

LABELING REQUIREMENTS FOR IMPORTED PROCESSED FOOD PRODUCTS
AND BEVERAGES

A company proposing to export processed food products and beverages to Mexico must first find and legally appoint and register with the Secretaria de Hacienda y Crédito Público (SHCP) a Mexican company as its representative for the import of such products into Mexico. In turn, the Mexican importer/agent must register the proposed product with the Secretariat de Salud (SSA). If SSA is satisfied, the product complies with Mexican food safety laws and SSA registration number is issued for which there is a registration fee of US\$225. In addition to the fee, to obtain registration, the following information must be provided:

- A certificate, issued by the Canadian Federal (or a provincial) Department of Health stating that the product could or is being sold in Canada. The certificate must be written in Spanish, notarized and consularized by one of the Mexican consulates in Canada.
- A physio-chemical analysis of the product conducted by a federal or provincial Department of Health laboratory or authorized laboratory. Again analysis results must be in Spanish and consularized by a Mexican consulate.
- A step by step technical description of the production of the product, in Spanish, and consularized.
- A description, in Spanish of the primary (and any secondary) packaging or container specifying materials, form, sealing material and capacity.
- Copies of the product label and color photographs of the product.

SSA also requires that a small (approx 1 1/2 by 1 1/2 inch or larger) label be affixed to each product. This "back label" (which also must be submitted for approval to SSA to obtain a registration number) is required to provide at least the following information (in Spanish): brand name and generic name of product, SSA registration number, importers name and address and SHCP taxation number, name and address of exporter, net content in grams or liters and origin of product.

Although not apparently obligatory, some products such as Dare cookies of Kitchener, Ont. also indicate ingredients and point of customs entry on back label. Should note in this regard that the labeling requirements, chemical analysis, "food safety law", etc., all lack transparency and can be subject to arbitrary decisions and discretion at various levels of the registration process.

The Director of Quality Certification in SECOFI (Secretariat of Industry and Commerce) has advised us that there are no can size requirements with respect to imported processed food products or beverages.