredients meet the SA additional sourcing requirements. For example, if you are buying a retail packed maple syrup, where the SA symbol is not applied, and the product is not re-labelled/packed/processed by an SA licensee then this can be listed on an SA Processor license.

For products that you only apply bulk labelling (non-retail) the label must include either the Soil Association symbol or the words 'Soil Association Organic'. For unpackaged product, (e.g. grain, milk, dispatching unprocessed fruit and vegetables from farm) this information must go on the accompanying paperwork. Refer to standard 5.14.2 of [GB Standards](#) or [NI Standards](#) for the requirements for labelling and transporting unpackaged or non-retail packed products.

## When can I market a new organic product?

Once you have received an email which states that the product has been approved and added to your trading schedule.

## What happens if I change a supplier for an existing product or ingredient within a product?

We do not require you to inform us when you use a new supplier for an existing product listed on your trading schedule or change supplier of an ingredient in an existing product, provided that it is not an ingredient/product for which we have any higher standards to check. Please check our ['Sourcing organic ingredients annex'](#) of our standards for more information on these ingredients.

For products and ingredients that do not have additional sourcing requirements, you must verify the certification documents of your suppliers, as per standard [5.7.2](#).

Guidance on verifying supplier certificates can be found in our 'supplier approval guidance' document available [here](#). If you are unsure, please submit the certificate to [food.drink@soilassociation.org](mailto:food.drink@soilassociation.org) and we will let you know if the supplier can be used.

## What do I do if I use someone else to label the product with the Soil Association symbol and they are certified by another certification body? (CSU agreement)

This requires a Contracted Symbol user agreement, (CSU), to be set up between yourself and the subcontractor and added to your account. There is a charge for this on application and annually. Please email [food.drink@soilassociation.org](mailto:food.drink@soilassociation.org) for a CSU application form and information on the cost.

## When do I need to answer the packaging questions?

You must complete the packaging checklist on the last page of the SIPS/MIPS form for any product that you wish to add to a Soil Association standard licence where you introduce any primary (retail), secondary (grouping, display) and tertiary (transport) packaging to the supply chain. If it is a packaging which has not been previously approved, you will also need to send the packaging specification.

The GB/EU regulation does not have packaging regulations and therefore this information is not required if the product in question is certified only to the GB regulation.

If the product is for a Soil Association standard licence but you buy and sell an already certified product and do not introduce any extra packaging to the supply chain, you do not need to provide packaging information.

Please note, 'extra packaging' includes primary (retail), secondary (grouping, display) and tertiary (transport).