

Vetimpleg: An Indispensable Reference Resource for EU-Legislation and Explanations on Veterinary and Food Safety Issues

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The European Union is the largest importer of products of animal origin and live animals worldwide. Import rules and transit rules are almost fully harmonized within the EU zone and the European Commission acts as the competent authority on behalf of the 27 member states. The EU Commission is the sole negotiating partner for all non-EU countries for questions relating to the import and transit of products of animal origin and live animals (Figure 1).

The import rules of the European Community seek to guarantee that all imports fulfill the same high standards as products and animals from EU member states with respect to hygiene, consumer safety, welfare and animal health status.

To ensure that imports take place smoothly, interested countries and businesses should understand the fundamental principles of the EU Animal Health Policy and the European Food and Feed regulations. They must be aware of hundreds of veterinary and food safety legislation documents and keep track of changes and their consequences.

Veterinary legislation changes frequently. In 2011 alone, the European Commission enacted in excess of 150 changes that affected veterinary import rules. Such changes force the stakeholders concerned to monitor developments closely with respect to the relevant EU-requirements. Not only does this take time, sources for EU legislation are not particularly user-friendly, are often not up-to date and can be incomplete.

The legislation website of the European Commission, Eurlex, contains all the EU legislation but often not in a consolidated way. But most of all, Eurlex does not answer product or animal-oriented questions. This needs a thorough knowledge of how to combine different aspects of legislation, which can only be done by specialists. To ensure compliance and avoid expensive mistakes, parties concerned will need a pro-active alert system, up-to-date information and multiple accesses to information with a product focus.

Vetimpleg

The Vetimpleg service centers on providing information on how EU veterinary and food safety legislation affects authorities, producers,

traders and establishments dealing with products of animal origin and live animals to conduct their operations. The Vetimpleg service is provided through an e-mail alert system and via the Vetimpleg website, www.vetimpleg.eu, which has a public and a client section.

Details of the service include:

- The Vetimpleg e-alert keeps clients informed of changes in veterinary legislation and their consequences. It helps them decide how to adjust processes to keep their business compliant.
- The public section of the Vetimpleg website explains the way European veterinary legislation is set up and constantly adjusted and how the Vetimpleg services work.
- The client section of Vetimpleg provides all the relevant veterinary legislation and explains EU veterinary law compliance requirements for each type of product or animal.
- The advantages and utility of working with the Vetimpleg system is affirmed by a group of worldwide clients. Vetimpleg is a guide to the complex world of EU legislation for professionals, authorities and organizations working with products of animal origin and live animals. Launched in the second half of 2006 after two years of intensive preparation, today Vetimpleg is used by public authorities and private companies all over the world.

From the end of August 2012 Vetimpleg will no longer only focus its content on import matters but will extend its content with a complete overview of all the existing EU-legislation having influence on veterinary matters and food safety and will make it very easy for the user to obtain updated documents on different subjects (Figure 2).

The Vetimpleg Approach

Vetimpleg offers an active service. Keeping up with changing legislation and being compliant is reduced to a matter of course. Vetimpleg alerts clients pro-actively about changes, their consequences and where to find further information on its website. From the inception of this service, the Vetimpleg email alert has been sent to our clients approximately once per week. Vetimpleg provides high-quality information. The Vetimpleg editorial board is on call seven days a week. Vetimpleg responds to EU changes on the day they happen and



The Vetimpleg office in Leiden The Netherlands

Figure 1: Members of the European Union.

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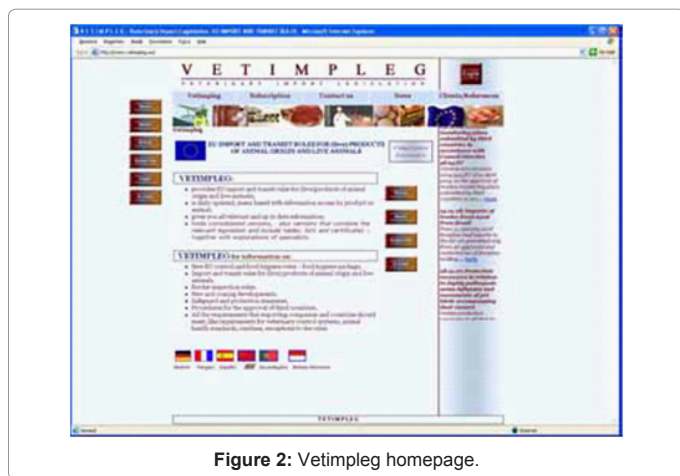


Figure 2: Vetimpleg homepage.

therefore is always up to date. Vetimpleg is the only service in this area that supplies consolidated EU legislation in such a manner.

Vetimpleg is product-focused. Vetimpleg is more than a collection of legislation documents. With the product or animal as a starting point, Vetimpleg explains all the aspects of key issues for the target product and includes a third country list, specific conditions, general information, health certification and establishments' list. Direct links to the relevant legislation are also provided. In addition, Vetimpleg offers direct access to the legislation which does not primarily concern specific products, but which is more general in character and therefore affects every organization working in this field.

Vetimpleg Takes a Stand

Although Vetimpleg is not a free service, it realizes that knowledge of EU legislation and the editorial effort to keep up with changes in legislation puts the organization in a special position. Consequently, Vetimpleg offers lots of free information via its website; an example of this is a review in the introduction on EU legislation. Vetimpleg offers special arrangements such as introductory subscriptions and has specialists available for training and presentations on EU veterinary and hygiene legislation and compliance (Figure 3).

Access to Vetimpleg Information

Vetimpleg supports access to four main areas of information:

- The veterinary and hygiene legislation.

The Vetimpleg website has all the consolidated versions of relevant veterinary and hygiene legislation arranged in directives and regulations and decisions in a chronological order. The legislation documents are available in PDF-format; the other Vetimpleg documents have direct links to these legislation documents.

- All the EU-legislation having influence on veterinary matters and food safety. Special chapters give reference to more than 1000 documents on import into the EU and intra-Community trade.

- The products.

Detailed EU legislation in the veterinary and food safety field lays down the conditions that apply to the imports of (live) products of animal origin and live animals from third countries. This vertical legislation imposes a series of health requirements depending on the kind of (live) product or animal. Vetimpleg explains all of the relevant legislation for each kind of (live) product or animal, directly accessible from a product list.

- The key issues.

Some legislation elements apply to all imports. The key issues also indicated as horizontal legislation, related to imports, are also provided by Vetimpleg and are directly accessible from the menu: the food hygiene package, transit rules, special agreements of the European Community and third countries, explanations on new development, approval procedures for third countries and guidance documents (Figure 4).

Vetimpleg is a production of Zilt&co and Marcuvet. Zilt&co is a Dutch web publishing office. Marcuvet is a Dutch editorial office specializing in veterinary and food legislation



Figure 3: Vetimpleg legislation page.



Figure 4: Veterinary import legislation detail page.