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Canada

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards

New Office for Natural Health Products 1999

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Report Highlights:

Canada's Health Minister has created a new Office of Natural Health Products to develop a national strategy for the Canadian nutraceutical and natural health products industry.

The Minister also instructed the Office of Natural Health Products to implement all of the recommendations of a recent House of Commons Health Committee report on natural health products. Health Canada will provide C\$7 million over the next three years to establish the new office plus contribute C\$3 million for research on natural health products and complementary medicines.

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

On March 26, 1999 Canada's Health Minister Allan Rock announced the creation of a new Office of Natural Health Products with C\$7 million in funding and C\$3 million for research over three years. The action marks the next step by the Canadian government toward the development of a national strategy for the sale of nutraceutical and functional foods in Canada. In addition, the Minister is accepting all the recommendations of a recent House of Commons Health Committee report on natural health products .

According to Health Canada, functional foods currently consumed in Canada include oat bran, green tea, yogurt containing live bacterial culture, and soy milk. Nutraceuticals are produced from foods but are marketed in the form of pills, potions, or forms not generally associated with foods. Concentrated broccoli tablets are an example of a nutraceutical. Other products to be considered in the scope of the new framework include traditional herbal medicines, homeopathic preparations, and vitamin and mineral supplements.

In Canada, natural health products, also referred to as complementary medicines or traditional remedies, have existed in a regulatory limbo, regulated by the Food and Drugs Act, without being either a food or a drug. The new Office of Natural Health Products, which is expected to be operational shortly, will be responsible for developing a definition of a natural health product and for setting manufacturing standards, safety assessment procedures, and labeling requirements affecting domestic and imported products.

Background: Given the increasing popularity of natural health products in Canada, the federal government began a review of the regulatory framework in early 1997. In November 1997, the Health minister announced a full public review (via the Health Committee Study) of the legal regime governing natural health products and halted a controversial regulatory proposal which would have required most herbs, vitamins, and mineral supplements to be declared drugs.

For U.S. companies interested in following the development of regulation in Canada for natural health products, see the Health Canada web page at: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/> Copies of the House of Commons Health Committee report are available on the parliamentary Internet site at:

<<http://www.parl.gc.ca/InfoComDoc/36/1/HEAL/Studies/Reports/healrp02-e.htm>>

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