



Canadian Food
Inspection Agency

Agence canadienne
d'inspection des aliments

Food Fraud Annual Report 2024 to 2025



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1 / Executive summary

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is Canada's leading authority on food fraud oversight.

This report summarizes the work that the CFIA did to prevent misrepresented food from being sold in Canada between April 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025, unless otherwise indicated. Here's what the work included:

- ▶ running awareness campaigns that reached thousands of people
- ▶ participating in international activities aimed at preventing fraud before it reaches our borders
- ▶ completing several research and method development projects
- ▶ testing 886 samples for authenticity, in 2 categories:
 - 246 marketplace monitoring samples (also referred to as targeted surveys)
 - 640 targeted inspectorate samples
- ▶ performing 362 label verifications, including basic label verifications and net quantity verifications
- ▶ taking enforcement action that prevented over 150,000 kg of misrepresented food from being sold in Canada

Overall, compliance rates were similar to [previous years](#). These are the highlights of the results:

- ▶ there was an increase in the compliance rate for grated hard cheese authenticity testing
- ▶ olive oil had the lowest compliance rate for authenticity testing, whereas fish, fruit juice, maple syrup and meat had the highest
- ▶ grated hard cheese, fish and other expensive oils had the lowest compliance rates for label verifications, while organic fresh fruit and vegetables and other foods had the highest

2 / Introduction

Tackling food fraud is a priority under the [Food Policy for Canada](#). As part of this initiative, the CFIA addresses food misrepresentation that falls within its [mandate](#). We do this by using strategies to prevent, detect and deter false, misleading or deceptive practices related to the manufacturing, preparing, packaging, labelling, selling, importing or advertising of food. Health Canada works collaboratively with the CFIA to deliver on this initiative in cases where food fraud may involve health and safety risks.

In Canada, it's prohibited to sell food in a manner that is false, misleading or deceptive. Industry is responsible for properly representing and labelling food products. The CFIA conducts inspection activities to verify if food businesses are meeting their statutory and regulatory obligations.

We carry out inspection, sampling, testing and enforcement activities under the following authorities: [Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act](#), [Food and Drugs Act](#), [Food and Drug Regulations](#), [Safe Food for Canadians Act](#) and [Safe Food for Canadians Regulations](#).

Where we found non-compliance, we took control and enforcement actions, guided by the applicable regulations and the CFIA's [Standard Regulatory Response Process](#). Control and enforcement actions included removing products from Canada and detaining, destroying or relabeling products. These actions directly protected consumers from misrepresentation and allowed businesses to compete fairly in the market.

Understanding the impact: What does food fraud cost

Misrepresentation, whether intentional or not, can have economic impacts on the consumer, and can result in an unfair marketplace. Food fraud is usually motivated by economic gain. To better understand how CFIA's work protects consumers, here are a few examples:



Through our inspection work, we identified fish labelled as Patagonian toothfish, which sells for approximately \$41.70 per kilogram¹ in Canada, that was actually Antarctic toothfish, a lower-value species that sells for about \$23.17 per kilogram². By preventing this misrepresented food from entering the marketplace, consumers were protected from paying nearly \$19 per kilogram more for a lower-value fish.



Net quantity verification ensures that the amount of food declared on the label matches what consumers actually receive in the package. For example, a beef sirloin tip roast sells for approximately \$30.00 per kilogram. If a 2 kilogram package priced at \$60 is underweight by 1%, or 0.020 kilogram³, the consumer loses \$0.60 on that purchase. Canadian consumers purchase an estimated 16 million kilograms⁴ of this cut of meat annually. Without CFIA's food fraud oversight, this scenario could result in up to \$160,000 in economic impacts per year.



At a retail price of \$10 per 200 grams, grated parmesan cheese with cellulose present at a level exceeding the allowable limit by 0.5%, results in an economic impact of \$0.05 per 200 gram package for consumers and \$25,000 per 100,000 kilogram lot. In 2024, approximately 3,817,000 kilograms of grated or powdered cheese were traded in Canada⁵. Without CFIA's food fraud oversight, this scenario could result in up to \$190,850 in economic impacts per year.

3 / Promoting Awareness

The CFIA actively raises awareness about food fraud in Canada through our website, social media and advertising. Promoting awareness contributes to CFIA's food fraud prevention efforts.

Communications outreach results



SOCIAL MEDIA

81 posts received
223,309 impressions* and
7,787 engagements
(such as likes, shares, comments
and clicks)



SHOP SAFE, SHOP SMART AD CAMPAIGN

As part of a broader consumer-focused awareness campaign, food fraud digital ads received over 3.4 million impressions* and resulted in 8,696 visits to our website



WEB PERFORMANCE

CFIA's food fraud
web pages received
more than
33,000 visits

**Note: impressions means the number of times a post or ad was displayed to users.*

CANADIAN LABELLING



In February 2025, the “Buy Canadian” movement gained popularity. This led to interest in Canadian content claims on food labels and advertisements (such as Product of Canada and Made in Canada). Consumers wanted to understand the different claims and symbols on food labels so they could support Canadian businesses. In response, the CFIA published 60 social media posts and a quick reference guide to help consumers [identify Canadian food](#).

This increase in consumer interest also led to concerns about false or misleading Canadian content claims. The CFIA saw a significant increase in complaints about origin claims starting in February 2025, from 1 or 2 complaints per month, to 25 complaints in February and 33 in March. The CFIA followed up on all complaints and took appropriate action when non-compliance was found. To promote compliance with labelling and advertising regulations, we issued a notice in March to remind industry of the [importance of accurate use of Product of Canada, Made in Canada and other origin claims](#).

4 / International Collaboration

CFIA’s international collaboration on food fraud recognizes the global nature of food supply chains and the benefits of working together to combat this common risk. Here are some highlights of our international activities this year:

- ▶ we sent 6 letters to foreign competent authorities to share details on 32 non-compliance issues originating from their jurisdiction
 - in several instances, this resulted in foreign competent authorities sharing the details of their follow up actions and findings, as well as information on the programs and activities they have in place to combat food fraud
- ▶ we continued our active involvement in the [Global Alliance on Food Crime](#), which progressed a joint action plan on food fraud and related activities
- ▶ we participated in [OPSON XIV](#). Operation OPSON is a joint international operation that targets fake and substandard food and beverages.
- ▶ CFIA, with Health Canada, continued to lead Canada’s participation in a number of [Codex Alimentarius](#) committees. This international standard-setting body works to protect consumers’ health and ensure fair practices in food trade, with ongoing work supporting food fraud prevention, such as *Draft Guidelines on the Prevention and Control of Food Fraud*.

Integration of food fraud into foreign safety assessments

DID YOU KNOW?

In the 2024 to 2025 fiscal year, we combined our food fraud efforts with foreign food safety assessments and incorporated a dedicated food fraud information-gathering component into this activity. Two of the food safety assessments included a food fraud element, while another incorporated a more substantial food fraud-focused review of the country’s honey sector. As we continue to refine our approach to integrating food fraud into these assessments, we anticipate that this work will strengthen international collaboration and contribute to enhanced food fraud prevention efforts by facilitating:

- early detection of emerging fraud risks
- improved information sharing between competent authorities
- harmonized approaches to fraud-related oversight within food safety activities abroad
- integrated foreign-based activities that support targeted follow-up on fraud risks detected in imported food commodities

5 / Methodology research and development

The CFIA, in collaboration with Health Canada, continued to keep pace with the latest science and emerging technology to detect food fraud by developing new analytical methods and improving current ones.



This year's highlights include the following:

- ▶ the CFIA expanded our DNA testing capability to include differentiation of 4 new **high value tuna** species
- ▶ the CFIA expanded our sterol and fatty acid profiling capability to analyze 11 new **high value oils**
- ▶ the CFIA published a [manuscript](#) on a rapid method for the detection of fillers in **ground turmeric** using infrared and atomic emission spectroscopy
- ▶ Health Canada presented the following completed methods at the Association of Official Analytical Chemists (AOAC) International 2024 meeting:
 - Parallel Reaction Monitoring Targeted Proteomics for **Saffron**
 - Development of Nano-Electrospray Ionization and Spectral Stitching-Based Flow-Injection-Mass Spectrometry Method for Rapid and Reliable Authentication of **Pomegranate Juice**

6 / Sampling, testing and verifying labels

This section provides the results of 3 types of activities to detect food misrepresentation in Canada:

- ▶ marketplace monitoring
- ▶ targeted inspectorate sampling
- ▶ label verification



Each year, in addition to sampling and testing for food fraud, we conduct tens of thousands of tests under various surveillance programs to detect allergens, chemical hazards and microbiological hazards. When needed, Health Canada evaluates these to determine whether there may be a safety concern to human health. We also publish reports detailing the [results of food safety surveillance activities](#) in Canada.

Marketplace monitoring

Marketplace monitoring (also sometimes referred to as targeted surveys) is planned based on risk intelligence such as environmental scanning to identify areas of vulnerability. It involves random (unbiased) sampling by an independent third party under contract with the CFIA. The third party collects samples of prepackaged products sold to consumers at retailers in various cities across Canada. The CFIA then tests the samples and the results are used to gauge compliance in the Canadian marketplace, as well as to inform future activities to address food fraud.

This year, the CFIA conducted marketplace monitoring for misrepresentation in 2 foods:

Commodity	Sampling and testing details	Results
Fresh meat	Tested for: non-permitted addition of sulfites, a food additive that can restore red colouration of meat and enhance the appearance of product freshness Test used: the optimized Monier-Williams method Sample type: fresh (unfrozen) ground meat (beef, pork, chicken, turkey), “meat patties,” “meatballs,” whole muscle cuts, sub-primal cuts of meat	100% satisfactory (148/148)
Tea	Tested for: the presence of colours or dyes used to mask adulteration Test used: chemical characterization by the determination of fat-soluble colours by high performance liquid chromatography and water-soluble colours by high performance liquid chromatography Sample type: tea with a compositional standard, including tea, black tea and green tea	100% satisfactory (98/98)

Targeted inspectorate sampling

CFIA inspectors perform targeted sampling at the regulated party that is responsible for the product in Canada. This includes domestic processors, importers or in the case of foods prepared, packaged and labelled at retail, retailers.

Unlike marketplace monitoring, this sampling targets areas of higher risk, based on factors such as history of non-compliance, unusual trading patterns and identified gaps in preventive controls.

Results of targeted sampling are not representative of overall compliance in the Canadian marketplace.

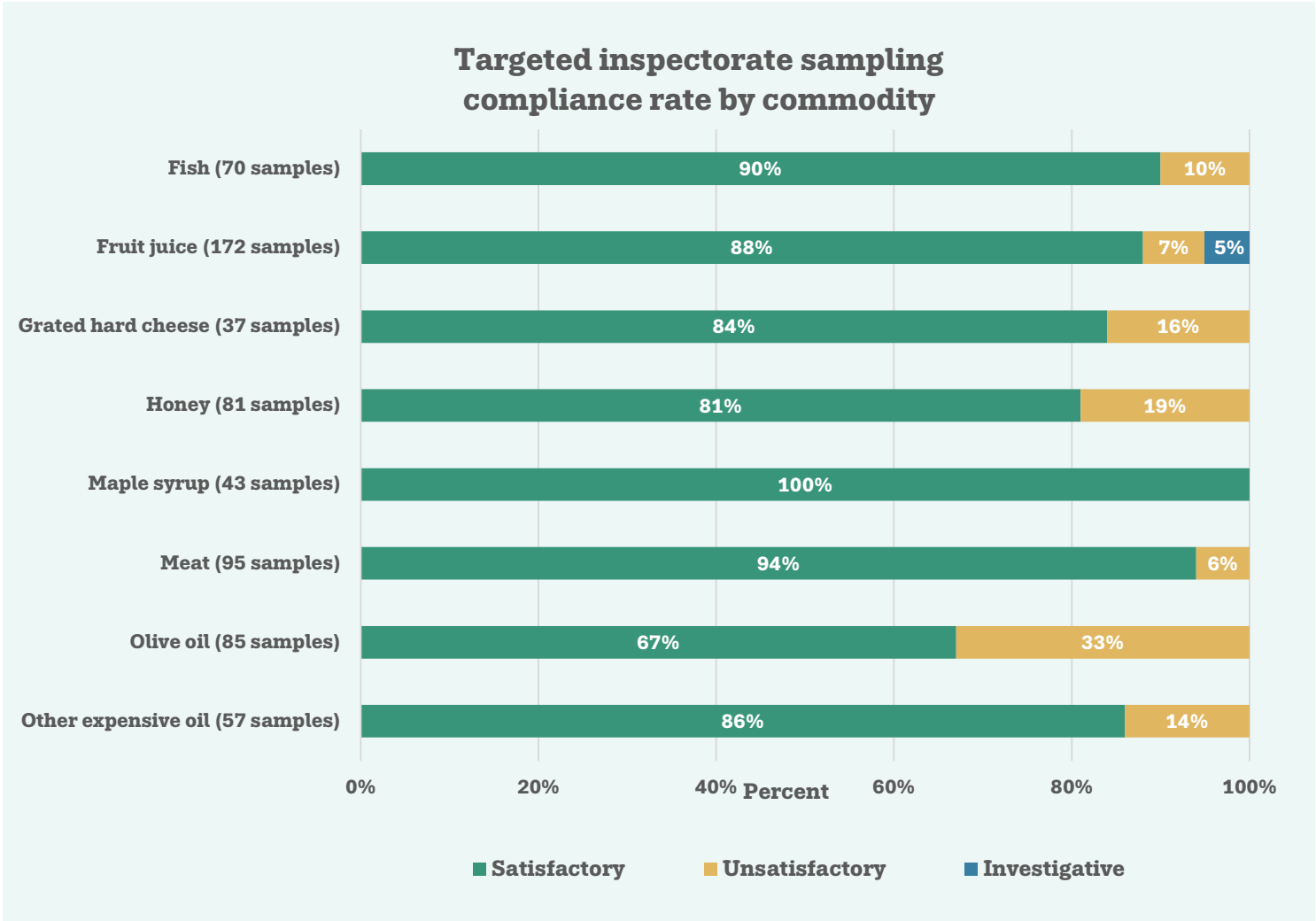
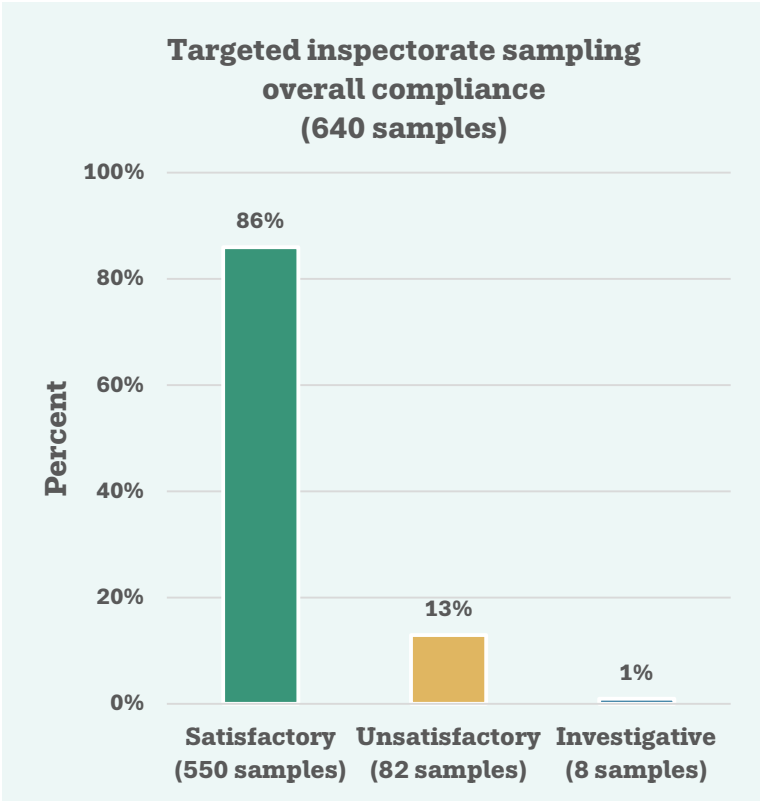
Below are the types of food misrepresentation we tested for in the 2024 to 25 fiscal year through our targeted inspectorate sampling.

Commodity	Type of misrepresentation we tested for
Fish	Species substitution
Fruit juice	Adulteration with foreign sugars, acids, dyes. Dilution or substitution with water or less expensive juices
Grated hard cheese	Adulteration from use of cellulose beyond permitted levels
Honey	Adulteration with foreign sugars, such as those derived from sugar cane, corn syrups or rice syrups
Meat	Species substitution
Maple syrup	Adulteration with foreign sugars
Olive oil	Adulteration with lower value oils, including misrepresentation of claims such as “extra virgin,” “virgin,” “cold pressed” and “unrefined”
Other expensive oil	Adulteration with lower value oils, including misrepresentation of claims such as “virgin,” “cold pressed” and “unrefined”
How we detect food misrepresentation in our laboratories	

Samples are assessed as satisfactory when they are found to meet regulatory criteria or parameters, and unsatisfactory when they do not.

Samples are assessed as investigative when some values may be outside of parameters while others are within, often requiring further review by inspection staff to determine compliance.

You can see detailed results on the [Open Government Portal](#), including product name, sampling location and origin of products sampled. Practices leading to non-compliance may have occurred at various points of the supply chain (for example, in the originating country, during processing, packaging/repackaging in Canada). An unsatisfactory result may not always mean the issue originated in the exporting country or where product was sampled.



Targeted inspectorate sampling: Results by level of trade

Commodity	Responsible level of trade	Number of samples	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Investigative
Fish	Domestic	11	100%	N/A	N/A
	Import	31	84%	16%	N/A
	Retail*	28	93%	7%	N/A
Fruit juice	Domestic	35	97%	3%	N/A
	Import	129	87%	8%	5%
	Retail*	8	75%	12.5%	12.5%
Grated hard cheese	Domestic	26	85%	15%	N/A
	Import	11	82%	18%	N/A
Honey	Domestic	13	100%	N/A	N/A
	Import	68	78%	22%	N/A
Maple syrup	Domestic	43	100%	N/A	N/A
Meat	Domestic	33	97%	3%	N/A
	Import	27	100%	N/A	N/A
	Retail*	35	86%	14%	N/A
Olive oil	Import	85	67%	33%	N/A
Other expensive oils	Domestic**	3	100%	N/A	N/A
	Import	54	85%	15%	N/A

*Food sampled at retail was prepared, packaged and/or labelled at retail

**Denotes products produced in Canada or those under the responsibility of a domestic dealer

FOCUS ON CANADIAN

Here are the targeted inspectorate sampling results for foods produced in Canada:

- fish (species substitution): 94% compliance (30/32)*
- fruit juice (adulteration with foreign sugars): 93% compliance (39/42)*
- grated hard cheese (adulteration with fillers): 85% compliance (22/26)
- honey (adulteration with foreign sugars): 100% compliance (13/13)
- maple syrup (adulteration with foreign sugars): 100% compliance (43/43)
- meat (species substitution): 91% compliance (60/66)*



*The numbers above include both domestic samples and retail samples identified as being of Canadian origin from the table above.

Targeted inspectorate label verification

CFIA inspectors perform label verifications at the regulated party that is responsible for the product in Canada. This includes domestic processors, importers or in the case of foods prepared, packaged and labelled at retail, retailers. This year, the CFIA did [basic label verifications](#) and [net quantity verifications](#) to identify potential misrepresentation.

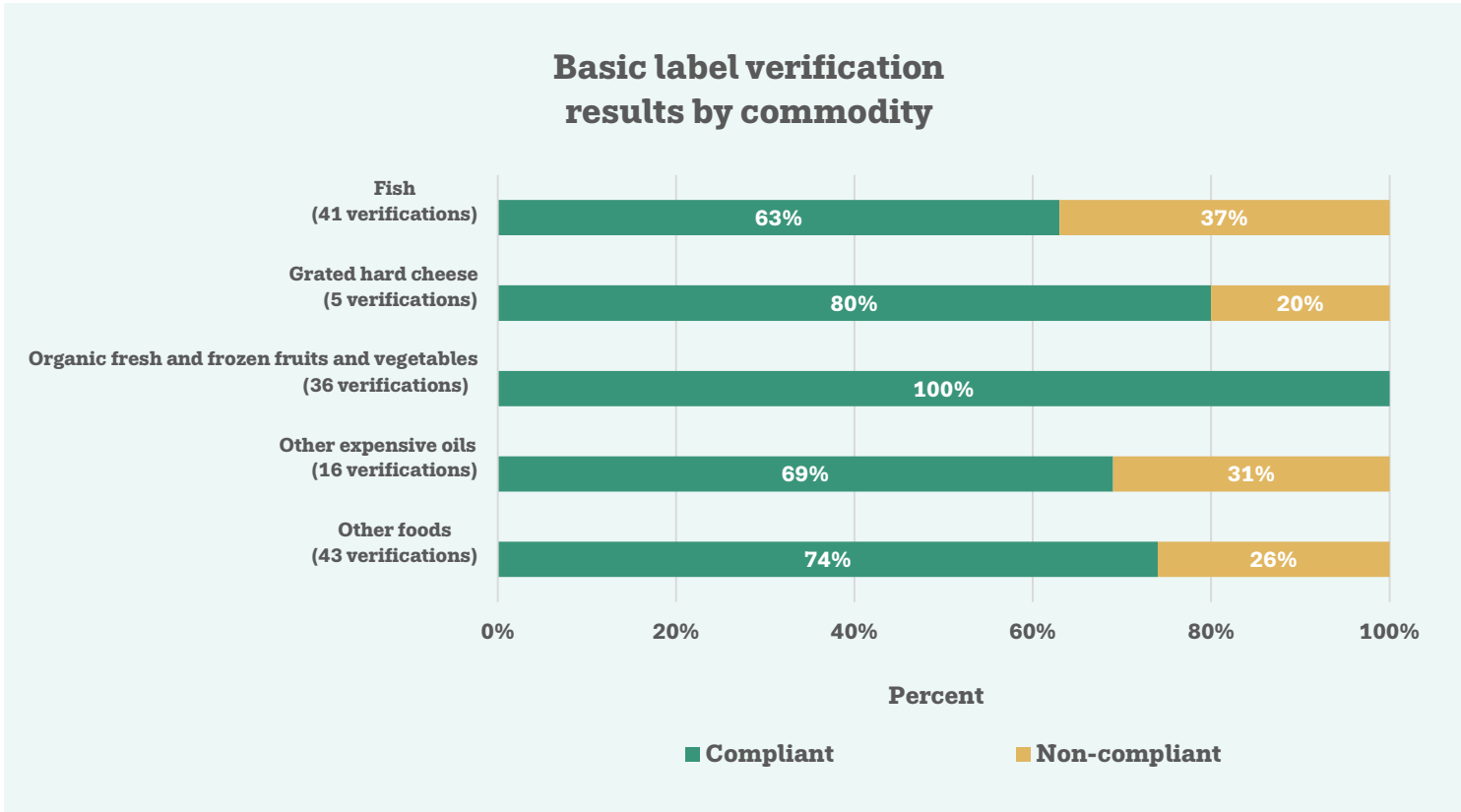
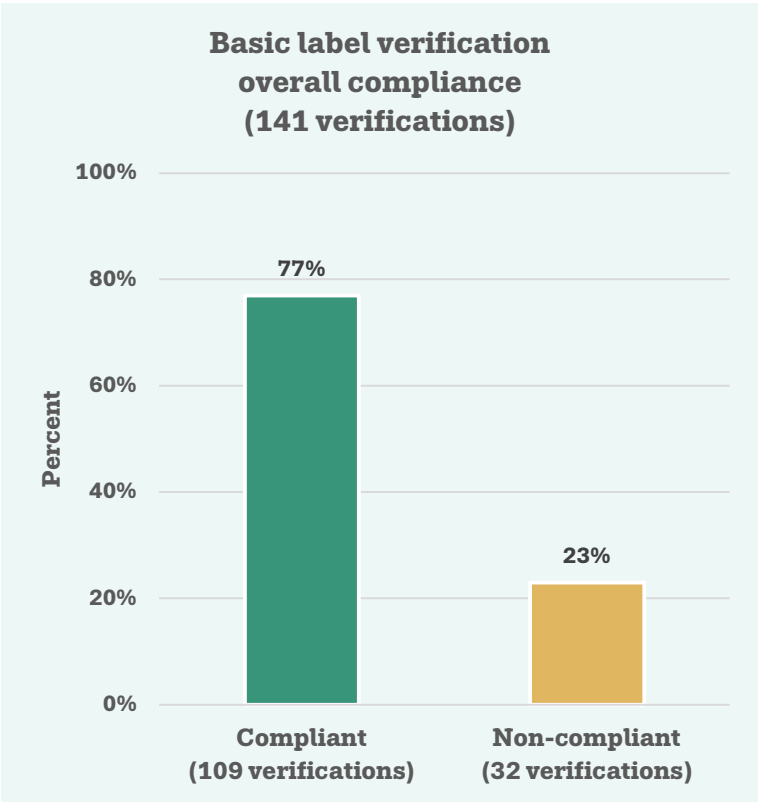
Basic label verification

A basic label verification is a type of commodity inspection that assesses a food label to determine compliance with regulatory requirements, which includes these elements:

- ▶ common name
- ▶ list of ingredients
- ▶ claims
- ▶ traceability information
- ▶ country of origin
- ▶ nutrition facts table
- ▶ any other mandatory or voluntary label information



We found various types of non-compliance related to labelling. Some involved misrepresentation such as omitting country of origin or incorrect common name. Other non-compliances related to issues such as mandatory information missing or not shown in both official languages, and infractions in the Nutrition Facts table.



Net quantity verification

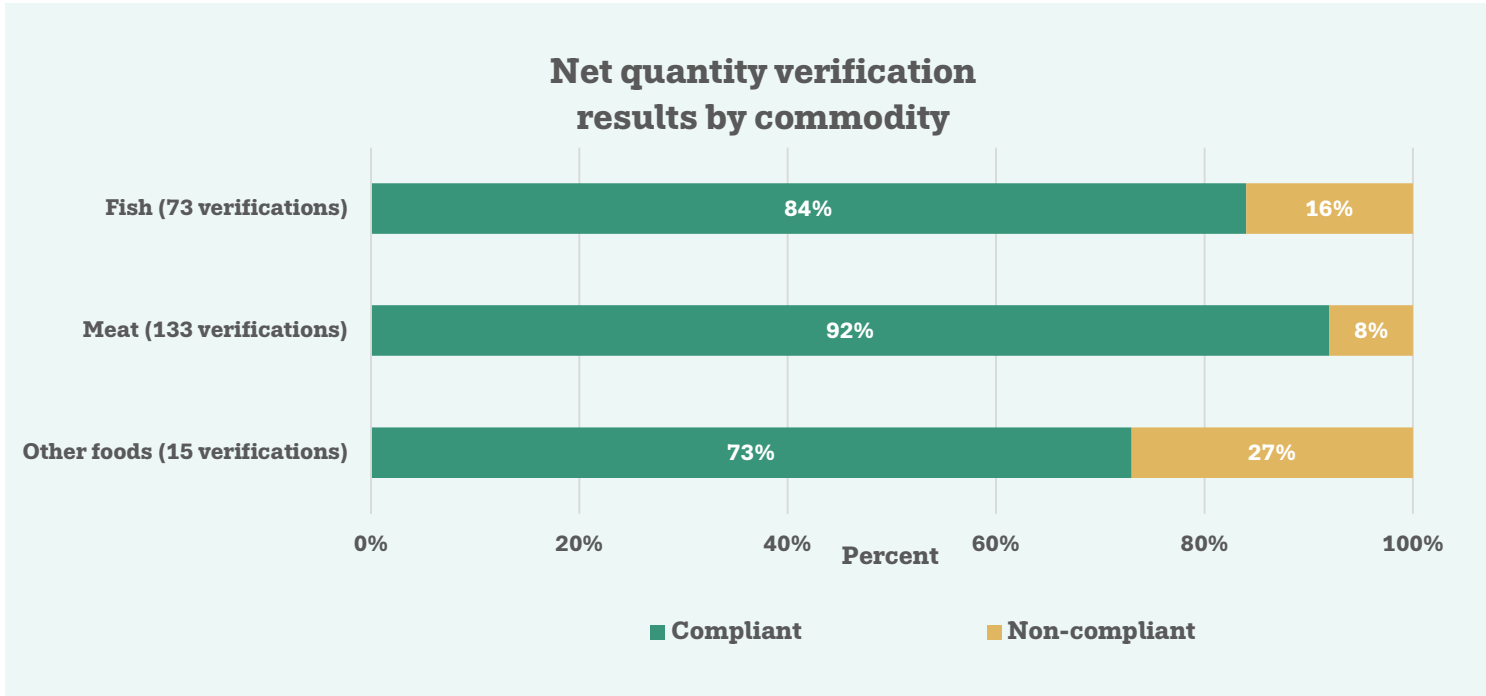
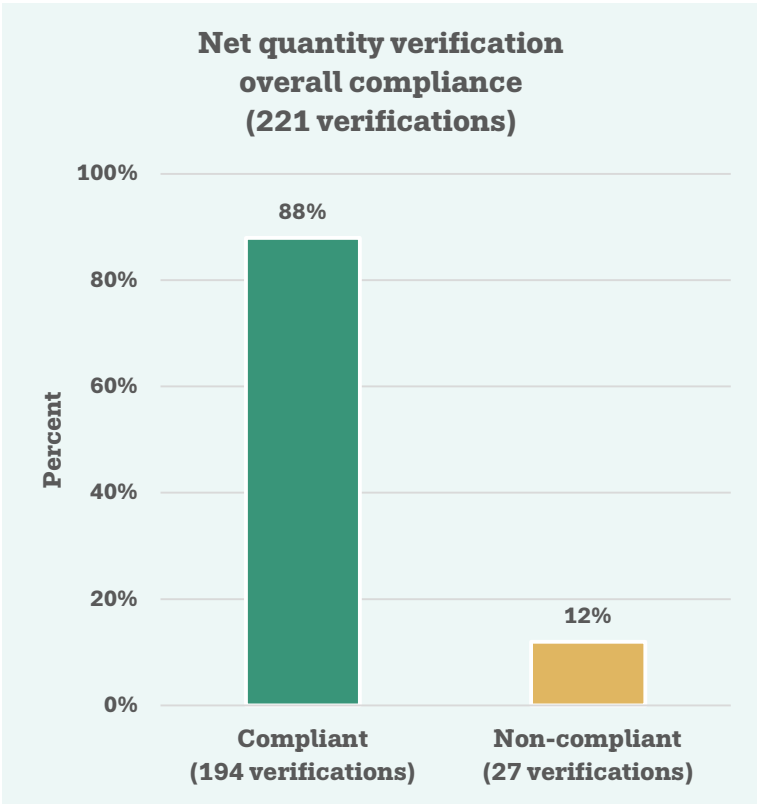
CFIA inspectors do net quantity verifications to check that the amount of food the consumer receives in a package is, on average, at least the declared quantity shown on the label.



Highlight: meat

This year, there was increased media and consumer attention on the accuracy of the net quantity declarations of meat products sold at retail stores in Canada.

The CFIA conducted a targeted net quantity verification project on meat packaged, labelled and weighed at retail, between January 25 and February 28, 2025. We found a 92% compliance rate, as shown in the table below. Where non-compliance was found, CFIA issued notices of violation with warning to the retail store for violations related to inaccurate net quantity declarations.



7 / Complaints

In the 2024 to 25 fiscal year, CFIA received over 380 consumer or industry complaints identifying concerns related to food misrepresentation or product advertising. The commodity with the highest number of complaints was meat.

There were 2 frequent concerns raised this year:

- ▶ underweight food products
- ▶ misleading or missing country of origin claims and advertising

Other concerns raised by consumers included a variety of potentially misleading claims on product labels, suspected meat species substitution and suspected authenticity issues with products such as olive oil, honey or fish.

VERIFYING ORGANIC PRODUCTS

This year, the CFIA's Canda Organic Regime team received 25 complaints:

- ▶ 22 were against operators or their products
- ▶ 2 were against CFIA-accredited certification bodies
- ▶ 1 was against the CFIA's handling of the decision to temporarily allow the certification of algal oil

We have successfully resolved 22 complaints and work is ongoing on the remaining 3.

8 / Enforcement

In the 2024 to 2025 fiscal year, we prevented over 150,000 kg of misrepresented food from being sold in Canada. These foods were either removed from Canada, voluntarily destroyed or relabelled before sale:

- ▶ 1,161 kg of misrepresented fish
- ▶ 2,632 L of adulterated fruit juice
- ▶ 132 kg of misrepresented rice porridge
- ▶ 156 misrepresented oat cakes
- ▶ 133,420 kg of adulterated honey
- ▶ 7,245 L of adulterated olive oil



We also took the following actions:

- ▶ we issued 13 letters of non-compliance
- ▶ we issued 2 notices of violation with warning
- ▶ we issued 6 notices of violation with penalties
- ▶ one high value food product was voluntarily [recalled](#) for an undeclared allergen (tree nut)
- ▶ we issued inspection reports, including requests for corrective action and followed up on non-compliant sample results to determine where the misrepresentation occurred in the supply chain
- ▶ we continue to follow up on cases of non-compliance where necessary

Prosecutions: charges and convictions

In 2025, we published a notice of fines imposed related to falsely declaring crab for export as Product of Canada, as well as a fine related to traceability records.

- ▶ [MPY Trading Ltd. fined \\$1,155,685 for offences under the Safe Food for Canadians Act](#)

We also publish reports of [Administrative Monetary Penalties](#) (AMPs). In the 2024 to 25 fiscal year, we issued 8 AMPs related to food misrepresentation, amounting \$60,000 in penalties.

It's important to note that certain enforcement actions (such as AMPs and prosecutions) often span several years before there's an ultimate resolution.



9 / Conclusions and next steps

We track, monitor and analyze the data and results of our food misrepresentation work from year to year. Our program design is continually improving because we use previous findings to increase the likelihood of detecting food misrepresentation, to improve compliance promotion and to enhance enforcement. The results in this report are being used to inform ongoing activities.

We encourage anyone who suspects food fraud, or has concerns that a product may be labelled in a misleading manner, to report it through our [food complaint or concern](#) web page.

¹ [Patagonian Toothfish Price in Canada – January 2026](#)

² [Antarctic Toothfish Price in Canada – January 2026](#)

³ [Safe Food for Canadians Regulations \(SOR/2018-108\)](#)

⁴ [Beef Consumption by Country 2026](#)

⁵ [Cheese Sector Profile, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada](#)