



Netherlands Food and Consumer  
Product Safety Authority  
*Ministry of Economic Affairs*

# The Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority

An introduction

invasive plants, export, animal  
risk assessment, safe products  
export, animal welfare, enforce  
safe products, industry, import  
fare, enforcement, risk assess  
import, invasive plants, export  
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plants, export, animal welfare

The Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA) monitors the health of animals and plants, animal welfare and the safety of food and consumer products, and enforces nature laws.

Consumers must be able to rely on the safety of food and other products, so businesses have to comply with national and international regulation, and the NVWA ensures that businesses are doing this. We also verify whether animals and nature are treated properly.

The NVWA identifies where the risks for people, animals and nature are greatest. We assess these risks and take action where required. Our enforcement is focused on influencing behaviour to achieve compliance. We do this for example by conducting inspections, by communication and by preliminary investigation. The NVWA also has an important role in export inspection and in the import of products within Europe.

Our independent Office for risk assessment and research (BuRO) advises ministers on food and consumer product safety and on animal health and welfare. We also have an Intelligence and Investigation Service (NVWA-IOD) that focuses specifically on organised and international crime.

**Consumers must be able to rely on the safety of their food. The NVWA supervises this.**

We monitor accredited businesses during meat production, processing and distribution. Around 10,000 businesses in the Netherlands produce, import, refrigerate or transport food products and there are around two hundred slaughterhouses and almost five hundred cutting rooms. The safety and the traceability of meat products is the sector's responsibility. We verify whether these businesses and their products meet the legal requirements, and if their procedures are in order. We also verify whether the products are free from pathogens, pollutants or carcinogens. And we keep an eye on labelling regulation.

In the Netherlands, about 100,000 businesses sell food products directly to the consumer. The NVWA monitors whether these businesses work according to strict hygiene rules and that they work safely with the food so there is no threat from dangerous substances or micro-organisms. We monitor food safety and hygiene at producers of food and at dairy and egg producers and at import and transport businesses. And we enforce compliance with the legal limits for plant protection products, pollutants and if necessary for genetically modified organisms. In addition we monitor the 4,000 businesses in the animal feed sector and our independent research agency Office for risk assessment and research (BuRO) carries out research on pathogenic micro-organisms. In the fisheries chain we supervise food safety and sustainability, for instance by controlling onboard facilities and fishing quotas.

Safe food is essential, so our motto for offenders is: 'Improve or close your business'.





**Food products are not the only goods that may pose risks to public health; consumer products must also be checked for safety.** Cosmetics for example may contain bacteria or carcinogens. Children's toys are inspected for contamination with lead-based paint, and toys for children under 3 are checked for loose parts. The NVWA supervises European regulation and the Dutch Food and Commodities Act sets standards for consumer articles. This also applies to fairground attractions, textiles, household chemicals, tattoos, lighters, packaging material, electrical products and gas appliances. We protect the consumer against products that can cause injury or health problems.

Products posing a safety or health risk cannot be put on the market. Our supervision is especially focused on processes and operating systems, checking to see if the products that are purchased and then traded are safe. If not, we remove the product from the market as quickly as possible. We make clear agreements with businesses that follow the rules, so we can spend more time controlling those businesses that do not always comply with regulation. Many consumer products are not produced in the Netherlands but imported from Southeast Asia and other regions. This requires an international approach to supervision, which is why we work together with EU Member States and countries outside the EU.

If the situation requires it, we provide information about the safe use of products and raise consumers' awareness of the risks in public information campaigns. In extreme cases this may involve the recall of an unsafe product from consumers.

**Our environment must stay clean and the drinking water pure. That is why we want to see as few chemical products as possible in plant protection products.** Those products are sometimes necessary to keep the damaging effects of plant disease, pests and weeds within acceptable limits. The plant protection products used must be permitted in the Netherlands. They should be prevented from contaminating ground water and other crops. The possession, sale and use of plant protection products are strictly regulated. The NVWA carries out checks at growers, agricultural businesses, import businesses, government organisations, retail and wholesale businesses.

In the Netherlands animals produce more manure than the soil can absorb without damage. The number of animals a farmer can keep is therefore limited. To further protect the soil, surface water and air quality, rules were put in place on manure use and trade. The NVWA controls whether manure has been processed at the right time of year and that the quantities are within the legal limits, including checks at transport businesses and processors.

**Nature reserves and vulnerable plant and animal species are protected on a global scale.** The NVWA carries out checks to prevent people from trading endangered plant or animal species under the CITES agreement. We also monitor any prohibited activities that damage nature reserves. Animal and plant species that are not native to the Netherlands, like the tiger mosquito or the ambrosia, can endanger the health of people, animals and plants. We help in keeping these species under control. A special team collects expertise, and advises and coordinates control activities.





**Alcohol and tobacco are harmful to health, so restrictions are placed on tobacco commercials, smoking in public places and alcohol.** In the Netherlands the smoking ban in bars, hotels and restaurants became effective on 1 July 2008. NVWA inspectors control compliance with the rules. Surveys have shown that smoking in bars, restaurants and hotels is decreasing. Minors under the age of 16 are not allowed to buy tobacco products.

The composition and labelling of tobacco products is also regulated. Since 2002, the packaging of rolling tobacco, cigarettes, cigars and pipe tobacco must be labelled with a warning of the damaging effects of smoking. The cigarette packaging should also state the levels of tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide. We test tobacco products sold in the Netherlands by sampling at factories, import businesses and sales points. In the laboratory we examine the composition of the product and we look to see if the label has all the required information.

Excessive alcohol consumption causes physical and social problems. The government wants to limit the use of alcoholic beverages and discourage young people from drinking. That is why there is regulation in place for the sale of alcohol under the Licensing and Catering Act. Since 1 January 2013, councils are responsible for the main share of the monitoring, like checking on age limits and permit conditions.

**Keeping animals healthy is very important. Within Europe, the Netherlands is the largest exporter of livestock.** Businesses like livestock farmers (over 50,000), transporters of animals (400), operators of collection centres (60) and washing locations (350), importers and producers of live products like semen, embryos and hatching eggs must therefore meet the legal standards. There is also regulation regarding the layout of businesses. The NVWA supervises compliance with these rules. An important topic is the use of veterinary drugs. To guarantee the health of both humans and animals, livestock producers must limit their use of veterinary drugs. Bacteria can become resistant to things like antibiotics and via the food chain, this can have consequences for people's health care. We supervise careful use of veterinary drugs.

**Animal welfare can be at risk in diverse places: on farms, with people keeping them as a hobby, at laboratories, during transport and at the slaughterhouse.** Regulation dictates how people should treat animals. We check 80,000 businesses and each year we publish a report on animal testing. Most noticeable is the wellbeing of animals during transport. Some welfare aspects, like the duration of the journey, the load allowed, drinking water supply and temperature control is subject to European regulation. We check at the start of the export route and during transport. In case of a serious violation we can impose a fine. Slaughtering animals is also subject to regulations; before being slaughtered, animals should have proper housing and treatment, and they should also be subject to adequate stunning procedures. If stunning does not take place, there are additional requirements. Our veterinarians supervise compliance with these welfare conditions.





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