



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

APHA Briefing Note 19/25

Publication of revised guidance on the Groupage Export Facilitation Scheme, including standardised Support Attestations

Date issued: 02 June 2025

Purpose

To inform Official Veterinarians (OVs) and Food Competent Certifying Officers (FCCOs) about the publication of the revised Groupage Export Facilitation Scheme (GEFS) guidance, including standardised Support Attestations (SAs), that must be used when exporting goods under GEFS from 1 August 2025.

Background

GEFS facilitates exports from approved food business operators with steady supply chains, by using 30-day SAs to help in the certification process. Based on feedback from RCVS, industry, and OVs, Defra has revised the scheme's guidance to introduce several improvements to its operation. Some of these changes may impact how OVs and FCCOs sign SAs and EHCs.

Information

1. APHA has published a new, revised version of the [GEFS guidance](#). This replaces the previous version of this guidance (ET193), hosted on the Improve website.
2. The eligibility requirements for using GEFS remain unchanged, as do the requirements to use a Support Attestation and a commercial document or manifest for each and every consignment moved to the export depot (now known as a "Batch Declaration").

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3. The revised guidance introduces new standardised Support Attestation templates that must be used by OV's and FCCOs using GEFS. These templates, as well as the guidance, can be downloaded from Form Finder on GOV.UK as follows:
 - [Support Attestation for OV's, covering POAO goods \(SA1\)](#)
 - [Support Attestation for OV's, covering ABP goods \(SA2\)](#)
 - [Support Attestation for FCCOs, covering specific POAO goods \(SA3\)](#)
4. The revised guidance, including standardised SAs, should be used by GEFS members, OV's and FCCOs signing SAs, and Certifying Officers, from 1 August 2025.
5. Existing members of the GEFS have also been contacted and made aware of the revised guidance.
6. Defra will be running webinars for OV's, FCCOs and GEFS members to provide further information about the key changes to the GEFS included in the revised guidance.

Key changes

7. OV's and FCCOs must check the list of GEFS members (ET200) and satisfy themselves that the exporter is eligible to use the GEFS prior to issuing the SA or certifying the goods for export using the scheme.
8. SAs can only be signed by OV's with an OCQ(V) - PX (Product Exports) qualification or, where the final product may be certified by a FCCO, by a FCCO. This ensures SAs will only be issued by officials with sufficient and relevant knowledge of animal product export requirements.
9. The SAs that must be used have been standardised and now form official documents on which OV's and FCCOs must use their official stamps. This means the signing of SAs will now be monitored by APHA as part of their ongoing quality assurance of OV activities.
10. The revised guidance confirms the process for OV's or FCCOs to amend existing SAs (e.g., to correct an error.)
11. SAs remain time limited to 30 calendar days. However, the 30-day duration begins on the day the Support Attestation is signed (not the following day) and covers products produced in the period up to and including the expiry date of the SA.
12. The revised guidance clarifies that the SA must cover the dates of production of the goods intended for export, not the date of export.

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13. The member of GEFS must be listed as the exporter on the Export Health Certificate in order to use the scheme. Subsidiary and sister companies must hold their own membership and cannot benefit from the membership of their associated company.
14. The frequency of audits for members will increase, so that members will never go more than two years without an audit. The scope of the audit has also been widened to take a broader view of documents that indicate compliance with the scheme's conditions. This provides greater assurance that the scheme's terms are being met.
15. Where severe or repeated non-compliance with the GEFS's conditions is identified, APHA may expel members from the scheme. The revised guidance sets out the appeals process and conditions for reapplying to the scheme.
16. Similarly, where members do not make use of the GEFS for six months, their membership is deemed to have lapsed, and they will be removed from the scheme. This streamlines the administrative process of running the GEFS, makes better use of audits, and provides better data on the scale of the scheme.

Action

- All OV's and FCCOs issuing Support Attestations or certifying goods under GEFS must adhere to the revised guidance and use the newly standardised Support Attestations (SAs) from 1 August 2025.
- Further information and a Q&A on the changes are available during upcoming webinars:
 - Wednesday 4 June at 12.00pm – [Register](#)
 - Thursday 12 June at 3.00pm - [Register](#)
 - Tuesday 17 June at 4.00pm - [Register](#)

Further Information

For further questions or clarification, exporters, suppliers and certifying officers should contact the GEFS team at APHA at gefsteam@apha.gov.uk

APHA's Centre for International Trade – Carlisle, email: exports@apha.gov.uk Telephone: 03000 300 201

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