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Canada

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards

Canadian Nutritional Labeling Coming Soon 2002

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Report Highlights:

Mandatory nutrition labeling may soon be required in Canada. Currently, nutrition labeling is optional on packaged food products in Canada. If a nutrition label does appear on a package however, it must follow Canadian regulations.

Labels of other countries, including the U.S. are not accepted.

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Ottawa[CA1], CA

Canadian Nutritional Labeling Coming Soon

Currently, nutrition labeling is optional (with a few exceptions) on packaged food products in Canada (for current guidelines:

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/food-aliment/english/publications/acts_and_regulations/part_1/1172_index.html). If a nutrition label appears on a package, current Canadian standards must be followed. Labels of other countries, including the U.S., are not accepted in Canada. However, Canada is getting closer to national regulations for mandatory nutrition labeling.

According Marie-Claude Thibault, Director, Health & Food Safety, Canadian Produce Marketing Association, as quoted in the Canadian Grocery magazine, most produce industry stakeholders are embracing the move to mandatory nutrition labeling. “Most industry stakeholders are interested in doing it,” says Thibault. “Especially within the produce industry where there is such good news about nutritional benefits. Produce importers are also looking for adding nutrition information to their package.”

In June 2001, Health Canada published the regulatory proposals to begin the process of implementing mandatory national nutritional labeling standards. Following the June proposal, a period of 90 days was allowed for consumers and other stakeholders to view and comment on the proposed regulations. Once the comments have been reviewed and evaluated by Canadian government officials (another 90-day period), any changes determined to be needed will be made to the proposal. When the regulations are finalized, they will be submitted to the Special Committee of council for approval, and then published in the Canada Gazette Part II. This process normally takes six months to one year. Final regulations, implementing the nutrition labeling changes are expected sometime in 2002. Manufacturers would be given up to two years after the regulations are in place to revise the labels on their products. Small businesses would be allowed an additional year to comply.

The regulatory proposals for mandatory nutrition labeling cover three key types of nutrition information:

Nutrition Labeling - The proposed label would be called “Nutrition Facts” box. It would contain 13 mandatory nutrients (fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrate, fibre, sugars, protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron) with the option of including additional nutrients. Canada’s proposed “Nutrition Facts” box is very similar to that used in the U.S. It looks the same and has the same nutrients, with the exception of trans fatty acids, listed in the same order. Nutrition labeling would be mandatory with a few exceptions, including all fresh fruit and vegetables. However, foods for which an exception is provided would lose their exempt status if their labels or advertisements carry a statement, claim or visual representation that expressly or implicitly suggests that the product has a particular nutritional or health-related property, or if vitamins, mineral nutrients and/or intense sweeteners are added to the food.

Nutrient Content Claims - the proposed regulations would update the current requirements for nutrient content claims (e.g., low in saturated fat, low sodium) based on current science and would also introduce new claims (e.g., x% fat-free).

Health Claims - Health related health claims are not allowed in Canada at this time and until the proposals are made into law, the nutrition labeling remains voluntary in Canada. The new regulations would permit four new claims for foods suitable for diets that reduce risk of heart disease, some types of cancer and osteoporosis.

Source: Canadian Grocer Magazine, December/January 2002 Issue

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CA1109	TWICA 32: Information Seminar on Mandatory Nutrition Labeling Proposal	08/10/01
CA1116	TWICA 33: Public Comment Period on Nutrition Labeling Proposal Drawing to Close	08/22/01