

quality products which are new to Mexico, have a good track record in their home markets, are competitively priced and can be adapted to Mexican tastes, if necessary.

Shipment to Mexico is usually by truck via Laredo, Texas. Several Canadian trucking companies can arrange through shipment to major Mexican cities. A few companies have begun to offer less-than-truckload shipments. Some exporters ship full truck loads to bonded refrigerated warehouses in Mexico and distribute from there.

Attending trade shows is an excellent way to introduce new products and make contact with potential customers or partners. The annual *ANTAD* show in Guadalajara is the main show for food products, while the industrial side of the food industry is covered by *Expo Alimentos*. This show is held annually in August in Monterrey. Trade shows are also organized by the Canadian Business Centre in Mexico City. Canada Food Week is scheduled for November, 1996.

## THE REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

### STANDARDS AND LABELLING

In 1994, a new labelling decree changed Mexico's requirements for imported consumer goods. In the past, Canadian producers were able to satisfy the regulations by providing the Mexican importer with stick-on Spanish labels. In addition, products covered by *Normas Oficiales Mexicanas (NOMs)*, official standards, had to be accompanied by certificates of compliance and meet the labelling requirements specified in those *NOMs* when they arrived at the border.

### SPECIAL CERTIFICATES

Many food products are covered by *Normas Oficiales Mexicanas (NOMs)*, official standards, and some require prior import authorization. Any Mexican government department may issue *NOMs*, but those affecting food products are the responsibility of two departments:

- The *Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería y Desarrollo Rural (SAGAR)*, Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Development. The products covered include unprocessed agricultural and animal products. These regulations include a general requirement for phytosanitary and animal health certificates, as well as special regulations requiring a prior "sanitary authorization" for specific shipments of certain products.
- The *Secretaría de Salud (SS)*, Secretariat of Health. These regulations affect all fish and fish products, as well as many processed foods and materials used to produce food, such as fertilizers and pesticides. Specified products must be approved for import before they can enter Mexico and must be accompanied by a sanitary authorization.

These regulations do not generally apply to processed foods, but they are subject to frequent change. Mexican authorities accept most Canadian health certificates, including those issued by the agriculture, fisheries and health and welfare departments. The exporter should begin consultations with the Mexican agent or distributor and provide the necessary information at least three months in advance of the planned shipment.

### LABELLING

The Mexican consumer protection law requires that all information contained on any consumer product or its labels, containers and packages must be in Spanish.

Food and beverages are presently covered by specific *Normas Oficiales Mexicanas (NOMs)*, official standards, or by other regulations issued by the *Secretaría de Salud (SS)*, Secretariat of Health, in addition to the generic labelling requirements that apply to all products.

Beginning in 1995, these requirements will be replaced by general regulations covering all food and beverage products, except those sold in bulk. Draft regulations were published in June 1994 and were to become

effective upon final publication, expected in late 1994. Grace periods for compliance were anticipated to extend into early 1995.

The product description must reveal the product's basic components. Food and beverage labels have to include a list of ingredients, the lot number, the expiry date and special instructions for preservation. A "best before" date is optional, and nutritional information is required only if a particular nutritional quality is claimed or advertised.

Outside packages or wrappers must contain all of the required information, or must allow for the visibility of inside labels.

The new regulations also specify certain claims that may not be made on a food or beverage label. They include claims to the effect that a balanced diet does not supply adequate nutrition, claims that cannot be proven, and claims that contravene the Mexican health law.

## KEY CONTACTS

### CANADA

#### *Canadian Government*

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) is the Canadian federal government department most directly responsible for trade development. The **InfoCentre** is the first contact point for advice on how to start exporting. It provides information on export-related programs and services; helps find fast answers to export problems; acts as the entry point to DFAIT's trade information network; and can provide companies with copies of specialized export publications.

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