

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Canada Consults on Food Labeling Modernization

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Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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Report Highlights:

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency moved into its third phase of consultations on key proposals to modernize the food labeling system. Among the proposals are the elimination of standard container sizes for certain products and a discussion on food compositional standards and standardized common names. Stakeholders should submit their comments on line by February 28, 2017.

General Information:

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) objective of the Food Labeling Modernization initiative is to develop a more modern food labeling system that responds to current and future challenges by:

- improving access to information about food labeling to help consumers make informed decisions about the food they buy
- protecting consumers, while enhancing opportunities for industry to be competitive
- responding more effectively to consumer, industry and government needs related to food labelling

Consultations initially started in 2013 to identify and prioritize issues relating to food labeling modernization, and continued in 2015 when CFIA sought options that could lead to recommendations for modernizing the Canadian food labeling system. The most recent report on these consultation was summarized by CFIA in their ["what we heard report"](#).

Currently, the CFIA moved into its third phase of consultations on key proposals to modernize the food labeling system. Stakeholders should submit their comments on line by February 28, 2017 at the following address: [Discussion Paper and Online Questionnaire - Phase III](#)

These consultations will focus on two "streams". The first stream is about modernized regulations which are meant to improve mandatory labeling requirements with respect to:

- Date marketing
- Food company/producer information,
- Origin of imported foods,
- Legibility,
- Percent ingredient declaration, class names;

and also to address previous regulatory commitments (e.g. beer standard and standard container sizes).

In the context of this first stream, one of the proposals is related to the elimination of standard container sizes for some products identified during the previous consultation phase from 2015. The list is available on page 32 of the [consultation document](#). Discussions around this proposal would also allow interested stakeholders to bring to CFIA's attention other products than those currently on the list and that could benefit from the removal of the container size restrictions.

Similarly, stakeholders could also use the framework offered under the first stream to raise concerns related to food compositional standards and standardized common names.

The second stream will focus on establishing a new approach for truthful and not misleading food labeling that realigns the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders. Under the proposed new approach, the industry will bear the main responsibility to ensure compliance with Canada's regulations, including ensuring that labels are not false or misleading to consumers, while for their part the consumers will be encouraged to take an active role in seeking information about a company's claim by contacting the company directly, or making complaints directly to companies should they have concerns.

The government's role will focus on adopting a risk-based enforcement of rules related to food safety and fraud, developing guidance, investigating falsely labeled products, and targeting inspection resources on areas of highest risk, including economically motivated adulteration of food and fraud.