



Health  
Canada

Santé  
Canada

*Your health and  
safety... our priority.*

*Votre santé et votre  
sécurité... notre priorité.*

Health Products and Food Branch

2012–2015

STRATEGIC PLAN



Canada

***Health Canada is the federal department responsible for helping the people of Canada maintain and improve their health. We assess the safety of drugs and many consumer products, help improve the safety of food, and provide information to Canadians to help them make healthy decisions. We provide health services to First Nations people and to Inuit communities. We work with the provinces to ensure our health care system serves the needs of Canadians.***

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## A Note from the Assistant Deputy Ministers

We are pleased to present the *Health Products and Food Branch's 2012–2015 Strategic Plan*, which details our change agenda for the next three years. This ambitious and achievable plan was developed with input from HPFB staff and other stakeholders, and will greatly support our mandate to help provide Canadians with continued access to safe and effective health products and food, as well as helping Canadians to make informed choices about their health.

Over the past few years, our Branch has been adapting to meet new and increasingly complex challenges. To provide clear direction over the next three years, we will focus on the Regulatory Roadmap, Operational Excellence, and the People Agenda. Openness and transparency will be increasingly important components in all of our activities as well.

In a rapidly evolving regulatory environment, innovations in areas such as science and social media are transforming the way Canadians use and learn about health products and food; we need to evolve with that environment. This Strategic Plan addresses the challenges of today and prepares our Branch for the challenges to come in the next three years and beyond. By laying a strong foundation now, we can help build a healthier future for all Canadians.



**Paul Glover**

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Health Products and Food Branch  
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# OVERVIEW

## What is the HPFB 2012–2015 Strategic Plan?

The *HPFB 2012–2015 Strategic Plan* provides strategic direction for our Branch by setting clear priorities that address current and future challenges and opportunities in the regulatory environment. This plan describes “what” we will do, while the Operational Plan will describe “how” we will do it.

Much has changed since the *2007–2012 Strategic Plan* was developed. The growth in the use of social media, heightened global safety issues, a different political environment, and a climate of fiscal restraint, are just some of the changes.

Given the rapidly evolving context and corresponding need for agility, the decision was made to develop a Strategic Plan that spans only three years. This will enable our Branch to adjust our strategies more frequently to respond to future domestic and international changes that may impact the safety of health products and food, and to take appropriate actions to continue to help protect the health and safety of Canadians.

## What is the Role of HPFB?

HPFB plays a vital role in protecting and promoting the health and safety of all Canadians. We take pride in being an impartial scientific and regulatory authority with responsibilities for monitoring the safety, effectiveness, and quality of food and health products in Canada, and in helping Canadians make informed decisions regarding the products they use. We also engage regularly with provinces and territories, health professionals, non-governmental organizations, industry, academia, and patient and other stakeholder groups, which better informs our work and provides opportunities to share important information with these stakeholders.

Our mandate is to take an integrated approach to managing the health-related risks and benefits of health products and food by:

- minimizing health risk factors to Canadians while maximizing the safety provided by the regulatory system for health products and food; and
- promoting conditions that enable Canadians to make healthy choices and providing information so that they can make informed decisions about their health.

Our vision is “to play a vital role in protecting and promoting the health and safety of all Canadians by excelling as a trusted scientific and regulatory authority for health products and food in Canada and internationally”.

## How Will We Build on What We've Learned?

HPFB has changed a lot since it was created in 2000. Our past experiences have taught us that making the best use of our human and financial resources will ultimately facilitate the way forward. We have learned the importance of looking critically at how we do business and planning sustainable regulatory activities. We also continue to explore more efficient strategies that inform our work with partners in Canada and internationally.

The 2012–2015 Strategic Plan will not only set the direction for the next three years, it will also provide a strong foundation for future years.

We are committed to modernizing our regulatory framework through the development of the *HPFB Regulatory Roadmap*, which will establish a more flexible, evolving and sustainable environment for health products and food throughout their lifecycle. As we advance an approach that assesses benefits, harms, and uncertainties, we will strive to be better informed about the latest scientific innovations, such as advances in genotechnology, biotechnology, and nanotechnology. These innovations will also create new opportunities for the application of science and technology.

The growth and health status of our population and the fragile economy will also put greater pressure on the health care system, while the scope of services needed to meet health care demands will increase as age expectancy rises. As the global market continues to expand, issues related to the safety of health products and food will become even more complex and international in scope.

Through our partnerships and alignments with both domestic and international partners, we will continue to build our scientific knowledge to assist in regulating health products and food in a way that satisfies health and safety standards, as well as consumer expectations. We will keep pace with evolving science to make the best decisions based on the best available information. We will work with our internal and external partners to help us deliver on Health Canada's mandate as well as HPFB's mandate and vision. We also commit to supporting our staff and providing them with the tools they need to serve Canadians.

## How Will We Respond to the Challenges of Today and Tomorrow?

This Strategic Plan sets the bar high for the Branch. We aim to be a trusted regulator for Canadians and for the Canadian health care system. We will learn from the best practices of partners and share our experiences and knowledge internationally. To maximize our effectiveness and efficiency, we will prioritize what we do and how we do it, modernize our internal processes and regulatory frameworks, better support staff, and work more effectively with partners and stakeholders. Our work must also continue to enhance safety while avoiding unnecessary regulatory burden that inhibits growth, productivity and innovation.

# KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This Strategic Plan outlines key opportunities for 2012–2015 to adapt to a changing environment, while increasing momentum on the modernization of our regulatory framework, improving our performance, and better supporting our staff. Delivering on our mandate and vision will depend upon our ability to meet our commitments under each of the following priorities:

**Priority No. 1: The Regulatory Roadmap**

**Priority No. 2: Operational Excellence**

**Priority No. 3: The People Agenda**

Openness and Transparency will guide the work in all three key priority areas.

# 1. The Regulatory Roadmap

**The goal of this priority is to build a sustainable regulatory system that helps to protect the Canadian public from the sale and advertising of unsafe food and health products, and to support the safest consumption of food and use of health products, well into the future.**

## COMMITMENTS

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We will reform our regulatory framework to continue to protect the health and safety of Canadians by reducing the impact on industry through:

1. Finalizing and implementing HPFB's *Regulatory Roadmap*
  2. Collaborating more extensively and strategically with our international counterparts, working to align our regulatory frameworks where appropriate
  3. Reducing red tape and regulatory burden on industry, while maintaining our focus on safety
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The *Regulatory Roadmap for Health Products and Food* will deliver the clearest value to Canadians and the health care and food safety systems. It will also deliver the greatest efficiency by cutting through unsustainable administrative requirements or approaches and replacing them with ones drawing upon international partnering, best practices and new technological advantages to contribute directly to the safety of food and health products.

## 2. Operational Excellence

**The goal of this priority is to set, meet, and ultimately exceed our performance standards, while working more effectively with staff, Canadians, international partners, and stakeholders.**

### COMMITMENTS

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We will take timely and effective regulatory and non-regulatory action to support the health and safety of Canadians and to enable innovation through:

1. Meeting our performance standards and eliminate our backlogs
  2. Strengthening planning, reporting, partnerships and foresight to better support decision-making and improve quality of service
  3. Using a broad base of evidence and the best science available to make consistent and predictable decisions and to help Canadians make informed choices about their health
  4. Adapting best practices and foster open, transparent communications with stakeholders
  5. Investing in information management (IM) and information technology (IT)
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The work carried out under the Operational Excellence Priority will ensure the Branch stays informed about and makes use of the latest scientific innovations, which will put us in a position to respond to future advances in science. It will enable us to identify barriers and options to reduce regulatory burden, enable innovation, consider the full range of levers available to address issues, share information, and improve transparency, while protecting and promoting the health and safety of Canadians. We will also invest in information and technology tools, develop a Branch IT strategy, and set clear performance targets.



### 3. The People Agenda

**The goal of this priority is to create and support a high performing and collaborative team working towards the strategic priorities of the Branch.**

#### COMMITMENTS

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We will put our people first and invest in staff through:

1. Providing employees with a workplace that is modern and efficient
  2. Fostering a culture of engagement, empowering all employees to participate in the priorities of the Branch
  3. Better supporting collaboration and innovation
  4. Recognizing the accomplishments of our people
  5. Continuing to promote diversity, official languages and other government commitments
  6. Helping the workforce adjust to changes in the work environment and business processes
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Employees are at the centre of everything that HPFB does, and our success depends on how we support our staff. A collaborative team and an enabling environment will help us to adapt and respond more quickly and effectively to evolving issues and opportunities.

Senior management will communicate more effectively and regularly with Branch staff to keep them up to date and informed on Branch news, while providing more opportunities for staff to engage with senior management and supporting opportunities to collaborate with one another.

We will also ensure that our staff have the necessary tools to do their jobs and make the most informed recommendations. The People Agenda supports the other strategic priorities and will improve the consistency and predictability of our decisions in a dynamic regulatory environment.

## Openness and Transparency

Openness and Transparency will inform our work in each of the three key strategic priorities. Advances in social media, Canadians' increasing expectations about accessing credible and timely information, the growing demand to be consulted on our decisions, and many other modern drivers represent opportunities for the Branch to be more open and transparent in the way we work.

HPFB is committed to engaging and involving stakeholders and the public in decision-making processes and the development of regulatory proposals. We will give meaningful consideration to the input we receive and will communicate with stakeholders on how the input is used. Leveraging this external input will increase efficiency and sustainability of decision-making and will enable better decisions and outcomes.

The Branch will support Departmental efforts to improve transparency and openness. As a Branch, we will promote a culture and system of openness and transparency, while developing creative ideas and strategies to better help Canadians make informed decisions.

Staff will also be more involved in our strategic priorities and management of the Branch, while benefiting from more effective horizontal, top-down, as well as bottom-up communications.

## Accountability, Consistency and Predictability

We will continue to serve the interests of Canadians and be accountable for our decisions through public scrutiny. We will maintain our regulatory independence from external stakeholders while continuing to value their perspectives. We commit to regulating health products and food with more consistency and predictability, in part through setting high performance standards.

## THE WAY FORWARD

The *2012–2015 HPFB Strategic Plan* sets ambitious but clear and achievable goals for our organization that will guide the development of strategic initiatives and annual operational plans for the Branch.

Engaging our employees and our partners throughout the next three years will ensure that we find the right path as we move forward on our priorities; we look to Branch staff and external partners to help us deliver on those priorities.

To ensure our plan remains relevant and effective over the next three years, we will continue to review it and the resulting operational plan. We commit to reporting on our progress on the key priorities through existing processes incorporated in the department's planning and performance reporting system.