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**SPECIAL REPORT**  
*Logistics & Transportation*  


# THE ROAD FORWARD

The way food and beverages are shipped continues to change. In Part I of this special report, *Food in Canada* looks at how food safety has influenced logistics in the industry **By Carolyn Gruske**

**A**nticipating what's going to happen is one of the daily challenges for any logistician — will a load arrive in time or will weather hamper delivery? — but contemplating the future of logistics in the food and beverage industry means considering everything from changing government regulations to new automated technologies, to improved training programs.

One such change that the entire industry is facing is the adoption of new food safety rules that have been proposed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). The *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations*, which were published in January, are undergoing a period of public commentary and consultation which will last until April 21. If adopted by parliament, the regulations would require companies that produce, store, handle, transport, import or export food to

implement preventive food safety controls, which the government describes as a "written document that demonstrates how hazards and risks to food are identified and controlled. The controls are based on internationally recognized good manufacturing practices and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles." They will also require traceability capabilities.

While most large producers, 3PLs, warehouses and transportation companies already have the ability to meet or exceed these requirements, many smaller organizations may find the regulations challenging to implement. According to Tammy Switucha, director, Domestic Food Safety Planning and Requirements, CFIA, the agency has taken the concerns of those types of businesses into account.

"The proposed regulations provide a considerable amount of time for certain types of businesses such as small and micro-size businesses to comply with the regulations," says Switucha. "Those that are currently federally regulated under the CFIA would be required to have the requirements in place upon coming into force. Others are being given up to three years to comply depending on the size of business and depending on what foods they are producing."

She adds that the CFIA is running seminars and webinars to offer businesses information about how they can learn about the regulations and update their business practices to meet the proposed rules. (For a list of events, see: ➔



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<http://inspection.sondages-surveys.ca/surveys/CFIA-ACIA/proposed-sfcr-info-session/?l=en>.

A year ago, the CFIA and the USFDA signed the *Food Safety Systems Recognition Arrangements*, which in part allows for “enhanced regulatory co-operation, improved co-ordination” and “verification activities” between the two agencies. Switucha says traceability is one of those areas where the two agencies are working to find more common ground. “We are currently working with the USFDA to determine what that would look like,” she says. “We’ve been working quite extensively with them over the past year to be able to scope out how the arrangement will work and what kind of information we’ll be sharing with each other to ensure that we respect the terms of the arrangement.”

While the two agencies may have common goals, Keith Warriner, professor of food safety in the Department of Food Science at the University of Guelph, says the two countries have a very different style when it comes to regulating the food industry. He says the FDA’s *Food Safety Modernization Act* (FSMA), which has been rolled out in pieces over the past few years (and still isn’t fully implemented), is very prescriptive in nature. In contrast, he notes, Canadian regulations, which use a risk-based approach, are more descriptive and in keeping with the nature of the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). “There is a discord there. The confusing part is how to become FSMA compliant. It’s a pickle trying to dig into it,” he says. Still, Warriner expects Canadian regulations to eventually echo the FSMA’s *Sanitary Transportation of Human and Animal Food* rules, which were finalized in 2016.

While it may be challenging to meet an assortment of different standards, the idea of having them is a good one, says John Halleran, director of Quality Assurance for Etobicoke, Ont.-based logistics provider Thomson Terminals Limited. “With these common standards everybody is working from the same play-

book, everybody is working from the same system. Everybody is trying to achieve the same result,” he says.

By working toward a common goal, Halleran says it’s easier for food producers to work with service providers to achieve results. This is especially important for traceability when communicating across different technologies using different data sets. Having common goals also means it’s easier to train people in the food handling techniques that not only promote food safety, but efficiency and good business practices.

“Where businesses are putting their efforts and focus is the management of the people. The challenge is to get your people trained in what to do, and get them trained in the right things,” explains Halleran. “You have to have people with application skills to be able to identify what’s important. It’s not so much that people need to be trained in HACCP or the different systems. You have to be able to articulate to them what they’re supposed to do, how they’re supposed to do it and how to record it.”

In addition to teaching drivers and warehouse workers safe food handling techniques, logistics companies are recalibrating the way they offer services. Doug Harrison, president and CEO of Richmond, B.C.-based VersaCold Logistics Services, says the company has found it necessary to revisit its own processes and procedures. “We’re spending more time on advanced planning, using advanced technology to be able to plan routings, and monitor weather fronts. More than 90 per cent of our long haul operations are done by team drivers, so they’re avoiding terminals and moving product across the network more quickly. We’re advance-booking appointments, to be able to get product into local DCs or retail DCs without undue delays.”

Part of the need for quicker deliveries is that the shelf life of products is becoming more important. Harrison says more food companies are producing fresh or time-sensitive products that require tighter delivery schedules and strict temperature controls during transportation over ever-increasing distances. “There’s more and more globalization of the food chain. We’re seeing it in our transportation management group where we do ocean and air freight, we’re getting more inquiries from Canadian manufacturers looking to sell product outside of North America. As transportation supply chains have evolved, there is the ability to move further into the world with efficient supply chains that allow a company to be competitive in the local markets. The challenge is, depending on the product, maintaining the freshness level.”

Part II of our look at logistics and the food and beverage industry will appear in the July/August 2017 Issue of *Food In Canada*.