

Preface

The idea of writing a book on the approach of the European Union to risk management in the area of import of feed and food of non-animal origin came to light during one session of the *Better Training for Safer Food* programme of the European Commission. In that context, in our capacity of tutors, we have had the opportunity to share our experience in the field with the staff of competent authorities of EU Member States, but also to learn directly from them about differences, difficulties and good practices that exist in this area across the EU.

The category of imports of non-animal origin includes both products of plant origin (e.g. fruits, vegetables, tubers, cereals, herbs, spices, sugar) and of mineral origin (e.g. salt). Rising consumer demands, in particular, for fresh produce during all the year makes the trade of such products increasingly global and considerable nowadays.

Traditionally subject to less stringent import requirements than those applying to products of animal origin, recent food scares triggered by fruits and vegetables—i.e. the *E. coli* in 2011 or the *norovirus* outbreak in 2012—have determined increased attention by policy-makers and scientists in Europe towards the health risks that those products may carry. At EU level, this approach has resulted in stricter import surveillance by national enforcement authorities on products of non-animal origin, on the one hand, and in the adoption of emergency measures, in certain instances. On the other hand, the same approach has led to the development and consequent implementation of a risk prioritisation exercise in this area that the European Food Safety Authority has been tasked with.

Against this background, this book first offers an overview of the main hazards that may be associated with imports of non-animal origin and their health implications (Chap. 1). This part is followed by a systematisation of the current EU regime applying to those products and an in-depth analysis of the specific risk-management measures currently in place (Chaps. 2 and 3).

Result of a multidisciplinary approach combining our scientific, public policy and legal expertise, this book is intended for academics, scientists, professionals, control authorities and for all those who desire to acquaint themselves with a very specific area of EU food law that is steadily acquiring its own standing. At the

same time, we are aware that this area is continuously evolving because of the diversification of possible episodes and food scares with chemical causes and other hazards.

In spite of that, we hope that this work can help the reader to understand rationale, functioning and dynamics of the area of imports of non-animal origin and the correlated assessment of safety risks and chemical hazards in the EU.

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The European Union Approach

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