

Mandatory labelling will take effect in April 2001, one year after Japan is scheduled to revise the Japanese Agricultural Standards. Canada will continue to follow the issue closely and will make representations, where appropriate, to ensure that Canada's reputation as a supplier of safe and nutritious food is not jeopardized, so that access for Canadian foodstuffs is preserved.

Variety-specific Testing of Tomatoes from Canada

Japan had required that tomatoes be approved for importation on a variety-specific basis. The scientific basis for such an approach is questionable. Variety-specific testing is not only expensive, but also delays the introduction of new varieties into the marketplace. This is particularly problematic for commercially grown tomatoes, as new and improved varieties are constantly being developed for commercial use. For example, after seven years of bilateral discussions and testing, Japan removed the ban on imports of seven varieties of Canadian tomatoes in September 1997. Of the seven varieties, only one remained in commercial production.

In June 1998, Canada presented to Japanese officials all of the requisite scientific technical data for five new varieties. Japan delayed in providing final approval. In 1999, Canada made high-level representations, pressing not only for the approval of the five additional varieties, but more broadly for elimination of the requirement for approval of new tomato varieties. As a result, in September 1999, Japan announced the end of the requirement for variety-specific approval for Canadian tomatoes, thus resolving the issue.

Fish Feed in Airtight Containers

The Japanese customs tariff allows duty-free importation for fish and other animal feed imported in "airtight container not more than 10kg each". Larger containers and those considered not to be "airtight" are subject to a duty of 36 yen/kg (reduced from 40 yen/kg on April 1, 2000). Officials are examining whether there is unjustified discrimination in the form of a more onerous definition of "airtight" being applied to imported products than to Japanese products.

Live Oyster Exports

In response to a specific request from oyster producers in British Columbia, CFIA officials have been negotiating with their Japanese counterparts to allow the export of live oysters to Japan.

CFIA has conducted specialized testing and has provided data to Japanese officials. Japan conducted an on-site visit in British Columbia in December 1999. CFIA officials are now working toward completing a final arrangement with Japan in early 2000.

Greenhouse Peppers

The Canadian greenhouse vegetable industry, particularly in British Columbia, is developing markets for its products in Japan. In January 1999, Canada presented arguments in favour of the recognition of a pest-free area in British Columbia. Technical discussions with Japan are scheduled to begin in 2000.

Hay

In December 1998, Japan approved an import protocol for fumigated hay from Canada. Japan's concern is the introduction of the Hessian fly, which is also a pest of rice. The Canadian hay industry wants to pursue the approval of a heat-treatment protocol, which is deemed to be more economical than fumigation. Although the first trials were inconclusive, the heat-treatment method has been refined and tests have resulted in 100 percent elimination of the pest. Canada will present Japan with the heat-treatment protocol as revised by the industry.

BUILDING PRODUCTS AND HOUSING

Early implementation in 1999 of amendments to the Building Standards Law to introduce aspects of a more performance-based (rather than prescriptive) building standard promises to bring great benefit to Canadian exporters. Further liberalization and deregulation with respect to building products would benefit both Japanese consumers and Canadian suppliers of wooden building materials. To this end, Canada and Japan continue their cooperation through mutual recognition of standards, the exchange of test data for building products and joint reviews of construction methods.