Valpak
by Reconomy

International data submissions - avoiding the pitfalls



International data management.

Companies that are expanding their retail operations outside the UK frequently underestimate the complexity of making data submissions around the world.

Companies can experience challenges with their international compliance data submissions for several reasons, for example if they:

1. Have high volumes of data. This might include having lots of product lines, or product lines that change often. It could also be that they have many suppliers that they must contact to obtain data.

2. Have incomplete or difficult to access data systems. This may include information being held within different parts of the organisation, complicated IT systems or gaps in packaging, electrical or battery data.

3. Are unsure about the submission process. Although the quality of their data may be excellent, they may lack the capacity to manipulate and collate this raw data into the required format for submission in multiple countries and to varying deadlines.



Avoiding the pitfalls.

The data submission process can be complex, resource intensive and time consuming. Each country has varying obligations and reporting requirements.



You will need to allow sufficient time for all aspects of your data submission process, from collecting packaging and product weights, researching country specific product scoping, analysing the data, and collating it into the correct data submission format.

Data requirements

Data requirements vary considerably between countries - you will need to check that your in-house data management systems can provide you with the relevant data for each submission. You will also need to be able to validate the accuracy of the data.

You must also declare data in the correct units (e.g. tonnes, kilograms or unit sales) and use the correct thousands separator (e.g. comma or full stop).

Schemes accept varying levels of data accuracy, with some expecting 100%; therefore, a retailer with many product lines should ensure they can source weights information for as many of their ranges as possible to minimise the risk of non-compliance.in order to minimise the risk of non-compliance.

The frequency of data submissions and compliance costs varies between countries.

Data reporting frequencies can vary from scheme to scheme, with submissions ranging from annual, biannual, quarterly to monthly. You will need to meet deadlines for all submissions and be aware of any changes to these dates if the deadline falls on a weekend.

Once you have reported your data you must pay compliance fees based on these figures - costs and payment terms can differ considerably between schemes.

Other considerations to be aware of include understanding whether you can net returns off your submission, i.e., use gross or net sales to calculate your data submission.

For some online retailers return rates can be as high as 40% so understanding this is important. You should also be able to demonstrate robust evidence for the accuracy of your data submission if you are audited.

Return rates for submissions can be as high as **40%**

Packaging pitfalls.

Defining and categorising your packaging accurately is essential as packaging definitions and data requirements vary between countries.

You must be able to define which products are categorised as packaging in the different countries you are obligated in. Definitions vary between countries - for example, some will class display units and materials that form an integral part of the product as packaging, whereas others will not.

To minimise risk, it is important to demonstrate auditable due diligence for packaging compliance across your supply chain. This includes ensuring your warehouse is tracking accurate postal packaging data, and understanding who is obligated when imported packaging is not sold to end-users.

You must also collect enough packaging information to allow you to accurately declare data in each country you are commercially active in.

This can range from basic weight information (kilograms per material) for obligated primary packaging, to a line-by-line breakdown of all your packaging elements, measured by weight in grams and material type.

Some international submissions even require the polymer grade of plastic packaging to be declared.



The value in good data.

Although identifying the components that comprise your packaging can be resource intensive, the information can be used to improve the accuracy of your financial forecasting. It can also allow you to monitor areas to improve packaging performance.

It is important to understand the details of the packaging used in all your products as this can greatly affect the compliance fees you will pay.

The time taken and the cost associated with gathering this detailed data can be excessive. It would take over five years for one employee to weigh all the packaging in a large UK supermarket! Additional time and human resource would also be required to develop a suitable database to compile the data submissions.

Robust data and a good understanding of packaging handled will assist your company's financial forecasting as it will enable you to confidently estimate how many products your business will sell in each overseas market. It will allow you to predict compliance costs, as packaging obligation fees vary between countries.

Improving data quality will also enable your company to move towards better environmental reporting, allowing you to focus on areas such as light weighting, packaging reduction and sustainability.

Other pitfalls.

Data reporting requirements vary between countries. It is therefore important to have a detailed understanding of all the compliance obligations in each overseas market you are commercially active.



WEEE

You will need to understand whether secondary function WEEE is in scope for your data submissions, and if so whether the item should be declared as WEEE.

You must also declare products in the correct international WEEE category. It is not uncommon for different countries to classify the same product in different categories.

From the 15 August 2018 the regulations changed to widen the scope of EEE and included changes to the categorisation of WEEE.

Product Categorisation

Some countries require you to assign product categories to each individual SKU. In France, for example, there are 289 packaging product categories, 73 WEEE categories and 1,228 WEEE SH4 codes categories.

Regulations can change and this can impact on the data you submit, as was the case in 2014 when the EU WEEE Directive was recast, and all member states had to change their reporting categories.

Data systems should therefore be flexible and as complete as possible to allow for times when additional data is requested.



How we can help.

We can help you avoid the pitfalls of the international compliance data submission process, which can be complex, resource intensive and time consuming.

Our team of over 40 dedicated account managers and technical experts have extensive knowledge on regulations and compliance in all 195 countries.

We are experts in managing large volumes of data across diverse business sectors and have assisted hundreds of organisations with their international compliance data submissions.

From multiple product lines to high product variation or complex supply chains, we can help manage your data submissions to ensure compliance overseas.

We offer a flexible service and can provide as much or as little data support as you require.

If you prefer, we can manage all your international compliance data submissions, allowing you to focus on other business priorities.

We can review your existing data collection methods, collect, and analyse data, collect packaging and product weights, review and identify your obligations, register you with the appropriate parties, collate and submit your data and monitor emerging areas of legislation.

Added value.

We offer additional invaluable support to help ease the burden of managing your data whilst ensuring your submissions overseas are accurate.

Our data management support is underpinned by our dynamic custom- built software and weights database, the largest in the UK, holding over 50 million SKUs with unique packaging metrics.

Last year our Data Management team added over 5.71 million new SKUs to this database, produced over 3,500 customer reports and contacted over 25,000 suppliers. In addition, we offer data quality assurance, with safe and confidential data storage secure to ISO 27001.

Our database and technical expertise allow us to operate more effectively and with greater accuracy. On average our clients report efficiency and cost savings of at least 30% The Data Management services we deliver also provide companies with an improved understanding of the packaging they handle, allowing them to reduce or improve packaging design, as well as supporting broader CSR objectives. This is further supported by our additional Packaging Analysis, WhatIf Modelling and Packaging Technology Consultancy services. Download a copy of our Packaging Analysis white paper to find out more.

On average we add 5.71 million new SKUs each year to our database

Valpak's International Compliance team is made up of over 40 dedicated account managers and technical experts whocan help you avoid the pitfalls of the international data submission process.

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