

5. SPECIAL CERTIFICATES AND PERMITS

At least three months prior to the planned export shipment, the exporter should take steps to find out if the product is subject to any special import requirements. If it is, the exporter will have to work with the agent or importer to obtain all of the necessary permits and certificates.

The Government of Mexico regulates the quality and purity of a wide range of products. In general, the purpose of these regulations is to ensure that the products are safe for use by consumers. In some cases, they also require that consumers be provided with certain product information, including instructions for use and handling. This includes requirements for product labelling as well as point-of-sale material.

These standards apply to imported, as well as domestically-produced goods, and special certificates are required at the border for many products. Compliance is technically the responsibility of the importer, so these certificates are not, strictly speaking, "shipping documents". However, Mexican officials require them before the goods can cross the border, and exporter-information is required to get them, so for practical purposes, the onus for compliance falls on the exporter.

Since even minor deficiencies in the documentation may lead to serious delays, the exporter should ensure that all special certificates are in the hands of the Mexican customs broker before the goods leave Canada. Normally, a Canadian customs broker will make arrangements with the Mexican broker well in advance.

Special certificates fall into three main categories:

- official standards, known as *Normas Oficiales Mexicanas (NOMs)* for such products as textiles, leather, electrical appliances, building materials, and chemicals. They are administered by the *Secretaría de Comercio y Fomento Industrial (SECOFI)*, Secretariat of Commerce and Industrial Development. Goods subject to *NOMs* must be accompanied by a certificate of compliance in order to enter Mexico;
- health regulations are administered by 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; and
- health regulations are administered by the *Secretaría de Salud (SS)* Secretariat of Health. These affect all fish and fish products, as well as many processed foods and materials used to produce food, such as fertilizers and pesticides. They also cover medicines, health and personal care products. Specified products must be approved for import before they can enter the country and must be accompanied by a sanitary authorization.