



Canadian Food  
Inspection Agency

Agence canadienne  
d'inspection des aliments

# *Guide to Importing Food Products & Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR)*

Importing food into Canada



Canada 

# Objectives

- Overview of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)
- Overview of the import process
- Overview of the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations
- Canadian labelling requirements
- Canadian food safety standards and guidelines

# Overview of CFIA Services

The CFIA is the Government of Canada's key science-based regulator for the following:

- Food Safety
- Animal Health
- Plant Protection



# Canadian Food Inspection Agency

## Vision

To excel as a science-based regulator, trusted and respected by Canadians and the international community

## Mission

Dedicated to safeguarding food, animals and plants, which enhances the health and well-being of Canada's people, environment and economy.

# Canadian Import Context

Canada is the fifth largest food importer in the world

- valued at approximately \$44 billion per year (2019)
- from 191 countries and 21,000 importers

Approximately 40% of food products sold in Canada are imported and many domestic products contain imported ingredients. Food imports are due to many factors:

- limited availability at the national level throughout the year
- Canada's Cultural Diversity
- Free Trade Agreements

# Government Agencies Involved In Imported Food

- Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)
- Health Canada (HC)
- Global Affairs Canada
- Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA, Customs)

# Border Clearance Process

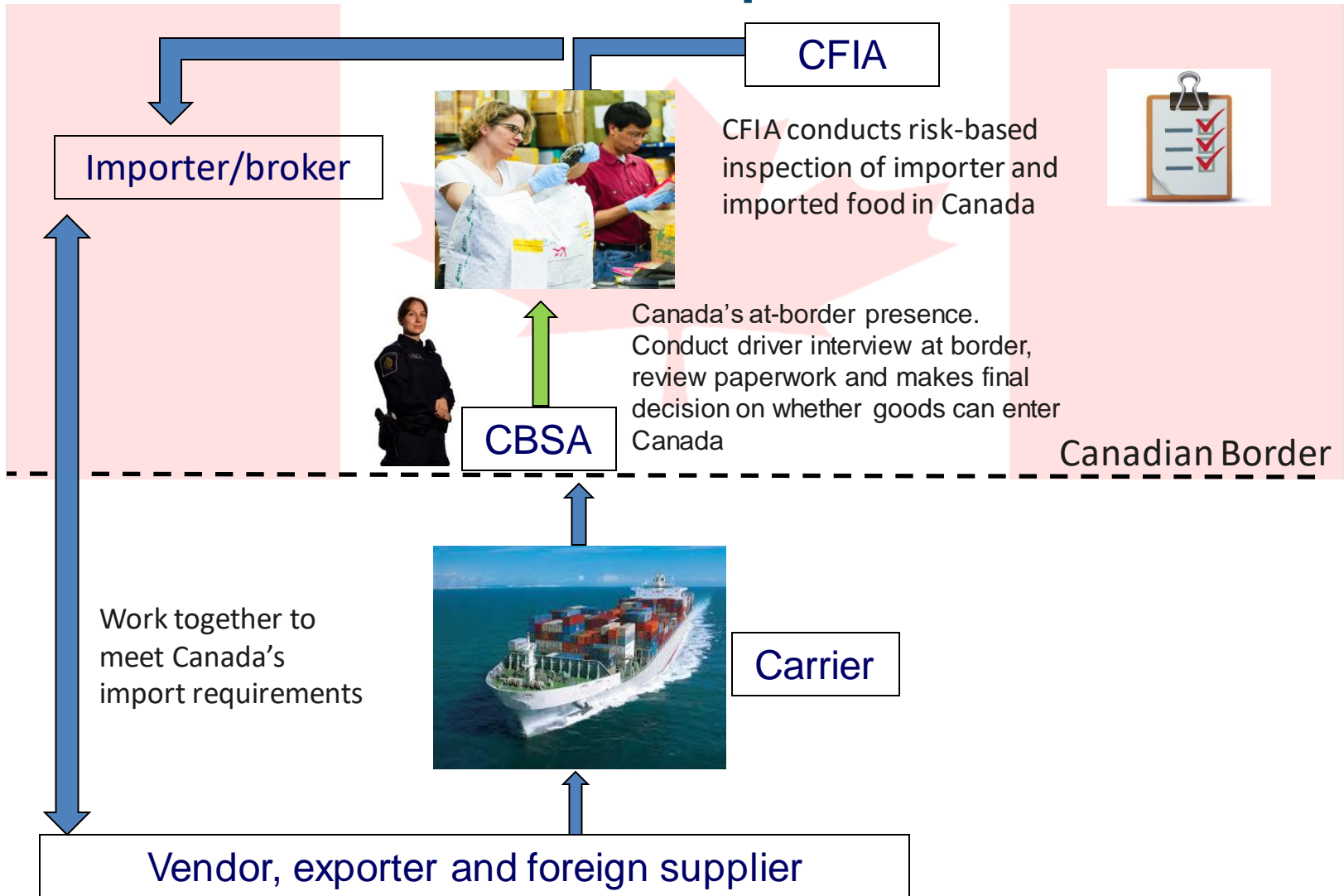
## CFIA:

- National Import Service Centre process import request documentation/data sent electronically or by fax from the importing community across Canada
- Officers review the declaration and return an admissibility recommendation electronically to CBSA; who then relays it to the client

## CBSA – Canada Border Services Agency:

- Supports the administration and enforcement of legislation as it applies to imported products
- Review import documentation (permits, certificates, licenses-presented before goods released)
- Perform examinations of incoming goods

# Roles and Responsibilities



# HOW CFIA DETERMINES IMPORT REQUIREMENTS



- ✓ Risks associated with the product
- ✓ Product's intended use
  - *plants used for propagation vs plants used for consumption or processing*
- ✓ Product's country of origin
- ✓ Presence or absence of certain plant pests or animal diseases both in Canada & by foreign country
- ✓ Availability of risk mitigation tools, such as heat treatment or fumigation, and their effectiveness

# AUTOMATED IMPORT REFERENCE SYSTEM (AIRS)

- The Automated Import Reference System (AIRS) shows the import requirements for Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) regulated commodities
- Resource for all staff, CBSA, brokers, importers and the public
  - Follows a series of drop-down options that include:
    - ❖ *Harmonized System (HS) classification (CBSA)*
    - ❖ *Origin, destination, end use, and miscellaneous qualifiers pertaining to the commodity for import*

# What to consider when using AIRS:



- AIRS is only for reference & updated frequently
- Importers are responsible to ensure their information is accurate at the time of importation
- AIRS does NOT include requirements for other government departments
  - Importers should consult Acts & Regulations prior to importation



# Canadian Food Inspection Agency



[Sign up to get AIRS Updates by e-mail](#)

[Transfer to AIRS User Guide](#)

[AIRS Home](#)

## Import Requirements

### Find by Commodity:

[Help](#)

Ensure at least one check box has been selected. \*Required  
When doing a search by HS Code, use only the first six digits. \*Required

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

HS Description  
HS Code  
Alternate Description  
Key Words  
Latin Names



Search

Back

Start Over

### Select by Drill-down:

[Help](#)



Please select HS Code Level 1. Use the 'Go' button to continue.

Go

# CFIA's Generic Import Process

1.

• Requirements

2.

• Permission

3.

• Clearance

4.

• At-border

5.

• Inspection (Destination)

6.

• Reporting

# Non-compliant shipments at the border

- ✗ If a product has entered Canada and is found non-compliant, it can be ordered removed, destroyed, or in some exceptions detained and brought into compliance
  - ✗ Additional enforcement actions can be taken if necessary. (Border Lookout/CBSA Target)
- ✗ Notice of Violation may be issued as either a Notice of Violation with a warning, or a Notice of Violation with a penalty (AMP Act)
- ✗ CBSA may also take their own enforcement action on importers for repeated mis-declarations or deliberate misdeclarations

# *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations*

## **Scope**

- Generally apply **to food for human consumption** (including ingredients) that is **imported, exported, or inter-provincially** traded.
- Apply to **food animals** from which meat products to be **exported or inter-provincially** traded may be derived.
- Some of the **traceability, labelling and advertising** provisions apply **to intra-provincially** traded foods.

# Licensing

Licensing will demonstrate accountability for food safety along the food chain, by ensuring that any manufacturing, processing, treating, preserving, grading, packaging or labelling done to a food was carried out by a licence holder under CFIA oversight.



# Who Needs a Licence

- If a person imports food into Canada, a Safe Food for Canadians (SFC) licence is required.
- You do not need an SFC licence to export to Canada
- It's the importer located in Canada that requires a SFC licence

# Preventive Controls

- Requirements include
  - the responsibility of the operator
  - hazard identification, analysis and control measures
  - establishment conditions
  - treatment and processes
  - sanitation, pest control and non-food agents
  - conveyances and equipment
  - unloading, loading and storage
  - competency
  - hygiene
- Outcome-based where possible to allow for flexibility and innovation
- Includes investigation, complaints, recalls



# Traceability Requirements

## Document Requirements for Importers

- **Identify:** common name; name & principal place of business; lot code or other unique identifier;
- **Trace back:** the date on which the food was provided to them and by whom it was provided;
- **Trace forward:** to whom they provided the food and the date on which it was provided.

# What Information Does the Importer Need?

Your Canadian importer may ask:

- for information about the products you are exporting;
- for information about the manufacturing practices and safety controls of the food being exported;
- how you are addressing any hazards associated with the food;
- if you are part of a food safety certification program;
- to visit you to verify the effectiveness of your controls.

# Exporting Foods to Canada

- All food imported into Canada is required to meet:
  - general food safety and nutritional quality standards
  - any applicable grade standards ([IBR documents](#))
  - any specified standard container sizes
  - labelling and packaging requirements
  - any applicable plant health requirements for fresh produce
  - any applicable animal health requirements for foods of animal origin
- Food products sold as food in Canada must not be adulterated as per the Part B, Division 15 of the [Food and Drug Regulations](#) (FDR)
- Organic foods:
  - must have an accompanying organic certificate that the importer will be required to show to CFIA
  - must meet all organic requirements including the organic labelling requirements outlined in the SFCR
  - [Canada Organic Regime import requirements](#)

# Food Fraud

- Globally, foods such as olive oil, honey, dry spices, fish, fruit juices and organic food products are considered high-risk commodities for fraud.
- Food fraud occurs when food is misrepresented by: adulteration; ingredient substitution; counterfeiting; false, misleading or deceptive labelling or advertising; and document falsification
- Food fraud:
  - has economic impacts for the food supply chain and health or food safety risks for consumers (e.g. undeclared allergens, melamine in milk products, false nutrition claims)
- As part of its role, the CFIA conducts routine sampling and testing of various food commodities for food fraud.
- Combatting food fraud is a joint responsibility between CFIA, the industry, and the consumers.

# Canadian Labelling Requirements

Most prepackaged foods sold in Canada are required to be labelled with:

- Common Name
  - Date Marking\* and Storage Instructions
  - Dealer Name and Place of Business
  - List of Ingredients and Allergens
  - Net Quantity
  - Nutrition Facts Table
- ✓ This information must be legible and in both official languages (English and French)
- ✓ All information and representations on food labels must be truthful and not misleading.

In addition, there may be commodity specific requirements – for example, certain commodities require country of origin labelling

\* Most prepackaged products having a durable life of 90 days or less must be marked

# Canadian food safety standards and guidelines

- CFIA
  - [Notice of modification: Prohibiting the use of partially hydrogenated oils \(PHOs\) in foods](#)
  - [Bacteriological Guidelines for Fish and Fish Products](#)
- Health Canada
  - [Guidance documents - Legislation and guidelines - Food and nutrition, Microbiological safety of foods](#)
  - [Policy on \*Listeria monocytogenes\* in ready-to-eat foods \(2011\)](#)
  - [Lists of permitted food additives](#)
  - [Maximum levels for chemical contaminants in foods](#)
  - [Maximum residue limits \(MRL\) for veterinary drugs in foods](#)
  - [Working Residue Levels \(WRLs\) For Antimicrobial Residues In Honey](#)
  - [Maximum residue limits for pesticides](#)

# Where to start?

## Services and information

### Food recalls and allergy alerts

Consult the list of the most recent public advisories for high-risk food recalls. The CFIA issues public advisories for all food products where consumption could cause serious health consequences.

### Licensing

Find out if your food business needs a licence, when and how to apply and other related information – including tips to avoid delays during the licence application process.

### General food requirements and guidance

Businesses that import or prepare food for export or to be sent across provincial or territorial

### Information for consumers

Everyone has a role to play in food safety. Find out how to keep yourself and your family safe by following safe food handling practices at home and staying informed.

### Getting started: Toolkit for food businesses

Use our interactive tools and other resources to find out how and when the new *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations* apply to your business and what steps you need to take.

## Most requested

- [My CFIA – apply for a Safe Food for Canadians \(SFC\) licence](#)
- [Interactive tools and timelines: Find out if and when the new requirements apply to your business](#)
- [Understanding the \*Safe Food for Canadians Regulations: A Handbook for Businesses\*](#)
- [Safe Food for Canadians Licence Registry](#)
- [Questions and answers: \*Safe Food for Canadians Regulations\*](#)

## Getting started: Toolkit for food businesses

The *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations* (SFCR) generally apply to businesses that import food or prepare food for export or interprovincial trade. Certain traceability, labelling and advertising requirements also apply to food businesses that trade intraprovincially.

Does your business need to meet new requirements? Find out by using these interactive tools:



[Find out if your business requires a licence](#)



[Find out if your business requires traceability records](#)



[Find out if your business requires a preventive control plan](#)

Consult the sector-specific [timelines](#) to determine when the requirements apply to your business.

[SFCR Timelines](#)

# More information on Importing under SFCR

## Services and information

### Food recalls

Warnings and allergy alerts.



### Importing food, plants or animals

Permits, notices, support and online services.



### Food label requirements

Claims and statements, standards of identity, grades, notices to industry, reading labels.

### Food licences

How to apply, timelines, licence registry.

### Plant health

Plant pests and invasive species, fertilizer, soil, grains and field crops, seeds, cannabis, forestry, and horticulture.

### Plant varieties

How to register, registered and cancelled varieties, Plant Breeders' Rights, plants with novel traits, potato varieties.



### Organic products

Standards, claims, sampling, testing, logos, labels.


### Travelling with pets, food or plants

Rules for travelling with a pet or bringing food or plants to Canada.

### Exporting food, plants or animals

Licences, certificates, guidance, notices, and online services.

### Food safety

### Inspection and enforcement

Guidance, investigations, enforcement action and data, compliance.

### Animal health


Biosecurity, humane transport, animal welfare, disease and surveillance, feed, veterinary biologics.



### Preventive controls

Rules and best practices for people, property and processes.

## Most requested

- [Make a payment](#)
- [Travelling with dogs](#)
- [Import requirements \(AIRS\)](#) 
- [My CFIA online services](#)
- [Acts and regulations](#)
- [Prosecution bulletins](#)
- [Toolkit for food businesses](#)
- [How to renew or amend an issued permission](#)

## Contact us

- [Phone, email, addresses, contact form](#)

[www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca)

# Questions

