

Moreover, any sample, or collection of samples, of no commercial value is exempted from the *NOM* certification requirements.

Under the health regulations administered by the Secretariats of Agriculture and Health, three categories of samples are recognized:

- *personal use samples* may be imported without prior authorization. A letter should be presented to the Customs official, stating that the product is for personal use and will not be used for commercial purposes or be given to a third party;
- *samples for research and testing* may be imported in quantities of up to three units, without prior authorization. Such samples are for use by laboratories conducting tests for certification or other purposes. They must be accompanied by a written notification to the *Secretaría de Salud* (SS), Secretariat of Health, stating that the product is for research or laboratory tests and it will not be used for human consumption. Some laboratories require proof that the samples have been properly imported and receipts for any duty paid should be retained; and
- *samples for exhibition or tasting* of products requiring prior import authorization must be accompanied by the appropriate sanitary authorization certificate. If the application states that the samples are not for commercial use, a permit will be issued even if the applicant is not an importer under Mexican law. Food samples of products that do not require prior import authorization need only a declaration that they are samples not for commercial use.

## FREE TRADE ZONES IN MEXICO

There are several border zones in Mexico that have been established as free trade zones. They include 20 kilometres along the United States-Mexico border, the Mexico-Guatemala border and the ports of Cancún, Cozumel, Chetumal and La Paz. The free trade zones also include the state of Baja California, the city of Agua Prieta and an area in the state of Sonora. When entering these zones, certain products are exempted from some or all taxes and duties and import permit requirements. The products covered may vary from time to time in each of these regions.

