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# ARY INDUSTRY MARKET AND LOGISTICS PROFILE

## elling Products for the Mexican Market

### BACKGROUND

Product labelling in Mexico is governed, in part, by the *Ley de Protección al Consumidor* (consumer protection law). Article 34 of that law requires that all information contained on a product or its labels, containers and packages must be in Spanish. The same requirement applies to product advertisements. Nonetheless, the labelling decree of June 19, 1987 allowed "pre-packaged" goods to enter Mexico with foreign labels, as long as minimum Spanish labelling was added by affixing stickers. Pre-packaged goods have been defined as those that are packaged without the consumer present.

In addition to these generic requirements, many products have long been subject to specific quality standards, known as *Normas Oficiales Mexicanas* or NOMs. Compliance with the NOM certification and labelling requirements has, until recently, been the responsibility of the importer. Clothing and textiles, leather products, electrical appliances, medical equipment and supplies, foods and beverages, and pesticides are among the products subject to these specific labelling requirements.

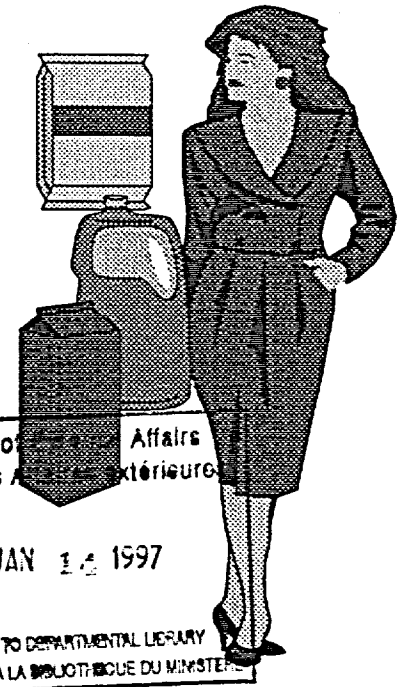
Previously, Canadian exporters of most consumer products had been able to satisfy the Mexican requirements by arranging to have Spanish stickers applied to the original English/French labels by the

Mexican importer or agent after importation and prior to resale.

In March 1994, the Government of Mexico published an official decree which states that effective immediately, both the generic labelling requirements and those set out in NOMs will be enforced at the border. This means that compliance has effectively become the responsibility of the Canadian exporter.

The official decree on labelling (more formally, a "Decisión" by the Minister of Trade and Industrial Development) is dated February 25, 1994. It came into force one day after it was published in the *Diario Oficial de la Federación* on March 7, 1994.

The Mexican government is expected to tighten the regulations to require full original Spanish labelling to be affixed at the point of origin. Canadian exporters to Mexico should prepare for these changes by developing full Spanish labelling for their products.



### GENERAL LABELLING REQUIREMENTS

The new regulations apply to all goods intended for sale to consumers, with certain exceptions which are discussed below. All such products must be labelled in Spanish when they arrive at Mexican customs. The label must contain specific information identifying the product, the

importer and the exporter as well as instructions for use and care (see box).

The labels must be legible, and must be "attached to the product, container or package, depending on the circumstances of the product and how it is to be marketed". Normally, the label will be affixed to each individual package offered for sale to consumers. If the product will be sold as a container of smaller containers, the individual packages do not need to be labelled. There are no

### SECTORAL REPORT

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has prepared this summary report on the **Labelling Requirements for the Mexican market**. It has been produced and published by Prospectus Inc. under the Access North America Program, along with other sector profiles and summaries on business opportunities in Mexico. It is available from:

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### HIGHLIGHTS

**Effective March 8, 1994, a new labelling decree changed Mexico's requirements for imported consumer goods:**

- all consumer goods, excluding bulk products, must now be labelled in Spanish (subject to mandatory content requirements) when they arrive at Mexican customs; and
- products covered by *Normas Oficiales Mexicanas* (NOMs) must be accompanied by certificates of compliance and must meet the labelling requirements specified in those NOMs when they arrive at the border.

The requirements for Spanish labelling contained in the March 8 decree are not new, but the enforcement of regulations at the border effectively shifts the onus for compliance from the Mexican importer to the foreign exporter. In addition, the rules for products not covered by NOMs are now somewhat more specific.

