

Canada seeks to bolster food safety regulations

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has launched a public consultation on new rules to strengthen food safety, which would put greater emphasis on risk prevention and create more harmonization with the U.S.

The proposed Safe Food for Canadians Regulations Act (SFCA) would apply to all foods imported into the country, prepared for export, and sold across provinces.

The update would consolidate 13 food commodity-based regulations, plus the food-related provisions of the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Regulations (CPLR), into a single and “more outcome-based” regulation.

The CFIA said it had consulted stakeholders on the initiative since 2013, including a targeted consultation with small businesses in 2015.

“Some requirements for certain food sectors would be phased in to reflect business size and different levels of industry readiness,” the CFIA said in a posting on the Canada Gazette.

“Plain-language tools and guidance would be provided to support small businesses that are involved in importing food, or preparing food for export for interprovincial trade, in meeting the requirements.”

The CFIA also explained harmonization between regulations in Canada and the U.S. – which recently introduced the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) – had been an important aspect.

“Canada and the United States are working together to harmonize regulatory approaches between the two countries where possible, including approaches on food safety,” it said.

“Under the Regulatory Cooperation Council (RCC), the CFIA has been working with its counterparts in the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on a number of food safety initiatives, some of which will be furthered by the proposed Regulations.”

The difference in estimated annual benefits and costs – related to aspects like the traceability of food, licensing of businesses, and the use of preventive controls – is less than CAD\$1 million.

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