

Food Legislation

In this area, five general framework directives on food are under consideration:

1. additives;
2. materials and articles in contact with food;
3. food labelling;
4. foods for particular nutritional uses; and
5. food processes, sampling, inspection, irradiation, new foods obtained through biotechnology, etc.

The aim is to provide a framework within which agreement could be reached on uniform treatment with no exceptions in all Member States, thus removing all technical barriers to trade in all these respects.

While the Member States have reached agreement in principle of mutual recognition of national standards, much work remains to be completed on matters such as permitted additives, residue levels, the precise materials deemed to be safe under Community law and the exact wording to be used to inform consumers what they are buying. Clearly, Canadian exporters of food products such as honey, maple products, canned and frozen fruit and vegetables could face additional costs in meeting these new standards. On the other hand, once the standards are met, sales to all twelve Member States within the Community will be facilitated. Currently, different standards exist in each Member State which makes Community-wide marketing and promotion difficult.

In the area of food products in particular, there could be a tendency for the new EC requirements to be adopted as standards by other countries. In view of this, it will be important that the activities of international standard bodies such as the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius are strengthened. In this context, the use of international standards should be emphasized as a key element in the current GATT Round.

CONCLUSION

All opportunities must be used to monitor developments in the EC carefully so that any adverse impact on Canadian exports can be minimized. At the same time, the Uruguay Round is providing a forum for promoting improved and more secure access to the EC market for Canadian agricultural and food products. This parallel approach will ensure that improvements in access negotiated in the MTN are not nullified by the harmonized regulations which will be in effect after 1992.