

## Commercial Importers of Food into Canada Now Require Import Licence

*Brenda C. Swick, A. Chandimal Nicholas*

**April 30, 2019**

Canadian companies must now have a licence to import food and food products into Canada. They must also comply with several new standard and reporting requirements to ensure that imported food advertised and sold in Canada is safe. These new requirements are set out in the [Safe Food for Canadians Act](#) (SFCA) and the [Safe Food for Canadians Regulations](#) (SFCR).

If your organization imports or plans to import food into Canada, the new requirements are as follows:

- 1. Importers must hold a “food import licence.”** For some foods (e.g., meat, fish, dairy, eggs), an import license was required effective January 15, 2019. For other foods, an import license is not required until July 2020 and following.
- 2. Importers must implement a Preventive Controls (including a Complaint and Recall Procedure).** Food importers must have the requisite processes in place with storage and logistic providers, as well as foreign suppliers. A cross-border accreditation system does exist. For certain foods, these requirements apply immediately. In the case of others, they will apply in January 2020, July 2020, or July 2021, depending on the food and the size of the business. In the case of large food importers, they are required to maintain a compliance plan (the Preventive Control Plan).
- 3. Traceability: Importers are required to trace imported products from the supplier to the customer.** Importers are required to maintain records in respect of imported food products that trace and record the person/entity from which they were purchased and the person to whom they were sold. This requirement came into effect on January 15, 2019, for certain food imports and will come into effect in July 2020 for others.

Failure to comply can result in seizure of offending food products, and for each offence, the imposition of fines ranging to \$250,000 to \$5 million and/or imprisonment terms of six months to five years.

For more information on this topic, please contact Brenda Swick or Chandimal Nicholas.