

New certificates must be obtained for each lot, although previous requirements for prior import permits have been eliminated under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In general, the importer must demonstrate that the product is fit for human consumption and complies with all health regulations. Usually, it is sufficient to demonstrate that the product is approved for human consumption in Canada. Certificates of Origin and Hygiene, and Certificates of Inspection that are issued by Fisheries and Oceans Canada are accepted by the Mexican authorities. They do not normally have to be legalized. Exporters should consult with their agent or importer in Mexico well in advance of shipment to ensure that all Mexican regulations have been complied with. Seemingly minor errors in paperwork may be treated as deliberate falsifications by Mexican authorities, leading to serious delays.

Additional regulations govern the operation of ports and navigable waters. Mexico is a signatory to more than a dozen international treaties and agreements affecting the oceans. Most observers do not consider these to have a significant market impact because they tend to specify principles rather than actions.

UNITED NATIONS EEZ AGREEMENT

Since 1978, limits to territorial claims over the ocean have been recognized by all member countries of the United Nations. The final stage of this process took place on 10 December 1982, with the formal signing of UNCLOS III. Part V of this agreement defines an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as extending up to 200 nautical miles from the base lines of a coastal state's territorial sea.

In Mexico's case, this increased its ocean resources to about three million square kilometres, which includes the entire Continental Shelf. Since Mexico claims Guadalupe Island and the Revillagigedo Islands, its EEZ reaches more than 400 nautical miles from the mainland in some places.

Article 56 of the UN agreement recognizes "sovereign rights" over the EEZ "for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources, whether living or non-living, of the waters superjacent to the sea-bed... and with regard to other activities for the economic exploitation and exploration of the zone."

The rights to an EEZ are balanced by a number of duties set out in the agreement. For example, the coastal state must take steps to preserve living species and manage harvesting for "maximum sustainable yield" based on scientific evidence. The agreement assigns "jurisdiction" over the protection and preservation of the marine environment, to the coastal state. The state must also maintain charts and geographic data adequate to identify the limits of its EEZ.

These requirements, however, are not accompanied by any specific standards. Article 61 simply requires coastal states to cooperate with "competent international organizations" and to "take into account" generally accepted international standards.