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NEWS RELEASE

**'IF IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT'
PERSONAL FOOD IMPORTS CAMPAIGN
COMING TO REGENTS PARK**

A new government campaign to highlight the risks from foods people bring back from abroad is coming to the London Central Mosque and Islamic Centre in Regents Park on Friday 18 March.

The aim of the campaign, launched by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), is to raise awareness of the foods that cannot be legally brought back to the UK from outside the EU.

The campaign highlights the rules and restrictions that people need to know before they travel abroad, so that they do not run the risk of breaking the law.

A mobile information unit will be parked in the **London Central Mosque and Islamic Centre, 146 Park Road, London, NW8 from 12pm to 2.30pm**. Staff will be on hand with up-to-date information on the campaign and the laws behind it. Visitors will be able to view a new public information film and explore a new website about the campaign. Leaflets and posters will be available in several languages including Arabic, Chinese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Turkish, Urdu and English.

Dr Yunes Teinaz, Hackney Principal Environmental Health Officer and advisor to the London Central Mosque, said, "It is vital that we are all made aware of the regulations regarding personal food imports as a great number of travellers tend to bring back food products that have been given to them as gifts by family or friends. It is great that information is available to people of many different backgrounds and cultures".

London Central Mosque and Islamic Centre in Regents Park is the 34th stop on a national tour by the road-show, which finishes at the end of this month. Food and Farming Minister Larry Whitty said:

"People may not see any harm in bringing food back to the UK when they return from a holiday or a business trip, but some foods may contain pests and diseases that threaten the health of our agricultural crops and livestock, as well as public health. Because of these risks, there are strict restrictions on foodstuffs brought back from countries outside the EU.

“I would urge everyone to check the rules before they leave the UK. If you are caught breaking them, then you may face long delays, prosecution and a fine.”

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Notes to Editors:

- Controls on food imports are essential to protect public health and livestock and the government is committed to reducing the risks of disease entering the food chain via illegally imported food products. Measures to raise public awareness and improve preventative measures at the UK border and inland are backed by £25 million from 2003-06.
- The current legislation makes it illegal to bring back meat and milk-based products for personal use into the UK from countries outside the EU. Other restrictions depend largely on the country you are travelling from, the type of food products brought back and the quantity. Enforcement activity has also been stepped up at ports and airports. In 2003/04, over 16,000 seizures were made of illegally imported food, amounting to over 180 tonnes.
- For detailed information on products that can/cannot be brought into the UK, call the Defra helpline on 08459 33 55 77 or check the database on the Defra website at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/illegal/default.htm>
- The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is responsible for policy issues relating to imports of products of animal origin, plants and plant products.

For further information about this event and if you would like the unit to visit your local area, please contact Media Moguls on 020 8902 5575 or:

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