



Canadian Food
Inspection Agency

Agence canadienne
d'inspection des aliments

How Canadian Food Businesses View Food Safety Regulations and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Final report

March 2026

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Canadian Food Inspection Agency

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Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.

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This public opinion research report presents the results of quantitative and qualitative research conducted by Quorus Consulting Group Inc. on behalf of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency between January and March 2026. The research involved five online focus groups with food industry representatives and 700 telephone surveys with individuals with responsibility for food safety and quality control within the Canadian food industry.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Comment les entreprises alimentaires canadiennes perçoivent les règlements sur la salubrité des aliments et l'Agence canadienne d'inspection des aliments

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Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Nadeau", is written over a light gray, textured rectangular background.

March 23, 2026
Rick Nadeau, President
Quorus Consulting Group Inc.

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Executive summary

Research purpose and objectives

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has a mandate to verify food sold in Canada is safe and accurately represented. The CFIA achieves this through enforcement of Canada's federal food legislation, including the *Safe Food for Canadians Act* (SFCA) and its regulations (*Safe Food for Canadians Regulations* - SFCR) which introduced new requirements for food businesses as of January 15, 2019. As part of the CFIA's commitment to delivering timely information and guidance to regulated parties, the Agency continues to develop tools and services to help industry meet food safety requirements.

This public opinion research aimed to gain a better understanding of regulated industry and their level of understanding, awareness, motivations, perceptions, and attitudes about:

- The various roles and responsibilities within the food safety system, in particular to measure the level of awareness of their own responsibilities in the system;
- Resource needs and barriers to complying with all regulatory requirements, to identify root causes of non-compliance and support development and implementation of compliance promotion, communications, and support service activities;
- The effectiveness and satisfaction of the SFCR communications and related communications from various services, such as My CFIA, Ask CFIA and the NISC;
- How requirements change for businesses depending on demographic characteristics of ownership or clientele;
- Satisfaction with guidance received from Ask CFIA and rating of overall experience in using the service;
- Measure awareness and effectiveness of CFIA communications regarding food safety;
- Impact and perception of the CFIA Manufactured Food Sector Inspection Blitz; and,
- Levels of trust in the Agency and key components of the agency such as inspectors and senior management.

The research also explored the following topics among pre-federally regulated companies:

- Assess readiness / willingness to enter federally regulated marketplace;
- Understand barriers to entering the federally regulated marketplace;
- Impression of level of effort to enter federally regulated marketplace; and
- Specific communication requirements for entering federally regulated marketplace.

Qualitative research results – focus groups with food businesses

The focus group research findings have been divided into three sections, one for each of the three main target audiences:

1. Federally regulated food businesses (two focus groups)
2. Provincially regulated food businesses planning on importing and/or selling outside their province/territory (two focus groups)
3. Recently licenced federally regulated food businesses (one focus group)

Focus groups with federally regulated food businesses

Familiarity with the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations

Most had heard of the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations and seemed fairly familiar with the various safety requirements in the regulations. Key challenges related to these requirements focused on training costs and consistency due to staff turnover; labelling; traceability, and the time and effort needed to scale up from provincial to federal requirements.

General views regarding SFCR licensing

For new federal licence applicants, the challenges raised tended to focus on navigating the CFIA portal, which was not considered user-friendly or intuitive, and on preparing their PCP, which was considered time-consuming and arduous. Ultimately, most agreed that the application process requires a lot of information, some of which can take days to find. In the end though, businesses seemed confident that their PCP was complete and that their business met SFC requirements before they applied for their licence.

New applicants did find themselves contacting the CFIA during the application process. These interactions were typically described as challenging and not very helpful.

Renewing a licence via the portal was considered straightforward.

Ongoing management of preventive controls

Areas of their preventive controls that tend to be the most difficult to consistently maintain over time included: managing cross-contamination, employee training in general, managing production documentation, and managing the supply chain. Concerns were also raised over the costs associated with more extensive quality control processes.

Participants had a few suggestions for how the CFIA could help them maintain more consistent preventive controls over time. These included finding ways to reduce paperwork, offering specific helpful suggestions when contacted, improving consistency across call center agents and inspectors, and offering industry training opportunities on how to manage preventive controls.

Inspections, compliance and enforcement actions

General thoughts related to inspections were quite diverse. While a few had neutral, non-descript sentiments regarding inspections and their inspector, others had a positive relationship while others best described this relationship as “a little bit painful.” Participants were less concerned with being inspected and more concerned with how those inspections are done. On this, consistency across inspectors was raised as an issue as were feelings of inspections being a “policing” exercise rather than one that could be more helpful or supportive.

Participants were confident that they understood the different ways the CFIA can respond when non-compliance is identified.

None of the businesses in the manufactured sector were aware that the CFIA recently conducted a focused inspection initiative.

Searching for information and use of CFIA tools

When searching for regulatory or food safety information, resources included various websites (including the CFIA website), academia, magazines, and peers. A few noted that they use Google and AI. The AI summary of a Google search is also considered but mostly as a starting point.

Most participants had recently visited the CFIA website. Although many find what they are looking for, the website is considered dense and “cumbersome.” The site menus are often used rather than the website’s search engine and the home page was considered user-friendly and a good starting point.

Participants were invited to scan two specific pages on the CFIA website: 1) [Own or operate a food business? Start here - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca/own-or-operate-a-food-business?start=here), and, 2) [Toolkit for new food businesses - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca/toolkit-for-new-food-businesses).

Generally, participants considered both pages useful and relevant. While many were more interested in the content of the second page, most preferred the first page in terms of layout, visual appeal and user-friendliness.

Focus groups with provincially regulated food businesses

Barriers to interprovincial or international trade

At the start of each session, businesses discussed some of the obstacles or barriers they face in expanding into other provinces or potentially exporting internationally. These included various logistical costs and shipping distance considerations, bilingual label costs, and tariffs. A few also raised significant concerns with the costs and resources needed to obtain the licences and certifications required to sell in other provinces or internationally. While businesses believe the upfront costs are prohibitive, the ongoing maintenance costs once a federal licence is obtained are expected to be quite minimal.

General attitudes towards food regulation and compliance

For the most part, business owners are supportive of food regulation in Canada with most seeing regulation as either a safeguard or a competitive advantage. That said, businesses agreed that regulations differ from one province to the next and that there is also a big difference between provincial and federal regulation.

Among the few businesses who seemed sufficiently familiar with federal regulations, their impression was that it would take much more time to be federally licenced compared to only provincially. It was suggested that if certain federal requirements, especially when it comes to traceability and detailed record keeping, were integrated into provincial ones, the transition to a federal licence would be easier.

Federal food regulation key safety requirements

Most businesses in these groups had heard of the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR) and, when shown by the moderator, most were also familiar with the list of key safety requirements in these food safety regulations. Key challenges regarding these requirements focused on hazard identification and analysis, traceability and product recall. To further support food businesses with their safety requirements, it was suggested that the CFIA could play a greater educational role in compliance.

Federal licensing

Businesses felt that the CFIA could provide new licence applicants support in the following ways: clear regulations, tools (such as a step-by-step guide on how to apply, a glossary, checklists, templates, standard operating procedure guidelines, and examples), work with the business to conduct a gap assessment or informal audit, and provide support from a CFIA staff, an online chat, or an AI tool.

Perceptions of the CFIA in food safety regulation

When asked to describe the CFIA in the context of food safety regulation, businesses often used terms related to enforcing regulations such as: control, regulate, and inspect. When asked what three words *should* describe the CFIA, responses struck a greater balance between enforcement, safety and support.

Searching for information and use of CFIA tools

Searching for regulatory or food safety information often involves general use of provincial and Government of Canada websites (including the CFIA website), peers, academic research, the FDA website, and calling their provincial inspector. Some used AI albeit with a grain of salt while others do not use it at all, fearing misinformation or inaccuracies. The AI summary provided through a Google search is also considered but mostly as a starting point.

Many participants had recently visited the CFIA website. While many find what they are looking for, it is seen as a typical “government” website in terms of being hard to use and dense. There was some use of the website’s search engine with no concerns raised.

Participants were invited to scan the following page on the CFIA website: [Own or operate a food business? Start here - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca/own-or-operate-a-food-business?Start=here). Everyone was seeing this page for the first time and reactions were positive, with many noticing links they considered relevant. The content was seen as logically organized and the layout was considered user-friendly.

Campaign tagline testing

Businesses were asked their views on three possible taglines for an upcoming campaign that the CFIA is considering.

- A. Inspiring Confidence. Ensuring Protection. Enabling Prosperity. / Inspirer confiance. Garantir la sécurité. Propulser l'économie.
- B. Securing Canada’s food, animals and plants for generations to come. / Préserver la salubrité des aliments, assurer la protection des animaux et des végétaux du Canada pour les générations futures.
- C. Safeguarding food, animals, plants — Protecting Canada’s future. / Protéger la salubrité des aliments, la santé des animaux et des végétaux: agir pour l’avenir du Canada.

Tagline “A” was a heavy favourite among English participants whereas votes were more dispersed among French participants.

Focus groups with newly licenced federally regulated food businesses

General attitudes towards food regulation and compliance

For the most part, businesses believe food regulation is necessary and is for the greater good. While regulation can be frustrating at times, the Canadian approach is better than the one in the United States which was seen as more lenient. Ultimately, most agreed that food regulation in Canada is primarily a safeguard with a noteworthy amount of burden.

The level of effort needed to meet all the administrative tasks related to their business licences varied considerably across businesses, from minimal among a few smaller businesses to much more significant among larger businesses with a dedicated quality control manager. That said, renewing a licence, including their SFC licence, takes very little time and is straightforward whereas applying for a new licence is very time consuming.

Views on the licence application or amendment process

Among those who applied for a licence for the first time, working through the CFIA portal was a common challenge. Businesses also felt that collecting and preparing all the information needed for the application submission was very time consuming.

Although not as challenging as first-time applicants, those who recently submitted an amendment to their licence also experienced some challenges, including trying to navigate the portal to find the specific product the business wanted to add to their licence.

A key element of a licence application is developing and implementing a Preventive Control Plan (PCP). Businesses seemed quite confident their PCP was complete when they applied for their licence – success factors included the research they did as part of the process, already having other third-party audit certifications such as GFSI and SQF, and working with a consultant or someone who has been through the licence application process before.

When applying, businesses used online resources such as Google, AI and the CFIA website while a few also relied heavily on a consultant or someone who has been through the licence application process before. A few agreed that contacting the CFIA for advice or guidance would not be helpful.

In terms of service standards, for the most part, businesses seemed to be receiving their new licence or renewals well within the current service standard of 70 business days.

Maintaining preventive controls over time

Businesses did not raise many issues when it comes to consistently maintaining various areas of their preventive controls over time. The only challenge that was raised pertained to making sure staff are and remain trained on the procedures, which is especially challenging for a business that sees heavy turnover or relies heavily on temporary workers.

Inspections and compliance

Among the few with CFIA inspection experience, there is a sense that “they are overall consistent on the whole program, but some have different hang-ups than others, and you just try and keep them happy and get along.” By and large, businesses were confident that they understand the compliance process, what would happen if they received a warning and what might trigger enforcement. That said, there are no clear instructions on how to specifically address the various types of non-compliances – they have had to develop tools and strategies on their own over the years.

If an inspection resulted in a non-compliance, businesses would like to ideally obtain information on the regulation not being followed, information on what had happened and guidance on where they can go to address the issue. They would also appreciate specific staff or departmental information if the non-compliance is training related and specific machinery information if it is equipment related. There was also interest in a list of examples of the major or most common non-compliances on the CFIA website and what they are typically looking for in those situations.

None of the participants had heard that the CFIA recently conducted a focused inspection initiative in the manufactured food sector. If this were to happen in their sector, businesses would hope that the CFIA would communicate to the sector why this is happening and, if possible, guidance so businesses understand what they are looking for.

Searching for information and use of CFIA tools

When searching for regulatory or food safety information, businesses use a range of online resources (ChatGPT, SQF website, CFIA website, etc.), food safety consultants, industry colleagues or experts, academics, trade magazines, and CFIA manuals of procedure.

A few noteworthy gaps in the CFIA website included plain and simple information related to the new front-of-package symbols requirements that came into effect January 1, 2026. As well, there is so much information on the site that it becomes impossible or near-impossible to find what one is looking for.

Participants were invited to scan the following page on the CFIA website: [Own or operate a food business? Start here - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca/own-or-operate-a-food-business?start=here). A few recognized the page but nothing stood out to them as being particularly memorable. Those seeing it for the first time felt that this page would have been helpful to them when they first applied for their federal licence.

Perceptions of the CFIA in food safety regulation

To conclude the session, participants were invited to list three words they believe describe the CFIA today, and then three words that should describe the CFIA. Many describe the CFIA through its main role and mandate which focus on regulation, safety, and protocol. A few see it as professional as well as informative and setting high standards. It was, however, also considered redundant, bureaucratic, slow and unhelpful. In terms of the words that should describe the CFIA, participants continued to emphasize professionalism, safety and high standards, but also introduced words suggesting a more supportive role such as “assistance”, “helpful”, “resourceful” and “accommodating.” Consistency was also a popular term that should describe the CFIA.

Qualitative research disclaimer

Qualitative research seeks to develop insight and direction rather than quantitatively projectable measures. The purpose is not to generate “statistics” but to hear the full range of opinions on a topic, understand the language participants use, gauge degrees of passion and engagement and to leverage the power of the group to inspire ideas. Participants are encouraged to voice their opinions, irrespective of whether or not that view is shared by others.

Due to the sample size, the special recruitment methods used, and the study objectives themselves, it is clearly understood that the work under discussion is exploratory in nature. The findings are not, nor were they intended to be, projectable to a larger population.

Specifically, it is inappropriate to suggest or to infer that few (or many) real world users would behave in one way simply because few (or many) participants behaved in this way during the sessions. This kind of projection is strictly the prerogative of quantitative research.

Quantitative research results – telephone survey with Canadian food businesses

Food business priorities

Business representatives were asked the extent to which specific priorities applied to their business over the last couple of years. A larger proportion of federally regulated businesses (54%) reported managing regulatory issues as a high priority, compared to 44% among intraprovincial businesses.

Expanding sales beyond provincial boundaries was a high priority for just 7% of intraprovincial businesses while 13% indicated this was a medium priority. A much larger proportion of intraprovincial businesses rated expanding sales beyond provincial boundaries as a low priority (71%).

A small proportion of intraprovincial businesses were considering this expansion within the next two years (8%) while a larger proportion reported a timeline of two to five years (14%). Another 8% were considering expanding within six to ten years, while 15% were considering doing so in more than ten years. More than half of intraprovincial businesses (55%) were not considering expansion.

Intraprovincial business representatives were asked what has prevented them from trading outside of their current province. The most common reason was a lack of interest (67%). Other barriers for intraprovincial businesses included resource challenges (54%), too many challenges to meeting federal regulations (31%), being unsure of the first step (26%), and lack of buyers or market (17%).

Those who reported challenges to meet federal food safety regulations as a barrier to expansion specified that these challenges were related to the number of regulations (35%) as well as a lack of resources (32%). A smaller proportion of respondents felt that the regulations are too complicated (19%) or described challenges with the amount of paperwork (17%) and amount of time and effort required (16%). Additionally, some described challenges meeting the regulations due to a small business size (14%).

CFIA Reputation

More than two-thirds of federally regulated businesses (68%) agreed (scores of 5, 6, or 7 on a 7-point scale) that CFIA guidance on regulations is clear (50% among intraprovincial businesses) while 20% were neutral (scores of 4) (28% among intraprovincial businesses). Conversely, 11% of federally regulated businesses disagreed (scores of 1, 2, or 3), while a slightly larger proportion of intraprovincial businesses disagreed (16%).

More than half of federally regulated businesses (56%) agreed that the CFIA provides better information and support to food businesses compared to other regulatory organizations they deal with (33% among intraprovincial businesses). Nearly a third of federally regulated businesses (30%) were neutral on this statement (42% among intraprovincial businesses). Conversely, 11% of federally regulated businesses disagreed (16% among intraprovincial businesses).

Understanding of and familiarity with food safety regulations

Nearly three in five federally regulated businesses (58%) reported being very familiar (scores of 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale) with the SFCR, while another 27% were somewhat familiar (scores of 4 or 5). Conversely, 15% were not very familiar (scores of 1, 2 or 3).

Familiarity with the SFCR was lower among intraprovincial businesses, among whom 44% reported being very familiar, 29% were somewhat familiar and 26% were not very familiar.

More than half of federally regulated businesses familiar with the SFCR (57%) had recently seen, heard, or read something about these regulations compared to 42% among intraprovincial businesses.

Businesses familiar with the SFCR that also sell food online were asked if they believed that the regulations applied to online sales of food products. Of these respondents, most believed the SFCR applied to online sales of food products (96% federally regulated, 90% intraprovincial only). A much smaller proportion did not believe they applied (3% federally regulated, 8% intraprovincial only).

Federally regulated businesses familiar with the SFCR that also import were asked whether they were aware that an SFCR licence is required to import food products into Canada. Nearly three quarters (74%) reported being clearly aware of this requirement, while 16% were somewhat or vaguely aware. Fewer respondents (9%) were not aware of this requirement.

Federally regulated business representatives familiar with the SFCR were asked whether they were aware of the requirement to update CFIA licensing information when adding activities or food commodities. A majority (61%) reported being clearly aware of this requirement, while 21% were somewhat or vaguely aware and 16% were not aware of this requirement.

Federally regulated business representatives familiar with the SFCR were asked which of the food safety requirements within the SFCR were the biggest challenge for their business. The biggest challenges were maintaining traceability records (13%), maintaining a written preventive control plan (13%), and implementing traceability labelling on products (8%). Fewer felt their biggest challenge was obtaining/ maintaining the SFCR licence (6%) or implementing preventative

controls (4%). Conversely, more than a third of federally regulated businesses (39%) felt that none of the requirements were challenges for their business.

Intraprovincial business representatives were asked about their likelihood to apply for an SFCR licence in the near future. Less than one in five (16%) were very likely (scores of 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale) to apply for an SFCR licence while a slightly smaller proportion was somewhat likely (scores of 4 or 5) to do so. Conversely, more than half were not very likely (scores of 1, 2 or 3) to apply for an SFCR licence in the near future and another 6% were unsure.

Intraprovincial business representatives were asked to provide reasons why they would or would not apply for an SFCR licence. Nearly a quarter of intraprovincial business representatives (24%) indicated that they did not require an SFCR license while slightly fewer indicated a lack of interest (19%). A smaller proportion already held other licences, such as provincially (14%), did not know enough about licencing (8%), felt the SFCR licence required too much paperwork (7%) or a lack of resources (5%).

The need for an SFCR licence for business expansion was a motivator for 14% while another 10% felt the licence was a requirement. A smaller proportion cited benefits of licence regulations and standards (5%) and customer obligations (5%).

Listeria contamination and related policies

Nearly one third of federally regulated businesses (31%) were clearly aware the Health Canada Listeria policy (11% among intraprovincial businesses). An additional 43% of federally regulated businesses were somewhat or vaguely aware of this policy (45% among intraprovincial businesses), while fewer were not aware (24% federally regulated, 40% intraprovincial only).

Searching for information related to food safety regulations

Two thirds of federally regulated businesses had accessed the CFIA website to learn about federal food safety requirements compared to 44% of intraprovincial businesses. Conversely, 33% of federally regulated businesses had not accessed the CFIA website for this purpose (56% among intraprovincial businesses).

Most businesses that had accessed the CFIA website to learn about federal food safety requirements reported that they found the information they were looking for (89% federally regulated, 90% intraprovincial) while a small proportion did not (10% federally regulated, 7% intraprovincial).

Nearly one third of federally regulated businesses (30%) felt that the information was very easy (scores of 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale) to find (24% among intraprovincial businesses) while more

than half (52%) felt that it was somewhat easy (scores of 4 or 5) to find (49% among intraprovincial businesses). Conversely, 18% reported that the information was not very easy (scores of 1, 2 or 3) to find (25% among intraprovincial businesses).

Just over two thirds of federally regulated businesses (67%) reported that the information was well understood (scores of 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale) while another 29% said it was somewhat well understood (scores of 4 or 5). Just 3% reported the information as not well understood (scores of 1, 2 or 3). Ease of understanding the federal food safety requirement information on the CFIA website was slightly lower among intraprovincial businesses, among whom 56% reported that the information was well understood, 32% somewhat well understood and 11% said it was not well understood.

When it comes to sources of information related to food safety regulations or requirements, the CFIA was cited most often across both segments (50%, compared to 27% among intraprovincial businesses). Additional common sources included the Government of Canada (11% federally regulated, 7% intraprovincial), Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation (MAPAQ; 7% federally regulated, 11% intraprovincial), industry associations (9% federally regulated, 13% intraprovincial only) and colleagues (8% federally regulated, 7% intraprovincial only).

Intraprovincial businesses also commonly cited provincial government (17% intraprovincial, 6% federally regulated), google or other search engines (9% intraprovincial, 6% federally regulated) and food safety course materials (9% intraprovincial, 3% federally regulated).

CFIA communications

Business representatives were asked how they received information from the CFIA within the past year. CFIA communications were most commonly reported through email notifications (54% federally regulated, 28% intraprovincial only) followed by personal interaction with a CFIA representative (20% federally regulated, 9% intraprovincial only).

Other sources included the CFIA website (8% federally regulated, 5% intraprovincial only), telephone calls (7% federally regulated, 4% intraprovincial only), mailed documents (7% federally regulated, 6% intraprovincial only), through an industry representative (3% federally regulated, 1% intraprovincial only) or notices in MyCFIA portal (2% federally regulated).

Nearly one quarter (24%) of federally regulated businesses and half (50%) of intraprovincial businesses had not received any information from the CFIA in the past year.

Those who had received information from the CFIA within the past year were asked to rate their satisfaction with these communications. Two in five federally regulated businesses (40%)

reported high satisfaction with CFIA communications (scores of 9 or 10 on a scale from 0 to 10) compared to 28% of intraprovincial businesses. Another 36% of federally regulated businesses and 42% of intraprovincial businesses reported moderate satisfaction (scores of 7 or 8), while fewer were not very satisfied (scores of 6 or lower; 22% federally regulated, 26% intraprovincial only).

When asked to select the types of information products they would most like to receive from the CFIA, the most appealing types of products were checklists (19% federally regulated, 22% intraprovincial only), videos (17% federally regulated, 11% intraprovincial only) and general web content (12% federally regulated, 16% intraprovincial only).

Business representatives who were interested in a particular information product were asked about preferred channels of communication for receiving these types of information products from the CFIA. Across both segments, email was by far the most preferred channel for communication from the CFIA (90% federally regulated, 85% intraprovincial only).

When business representatives were asked whether they have had difficulty getting the information they needed from the CFIA over the past few years a minority of businesses reported difficulties (16% federally regulated businesses, 10% intraprovincial businesses). Most representatives did not experience any difficulties accessing information (83% federally regulated, 86% intraprovincial only).

Ask CFIA

More than four times as many federally regulated business representatives reported having used the Ask CFIA service when compared to intraprovincial businesses (18% compared to 4%).

More than half (53%) of federally regulated businesses who had used the Ask CFIA service reported high satisfaction (scores of 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale) compared to 44% of intraprovincial businesses. Another third (33%) of federally regulated businesses reported moderate satisfaction (scores of 4 or 5) with the service compared to 56% among intraprovincial businesses. Conversely, 14% of federally regulated businesses reported low satisfaction (scores of 1, 2 or 3).

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These results are presented and discussed in-depth throughout the detailed results section of the report.

Detailed results

Research purpose and objectives

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has a mandate to verify food sold in Canada is safe and accurately represented. The CFIA achieves this through enforcement of Canada's federal food legislation, including the *Safe Food for Canadians Act* (SFCA) and its regulations (*Safe Food for Canadians Regulations* - SFCR) which introduced new requirements for food businesses as of January 15, 2019.

The SFCR generally applies to food for human consumption (including ingredients) that is imported, exported, or inter-provincially traded for commercial purposes. It also applies to the slaughter of food animals from which meat products to be exported or inter-provincially traded may be derived. The regulations had a graduated coming into force schedule that started in January 2019, beginning with businesses that were previously registered under commodity-specific regulations (e.g. meat, eggs, fish and seafood, dairy), and ending in July 2020 for businesses in the manufactured food sector with some requirements being phased in based on food commodity, type of activity and business size. Since November 1, 2022, the CFIA has been conducting compliance activities for SFCR requirements for all food sectors, including the manufactured food sector. SFCR introduced components, which apply to most food businesses: licensing, preventive controls and traceability requirements.

A review of the provisions and operations of the SFCA, including an assessment of the resources allocated to its administration and enforcement, must take place every five years. The first review began in early 2024-25.

As part of the CFIA's commitment to delivering timely information and guidance to regulated parties, the Agency continues to develop tools and services to help industry meet food safety requirements.

Food safety is a top priority for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. The CFIA continually works to improve the overall health of Canadians. This includes ensuring that food is safely produced, accurately represented to Canadians, and properly labelled.

The CFIA develops and delivers programs and services designed to protect Canadians from preventable food safety hazards, to ensure that food safety emergencies are effectively managed, food is accurately represented, and to ensure that the public is aware of—and contributes to—food safety. Canada has a sound and internationally respected food safety system and food recall process. The SFCR provide clear and consistent rules for food commodities so that consumers can be confident that food on grocery shelves is safe to eat, whether it is produced in Canada or abroad. The regulations also help get unsafe food off the shelves faster

by requiring businesses that import or prepare food for export or interprovincial trade to trace their food back to their supplier and forward to whom they sold their products.

The main objective of this research was to gain insights into the views of Canadian food businesses on food safety and food safety regulations.

The research focused on small food businesses, food importers and exporters, the manufactured food sector and businesses currently operating only in one province or territory that may want to expand to importing or making food for interprovincial trade or export. As well, a particular topic of focus was on the current level of awareness and satisfaction with service from the CFIA and the level of guidance for industry surrounding regulatory requirements of food products.

Specifically, this public opinion research aimed to gain a better understanding of regulated industry and their level of understanding, awareness, motivations, perceptions, and attitudes about:

- The various roles and responsibilities within the food safety system, in particular to measure the level of awareness of their own responsibilities in the system;
- Resource needs and barriers to complying with all regulatory requirements, to identify root causes of non-compliance and support development and implementation of compliance promotion, communications, and support service activities;
- The effectiveness and satisfaction of the SFCR communications and related communications from various services, such as My CFIA, Ask CFIA and the NISC;
- How requirements change for businesses depending on demographic characteristics of ownership or clientele;
- Satisfaction with guidance received from Ask CFIA and rating of overall experience in using the service;
- Measure awareness and effectiveness of CFIA communications regarding food safety;
- Impact and perception of the CFIA Manufactured Food Sector Inspection Blitz; and,
- Levels of trust in the Agency and key components of the agency such as inspectors and senior management.

The research also explored the following topics among pre-federally regulated companies:

- Assess readiness / willingness to enter federally regulated marketplace;
- Understand barriers to entering the federally regulated marketplace;
- Impression of level of effort to enter federally regulated marketplace; and
- Specific communication requirements for entering federally regulated marketplace.

Qualitative research results – focus groups with food businesses

The focus group research findings have been divided into three sections, one for each of the three main target audiences:

1. Federally regulated food businesses
2. Provincially regulated food businesses planning on importing and/or selling outside their province/territory
3. Recently licenced federally regulated food businesses

Focus groups with federally regulated food businesses

This section captures the comments from two focus groups held with federally regulated food businesses.

Familiarity with the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations

Most businesses had heard of the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations. As well, participants seemed fairly familiar with the various safety requirements in the SFCR even though they did not explicitly list them off using the formal terminology in the regulations. More specifically, many referred to:

- Traceability
- Preventive control plans (PCPs) or aspects of PCPs (such as hazard analysis, hygiene, critical controls, controls for all aspects of production including transportation, employees, production equipment, etc.)
- Labelling
- Packaging
- Product recall

One participant summarized the requirements as “all measures that need to be taken into account to avoid that food or products become a danger to consumers.”

Some of the requirements that businesses considered the most challenging were:

- The high training costs and challenges with consistency due to high staff turnover.
- Labelling is challenging, especially regarding the accuracy of country-of-origin claims (such as “Product of Canada”).
- Traceability – keeping track of the source of ingredients, including the amount of time needed to ensure the quality checks are done for imported products.
- The amount of time and effort to scale up from the provincial safety plan to the federal one where a more detailed written PCP is required.

General views regarding SFCR licensing

Participants were asked to describe their experience applying for or renewing their SFCR licence.

For new applicants, the challenges raised tended to focus on navigating the CFIA portal and on preparing their PCP.

The particular challenge with the portal was generally described as “getting the specific documents into the right place” in the portal to avoid triggering audits. Using the portal was not considered user-friendly or intuitive and could benefit from more standardization. Some suggested including “hints” or give the user the option to access a live chat as they work through a specific section in the portal. One participant had used “Walk Me” but did not find it helpful.

In terms of preparing the PCP, authoring the document was considered by a few participants as time-consuming and arduous to the point where they hired an external company to help them. It was felt that ““navigating that process can be very, very challenging for somebody who's never been through it before.” Furthermore, these external consultants are considered expensive. As a result of the challenges in preparing their PCP, a few businesses suggested the CFIA should have sector-specific templates, guides or something similar to work from.

“They have a general template, which sometimes we force our way to use, but then it's not really applicable. So I think having templates for these specific industries would really help - to know that, if you're in seafood, go to this site, use this template. If you're in dairy, use this template. Stuff like that would help, especially for small growing businesses - not necessarily the established ones, but for growing businesses, it would go a long way to help.”

Ultimately, there was general agreement that the application process requires a lot of information, some of which can take days to find. This can be especially challenging for smaller businesses: “Who has that time?”

Conversely, renewing a licence via the portal was considered straightforward.

New applicants did find themselves contacting the CFIA during the application process. These interactions were typically described as challenging and not very helpful. Examples of some of the challenges included the following:

- There was a sense that the CFIA was unwilling or unable to help since they just kept directing them to the website.
- Businesses were further frustrated by a lack of specific guidance, leaving the business with the impression that the CFIA is not solution-oriented. As one business explained: “They said: you have to provide us with what you think, and we'll tell you if it's right or wrong.”
- There were also concerns with lack of consistency from one call center agent to another while another business sensed that there was also a lack of consistency in regulatory interpretation from one inspector to the other.

“At the end of the day, they'll tell you, oh, it's your business, you need to figure it out.”

Although preparing their PCP was challenging and time-consuming, businesses seemed confident that their PCP was complete and that their business met SFC requirements before they applied for their licence. This was largely attributable to such factors as having worked with an external consultant, knowing that their facility was certified before the application process, and, for larger businesses, having an in-house team dedicated to quality control.

In terms of service standards, participants did not raise any concerns with the amount of time it took them to receive their new licence. One participant recalled it taking 30 to 40 days, which they considered a reasonable amount of time.

Ongoing management of preventive controls

When asked to describe areas of their preventive controls that tend to be the most difficult to consistently maintain over time, some of the themes that emerged included:

- Managing cross-contamination and ensuring that customers are aware of this possibility;
- Employee training in general, but especially having to train new employees due to high turnover;

- The amount of control points and hazard analysis involved drives up operating costs;
- Managing production documentation, such as start times, end times, etc. is difficult to do consistently well;
- Managing time-sensitive samples for testing or for exporting, for instance with live seafood;
- Managing the supply chain, more specifically:
 - making sure that suppliers maintain their certifications and are doing what they're supposed to do in terms of their own quality control;
 - dealing with brokers who may not have all the information related to the source product;
 - ensuring suppliers are consistent in what they ship to the business;
 - ensuring suppliers maintain the appropriate documentation for what they are selling.

One business explained that requiring their suppliers to have the proper documentation is so challenging that they have lost various suppliers over the years because they do not want to invest the time and effort to maintain their documentation.

“So with time, what you see is that you lose most of the suppliers because they feel that, no, you're asking for too much documents.”

Participants had a few suggestions for how the CFIA could help them maintain more consistent preventive controls over time:

- they could do some analysis to see how they can help businesses reduce paperwork;
- they could offer some suggestions sometimes rather than leave it to businesses to figure challenges out on their own;
- they could find a way to make sure their responses to industry are consistent, as much at the call center as with inspectors; and,
- they could offer training to help food businesses more effectively manage preventive controls, especially for smaller companies.

“They can call most of the food service operators into a hotel and do a training session for the key people once a year or, you know, twice a year in different cities and towns. Basically, giving them the trainings on how to do the documentation, what could be the challenges,

who are the key people they can go to in case they're getting stuck, what does the inspection look like, you know, general information, and take the industry questions and answers there, and create a training module for the industry.”

Inspections, compliance and enforcement actions

General thoughts related to inspections were quite diverse. While a few had neutral, non-descript sentiments regarding inspections and their inspector, others had a positive relationship while others best described this relationship as “a little bit painful.”

Participants were not concerned with being inspected – in fact they see it as a necessary part of operating a food business. It is also seen as a learning opportunity and a way to identify potential opportunities for improvement.

« J'aime bien les inspections parce qu'au moins ça te donne une vue d'externe pour faire des corrections. »

Businesses were more concerned with how those inspections are done. A few generally described the inspector's role as one of “policing” whereas they would prefer if their inspector worked with them in a more helpful, supportive and coach-like role.

- The CFIA's approach was contrasted to the USDA which was seen as much more supportive and motivational in terms of helping businesses succeed, whereas the CFIA is “trying to stop business in some cases – they try to make it as difficult as possible.”

Since businesses in these groups were mostly small businesses with a single location, participants could not say whether inspections were consistent across regions. They could say however that there was a notable lack of consistency across inspectors.

Participants were confident that they understood the different ways the CFIA can respond when non-compliance is identified. Even though they have never experienced enforcement actions, they also feel confident that they understand the process and when and why such actions might be used. To them the documentation is clear on this.

None of the businesses in the manufactured sector were aware that the CFIA recently conducted a focused inspection initiative. In the event of this sort of initiative, businesses would hope that all businesses in the targeted sector would be notified that it is happening. They would also like to know when it will happen, what it involves beyond a standard inspection, why it is happening, and, if new requirements are being introduced, what those might be.

Searching for information and use of CFIA tools

Businesses have various starting points when seeking regulatory or food safety information. Resources included academic research studies, the CFIA website (“because they are the holders of the regulations”), Health Canada’s website, Justice Canada’s website, peers/other businesses in their sector, industry magazines (such as the Canadian College and University Food Service Association magazine and Restaurants Canada), Google, industry associations, and the Health Canada Stakeholder Registry.

A few noted that they use AI to research regulatory matters or food safety information. The AI summary provided through a Google search is also considered but mostly as a starting point. Participants clarified that they do not limit themselves to the summary but rather they will check the summary sources which often would include the CFIA website.

Most participants had recently visited the CFIA website. Feedback on the CFIA website touched on the following:

- There is some agreement that the website is dense and text heavy, leading a few to consider it “cumbersome.” While some explained that they often find what they are looking for, it is nonetheless considered difficult to use to find information.
- Participants seemed to use one of two approaches to finding specific information on the website. There was a preference for the menus rather than the website’s search engine which “doesn't give you what you want” and will typically generate links to text heavy pages through which one needs to sift to determine relevance. As well, a few also explained how, rather than use the website’s search engine, they will specifically prompt an AI tool to search the CFIA website for information by including the link in their prompt.
- The home page was considered user-friendly and a good starting point. Many noticed links off the home page that they considered relevant to their business.

Participants were invited to scan two specific pages on the CFIA website:

- [Own or operate a food business? Start here - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca/en/food-safety/food-businesses/own-or-operate-a-food-business?lang=eng)
- [Toolkit for new food businesses - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca/en/food-safety/food-businesses/toolkit-for-new-food-businesses?lang=eng)

Generally, participants considered both pages useful and relevant. While many were more interested in the content of the second page, most preferred the first page in terms of layout, visual appeal and user-friendliness. A menu item on the second page that increased relevance was the reference to commodity-specific requirements.

Focus groups with provincially regulated food businesses

This section captures the comments from two focus groups held with provincially regulated food businesses that are likely to import, sell to other provinces or territories or export in the near future.

Barriers to interprovincial or international trade

At the start of each session, businesses discussed some of the obstacles or barriers they face in expanding into other provinces or potentially exporting internationally. Although some felt they still needed to saturate their own provincial market, there is some consideration for going beyond provincial borders. Some face some additional logistical costs such as maintaining margins on products that would require shipping and distribution in other provinces. Shipping over greater distances also raises concerns with food freshness and quality control. Interprovincial trade also requires bilingual labelling, which increases costs. As well, selling to the United States cannot happen without taking the impact of tariffs into consideration.

A few also raised significant concerns with the costs and resources needed to obtain the licences and certifications required to sell in other provinces or internationally. Without the help of external resources, such as a consultant, and without a significant cash injection to hire these consultants and then have the proper infrastructure and staff in place to sustain the quality control measures needed, these businesses felt that growing beyond their provincial borders was, if not impossible, at least a major challenge. This challenge was especially acute for small or start-up businesses, one of whom who speculated that this is perhaps why so many smaller companies sell to larger ones who have the means and internal resources to manage licensing requirements.

“We're very comfortable with the safety of how we produce our stuff, the records we keep, satisfying all of our provincial regulations, but there's another level of sophistication and detail needed when you start exporting, and sometimes just staffing to ensure that that's all done up to speed is tough.”

While businesses believe the upfront costs are prohibitive, the ongoing maintenance costs once a federal licence is obtained would be quite minimal.

General attitudes towards food regulation and compliance

For the most part, business owners are supportive of food regulation in Canada since it plays an important role in protecting consumers. Inspections are viewed as opportunities to fine-tune their operations and they help keep staff and owners alert. Regulations also create peace of mind for both the business owner and the consumer. In the end, most would see regulation as either

a safeguard or a competitive advantage. A few viewed regulations as a burden, with one business specifying that the burden was related to the fact that there are different regulations for each province.

On a related note, businesses not only agreed that regulations differ from one province to the next but that there is also a big difference between provincial and federal regulation. Participants did not understand how a product can be safe in one province and not be in another province.

As well, for certain federal requirements, especially when it comes to traceability and detailed record keeping, they don't understand why those are not built into provincial requirements as well so that when businesses start up and build their quality control processes, they meet all requirements by default. That said, even though a number of businesses are not very familiar with federal regulations, the sense was that provincial regulations are different from federal ones, and as far as they could tell, they do not appear to contradict each other.

"Provincially, you can do things within the province really easily. When you want to do something where you're selling outside of your province, it gets very, very complicated."

"So I have a lot of business ideas and project development that I would like to do, but so far, I haven't been doing it because I know it would involve CFIA, and it just seems more complex."

Among the few businesses who seemed sufficiently familiar with federal regulations, their impression was that it would take much more time to be federally licenced compared to only provincially. The efforts required to become federally licenced would also impinge on regular business operations. That said, once the resources and processes are in place for a federal licence, it is suspected that, although ongoing operating costs are probably higher, no further significant costs would be incurred to maintain the licence and all efforts previously dedicated to obtaining the licence could be reassigned to usual business operations.

Federal food regulation key safety requirements

Most businesses in these groups had heard of the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR) and, when shown by the moderator, most were also familiar with the list of key safety requirements in these food safety regulations.

When asked which safety requirements they considered the most challenging, responses varied somewhat:

- Hazard identification and analysis
 - **Challenge:** with fish and meat products, not knowing exactly when the food is safe to be sold or served and ensuring consistency at that level.
 - **Potential CFIA support:** inspections could help identify what is and is not a risk.
 - **Potential CFIA support:** help finance or subsidize certain quality control equipment like meat / fish thermometers.
- Traceability
 - **Challenge:** don't currently have this requirement with the province so it would involve setting up new processes.
 - **Challenge:** currently source inputs from a wide variety of formal and informal suppliers, for instance, to make apple juice, apples come from all shapes and sizes of producers.
 - **Challenge:** it is very difficult to find information and guidelines for very niche food products (such as foraging).
 - **Potential CFIA support:** templates and guidelines, the more industry-specific, the better.
- Product recall
 - **Challenge:** don't currently have this requirement with the province so it would involve setting up new processes
 - **Potential CFIA support:** templates and guidelines.

Even with the availability of templates, businesses still feel a big challenge is to find the time and resources to do all the paperwork.

Finally, to further support food businesses with their safety requirements, it was suggested that the CFIA could play a greater educational role in compliance. Rather than focusing exclusively on compliance-focused inspections, they could have more preventive visits: « Ça permettrait vraiment de favoriser la prévention, l'éducation positive. » [*"It would really promote prevention and positive education."*]

Federal licensing

A few businesses had considered applying or had started the process of applying for a Safe Food for Canadians licence. Starting points for information tended to be a mix of industry colleagues and the CFIA website, although all those who wanted specific information on the licence necessarily went to the CFIA website. As far as they could remember, nothing stood out to them as problematic with their overall experience with the website, following the steps to apply, understanding whether they needed to get a licence, etc.

In a context where businesses might want to get a federal licence in the future, businesses felt that the CFIA could provide support in the following ways:

- Make sure the businesses understand the regulations.
- A step-by-step guide on how to apply, including what to look out for, what not to do, terminology, etc., with support from a CFIA staff, an online chat, or an AI tool.
- A glossary to help understand the forms they would need to complete.
- Provide checklists or templates for checklists so that businesses can consistently follow the requirements.
- Process or standard operating procedure guidelines.
- Work with the business to conduct a gap assessment, an informal audit or have a neutral consultant or advisor come to the facility to provide some guidance or tips on how to prepare their operations for federal licensing.
- Examples, including photos and videos.
- Have greater interaction with provincial inspectors so that they can be an information conduit to federal licensing.
- One-on-one support.

Among the few businesses who use third-party auditors (such as SQF, FSSC, HACCP, etc.), views were mixed on whether SFCR requirements would be more demanding. Nobody said it would be easier to obtain a federal licence compared to these certifications.

On the topic of enforcement, participants tended to agree that there is no consistency across provincial inspectors.

Perceptions of the CFIA in food safety regulation

When asked to describe the CFIA in the context of food safety regulation, businesses often used terms related to enforcing regulations such as: control, regulate, and inspect. A few were reminded of assurance and food safety and that the agency is trustworthy. That said, some were also reminded of challenges dealing with the CFIA or at least negative perceptions they have of the agency and used terms such as complexity, rigor, nerves and fear.

When asked what three words *should* describe the CFIA, responses struck a greater balance between enforcement, safety and support:

- Réguler, renforcer, éducation et formation
- Support, safety, practical
- Trust, safety, assurance
- Trust, approachable, supportive
- Supportive, friendly, safety

Searching for information and use of CFIA tools

Businesses have various starting points when seeking regulatory or food safety information. Resources included general use of Government of Canada websites, the CFIA website, talking to others in the industry, provincial websites, academic research, the FDA website, and calling their provincial inspector.

Use of AI was mixed – some used it albeit with a grain of salt while others do not use it at all, fearing misinformation or inaccuracies. The AI summary provided through a Google search is also considered but mostly as a starting point. Participants clarified that they do not limit themselves to the summary but rather they will check the summary sources seeking out authoritative websites such as Government of Canada sites, the CFIA website, etc.

“I think we use ChatGPT a lot, but we can't really blindly trust it. So, the good thing about ChatGPT and other AI search engines is it actually points you to a right direction. So the source.”

Many participants had recently visited the CFIA website. Comments regarding the website touched on the following:

- Some are bit intimidated by the amount of information found on it. It is seen as a typical “government” website in terms of being hard to use and dense. Many do feel they end up finding what they are looking for most of the time once they get used to the site.
- There was some use of the website’s search engine with no concerns raised.
- Some of the topics that recently drew a few of the businesses to the site included labelling, food moisture content, regulation updates and pressure canning guidelines.

Participants were invited to scan the following page on the CFIA website:

- [Own or operate a food business? Start here - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca)

General reactions to the page included the following:

- Everyone was seeing this page for the first time.
- Reactions were positive and many were immediately finding links they considered relevant. The content appeared to be presented in a logical, coherent manner with clear steps to follow.
- The layout was considered quite good and user-friendly, especially since it did not contain too much information.
- A suggestion included adding a step-by-step guide on how to become federally regulated if you are already provincially regulated, customized according to the province. There was also interest in a link to “contact us” / “contact support” or an option for a live chat.

Campaign tagline testing

Businesses were asked their views on possible taglines for an upcoming campaign that the CFIA is considering. Three taglines were shown:

- D. Inspiring Confidence. Ensuring Protection. Enabling Prosperity. / Inspirer confiance. Garantir la sécurité. Propulser l'économie.
- E. Securing Canada’s food, animals and plants for generations to come. / Préserver la salubrité des aliments, assurer la protection des animaux et des végétaux du Canada pour les générations futures.
- F. Safeguarding food, animals, plants — Protecting Canada’s future. / Protéger la salubrité des aliments, la santé des animaux et des végétaux: agir pour l’avenir du Canada.

Tagline “A” was a heavy favourite among English participants whereas votes were more dispersed among French participants. Some reactions included:

- Taglines “B” and “C” sounded too agricultural and less focused on food safety. There was also less buy-in that it is the CFIA’s role to be concerned with the country’s future.
- There were mixed reactions towards the term “prosperity” in Tagline “A”, a few feeling it was not relevant to what the CFIA does specifically.
- To inspire confidence in both consumers and industry was considered a key role for the CFIA.
- It was suggested in the French session that taglines “B” and “C” were too long.

Focus groups with newly licenced federally regulated food businesses

This section captures the comments from one focus group held with federally regulated food businesses having recently obtained a new licence or amended their licence. Businesses having only renewed their licence were not included in this session.

General attitudes towards food regulation and compliance

For the most part, businesses believe food regulation is necessary and is for the greater good. While regulation can be frustrating at times, the Canadian approach is better than the one in the United States which was seen as more lenient. A few felt there are inadequacies though – for instance, all the rules should not apply as strictly across all food businesses since it should be risk-based. As well, imported products and domestically produced products are not seen to be competing on an even playing field, with rules seemingly more lenient towards imported products.

Ultimately, most participants agreed that food regulation in Canada is primarily a safeguard with a noteworthy amount of burden. A few felt it was as much a competitive advantage as a safeguard.

Businesses had various licences and certifications in addition to their SFC licence, including Health Canada licences, food handler certifications, HACCP, and a provincial licence. The level of effort needed to meet all the administrative tasks related to these licences varied considerably across businesses – for smaller businesses that see themselves as lower risk, ongoing efforts added up to “a few hours a year” whereas for somewhat larger businesses with a dedicated quality control manager, this person might spend 40% to 50% of their time ensuring ongoing operations continue to meet requirements. Participants did make a few distinctions:

- Renewing a licence, including their SFC licence, takes very little time and is straightforward. What takes most of their time is managing daily operations so that they comply when inspectors visit and when it comes time to renew their licence.
- Applying for a new licence is very time consuming whereas maintaining the licence is far more straightforward.

Views on the licence application or amendment process

Challenges

Among those who applied for a licence for the first time, the CFIA portal was a common challenge. Issues with the portal pertained to not clearly understanding the information being requested, the process regarding the proof of authority (“this took 2 weeks!”), and a lack of helpful information on how to fix errors in the submission.

To help them through this process, one participant resorted to a colleague with experience while another took screenshots of portal screens and prompted ChatGPT to help her understand the information the CFIA was requesting.

“My biggest complaint was what took me 3 weeks trying to get the Safe Food for Canadians licence, just because of the [portal] issues. I’ve walked friends through it now in 45 minutes.”

Businesses also felt that collecting and preparing all the information needed for the application submission was very time consuming.

Another major challenge for a few was determining whether or not they should be applying for a federal licence, and then, once the application was started in the portal, there were some challenges finding the right product that fit what the business produced (for instance, mixed foods).

There was some concern with the relevance of a telephone interview that one business needed to complete to obtain their licence. Two specific concerns were raised – first, the interviewer was asking about procedures that had already been verified or confirmed by their provincial health authority, so this step felt redundant. Second, they were distraught that nobody at the CFIA, including the interviewer, asked to see specific information related to requirements such as labelling and a PCP but instead just asked them to swear that they will follow their PCP to the best of their ability:

“Why are they not asking for that? Why are they not asking for, you know, I just spent \$10,000 redesigning packaging to make it CFIA compliant? CFIA doesn’t want to see that. They don’t want to see your PCP plans.”

There was an expectation here that the CFIA would have a template into which applicants would need to enter their PCP.

Although not as challenging as first-time applicants, those who recently submitted an amendment to their licence also experienced some challenges. These were focused on the following:

- trying to navigate the portal to find the specific product the business wanted to add to their licence, and,
- At the behest of the CFIA, a business was required to remove a product from their licence and to reapply to add that product once again. This was frustrating because this was a product that the business had been producing for decades and yet all prior experience and documentation was invalid and they needed to apply as if they were introducing a new product:

“It doesn't matter, you've made it for 50 years, now they look at you like you are brand new, you don't know anything, send us everything. It was at least 20 different documents.”

In this latter scenario, the inspector was not familiar with the portal and this again was a point of frustration for the business: “They never see it from our side. [...] This whole portal may have been around about, I don't know, is it 4 or 5 years now? I don't like it, but they don't understand it either.”

Finally, businesses reiterated that, unlike a first-time application or an amendment, renewing their licence was straightforward. Furthermore, a few businesses did recall having to complete the food safety supplemental information questionnaire and all agreed that the extra questions were simple and did not take much time to answer: “it takes, I would say, less than 10 minutes.” It was difficult for them to assess whether this extra step had any impact on licence processing times.

Completeness of PCPs

A key element of a licence application is developing and implementing a Preventive Control Plan (PCP). When asked how they knew whether their PCP was complete when they applied for their licence, strategies included:

- Lots of research looking at different sources such as the CFIA website, the Government of Canada website, and also ChatGPT with a focus on understanding how specific requirements are defined by the CFIA, so that they could provide the analysis according to their criteria.

- Prior to applying, they had other third-party audit certifications such as GFSI and SQF.
- Working with a consultant or someone who has been through the licence application process before.

Information resources used

Businesses used a combination of resources to prepare their licence application. Online resources tended to be Google, AI and the CFIA website (including the search function within the website). A few businesses also relied heavily on a consultant or someone who has been through the licence application process before.

A few agreed that contacting the CFIA for advice or guidance will not be helpful. They explained that a CFIA call center agent will most likely point them to the website:

“I would say don't ask the CFIA anything, because they're mandated not to give you advice. At least that's my experience. You can ask them the question, and they will shut you down and say: ‘We're not going to be responsible with any answer we give you, so we're not going to tell you anything useful. Go find it on your own. We're not consultants.’”

Finally, to wrap up the discussion on the application process, businesses were asked what advice they would give to a business going through an application for the first time. Common responses included working with someone or another business that has been through the process before, referring to the CFIA website “because if they are administering the licence, you can find accurate, reputable information on there”, and relying heavily on any existing quality control programs they might already have in place. The only caveat that participants gave regarding use of the CFIA website was that there is a lot of information, especially for someone applying for the first time.

Service standards / timing

For the most part, businesses seemed to be receiving their new licence or renewals well within the current service standard of 70 business days. One participant has been going through application process for 6 months but admits there were inaccuracies in her application while another was waiting for the amendment to come through (having started just over a month ago).

“I got my license within 2 weeks, I think. I don't remember waiting very long for it. I was surprised when I got it.”

Maintaining preventive controls over time

Businesses did not raise many issues when it comes to consistently maintaining various areas of their preventive controls over time. Very small businesses feel it is easy for them to stay on top of their preventive controls because they are small. Larger businesses have resources dedicated to their preventive controls so again here, they tend to feel that “if you're not changing anything, it's not that hard to maintain. It's an annual review, reassessment.” The only challenge that was raised pertained to making sure staff are and remain trained on the procedures, which is especially challenging for a business that sees heavy turnover or relies heavily on temporary workers.

Inspections and compliance

Businesses had limited experiences with inspections. Among the few with experience, there is a sense that “they are overall consistent on the whole program, but some have different hang-ups than others, and you just try and keep them happy and get along.”

These few participants also tended to agree that if the inspector identifies an issue or non-compliance, they clearly understand what the issue is, and what they need to do next. This is largely attributable to knowing their own preventive controls well and that if there is an issue, it tends to be a minor adjustment. Years of experience as a quality control manager also helps – having gone through multiple corrective action plans over the years has led to them becoming very familiar with the non-compliance protocol. That said, there are no clear instructions on how to specifically address the various types of non-compliances – they have had to develop tools and strategies on their own over the years: “Those answers aren't really given anywhere. There is no real good template for that. I've had to do my own research over the years and put those together. But no, it's not easy, it's not simple, not in my business, anyway.”

By and large, businesses were also confident that they understand the compliance process, what would happen if they received a warning and what might trigger enforcement.

Businesses would hope to receive a range of information following an inspection that resulted in a non-compliance, including:

- information on what had happened and guidance on where they can go to make sure they can address the non-compliance;
- if it is training related, provide the name or initials of the person to whom the inspector spoke, or the department they are in, so they can target training programs accordingly;
- if it is equipment related, specify the time the incident was noticed, and specific information on the machine including a picture;

- to quote the regulation not being followed; and,
- a list of examples of the major or most common non-compliances on their website and what they are typically looking for in those situations.

None of the participants had heard that the CFIA recently conducted a focused inspection initiative in the manufactured food sector. In the event of this sort of initiative, businesses would hope that the CFIA would communicate to the sector why this is happening and, if possible, guidance so businesses understand what they are looking for. In the absence of a clear reasoning, businesses would feel fearful or concerned about a focused inspection initiative in their sector.

Searching for information and use of CFIA tools

Businesses have various starting points when seeking regulatory or food safety information. Responses included a range of online resources (ChatGPT, SQF website, CFIA website, online forums such as the International Food Safety and Quality Network, and provincial industry groups), food safety consultants, industry colleagues or experts, academics, trade magazines, and CFIA manuals of procedure.

When seeking feedback regarding any important gaps on the CFIA website, two themes emerged:

- the documentation related to the new front-of-package symbols requirements that came into effect January 1, 2026 was deemed too voluminous and complicated: “They could have made that a lot simpler.”
- There is so much information on the site that it becomes impossible or near-impossible to find what one is looking for and this represents an important information gap: “I feel like you shouldn't have to go to ChatGPT to find information on the CFIA website.”

Participants were invited to scan the following page on the CFIA website:

- [Own or operate a food business? Start here - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca/en/food-safety/food-businesses/own-or-operate-a-food-business?lang=eng)

A few recognized the page but nothing stood out to them as being particularly memorable. Those seeing it for the first time felt that this page would have been helpful to them when they first applied for their federal licence.

“I would say it would make the whole process less daunting to somebody who's new to it, because everything, you know, is right there, as opposed to trying to get it yourself and guessing.”

Perceptions of the CFIA in food safety regulation

To conclude the session, participants were invited to use the chat feature to list three words they believe describe the CFIA today, and then afterwards list three words that *should* describe the CFIA. Many describe the CFIA through its main role and mandate which focus on regulation, safety, and protocol. A few see it as professional as well as informative and setting high standards. It was, however, also considered redundant, bureaucratic, slow and unhelpful. In terms of the words that should describe the CFIA, participants continued to emphasize professionalism, safety and high standards, but also introduced words suggesting a more supportive role such as “assistance”, “helpful”, “resourceful” and “accommodating.” Consistency was also a popular term that should describe the CFIA. The figure below shows how the responses for each of the six participants evolved from one question to the next.

Three words that describe the CFIA	→	Three words that <i>should</i> describe the CFIA
agency, safety, protocol	→	assistance, professional, efficient
professional, regulation, safety	→	helpful, safety, professional
necessary, safety, guidance	→	safety, helpful, consistent
informative, high standards, professional	→	motivation, high standards, professional
redundant, safety, protocol	→	helpful, reliable, consistent
bureaucratic, slow, unhelpful-to-producers, fearful	→	helpful, resourceful, accommodating, consistent

Quantitative research results – food business survey

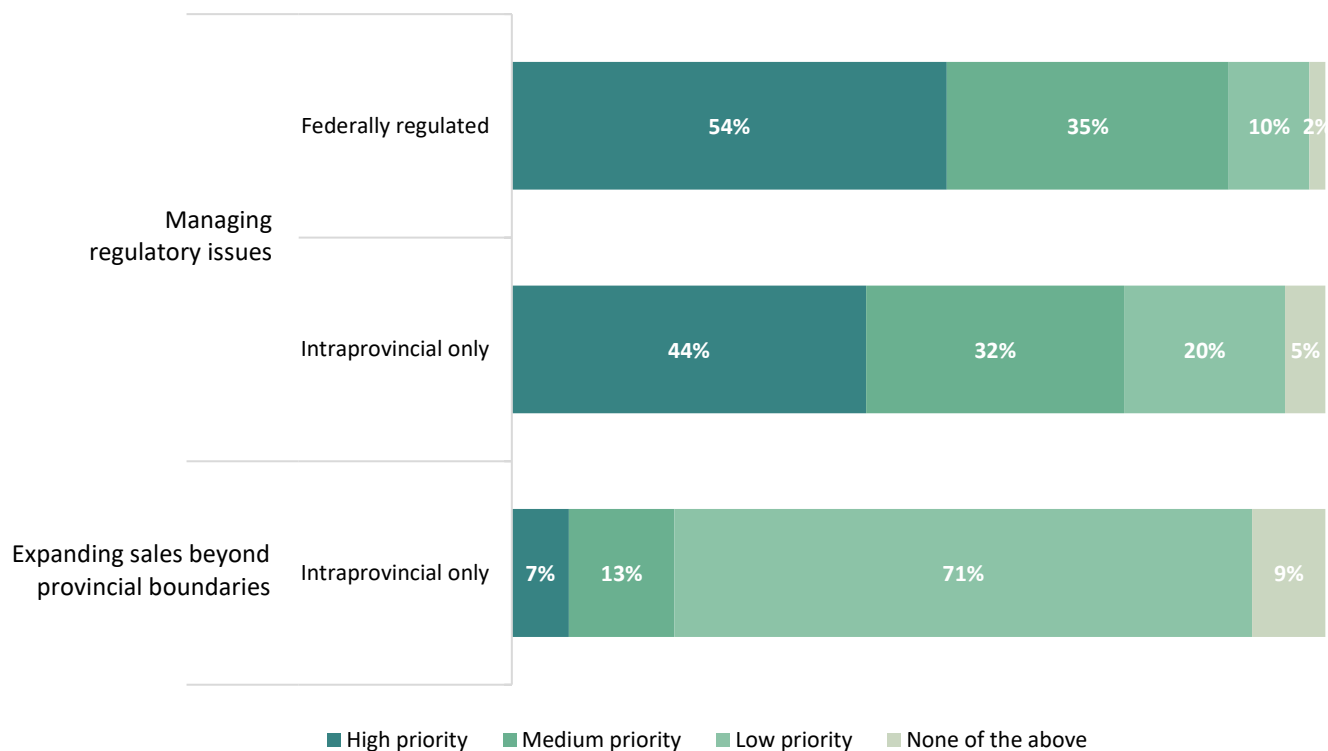
Food business priorities

Business representatives were asked the extent to which specific priorities applied to their business over the last couple of years.

A larger proportion of federally regulated businesses (54%) reported managing regulatory issues as a high priority, compared to 44% among intraprovincial businesses.

Expanding sales beyond provincial boundaries was a high priority for just 7% of intraprovincial businesses while 13% indicated this was a medium priority. A much larger proportion of intraprovincial businesses rated expanding sales beyond provincial boundaries as a low priority (71%) while another 9% did not provide a response. This priority area was not presented to federally regulated businesses.

Figure 1. Priorities among food businesses



Q1AA. Thinking about the past two years, have the following been high, medium, or low priority for your company? Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478; intraprovincial only, n=222.

Key findings

Those more likely to report that managing regulatory issues was a high priority included:

Federally regulated businesses

- Large/medium sized businesses compared to micro businesses (61% vs 39%).
- Businesses that had accessed the CFIA website to learn about the federal food safety requirements compared to those who had not (60% vs. 41%).

Those more likely to indicate that expanding sales beyond provincial boundaries was a low priority included:

Intraprovincial only businesses

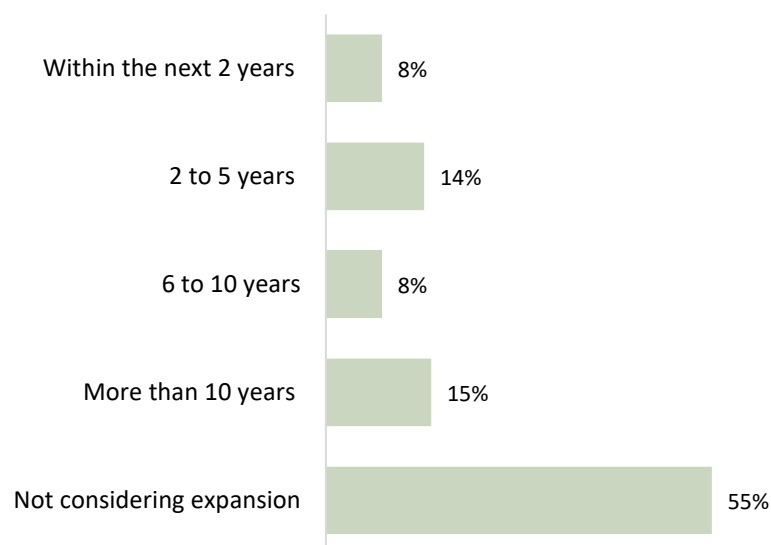
- Business representatives in Quebec compared to Western Canada (78% versus 59%).

Intraprovincial businesses were asked about their timeline for expanding sales beyond provincial boundaries.

A small proportion were considering this expansion within the next two years (8%) while a larger proportion reported a timeline of two to five years (14%). Another 8% were considering expanding within six to ten years, while 15% were considering doing so in more than ten years.

More than half of intraprovincial businesses (55%) were not considering expansion.

Figure 2. Timeline for expansion – intraprovincial only businesses



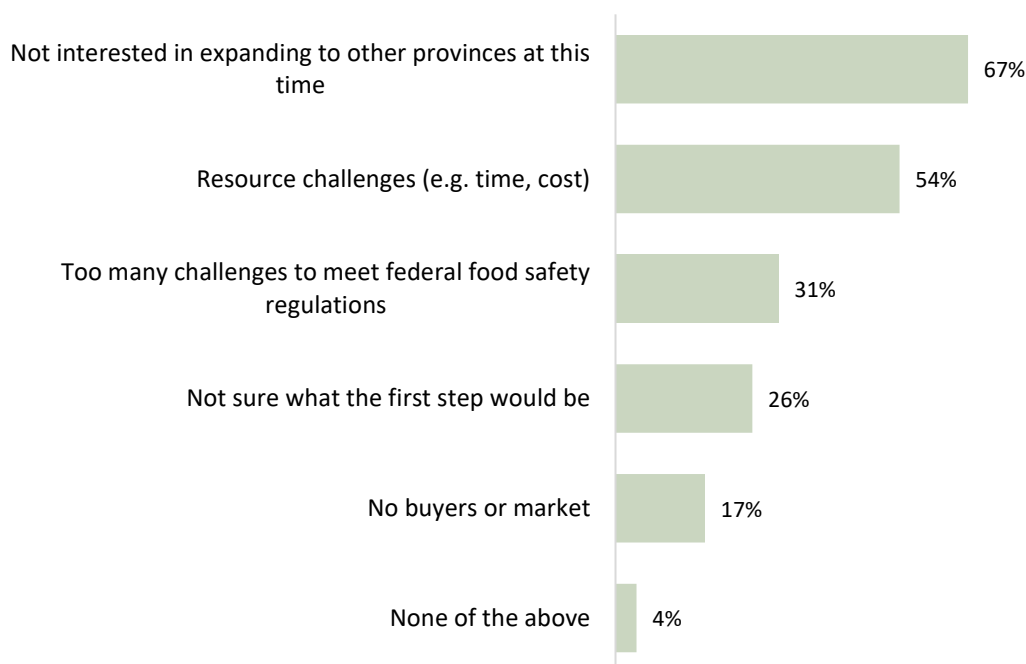
QS12. You may be interested in expanding to include activities such as importing or manufacturing, processing, treating, preserving, grading, packaging or labelling food for trade between provinces or exporting or importing food products. What do you think your timeline would be for expansion? Base: All respondents, intraprovincial only, n=222.

Key findings

- Business representatives in Western Canada (20%) were more likely to report a timeline of the next two years compared to Ontario (6%) and Quebec (4%).
- Micro businesses were more likely to report a timeline of more than ten years compared to small businesses (21% vs. 10%).
- Businesses that produce fresh fruits or vegetables were more likely to report a timeline of more than ten years compared to businesses that produce maple products (8% vs. 0%).

Intraprovincial business representatives were asked what has prevented them from trading outside of their current province. The most common reason was a lack of interest (67%). Other barriers for intraprovincial businesses included resource challenges (54%), too many challenges to meeting federal regulations (31%), being unsure of the first step (26%), and lack of buyers or market (17%).

Figure 3. Barriers to expansion – intraprovincial only businesses



Q1AAA. What is stopping your business from trading outside of your current province (or territory) at present? Would it be...? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY] Base: All respondents, intraprovincial only, n=222.

Key findings

- Business representatives in Quebec were more likely to report that they were not interested in expanding to other provinces at this time compared to Western Canada (74% vs. 63%).

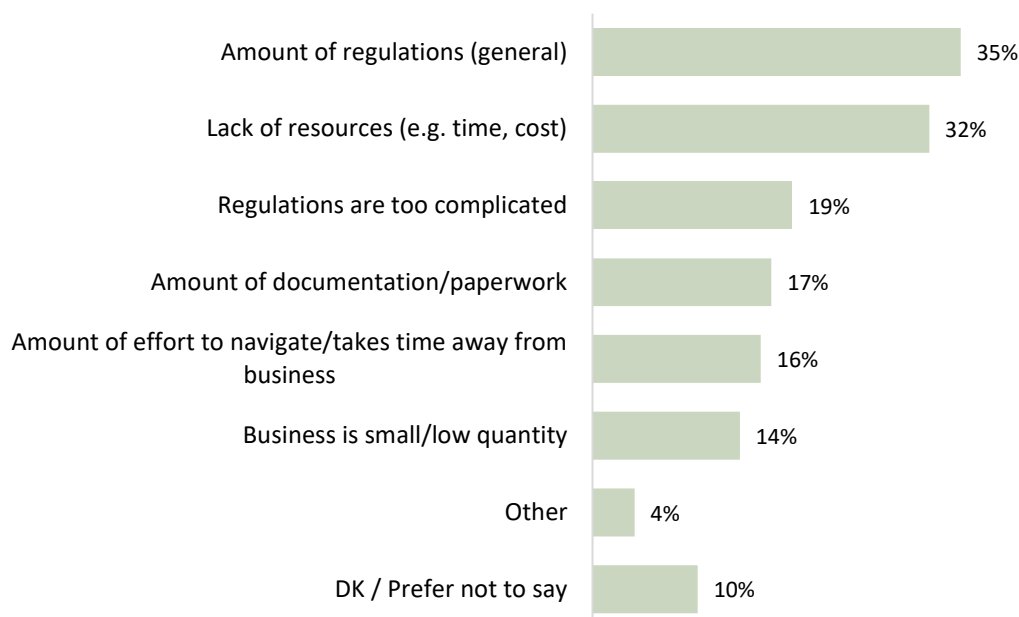
- Business representatives in Quebec were more likely to cite the following reasons compared to those in Ontario:
 - Resource challenges (64% vs 39%).
 - Too many challenges to meet federal food safety regulations (35% vs. 20%).
 - Not sure what the next step would be (32% vs. 12%).
- Business representatives in Quebec were more likely to report a lack of buyers or market compared to Western Canada (23% vs. 9%).
- Micro businesses were more likely to report that they were not interested in expanding to other provinces at this time compared to large/medium sized businesses (76% vs. 58%).
- Large/medium sized businesses (43%) were more likely to cite too many challenges to meet federal food safety regulations compared to micro and small businesses (26% respectively).
- Large/medium sized businesses were more likely to describe being unsure of what the next step would be compared to micro businesses (35% vs. 20%).
- Businesses that produce maple products (95%) were more likely to cite a lack of interest in expanding compared to businesses that produce meat products (71%), fresh fruits or vegetables (65%) or dairy products (59%).

Intraprovincial business representatives who reported challenges to meet federal food safety regulations as a barrier to expansion were then asked to provide more details on these challenges.

Roughly a third of these respondents cited the number of regulations as a challenge (35%) as well as a lack of resources (32%).

A smaller proportion of respondents felt that the regulations are too complicated (19%) or described challenges with the amount of paperwork (17%) and amount of time and effort required (16%). Additionally, some described challenges meeting the regulations due to a small business size (14%).

Figure 4. Challenges to meet federal food safety regulations – intraprovincial only businesses



Q1AAA1. Why do you think there are too many challenges to meet the federal food safety regulations? Base: Intraprovincial businesses who cited too many challenges to meet federal food safety regulations, n=69.

Key findings

- Large/medium sized businesses were more likely to report that the regulations are too complicated compared to small businesses (27% vs. 6%).

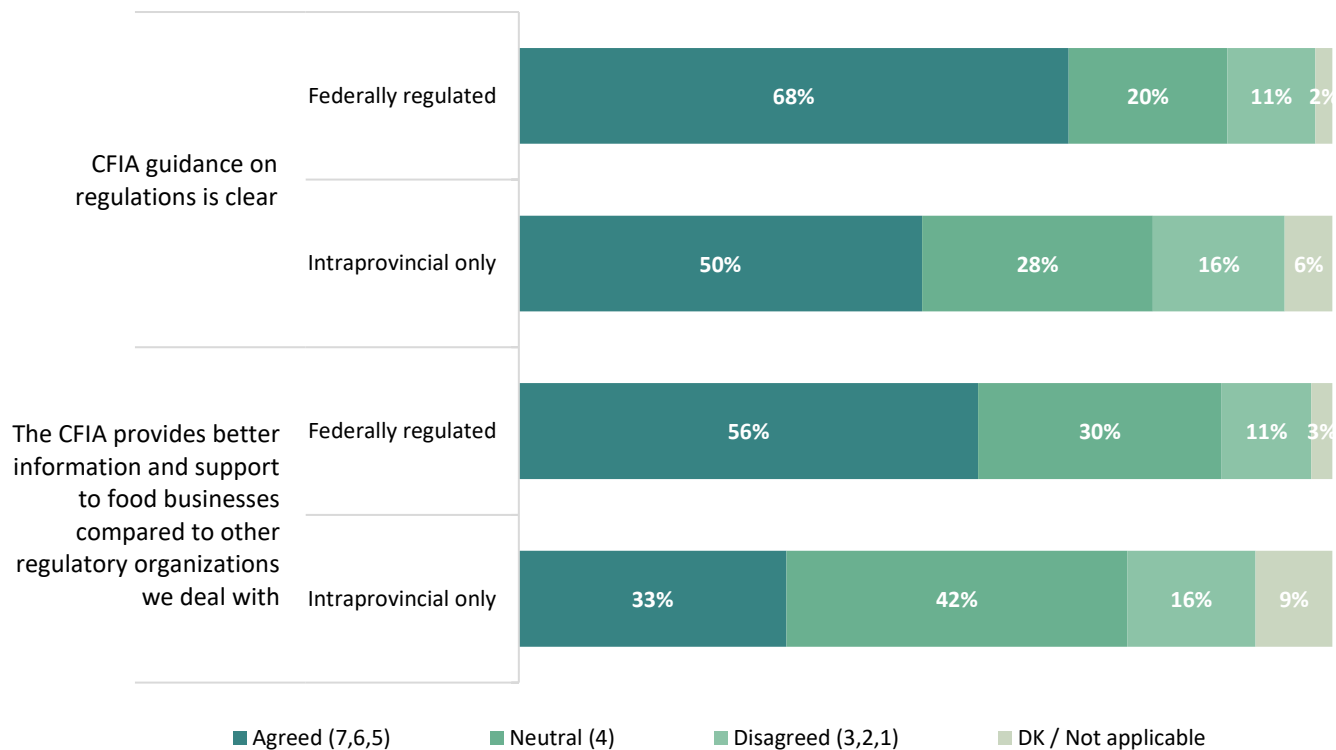
CFIA Reputation

Business representatives were asked to rate their agreement on statements regarding the CFIA where 1 means “strongly disagree”, 4 means “neither agree nor disagree”, and 7 means “strongly agree”.

More than two-thirds of federally regulated businesses (68%) agreed (scores of 5, 6, or 7) that CFIA guidance on regulations is clear (50% among intraprovincial businesses) while 20% were neutral (scores of 4) (28% among intraprovincial businesses). Conversely, 11% of federally regulated businesses disagreed (scores of 1, 2, or 3), while a slightly larger proportion of intraprovincial businesses disagreed (16%).

More than half of federally regulated businesses (56%) agreed that the CFIA provides better information and support to food businesses compared to other regulatory organizations they deal with (33% among intraprovincial businesses). Nearly a third of federally regulated businesses (30%) were neutral on this statement (42% among intraprovincial businesses). Conversely, 11% of federally regulated businesses disagreed (16% among intraprovincial businesses).

Figure 5. Reputation of the CFIA



QR1. Rate your overall agreement with the following statements about the CFIA. Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means “strongly disagree”, 4 means “neither agree nor disagree”, and 7 means “strongly agree”. Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478; intraprovincial only, n=222.

Key findings

Across sub-segments, those more likely to agree (scores of 5, 6 or 7) that CFIA guidance on regulations is clear included:

Federally regulated businesses

- Large/Medium sized businesses (76%) and small businesses (74%) compared to micro businesses (52%).

Intraprovincial only businesses

- Businesses in Western Canada (59%) and Ontario (57%) compared to those in Quebec (40%), and,
- Businesses that produce fresh fruits or vegetables compared to those that produce maple products (43% vs. 19%).

Across sub-segments, those more likely to agree (scores of 5, 6 or 7) that the CFIA provides better information and support to food businesses compared to other regulatory organizations we deal with included:

Federally regulated businesses

- Businesses in Ontario (67%) and Western Canada (64%) compared to those in Quebec (46%),
- Large/medium sized businesses compared to micro businesses (61% vs. 44%),
- Businesses that produce fish (77%) compared to those that produce processed fruit or vegetable products (41%) or dairy products (38%), and,
- Businesses that produce meat products compared to those that produce dairy products (66% vs. 38%).

Intraprovincial only businesses

- Businesses in Western Canada compared to those in Quebec (50% vs. 23%), and,
- Businesses that produce dairy products (36%) or meat products (29%) compared to those that produce maple products (10%).

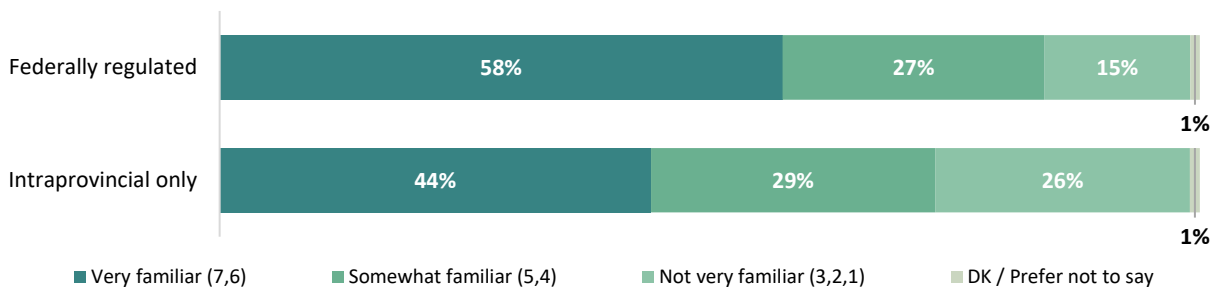
Understanding of and familiarity with food safety regulations

Business representatives were asked to rate their familiarity with the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations* (SFCR). A 7-point scale was used with 7 representing “very familiar” and 1 representing “not at all familiar”.

Nearly three in five federally regulated businesses (58%) reported being very familiar (scores of 6 or 7) with the SFCR, while another 27% were somewhat familiar (scores of 4 or 5). Conversely, 15% were not very familiar (scores of 1, 2 or 3).

Familiarity with the SFCR was lower among intraprovincial businesses, among whom 44% reported being very familiar, 29% were somewhat familiar and 26% were not very familiar.

Figure 6. Familiarity with the SFCR



QA2ii. How familiar are you with the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations*? Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means “not at all familiar” and 7 means “very familiar”. Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478; intraprovincial only, n=222.

Key findings

Across sub-segments, those more likely to report being very familiar with the SFCR included:

Federally regulated businesses

- Respondents in Atlantic Canada (77%), Ontario (71%) and Western Canada (62%) compared to those in Quebec (46%),
- Large/medium sized businesses (72%), compared to small (45%) and micro (41%) businesses,
- Businesses that produce fish (83%) compared to those that produce dairy products (45%), meat products (46%) or maple products (32%),
- Businesses that produce fresh fruits or vegetables (66%) compared to those that produce meat products (46%) or maple products (32%), and,
- Businesses that produce processed fruit or vegetable products compared to those that produce maple products (68% vs. 32%).

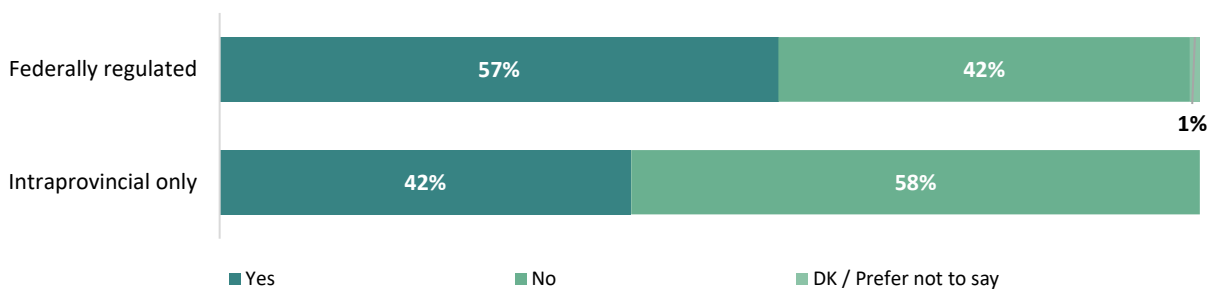
Intraprovincial only businesses

- Respondents in Western Canada compared to those in Quebec (65% versus 33%).

Those at least somewhat familiar with the SFCR (a score of 3 or higher) were asked whether they had recently seen, heard, or read something about these regulations.

More than half of federally regulated businesses familiar with the SFCR (57%) had recently seen, heard, or read something about these regulations. The equivalent figure among intraprovincial only businesses was lower at 42%.

Figure 7. Seen, read, or heard anything about SFCR



QA2. Have you seen, read or heard anything about *the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations*? Base: Businesses familiar with the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations*, federally regulated, n=456; intraprovincial only, n=184.

Key findings

Across sub-segments, businesses more likely to have seen, read or heard something about the SFCR included:

Federally regulated businesses

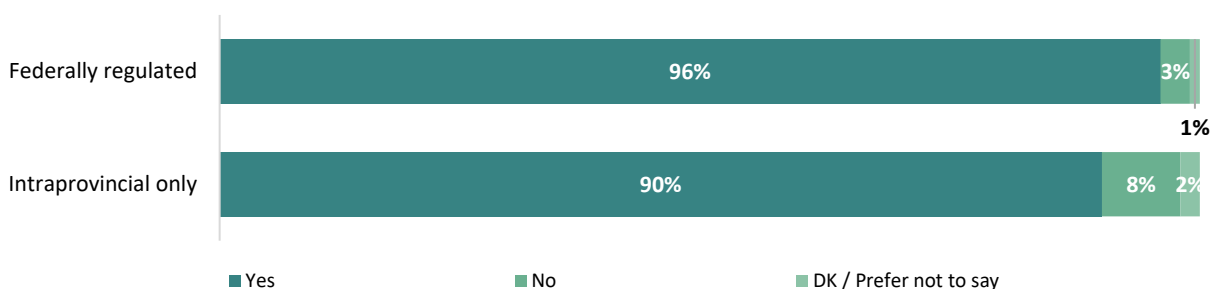
- Businesses that had accessed the CFIA website to learn about the federal food safety requirements compared to those who had not (69% vs. 29%).

Intraprovincial only businesses

- Large/medium sized businesses (55%), compared to small (37%) and micro (36%) businesses.
- Businesses that had accessed the CFIA website to learn about the federal food safety requirements compared to those who had not (56% vs. 27%).

Businesses familiar with the SFCR that also sell food online were asked if they believed that the regulations applied to online sales of food products. Of these respondents, most believed the SFCR applied to online sales of food products (96% federally regulated, 90% intraprovincial only). A much smaller proportion did not believe they applied (3% federally regulated, 8% intraprovincial only). Additionally, a small proportion were unsure (1% federally regulated, 2% intraprovincial only).

Figure 8. Perceived relevance of SFCR for online sales



QA5. As far you know do you think the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations* apply to on-line sales of food products? Base: Online sellers familiar with the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations*, federally regulated, n=133; intraprovincial only, n=49.

Key findings

Across sub-segments, businesses more likely to believe that the SFCR applied to online sales of food products included:

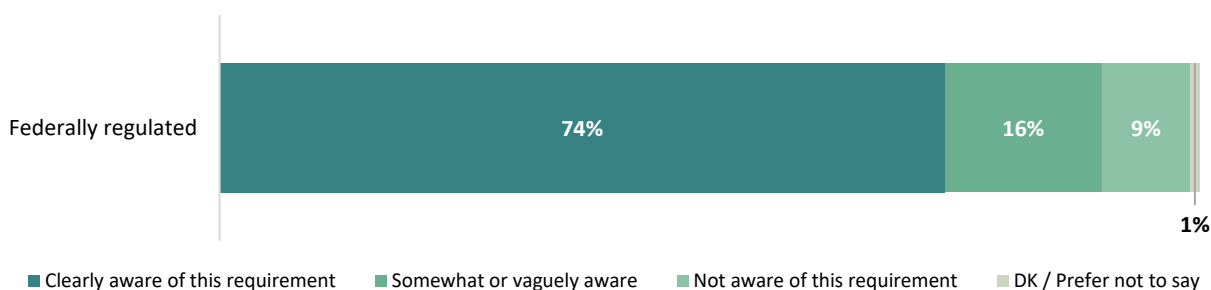
Intraprovincial only businesses

- Businesses with a medium/large revenue compared to those with a small revenue (100% vs. 88%).

Federally regulated businesses familiar with the SFCR that also import were asked whether they were aware that an SFCR licence is required to import food products into Canada.

Nearly three quarters (74%) reported being clearly aware of this requirement, while 16% were somewhat or vaguely aware. Fewer respondents (9%) were not aware of this requirement.

Figure 9. Awareness of Safe Food for Canadians licence requirement



QA6. Were you aware that a Safe Food for Canadians licence is required to import food products into Canada? Would you say you were... Base: Importers familiar with the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations and import food products, n=220.

Key findings

Across sub-segments, businesses more likely to be clearly aware that an SFCR licence is required to import food products into Canada included:

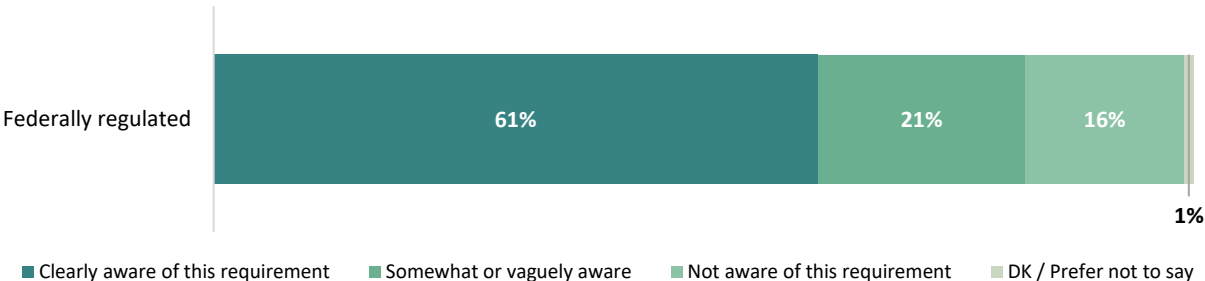
Federally regulated businesses

- Businesses representatives in Atlantic Canada (96%) compared to those in Western Canada (74%) and Quebec (67%),
- Large/medium sized businesses (83%) compared to small (59%) or micro (52% business), and,
- Businesses that had accessed the CFIA website to learn about the federal food safety requirements compared to those who had not (84% vs. 48%).

Federally regulated business representatives familiar with the SFCR were asked whether they were aware of the requirement to update CFIA licensing information when adding activities or food commodities.

A majority (61%) reported being clearly aware of this requirement, while 21% were somewhat or vaguely aware and 16% were not aware of this requirement.

Figure 10. Awareness of updated CFIA licensing information requirement



QA6A. Were you aware that your SFCR licensing information must be updated when you add or remove activities or food commodities? Would you say you were... Base: Federally regulated businesses familiar with the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations, n=456.

Key findings

Across sub-segments, businesses more likely to be clearly aware of the CFIA licensing information requirement included:

Federally regulated businesses

- Large/medium sized businesses (73%) compared to small (52%) and micro (42%) businesses, and,
- Businesses that had accessed the CFIA website to learn about the federal food safety requirements compared to those who had not (72% vs. 37%).

Federally regulated business representatives familiar with the SFCR were asked which food safety requirements within the SFCR were the biggest challenge for their business. A specific list of food safety requirements was provided to respondents.

The biggest challenges were maintaining traceability records (13%), maintaining a written preventive control plan (13%), and implementing traceability labelling on products (8%). Fewer felt their biggest challenge was obtaining/ maintaining the SFCR licence (6%) or implementing preventative controls (4%).

Additional challenges mentioned by a small proportion of respondents included developing a recall procedure (5%), identifying and analyzing hazards (4%), developing a complaints procedure (3%) and navigating information/the CFIA website (2%).

More than a third of federally regulated businesses (39%) felt that none of the requirements were challenges for their business.

Figure 11. Challenges meeting food safety requirements of the SFCR



QA7. From your perspective, which of the following food safety requirements of the SFCR is your biggest challenge? Would it be..? Base: Businesses familiar with the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations, federally regulated, n=456. *Option was not listed to respondents.

Key findings

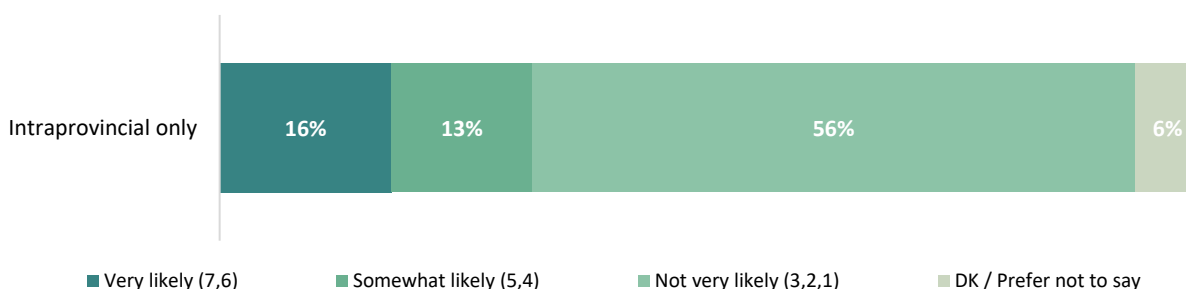
Federally regulated businesses

- Businesses in Quebec were more likely to cite maintaining a written preventative control plan as their biggest challenge compared to those in Ontario (17% versus 5%),
- Respondents in Atlantic Canada (22%) were more likely to report implementing traceability labeling on products as their biggest challenge compared to those in Quebec (7%), Western Canada (7%) and Ontario (5%),
- Businesses in Ontario were more likely to cite obtaining or maintaining an SFCR licence as a challenge compared to those in Western Canada (2%).
- Micro businesses were more likely to report maintaining traceability records as their biggest challenge compared to small businesses (21% vs. 5%).
- Small sized businesses were more likely to mention preparing or implementing a written preventative control plan as their biggest challenge compared to micro businesses (22% vs. 7%).
- Businesses producing fresh fruits or vegetables were more likely to cite maintaining traceability records as their biggest challenge compared to those producing meat products (19% vs. 5%).
- Businesses producing maple products (31%) were more likely to report implementing traceability labelling on products as their biggest challenge compared to businesses producing fresh fruits or vegetables (4%), dairy products (3%) or processed fruit or vegetable products (2%).
- Businesses producing processed fruit or vegetable products were more likely to cite obtaining or maintaining an SFCR licence as a challenge compared to those producing fish (20% vs. 1%).
- Businesses producing fish were more likely to report that none of these requirements were challenges compared to businesses producing fresh fruits or vegetables (55% vs. 30%).

Intraprovincial business representatives were asked about their likelihood to apply for an SFCR licence in the near future. A 7-point scale was used with 7 representing “very likely” and 1 representing “not at all likely”.

Less than one in five (16%) were very likely (scores of 6 or 7) to apply for an SFCR licence while a slightly smaller proportion was somewhat likely (scores of 4 or 5) to do so. Conversely, more than half were not very likely (scores of 1, 2 or 3) to apply for an SFCR licence in the near future and another 6% were unsure.

Figure 12. Likelihood to apply for an SFCR license – intraprovincial only businesses



QA9A. How likely are you to apply for a Safe Food for Canadians Licence in the near future? Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means “not at all likely” and 7 means “very likely”. Base: All respondents, intraprovincial only, n=222.

Key findings

Across sub-segments, businesses more likely to be very likely to apply for an SFCR licence in the near future included:

Intraprovincial only businesses

- Businesses in Western Canada compared to those in Quebec (26% vs. 10%).
- Businesses that had accessed the CFIA website to learn about the federal food safety requirements compared to those who had not (23% vs. 10%).

Intraprovincial business representatives were asked to provide reasons why they would or would not apply for an SFCR licence.

Nearly a quarter of intraprovincial business representatives (24%) indicated that they did not require an SFCR license while slightly fewer indicated a lack of interest (19%). A smaller proportion already held other licences, such as provincially (14%), did not know enough about licencing (8%), felt the SFCR licence required too much paperwork (7%) or a lack of resources (5%).

The need for an SFCR licence for business expansion was a motivator for 14% while another 10% felt the licence was a requirement. A smaller proportion cited benefits of licence regulations and standards (5%) and customer obligations (5%).

Figure 13. Reasons for SFCR application likelihood ratings – intraprovincial only businesses

Reasons provided	Total (n=189)	Businesses with low to moderate likelihood (n=153) (likelihood of rating of 5,4,3,2,1)	Businesses with high likelihood (n=36) (likelihood rating of 7,6)
License is not required/don't need to	24%	28%	6%
Not interested in applying (general)	19%	23%	-
License is required for business expansion	14%	11%	28%
Have other license/provincial license	13%	15%	3%
License is required/need to	10%	5%	31%
Do not know enough about licensing	8%	9%	6%
Too much documentation/paperwork	7%	8%	3%
Lack of resources (e.g. time, cost)	5%	6%	3%
License regulations and standards are beneficial	5%	1%	22%
License is obligated by customers	5%	5%	3%
Other	3%	3%	3%
Don't know / Prefer not to say	4%	3%	8%

QA9B. Can you expand on why you would or would not apply for a Safe Food for Canadians Licence? Base: Intraprovincial only businesses that provided a valid likelihood rating, n=189.

Key findings

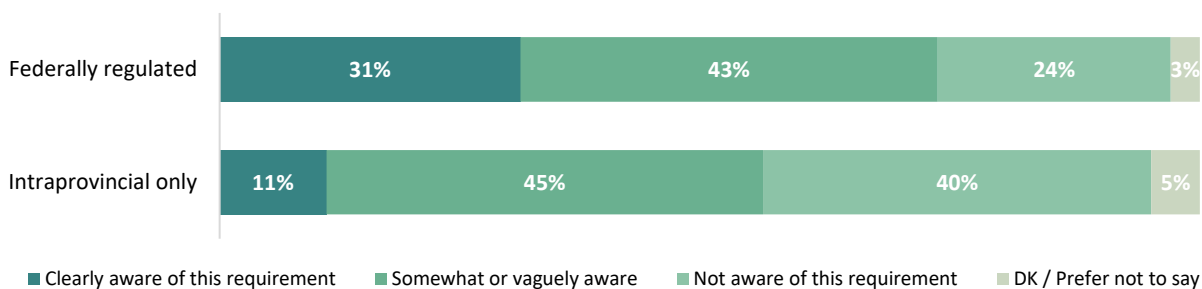
- Businesses in Quebec were more likely to report a lack of interest in applying for an SFCR licence compared to those in Ontario (21% vs. 8%),
- Businesses in Quebec (22%) were more likely to mention that they already have other licences compared to those in Western Canada (3%) or Ontario (0%),
- Businesses in Ontario were more likely to cite not knowing enough about licensing compared to those in Quebec (18% vs. 4%), and,
- Micro businesses were more likely to report a lack of interest in applying for an SFCR licence compared to large/medium sized businesses (31% vs. 14%).

Listeria contamination and related policies

Respondents were asked whether they were aware of the Health Canada Listeria policy.

Nearly one third of federally regulated businesses (31%) were clearly aware of this policy (11% among intraprovincial businesses). An additional 43% of federally regulated businesses were somewhat or vaguely aware of this policy (45% among intraprovincial businesses), while fewer were not aware (24% federally regulated, 40% intraprovincial only).

Figure 14. Awareness of the Health Canada Listeria policy



QA11A. Were you aware of the Health Canada Listeria policy? Would you say you were... Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478; intraprovincial only, n=222.

Key findings

Across sub-segments, businesses more likely to be clearly aware of the Health Canada Listeria policy included:

Federally regulated businesses

- Large/medium sized businesses (43%) compared to small (19%) and micro (13%) businesses.
- Businesses that produce processed fruit or vegetable products (58%) and fish (52%) compared to those that produce fresh fruits or vegetables (18%) or maple products (14%).
- Businesses that produce processed fruit or vegetable products compared to those that produce meat products (58% vs. 28%).
- Businesses that had accessed the CFIA website to learn about the federal food safety requirements compared to those who had not (41% vs. 9%).

Across sub-segments, businesses more likely to report that they were not aware of the Health Canada Listeria policy included:

Intraprovincial only businesses

- Businesses in Quebec compared to those in Ontario (45% vs. 25%)

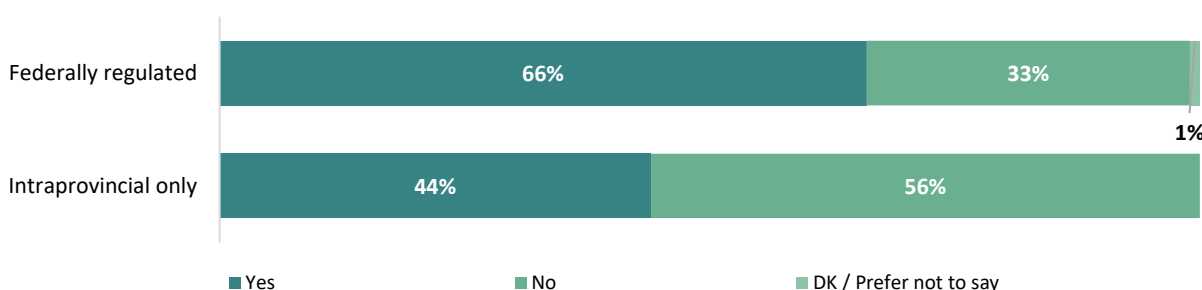
Federally regulated businesses were more likely to be aware of the Health Canada Listeria policy compared to intraprovincial businesses (31% vs. 11%).

Searching for information related to food safety regulations

Business representatives were asked whether they had ever accessed the CFIA website to learn about the federal food safety requirements.

Two thirds of federally regulated businesses had accessed the CFIA website to learn about federal food safety requirements compared to 44% of intraprovincial businesses. Conversely, 33% of federally regulated businesses had not accessed the CFIA website for this purpose (56% among intraprovincial businesses).

Figure 15. Engagement with the federal food safety requirements via the CFIA website



Q11. Have you ever accessed the CFIA website to learn about the federal food safety requirements? Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478; intraprovincial only, n=222.

Key findings

Across sub-segments, businesses more likely to have accessed the CFIA website to learn about the federal food safety requirements included:

Federally regulated businesses

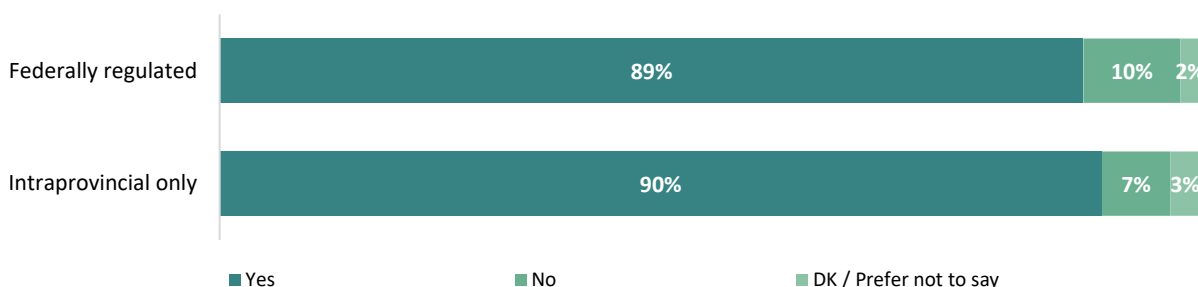
- Businesses in Atlantic Canada compared to those in Quebec (83% vs. 52%),
- Large/medium sized businesses (80%) compared to small (60%) and micro (45%) businesses,
- Businesses that produce processed fruit or vegetable products (85%), fish (77%) or fresh fruits or vegetables (75%) compared to those that produce dairy products (46%) or maple products (32%), and,
- Businesses that produce processed fruit or vegetable products (85%) or fresh fruits or vegetables (75%) compared to those that produce meat products (58%).

Intraprovincial only businesses

- Large/medium sized businesses compared to small businesses (55% vs. 37%), and,
- Businesses that produce honey (83%) compared to those that produce meat products (35%) or dairy products (32%).

Businesses that had accessed the CFIA website to learn about federal food safety requirements were asked whether they found the information they were looking for. Most businesses found the information they were looking for (89% federally regulated, 90% intraprovincial) while a small proportion did not (10% federally regulated, 7% intraprovincial).

Figure 16. Locating federal food safety requirement information via the CFIA website

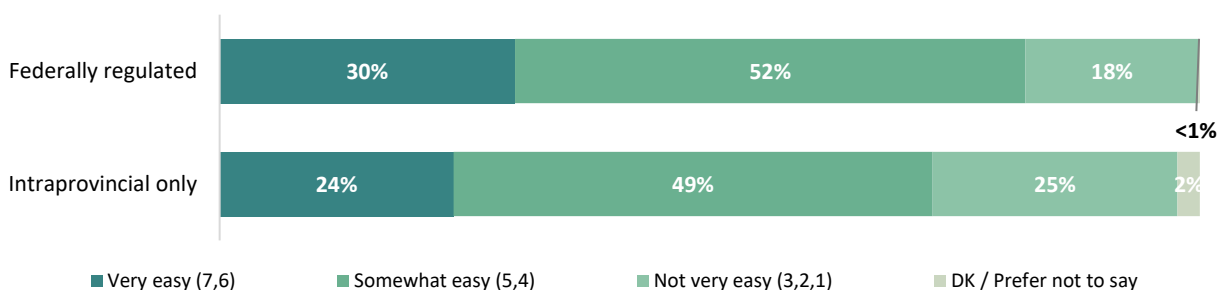


Q13. Did you find the information you were looking for? Base: Businesses that accessed the CFIA website, federally regulated, n=377; intraprovincial only, n=98.

Respondents who had accessed the CFIA website and were able to locate the federal food safety information they were looking for were asked how easy it was to find this information. A 7-point scale was used with 7 representing “very easy” and 1 representing “not at all easy”.

Nearly one third of federally regulated businesses (30%) felt that the information was very easy (scores of 6 or 7) to find (24% among intraprovincial businesses) while more than half (52%) felt that it was somewhat easy (scores of 4 or 5) to find (49% among intraprovincial businesses). Conversely, 18% reported that the information was not very easy (scores of 1, 2 or 3) to find (25% among intraprovincial businesses).

Figure 17. Ease of locating federal food safety requirement information via the CFIA website



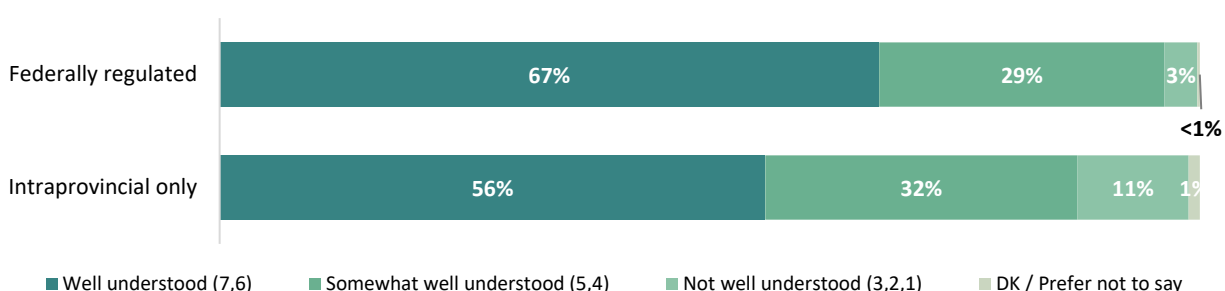
Q14. How easy was the information to find? Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means “not at all easy” and 7 means “very easy”. Base: Businesses that located the federal food safety information they were looking for, federally regulated, n=332; intraprovincial only, n=88.

Respondents who had accessed the CFIA website and were able to locate the federal food safety information they were looking for were asked how well they understood the information. A 7-point scale was used with 7 representing “understood completely” and 1 representing “did not understand at all”.

Just over two thirds of federally regulated businesses (67%) reported that the information was well understood (scores of 6 or 7) while another 29% said it was somewhat well understood (scores of 4 or 5). Just 3% reported the information as not well understood (scores of 1, 2 or 3).

Ease of understanding the federal food safety requirement information on the CFIA website was slightly lower among intraprovincial businesses, among whom 56% reported that the information was well understood, 32% somewhat well understood and 11% said it was not well understood.

Figure 18. Ease of understanding federal food safety requirement information



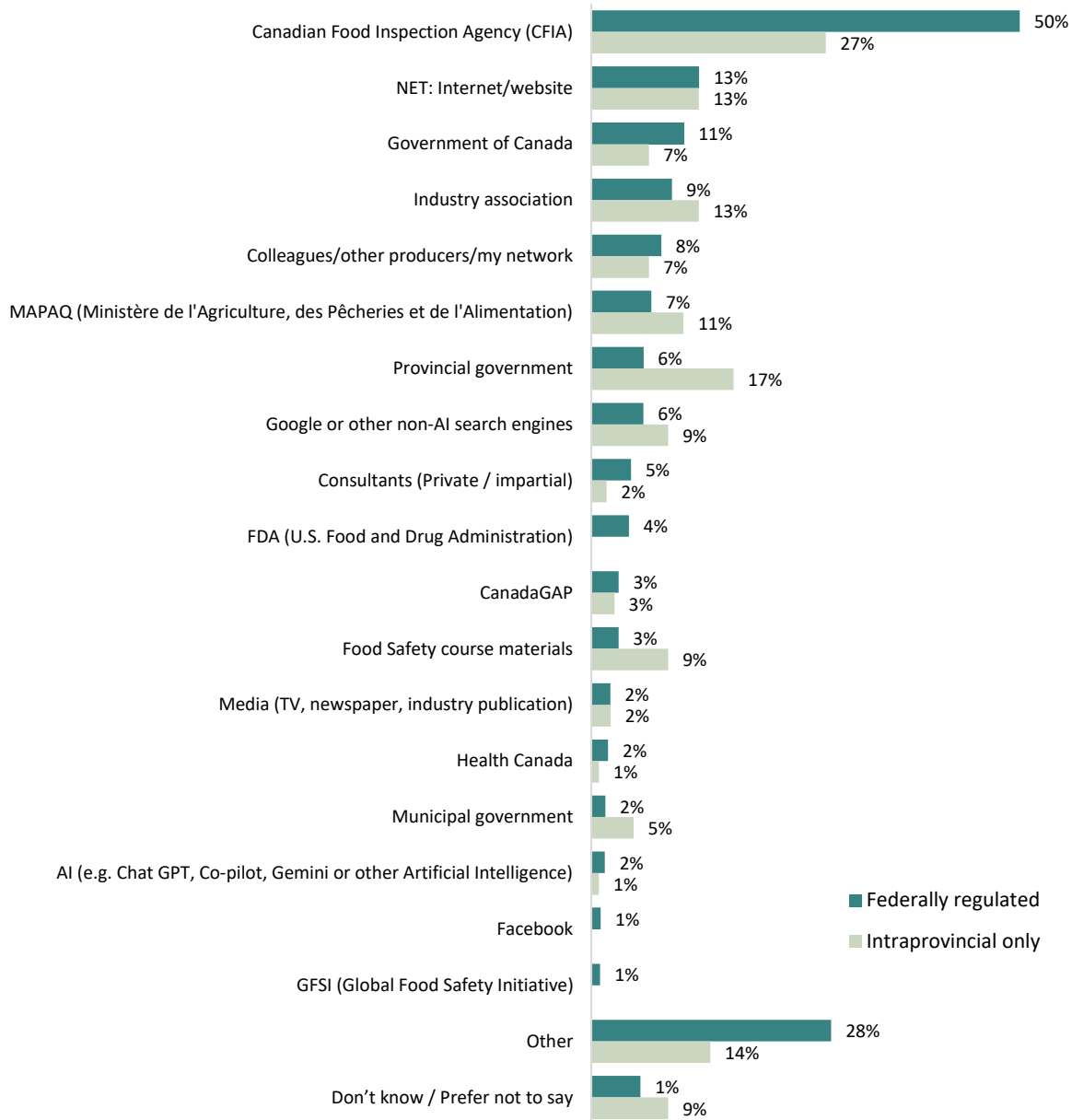
Q15. How well do you feel you understand the information? Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means “did not understand at all” and 7 means “understood completely”. Base: Businesses that located the federal food safety information they were looking for, federally regulated, n=332; intraprovincial only, n=88.

When it comes to sources of information related to food safety regulations or requirements, the CFIA was cited most often across both segments (50%, compared to 27% among intraprovincial businesses).

Additional common sources included the Government of Canada (11% federally regulated, 7% intraprovincial), Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation (MAPAQ; 7% federally regulated, 11% intraprovincial), industry associations (9% federally regulated, 13% intraprovincial only) and colleagues (8% federally regulated, 7% intraprovincial only).

Intraprovincial businesses also commonly cited provincial government (17% intraprovincial, 6% federally regulated), google or other search engines (9% intraprovincial, 6% federally regulated) and food safety course materials (9% intraprovincial, 3% federally regulated).

Figure 19. Sources of information for food safety regulations



Q16. What sources or types of information about food safety regulations do you go to or have you used in the past? Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478; intraprovincial only, n=222.

Key findings

Across sub-segments, businesses more likely to have previously used CFIA as a source for food safety regulations included:

Federally regulated businesses

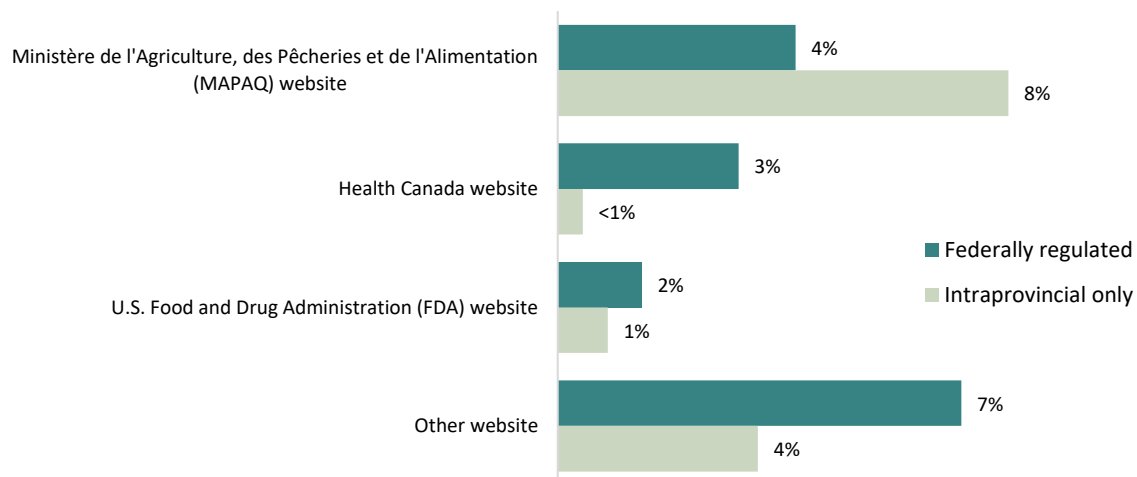
- Large/medium sized businesses (62%) compared to small (42%) and micro businesses (36%), and,
- Businesses that produce fresh fruits or vegetables (56%), fish (53%) or meat products (52%) compared to those that produce dairy products (22%).

Intraprovincial only businesses

- Businesses in Western Canada compared to those in Quebec (39% vs. 18%).

The primary alternative website sources mentioned by business representatives included the MAPAQ website (4% federally regulated, 8% intraprovincial only), the Health Canada website (3% federally regulated, <1% intraprovincial only), and the FDA website (2% federally regulated, 1% intraprovincial only), among other specific sources mentioned.

Figure 20. Website sources of information for food safety regulations



Q16. What sources or types of information about food safety regulations do you go to or have you used in the past? Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478; intraprovincial only, n=222.

CFIA communications

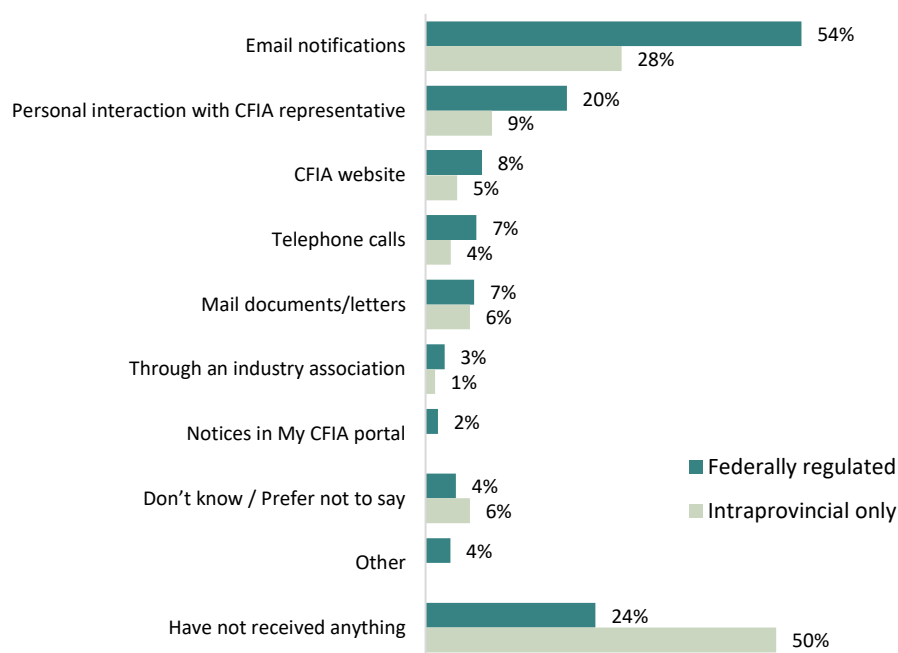
Business representatives were asked how they received information from the CFIA within the past year.

CFIA communications were most commonly reported through email notifications (54% federally regulated, 28% intraprovincial only). A smaller proportion had received information through personal interaction with a CFIA representative (20% federally regulated, 9% intraprovincial only).

Other sources included the CFIA website (8% federally regulated, 5% intraprovincial only), telephone calls (7% federally regulated, 4% intraprovincial only), mailed documents (7% federally regulated, 6% intraprovincial only), through an industry representative (3% federally regulated, 1% intraprovincial only) or notices in MyCFIA portal (2% federally regulated).

Nearly one quarter (24%) of federally regulated businesses and half (50%) of intraprovincial businesses had not received any information from the CFIA in the past year.

Figure 21. How information from CFIA was received



Q17B. How has your business received information from the CFIA in the past year? Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478; intraprovincial only, n=222.

*Excluding results of <1%

Key findings

Federally regulated businesses

- Businesses in Atlantic Canada (80%) and Western Canada (63%) were more likely to report receiving email notifications compared to those in Quebec (42%),
- Businesses in Atlantic Canada (80%) were more likely to report receiving email notifications compared to those in Ontario (57%),
- Large/medium businesses (67%) were more likely to cite email communications as a source for information from the CFIA compared to small (47%) or micro (32%) businesses, and,
- Businesses that produce fish (69%) or fresh fruit or vegetables (61%) compared to those that produce dairy products (33%) or maple products (29%).

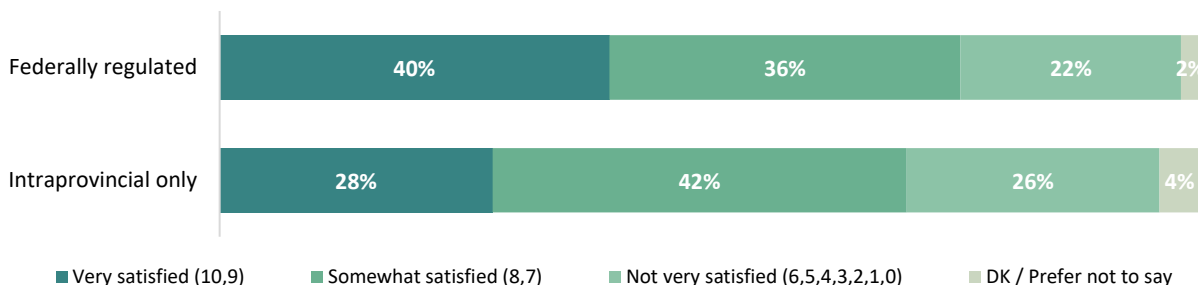
Intraprovincial only businesses

- Large/medium businesses were more likely to report receiving email notifications compared to micro businesses (42% vs. 18%).

Those who had received information from the CFIA within the past year were asked to rate their satisfaction with these communications. An 11-point scale was used with 10 representing “very satisfied” and 0 representing “not at all satisfied”.

Two in five federally regulated businesses (40%) reported high satisfaction with CFIA communications (scores of 9 or 10) compared to 28% of intraprovincial businesses. Another 36% of federally regulated businesses and 42% of intraprovincial businesses reported moderate satisfaction (scores of 7 or 8), while fewer were not very satisfied (scores of 6 or lower; 22% federally regulated, 26% intraprovincial only).

Figure 22. Satisfaction with communications received from CFIA



Q18. Overall, how satisfied are you with the communications you have received from CFIA? Please use a number between 0 and 10, where 0 means “not at all satisfied” and 10 means “very satisfied”. Base: Businesses that received information from the CFIA in the past year, federally regulated, n=379; intraprovincial only, n=97.

Key findings

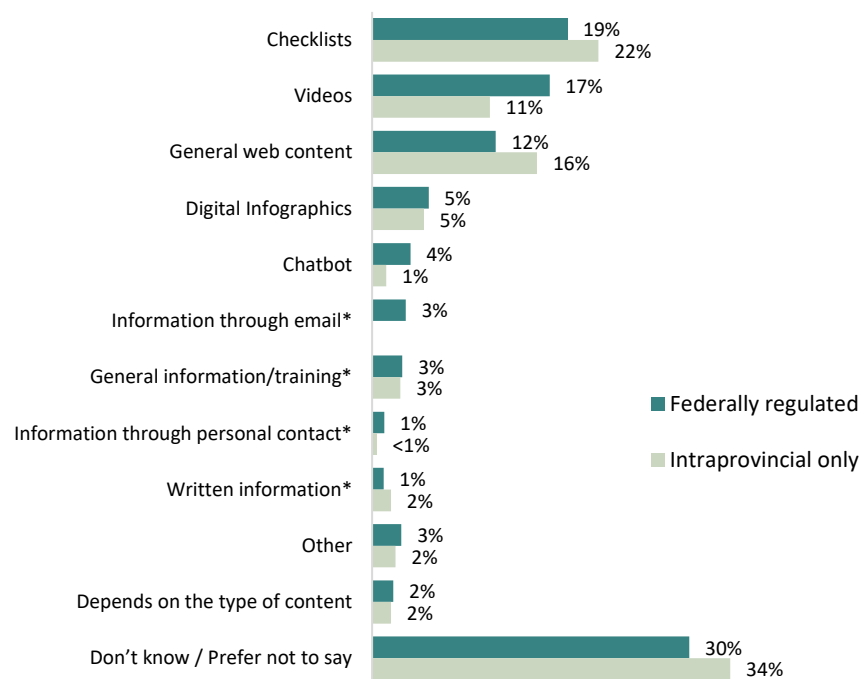
Federally regulated businesses

- Businesses in Quebec were more likely to report being very satisfied with CFIA communications compared to those in Western Canada (48% vs. 27%).

When asked to select the types of information products they would most like to receive from the CFIA, the most appealing types of products were checklists (19% federally regulated, 22% intraprovincial only), videos (17% federally regulated, 11% intraprovincial only) and general web content (12% federally regulated, 16% intraprovincial only).

Many respondents were unsure or did not provide their preference (30% federally regulated, 34% intraprovincial only).

Figure 23. Preferred types information products



Q19B. Is there a particular information product you would most prefer to receive from the CFIA? Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478; intraprovincial only, n=222. *Option was not listed to respondents.

Key findings

Across sub-segments, preferences for information products from CFIA included:

Federally regulated businesses

- Businesses in Western Canada were more likely to prefer general web content compared to those in Ontario (17% versus 7%),
- Large/medium sized businesses were more likely to prefer general web content compared to micro businesses (16% vs. 5%),

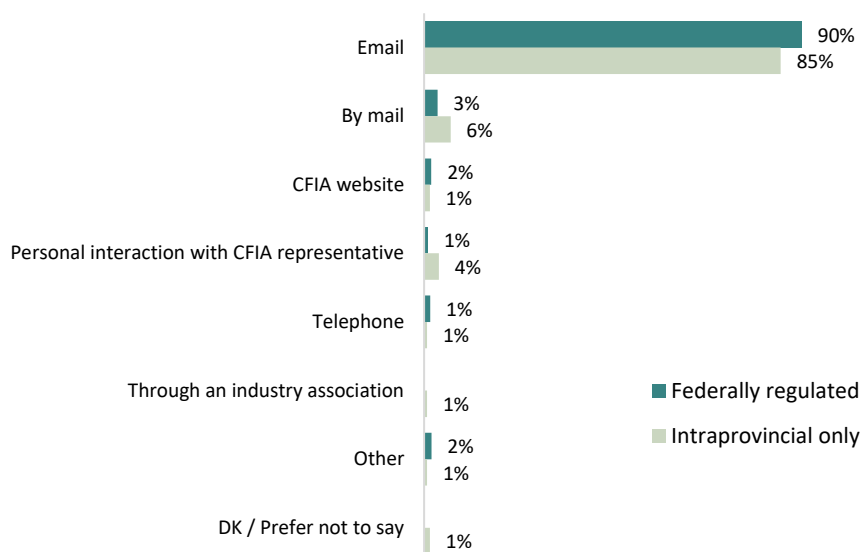
Intraprovincial only businesses

- Large/medium sized businesses were more likely to prefer checklists compared to micro businesses (35% vs. 11%).

Business representatives who were interested in a particular information product were asked about preferred channels of communication for receiving these types of information products from the CFIA.

Across both segments, email was by far the most preferred channel for communication from the CFIA (90% federally regulated, 85% intraprovincial only). Interest was lower for receiving information by mail (3% federally regulated, 6% intraprovincial only), the CFIA website (2% federally regulated, 1% intraprovincial only), through personal interaction with a CFIA representative (1% federally regulated, 4% intraprovincial only), telephone (1% respectively) or through an industry association (1% intraprovincial only).

Figure 24. Preferred CFIA information channels



Q19A. How would you most prefer to receive that information from the CFIA? Base: Businesses interested in receiving information products from CFIA, federally regulated, n=364; intraprovincial only, n=142.

*Excluding results of <1%

Key findings

Across sub-segments, preferences for communications channels included:

Federally regulated businesses

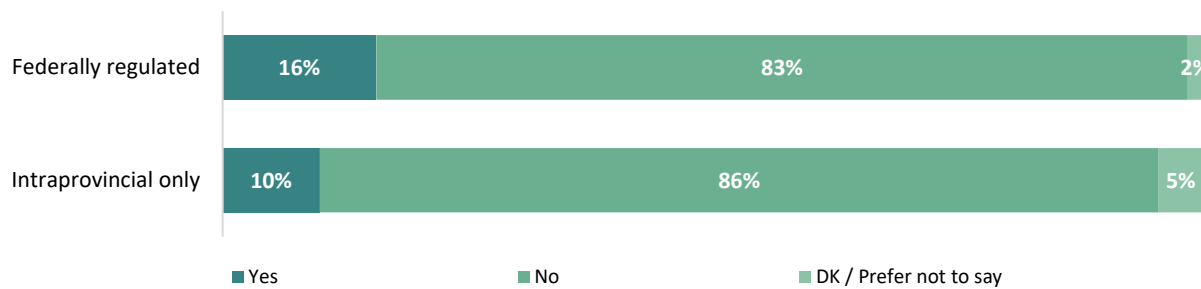
- Businesses in Atlantic Canada were more likely to prefer email compared to those in Ontario (97% vs. 84%), and,
- Businesses that produce fish were more likely to prefer email compared to those that produce processed fruit or vegetable products (97% vs. 76%).

Intraprovincial only businesses

- Businesses in Western Canada were more likely to prefer email compared to those in Ontario (94% vs. 78%), and,
- Large/medium sized businesses (100%) were more likely to prefer email compared to small (79%) and micro (77%) businesses.

When business representatives were asked whether they have had difficulty getting the information they needed from the CFIA over the past few years a minority of businesses reported difficulties (16% federally regulated businesses, 10% intraprovincial businesses). Most representatives did not experience any difficulties accessing information (83% federally regulated, 86% intraprovincial only).

Figure 25. Difficulty accessing information from CFIA



QC10. Over the past few years, have you had difficulty getting information you needed from CFIA? Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478; intraprovincial only, n=222.

Key findings

Businesses more likely to have reported difficulty getting information from CFIA included:

Federally regulated businesses

- Businesses that produce processed fruit or vegetable products compared to those that produce dairy products (34% vs. 4%).

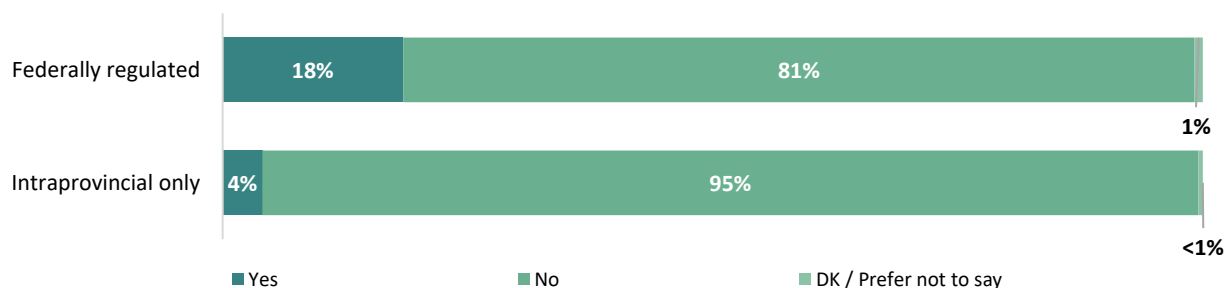
Intraprovincial only businesses

- Large/medium sized businesses compared to small businesses (16% vs. 5%).

Ask CFIA

More than four times as many federally regulated business representatives reported having used the Ask CFIA service when compared to intraprovincial businesses (18% compared to 4%).

Figure 26. Usage of “Ask CFIA”



QC4. Ask CFIA provides the food industry with one point of entry through the “Contact us” page of the CFIA website. Canadian food businesses and non-resident importers can submit questions about food regulatory requirements using an online form and “Ask CFIA” provides written answers. Based on this definition, have you used the Ask CFIA service in the past year?? Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478; intraprovincial only, n=222.

Key findings

Across sub-segments, businesses more likely to have used the Ask CFIA service included:

- Federally regulated businesses compared to intraprovincial only businesses (18% vs. 4%).

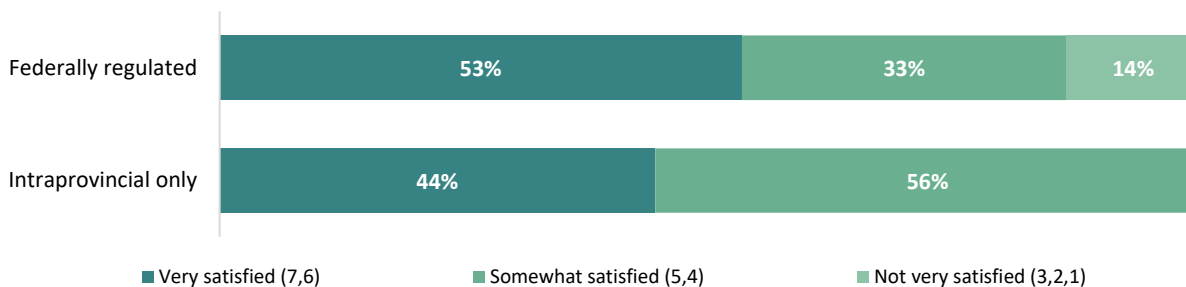
Intraprovincial only businesses

- Businesses in Western Canada (9%) or Quebec (5%) compared to those in Atlantic Canada or Ontario (0% respectively).

Those who had used the Ask CFIA service in the past were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the service. A 7-point scale was used with 7 representing “very satisfied” and 1 representing “not at all satisfied”.

More than half (53%) of federally regulated businesses who had used the Ask CFIA service reported high satisfaction (scores of 6 or 7) compared to 44% of intraprovincial businesses. Another third (33%) of federally regulated businesses reported moderate satisfaction (scores of 4 or 5) with the service compared to 56% among intraprovincial businesses. Conversely, 14% of federally regulated businesses reported low satisfaction (scores of 1, 2 or 3).

Figure 27. Overall satisfaction with “Ask CFIA” service



QC7. Rate your overall level of satisfaction with the Ask CFIA service. Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means “not at all satisfied” and 7 means “very satisfied”. Base: Businesses that have used the Ask CFIA service, federally regulated, n=102; intraprovincial only, n=9.

Methodology

All research work was conducted in accordance with the professional standards established by the Government of Canada Public Opinion Research Standards, as follows:

The research methodology involved two phases of research:

- Phase 1: A national telephone survey with representatives of Canadian food businesses
- Phase 2: Online focus groups with representatives of Canadian food businesses

Qualitative research

The qualitative research consisted of five online focus groups with representatives of food businesses in Canada across the country. The focus groups were conducted between February 11 and March 10, 2026.

Three of the focus groups were held with businesses that are federally regulated, with one of these groups consisting of representatives from businesses with an SFCR licence that has been obtained or amended within the past two years. Two of the focus groups were held with businesses that are regulated at the provincial level. Groups also targeted businesses producing specific food commodities, as detailed in Figure 28.

Quorus was responsible for coordinating all aspects of the research project including designing and translating the recruitment screener and the moderation guide, coordinating all aspects of participant recruitment, coordinating the online focus group platform and related logistics, moderating all sessions, and delivering required reports at the end of data collection.

In focus groups, recruitment efforts aimed for a mix across business type and size and aimed for representation from small and medium sized businesses with female management/ownership and companies started by newcomers or recently immigrated individuals. For sessions that covered more than one province or territory, efforts aimed for representation from each individual province and territory within the given region.

Participants invited to participate in the focus groups were recruited by telephone from the general public, social media advertisements, as well as from an opt-in database. Commercially available business lists were also used to recruit for the industry focus groups.

In the design of the recruitment screener, specific questions were inserted to clearly identify whether participants qualify for the research program and to ensure a good representation across key profile dimensions.

In addition to the general participant profiling criteria noted above, additional screening was done to ensure quality respondents, such as:

- No participant (nor anyone in their immediate family or household) may work in an occupation that has anything to do with the research topic area, in related government departments/agencies, nor in advertising, marketing research, public relations or the media (radio, television, newspaper, film/video production, etc.).
- No participants acquainted with each other may be knowingly recruited for the same study, unless they are in different sessions that are scheduled separately.
- No participants may be recruited who have attended a qualitative research session within the past 6 months.
- No participant may be recruited who has attended 5 or more qualitative research sessions in the past 5 years.
- No participant should be recruited who has attended, in the past 2 years, a qualitative research session on the same general topic as defined by the researcher/moderator.

Data collection consisted of online focus groups, each lasting 1.5 hours. Quorus recruited 6 participants to achieve 5 to 6 participants per focus group.

All focus groups were held in the evenings on weekdays using the Zoom web conferencing platform, allowing the client team to observe the sessions in real-time. The research team used the Zoom platform to host and record sessions (through microphones and webcams connected to the moderator and participants electronic devices, for example laptops and tablets) enabling client remote viewing. Participants were offered an honorarium of \$200 for their participation.

The recruitment of focus group participants followed the screening, recruiting and privacy considerations as set out in the *Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research—Qualitative Research*. Furthermore, recruitment respected the following requirements:

- All recruitment was conducted in the participant's official language of choice, English and French, as appropriate.
- Upon request, participants were informed on how they can access the research findings.
- Upon request, participants were provided with Quorus' privacy policy.
- Recruitment confirmed each participant had the ability to speak, understand, read and write in the language in which the session was to be conducted.

- Participants were informed of their rights under the *Privacy* and *Access to Information Acts* and ensured those rights were protected throughout the research process. This included: informing participants of the purpose of the research, identifying both the sponsoring department or agency and research supplier, informing participants the study will be made available to the public 6 months after field completion through Library and Archives Canada, and informing participants that their participation in the study is voluntary and the information provided will be administered according to the requirements of the *Privacy Act*.

At the recruitment stage and at the beginning of each focus group, participants were informed that the research was for the Government of Canada. Participants were informed of the recording of their session in addition to the presence of Government of Canada observers. Quorus ensured that prior consent was obtained at the recruitment stage.

A total of five online focus groups were conducted with representatives from food businesses. A total of 28 individuals participated in the groups. The schedule of the focus groups is as follows:

Figure 28 – Focus group schedule

Location	Segment	Language	Date	Participants
Quebec	Federally Regulated – meat, poultry, fish, dairy, egg, processed egg, fresh and processed fruit and vegetables, honey, and maple sectors	French	February 11, 2026	6
National	Federally Regulated – manufactured food sector	English	February 11, 2026	6
QC/ON/NB	Provincially Regulated – manufactured food sector	French	February 26, 2026	4
National	Provincially Regulated – meat, poultry, fish, dairy, egg, processed egg, fresh and processed fruit and vegetables, honey, and maple sectors	English	February 26, 2026	6
National	Federally Regulated – having recently obtained or amended their SFC licence – mix of all sectors	English	March 10, 2026	6
				Total: 28

Quantitative research

Overview

The quantitative research consisted of a national telephone food business survey. The food business survey consisted of 700 completions with businesses in the food industry in Canada from January 7, 2026 to March 5, 2026.

Questionnaire Design

The questions utilized in this study were provided by CFIA. Quorus reviewed the questions, providing suggestions and preparing them in a format suitable for data collection. As required by Government of Canada standards, English and French pre-test surveys were conducted (more details related to the pre-tests are provided further in this methodology section).

Sampling

The survey consisted of a national telephone survey with businesses in the food industry in Canada based on a selected list of North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes approved by CFIA.

The sampling was designed to be administered to a random sample of 700 industry representatives. Specifically:

- Employees responsible for regulatory compliance, food safety and/or quality control at small, medium, and large-sized food businesses
- Employees responsible for food safety or quality control from businesses in the manufactured food sector
- Representation from all provinces and territories in Canada.

The sample frames were selected from a list of businesses from InfoCanada, a common and reputable list provider in the industry. The list of NAICS codes used are listed below.

Figure 29. NAICS codes

TARGETED INDUSTRIES WITH NAICS CODES			
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHING AND HUNTING			
111211	Potato Farming	111339	Other Noncitrus Fruit Farming
111219	Other Vegetable (except Potato) & Melon Farming	111411	Mushroom Production
111331	Apple Orchards	111419	Other Food Crops Grown Under Cover
111334	Berry (except Strawberry) Farming		
MANUFACTURING			
311211	Flour Milling	311612	Meat Processed from Carcasses
311212	Rice Milling	311613	Rendering and Meat Byproduct Processing
311213	Malt Manufacturing	311615	Poultry Processing
311224	Soybean and Other Oilseed Processing	311710	Seafood Product Preparation and Packaging
311225	Fats and Oils Refining and Blending	311812	Commercial Bakeries
311230	Breakfast Cereal Manufacturing	311813	Frozen Cakes Pies and Other Pastries Manufacturing
311313	Beet Sugar Manufacturing	311821	Cookie and Cracker Manufacturing
311314	Cane Sugar Manufacturing	311824	Dry Pasta Dough and Flour Mixes Manufacturing from Purchased Flour
311340	Nonchocolate Confectionery Manufacturing	311830	Tortilla Manufacturing
311351	Chocolate and Confectionery Manufacturing from Cacao Beans	311911	Roasted Nuts and Peanut Butter Manufacturing
311352	Confectionery Manufacturing from Purchased Chocolate	311919	Other Snack Food Manufacturing
311411	Frozen Fruit Juice and Vegetable Manufacturing	311920	Coffee and Tea Manufacturing
311412	Frozen Specialty Food Manufacturing	311930	Flavoring Syrup and Concentrate Manufacturing
311421	Fruit and Vegetable Canning	311941	Mayonnaise Dressing and Other Prepared Sauce Manufacturing
311423	Dried and Dehydrated Food Manufacturing	311942	Spice and Extract Manufacturing
311512	Creamery Butter Manufacturing	311991	Perishable Prepared Food Manufacturing
311513	Cheese Manufacturing	311999	All Other Miscellaneous Food Manufacturing
311514	Dry Condensed and Evaporated Dairy Product Manufacturing	312111	Soft Drink Manufacturing
311520	Ice Cream and Frozen Dessert Manufacturing	312112	Bottled Water Manufacturing
311611	Animal (except Poultry) Slaughtering	312113	Ice Manufacturing
ANIMAL PRODUCTION AND AQUACULTURE			
112111	Beef Cattle Ranching and Farming	112410	Sheep Farming
112112	Cattle Feedlots	112420	Goat Farming
112120	Dairy Cattle and Milk Production	112511	Finfish Farming and Fish Hatcheries
112130	Dual-Purpose Cattle Ranching and Farming	112512	Shellfish Farming
112210	Hog and Pig Farming	112519	Other Aquaculture
112310	Chicken Egg Production	112910	Apiculture
112320	Broilers and Other Meat Type Chicken Production	112920	Horses and Other Equine Production

112330	Turkey Production	112930	Fur-Bearing Animal and Rabbit Production
112340	Poultry Hatcheries	112990	All Other Animal Production
112390	Other Poultry Production		
FISHING, HUNTING AND TRAPPING			
114111	Finfish Fishing	114119	Other Marine Fishing
114112	Shellfish Fishing	114210	Hunting and Trapping
WHOLESALE TRADE			
424430	Dairy Product (except Dried or Canned) Merchant Wholesalers	424470	Meat & Meat Product Merchant Wholesalers
424440	Poultry & Poultry Product Merchant Wholesalers	424480	Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Merchant Wholesalers
424450	Confectionery Merchant Wholesalers	424510	Grain & Field Bean Merchant Wholesalers
424460	Fish & Seafood Merchant Wholesalers	424590	Other Farm Product Raw Material Merchant Wholesalers

Survey administration

As noted, the survey was conducted via telephone. The survey was programmed by Quorus and its data collection partner in both English and French via Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing software (CATI). Respondents had the option to complete the survey questionnaire in the official language of their choice. Assistance was available from bilingual staff members as required, with ongoing bilingual supervision.

If an interviewer did not speak the official language requested by the respondent, the interview transferred to another interviewer or a call-back was arranged within 20 minutes (or at another time if requested by the respondent). When calling to a particular location with a predominant language (e.g., French in Quebec), initial calling was conducted by interviewers who spoke the predominant language, to minimize the number of transfers required.

In terms of training, in addition to a thorough general screening and training process, supervisors and interviewers were provided with customized project-specific training, a review of the questionnaire including specific terminology, acronyms and pronunciations, and background information on the project goals and objectives.

In terms of supervision, as with all projects there was a ratio of one supervisor for every 10 interviewers working. This “floor supervisor” answers questions, handles escalations, ensures that technology is functioning properly, and blind monitors interviewers.

Respondents were able to verify the legitimacy of the survey via contacting representatives of Quorus and/or CFIA, or via the Canadian Research Insights Council’s Research Verification Service.

The programmed survey was thoroughly tested to ensure question order and skip patterns were properly represented. In addition to this testing, a pre-test was conducted resulting in 10 English and 11 French surveys. The overall purpose of the pre-test was to ensure that:

- The wording of the questions was clearly understood and unambiguous;
- The sequence of the questions was appropriate;
- The necessary response categories had been included for each question; and
- Neither specific questions nor the survey overall evoked a negative reaction or discomfort among respondents.

After the pre-test, the data was carefully reviewed to ensure accuracy and identify any aspects that needed to be modified. In addition to the actual survey queries, a section was included at the end of the questionnaire to ascertain respondent comprehension and experience with the survey.

Given the average completion length of roughly 20 minutes, cuts to the survey were made prior to fully launching the survey, and the responses were ultimately included in the final sample.

Fieldwork was monitored on an ongoing basis, allowing supervisors to determine if there were any challenges via the call disposition/reasons for non-response information. The average interview lasted approximately 15 minutes.

The tables below display industry and regional data in terms of the actual distribution of federally regulated Canadian food businesses, as catalogued by our sample provider. As well, target quotas and completed surveys for each industry and region are detailed (both in terms of the actual *number* of surveys completed, and the *percentage* of all surveys completed). The tables on the pages below present data with the weighted and unweighted *number* as well as *percentage* of surveys collected.

Figure 30. Distribution of the target population and of the final sample

Subsegments	Sample universe (n=)	Sample universe (%)	Surveys completed (unweighted) (n=)	Surveys completed (unweighted) (%)	Surveys completed (weighted) (n=)	Surveys completed (weighted) (%)
Industry – Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	586	9.1%	65	13.6%	43	9.0%
Industry – Manufacturing	3,223	50.2%	345	72.2%	235	49.3%
Industry – Animal production and aquaculture	2,410	37.5%	51	10.7%	176	36.8%
Industry – Fishing, hunting, and trapping	207	3%	6	1.3%	15	3.2%
Industry – Wholesale trade ¹	3,008	-	11	2.3%	9	1.8%
Region – British Columbia	827	12.9%	85	12.1%	54	11.4%
Region – Alberta	409	6.4%	56	8.0%	37	7.7%
Region – Saskatchewan	120	1.9%	15	2.1%	6	1.3%
Region – Manitoba	135	2.1%	26	3.7%	7	1.5%
Region – Ontario	1,681	26.2%	205	29.3%	112	23.5%
Region – Quebec	2,794	43.5%	235	33.6%	219	45.8%
Region – New Brunswick	141	2.2%	26	3.7%	14	3.0%
Region – Nova Scotia	204	3.2%	29	4.1%	21	4.3%
Region – Prince Edward Island	50	0.8%	11	1.6%	3	0.5%
Region – Newfoundland and Labrador	57	0.9%	10	1.4%	4	0.9%
Region – Territories	8	0.1%	2	0.3%	1	0.1%

For this study, a soft quota for “Intraprovincial Only” businesses was established to maximize representation of this segment in the overall sample (n=200). Ultimately, these results remained unweighted and were presented separately from the federally regulated business results. Results were not weighed since there is no data available to determine the national or regional distribution of these types of businesses. It should also be noted that “Retail Only” businesses were excluded from participation.

Data was monitored to also ensure that multiple locations from the same franchises were not overrepresented in the sample.

¹ Wholesale trade businesses were excluded from industry factor weighting, as they were introduced in the sample following the exhaustion of the original industry targets.

Federally regulated business results were weighted using industry totals from the sample universe provided by our sample provider and then by province.

Participation/Response rate: The rate below was derived using the principal elements of the formula recommended by the Public Opinion Research Directorate of the Government of Canada:

Figure 31. Completion results:

A. Total numbers attempted	7,426
Total invalid numbers	1,567
B. Total unresolved numbers (U)	2,987
No answer/answering machine	2,987
C. In-scope non-responding units (IS)	1,638
Language barrier	33
Incapable of completing (ill/deceased)	11
Callback (respondent not available)	833
Refusal	708
Termination	53
D. Responding units (R)	1,234
Quota full/not completed	6
Completed interviews	700
NQ - None of the above at S5, S7 & S8	402
NQ - Retail only	126
Rounded response rate: $R \div (U + IS + R) = 1,234 \div (2,987 + 1,638 + 1,234)$	21.1%
Incidence	56.7%

Given that this telephone survey methodology entailed a probability sampling approach, the data collected can be extrapolated to the Canadian population of food businesses, within the limitations of the attendant margins of error and the confidence interval.

The margin of error for the federally regulated business results is +/- 4.5%, 19 times out of 20. The research findings can be extrapolated to the broader audience considering the margin of error associated with this sample size. The margins of error for the results in this study will vary based on a variety of factors. For instance, results for sub-groups with smaller sample sizes will have a higher margin of error. As well, the margin of error is typically highest for questions where 50% of respondents answered one way and 50% answered another way. The margin of error typically decreases as the percent for a particular response approaches 0% or 100%.

A margin of error could not be calculated for the “Intraprovincial Only” sample, as the population totals were not known at the time of the study.

Respondent profile

Figure 32. Business segment by region and company size

Business regulation	Total (n=700)	Atlantic (n=76)	Quebec (n=235)	Ontario (n=205)	West (n=128)	Micro (n=194)	Small (n=139)	Medium / Large (n=363)
Intraprovincial only	32%	22%	54%	25%	30%	46%	45%	19%
Federally regulated	68%	78%	46%	75%	70%	54%	55%	81%

Base: All respondents, n=700.

Federally regulated businesses

Figure 33. Region by company size

Region	Total (n=478)	Micro (n=104)	Small (n=77)	Medium / Large (n=294)
Atlantic (NET)	9%	3%	4%	14%
New Brunswick	3%	<1%	1%	5%
Nova Scotia	4%	2%	2%	6%
Newfoundland & Labrador	1%	-	-	2%
Prince Edward Island	1%	<1%	1%	1%
Quebec	46%	58%	49%	37%
Ontario / Nunavut (NET)	23%	19%	26%	25%
Ontario	23%	19%	26%	25%
Nunavut	-	-	-	-
West (NET)	22%	20%	21%	24%
British Columbia	11%	14%	8%	11%
Alberta	8%	4%	8%	10%
Manitoba	1%	1%	2%	2%
Saskatchewan	1%	2%	2%	1%
Yukon	<1%	<1%	-	<1%

QS1. Province/territory. Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478.

Figure 34. Company size by region

Company size	Total (n=478)	Atlantic (n=59)	Quebec (n=127)	Ontario (n=154)	West (n=138)
1 (Self-employed)	8%	-	13%	5%	4%
2-4 employees	23%	10%	26%	21%	25%
5-10 employees	15%	7%	17%	17%	15%
11-99 employees	36%	52%	33%	36%	38%
100-499 employees	10%	17%	6%	16%	11%
500 employees or more	5%	13%	2%	4%	8%
DK / Prefer not to say	1%	1%	2%	1%	-

QS3. Which of the following best represents the number of people including yourself your company employs in Canada? If you are a franchisee, please only consider your location. Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478.

Figure 35. Distribution activities by region and company size

Distribution activities	Total (n=478)	Atlantic (n=59)	Quebec (n=127)	Ontario (n=154)	West (n=138)	Micro (n=104)	Small (n=77)	Medium / Large (n=294)
Import food	44%	37%	43%	55%	38%	29%	46%	51%
Export food	57%	78%	55%	47%	62%	51%	49%	64%
Make food to be sold in more than one province or territory	69%	81%	63%	61%	83%	54%	70%	76%

QS6. Do you: [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY] Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478.

Figure 36. Business activities by region and company size

Business activities	Total (n=478)	Atlantic (n=59)	Quebec (n=127)	Ontario (n=154)	West (n=138)	Micro (n=104)	Small (n=77)	Medium / Large (n=294)
Manufacture, process, treat, preserve, grade, package or label food for trade	75%	90%	72%	74%	78%	58%	78%	87%
Manufacture, process, treat, preserve, grade, package or label food for export (including labelling for export)	43%	68%	38%	35%	50%	24%	32%	58%
Slaughter food animals from which the meat products will be traded or sold	9%	5%	11%	2%	15%	13%	3%	9%
Store and handle an imported meat product for inspection by CFIA	10%	18%	12%	3%	10%	3%	7%	13%
Grow and harvest fruits or vegetables for trade, sale, or export	13%	13%	12%	16%	13%	5%	12%	19%
Handle fish on a vessel for trade, sale, or export	5%	24%	1%	4%	8%	4%	1%	7%
Sell food at retail	55%	54%	50%	65%	56%	52%	53%	60%
Act as a wholesaler or a distributor	43%	53%	28%	61%	51%	30%	43%	48%
Sell food products <u>online</u>	23%	9%	17%	30%	33%	27%	28%	17%
None of the above	7%	-	13%	3%	2%	22%	-	1%

QS3A. Which of the following activities do you conduct as part of your business? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY] Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478.

Figure 37. Provincial or national online sales by region and company size

Provincial or national online sales	Total (n=139)	Atlantic (n=10)	Quebec (n=26)	Ontario (n=49)	West (n=54)	Micro (n=49)	Small (n=34)	Medium / Large (n=54)
Sell food products <u>online</u> only within your province/territory	23%	8%	30%	26%	15%	19%	22%	32%
Sell food products <u>online</u> to other provinces or other countries	77%	92%	70%	74%	85%	81%	78%	68%

QS9. Do you: Base: Online sellers, federally regulated, n=139.

Figure 38. Types of foods dealt with by region and company size

Types of foods dealt with	Total (n=478)	Atlantic (n=59)	Quebec (n=127)	Ontario (n=154)	West (n=138)	Micro (n=104)	Small (n=77)	Medium / Large (n=294)
Dairy products	20%	8%	34%	12%	7%	29%	32%	10%
Egg and processed egg products	3%	7%	4%	-	-	-	7%	3%
Fish	10%	55%	6%	7%	7%	7%	2%	15%
Fresh fruits or vegetables	12%	12%	12%	13%	13%	5%	13%	17%
Honey	3%	-	1%	2%	9%	4%	-	4%
Maple syrup or maple products	9%	1%	14%	7%	1%	20%	2%	4%
Meat products and food animals	17%	13%	16%	15%	24%	18%	8%	20%
Processed fruit or vegetable products such as canned or frozen fruits and vegetables	4%	4%	4%	8%	3%	1%	3%	7%
Other foods, including confectionary, snack foods, beverages, fats and oils, infant food, nuts, seeds, spices, condiments, cereals and pastas	45%	10%	50%	48%	46%	47%	52%	41%

QS11. Which of the following foods does your company deal with? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY] Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478.

Figure 39. Indigenous status by region and company size

Indigenous status	Total (n=478)	Atlantic (n=59)	Quebec (n=127)	Ontario (n=154)	West (n=138)	Micro (n=104)	Small (n=77)	Medium / Large (n=294)
Yes	4%	3%	2%	5%	8%	4%	5%	4%
No	95%	97%	98%	94%	88%	96%	95%	94%
DK / Prefer not to say	1%	1%	1%	1%	4%	<1%	-	2%

QD3. Would you classify your company as Indigenous-owned or -operated? Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478.

Figure 40. Annual revenue by region and company size

Annual revenue	Total (n=478)	Atlantic (n=59)	Quebec (n=127)	Ontario (n=154)	West (n=138)	Micro (n=104)	Small (n=77)	Medium / Large (n=294)
\$30,000 or less per year	3%	-	3%	5%	3%	8%	1%	1%
Between \$30,000 and less than \$100,000 per year	5%	1%	4%	7%	5%	10%	4%	2%
Between \$100,000 and less than \$500,000 per year	21%	18%	22%	20%	20%	46%	21%	5%
Between \$500,000 and less than \$1 million per year	13%	5%	15%	8%	19%	21%	16%	8%
Between \$1 million and less than \$5 million per year	23%	23%	22%	25%	22%	11%	35%	27%
\$5 million or more per year	23%	35%	20%	21%	25%	-	15%	39%
DK / Prefer not to say	13%	18%	15%	15%	7%	4%	9%	18%

QD4. And which of the following reflects the approximate size of your business by gross annual revenue for your Canadian operations? Again, if you are a franchisee, please only consider your location. Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478.

Figure 41. Women in senior management by region and company size

% of females in senior management	Total (n=478)	Atlantic (n=59)	Quebec (n=127)	Ontario (n=154)	West (n=138)	Micro (n=104)	Small (n=77)	Medium / Large (n=294)
0%	19%	8%	26%	12%	15%	44%	21%	3%
1% to 24%	22%	41%	15%	27%	21%	2%	22%	34%
25% to 49%	18%	11%	17%	26%	15%	15%	22%	20%
50% to 74%	27%	28%	28%	21%	28%	25%	20%	31%
75% to 99%	3%	3%	3%	3%	5%	2%	4%	3%
100%	5%	2%	6%	3%	6%	10%	7%	1%
DK / Prefer not to say	7%	6%	5%	7%	9%	1%	4%	8%

QD5. Can you provide an approximate percentage of individuals in your company with a senior management role that identify as women? Base: All respondents, federally regulated, n=478.

Intraprovincial only businesses

Figure 42. Region by company size

Region	Total (n=222)	Micro (n=90)	Small (n=62)	Medium / Large (n=69)
Atlantic (NET)	8%	11%	3%	7%
New Brunswick	3%	4%	-	3%
Nova Scotia	4%	3%	3%	4%
Newfoundland & Labrador	1%	2%	-	-
Prince Edward Island	<1%	1%	-	-
Quebec	49%	44%	48%	55%
Ontario / Nunavut (NET)	23%	24%	24%	19%
Ontario	23%	24%	24%	19%
Nunavut	-	-	-	-
West (NET)	21%	20%	24%	19%
British Columbia	11%	10%	13%	10%
Alberta	3%	4%	2%	3%
Manitoba	4%	3%	3%	4%
Saskatchewan	3%	2%	6%	1%
Yukon	-	-	-	-

QS1. Province/territory. Base: All respondents, intraprovincial only, n=222.

Figure 43. Company size by region

Company size	Total (n=222)	Atlantic (n=17)	Quebec (n=108)	Ontario (n=51)	West (n=46)
1 (Self-employed)	10%	24%	9%	10%	9%
2-4 employees	30%	35%	28%	33%	30%
5-10 employees	28%	12%	28%	29%	33%
11-99 employees	30%	29%	34%	24%	28%
100-499 employees	1%	-	1%	2%	-
DK / Prefer not to say	<1%	-	-	2%	-

QS3. Which of the following best represents the number of people including yourself your company employs in Canada? If you are a franchisee, please only consider your location. Base: All respondents, intraprovincial only, n=222.

Figure 44. Business activities by region and company size

Business activities	Total (n=222)	Atlantic (n=17)	Quebec (n=108)	Ontario (n=51)	West (n=46)	Micro (n=90)	Small (n=62)	Medium / Large (n=69)
Manufacture, process, treat, preserve, grade, package or label food for trade	88%	88%	92%	86%	83%	89%	85%	90%
Manufacture, process, treat, preserve, grade, package or label food for export (including labelling for export)	2%	6%	2%	-	2%	2%	2%	1%
Slaughter food animals from which the meat products will be traded or sold	6%	12%	3%	10%	7%	2%	10%	7%
Store and handle an imported meat product for inspection by CFIA	5%	6%	3%	6%	11%	4%	10%	3%
Grow and harvest fruits or vegetables for trade, sale, or export	24%	18%	27%	29%	15%	22%	26%	25%
Handle fish on a vessel for trade, sale, or export	<1%	-	-	2%	-	1%	-	-
Sell food at retail	75%	82%	69%	84%	78%	66%	79%	84%
Act as a wholesaler or a distributor	41%	59%	31%	41%	57%	34%	42%	46%
Sell food products <u>online</u>	25%	12%	22%	31%	30%	22%	26%	28%

QS3A. Which of the following activities do you conduct as part of your business? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY] Base: All respondents, intraprovincial only, n=222.

Figure 45. Types of foods dealt with by region and company size

Types of foods dealt with	Total (n=222)	Atlantic (n=17)	Quebec (n=108)	Ontario (n=51)	West (n=46)	Micro (n=90)	Small (n=62)	Medium / Large (n=69)
Dairy products	10%	6%	14%	8%	4%	13%	11%	4%
Egg and processed egg products	3%	12%	3%	-	2%	2%	2%	4%
Fish	2%	6%	3%	-	-	1%	3%	1%
Fresh fruits or vegetables	22%	24%	22%	22%	22%	19%	21%	28%
Honey	3%	-	1%	4%	7%	3%	3%	1%
Maple syrup or maple products	9%	6%	13%	12%	-	14%	3%	9%
Meat products and food animals	22%	29%	25%	16%	20%	23%	19%	23%
Processed fruit or vegetable products such as canned or frozen fruits and vegetables	8%	-	11%	8%	4%	7%	18%	1%
Other foods, including confectionary, snack foods, beverages, fats and oils, infant food, nuts, seeds, spices, condiments, cereals and pastas	46%	24%	44%	45%	61%	38%	48%	54%

QS11. Which of the following foods does your company deal with? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY] Base: All respondents, intraprovincial only, n=222.

Figure 46. Indigenous status by region and company size

Indigenous status	Total (n=222)	Atlantic (n=17)	Quebec (n=108)	Ontario (n=51)	West (n=46)	Micro (n=90)	Small (n=62)	Medium / Large (n=69)
Yes	3%	12%	-	2%	7%	3%	3%	1%
No	97%	88%	100%	98%	91%	96%	97%	99%
DK / Prefer not to say	<1%	-	-	-	2%	1%	-	-

QD3. Would you classify your company as Indigenous-owned or -operated? Base: All respondents, intraprovincial only, n=222.

Figure 47. Annual revenue by region and company size

Annual revenue	Total (n=222)	Atlantic (n=17)	Quebec (n=108)	Ontario (n=51)	West (n=46)	Micro (n=90)	Small (n=62)	Medium / Large (n=69)
\$30,000 or less per year	9%	6%	6%	18%	7%	19%	5%	-
Between \$30,000 and less than \$100,000 per year	13%	18%	11%	10%	20%	21%	10%	6%
Between \$100,000 and less than \$500,000 per year	28%	35%	25%	31%	30%	39%	31%	13%
Between \$500,000 and less than \$1 million per year	18%	18%	19%	16%	20%	10%	29%	20%
Between \$1 million and less than \$5 million per year	19%	18%	27%	12%	11%	8%	15%	39%
\$5 million or more per year	3%	-	4%	2%	2%	-	2%	7%
DK / Prefer not to say	9%	6%	7%	12%	11%	3%	10%	14%

QD4. And which of the following reflects the approximate size of your business by gross annual revenue for your Canadian operations? Again, if you are a franchisee, please only consider your location. Base: All respondents, intraprovincial only, n=222.

Figure 48. Women in senior management by region and company size

% of females in senior management	Total (n=222)	Atlantic (n=17)	Quebec (n=108)	Ontario (n=51)	West (n=46)	Micro (n=90)	Small (n=62)	Medium / Large (n=69)
0%	19%	41%	25%	6%	11%	30%	16%	7%
1% to 24%	21%	18%	18%	33%	15%	11%	24%	30%
25% to 49%	13%	12%	11%	16%	13%	11%	18%	10%
50% to 74%	30%	18%	33%	27%	30%	31%	29%	30%
75% to 99%	5%	6%	4%	4%	11%	2%	6%	9%
100%	6%	-	6%	10%	4%	11%	2%	3%
DK / Prefer not to say	6%	6%	4%	4%	15%	3%	5%	10%

QD5. Can you provide an approximate percentage of individuals in your company with a senior management role that identify as women? Base: All respondents, intraprovincial only, n=222.

Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment screener

Specifications

- Recruit 6 participants per group, for 5-6 to show.
- Participants to be paid \$200.
- 5 online focus groups with representatives of food businesses in Canada.
- Participants will be employees responsible for regulatory compliance from micro, small and medium-sized food businesses.
 - 3 groups will be with representatives from federally regulated businesses while 2 groups will be with representatives of businesses that are operating within one province or territory but that may be interested in expanding to include importing or making food for interprovincial trade or export.
 - 1 session with federal regulated businesses will be with SFCR licence holders having recently (within the past 2 years) obtained a new licence or amended an existing licence. Priority should be given to new licencees.
 - With the exception of Group 5, there must be some representation from small and medium businesses with female management/ownership, companies started by newcomers or recently immigrated individuals.
- For sessions covering multiple provinces, aim for a mix across provinces within each grouping. Aim for representation from as many provinces/territories as possible.

All times are stated in local area time unless specified otherwise.

Group 1
Quebec / Ontario / New
Brunswick [FRENCH]

February 26
5:00 pm EST
Provincially regulated
manufactured food sector

Group 2
National

February 26
7:00 pm EST
Provincially regulated –
meat, poultry, fish, dairy,
egg, processed egg, fresh
and processed fruit and
vegetables, honey, and
maple sectors

Group 3
Quebec [FRENCH]

February 11
5:00 pm EST
Federally regulated – meat,
poultry, fish, dairy, egg,
processed egg, fresh and
processed fruit and
vegetables, honey, and
maple sectors

Group 4
National

February 11
7:00 pm EST
Federally regulated
manufactured food sector

Group 5
National

March 10
7:00 pm EST
Federally regulated having
recently obtained or
amended their SFC licence
– mix of all sectors

A. Introduction

Hello, my name _____. I'm calling from Quorus Consulting, a Canadian public opinion research company and we are calling on behalf of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

Would you prefer to continue in English or French? / Préférez-vous continuer en anglais ou en français?

[INTERVIEWER NOTE: FOR ENGLISH GROUPS, IF PARTICIPANT WOULD PREFER TO CONTINUE IN FRENCH, PLEASE RESPOND WITH, "Malheureusement, nous recherchons des gens qui parlent anglais pour participer à cette recherche. Nous vous remercions de votre intérêt." FOR FRENCH GROUPS, IF PARTICIPANT WOULD PREFER TO CONTINUE IN ENGLISH, PLEASE RESPOND WITH, "Unfortunately, we are looking for people who speak French to participate in this research. We thank you for your interest."]

From time to time, we solicit opinions by sitting down and talking with people and the business community. We are preparing to conduct a series of these discussions on behalf of the Government of Canada and the CFIA and I would like to speak to the individual in your organization who is most responsible for food safety of the food products that your business sells or produces. Please note this is not a sales call, this important research will help the Government understand industry's views on food safety practices and regulations.

This could be the owner of the company or a manager who oversees the sale of food products, the food safety manager or the quality assurance manager. Are you the right person to speak with?

ONCE APPROPRIATE CONTACT HAS BEEN REACHED – REPEAT INTRO IF NEEDED AND CONTINUE:

We are reaching out to you today to invite you to a research session to share your feedback on the opportunities and challenges the food industry and your company face and the role the Government of Canada plays in relation to these.

Other decision makers from companies located in Canada will be taking part in this research. It is a first-name basis only discussion so nobody, including the Government of Canada, will know the companies being represented. For their time, participants will receive a cash compensation.

Participation is voluntary and all opinions will remain anonymous and will be used for research purposes only in accordance with laws designed to protect your privacy, including the Privacy Act and the Access to Information Act. We are simply interested in hearing your opinions, no attempt will be made to sell you anything. The format would be an online discussion lead by a research professional.

[INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF ASKED ABOUT PRIVACY LAWS, SAY: "The information collected through the research is subject to the provisions of the Privacy Act, legislation of the Government of Canada, and to the provisions of relevant provincial privacy legislation."]

But before we invite you to attend, we need to ask you a few questions to ensure that we get a good mix/variety of businesses. This should only take about 5 minutes. In case you are uncertain, **all my questions pertain to your company's Canadian operations.** May I ask you a few questions?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	THANK & TERMINATE

B. Business and Participant Profile

- How would you rate your own level of familiarity with the food safety protocols of the food products that your business sells or produces? Would you say you are...

Very familiar	1
Fairly familiar	2
Not very familiar	3
Not at all familiar	4

RECRUIT A MIX OF THOSE VERY FAMILIAR AND FAIRLY FAMILIAR

IF NOT VERY OR NOT AT ALL FAMILIAR, ASK: *Since this will be one of the themes discussed, is there someone else in your company who would be more familiar with these protocols?*

IF YES, ASK TO SPEAK WITH THAT PERSON INSTEAD

IF NO, THANK AND DISCONTINUE

- In what province or territory is your company located?

Newfoundland and Labrador	1
Nova Scotia	2
Prince Edward Island	3
New Brunswick	4
Quebec	5
Ontario	6
Manitoba	7
Saskatchewan	8
Alberta	9
British Columbia	10
Yukon	11
Nunavut	12
Northwest Territories	13

3. Which of the following activities apply to your business [READ LIST - SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]?

- | | |
|---|----|
| Import food products | 1 |
| Export food products | 2 |
| Prepare, process, treat, manufacture or preserve food for export or to be sent across provincial or territorial borders | 3 |
| Grade, label or package food for export or to be sent across provincial or territorial borders | 4 |
| Grow fruit, vegetables or grains for export or to be sent across provincial or territorial borders | 5 |
| Send or convey food products across provincial or territorial borders (wholesaler/ distributors) | 6 |
| Sell food products at retail directly to consumers | 7 |
| Produce organic food [interviewer note: includes organic meats, dairy, etc.] | 8 |
| Prepare, process, treat, manufacture or preserve food for sale within your province only | 9 |
| A restaurant, a bar or a café | 10 |
| None of the above | 11 |

IF ONLY CODE “6” AND/OR “7” AND/OR “10” AT Q3, THANK AND TERMINATE

IF CODE “9” ONLY, TAG AS “PROVINCIALY REGULATED” – CONSIDER FOR GROUPS 1 & 2

IF CODE 10 IS SELECTED IN ANY WAY, EXCLUDE FROM GROUP 5

4. **[ASK IF Q3=9]** Within the next 2 to 5 years, how likely is your business to expand to include the following?

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Somewhat unlikely	Not very likely
Importing food that has been produced in another province/territory or region for sale in your province/territory				
Producing food for sale to other provinces or territories				
Producing food for sale for export to other countries				

IF “SOMEWHAT” OR “VERY” LIKELY TO ANY OF THE ABOVE, CONSIDER FOR GROUPS 1 & 2. OTHERWISE, THANK AND TERMINATE.

5. **[IF “NONE OF THE ABOVE” IN Q3: Ask]** What would you say is your company’s main business activity?

IF BUSINESS IS RELATED TO FOOD BUSINESS RECODE Q3 AND CONTINUE, OTHERWISE THANK AND TERMINATE

6. Which type(s) of food products is your business primarily involved with? **[SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.]**

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Meat | 1 |
| Poultry | 2 |
| Fish / Seafood | 3 |
| Dairy | 4 |
| Eggs | 5 |
| Fresh fruits and/or vegetables | 6 |
| Processed fruits and/or vegetables | 7 |
| Honey | 8 |
| Maple | 9 |
| Other (please specify ____) | 10 |

NOTE SPECIFIC BUSINESS LINES FOR GROUPS 2 AND 3

7. Which of the following best represents the number of people your company employs in Canada, including yourself? If you are a franchisee, please only consider your location. **[READ LIST] [Just total number of employees is acceptable including part-time and casual]**

1 – [Self-employed]	1	“MICRO”
2-4 employees	2	“MICRO”
5-10 employees	3	“SMALL”
11-99 employees	4	“SMALL”
100-499 employees	5	“MEDIUM”
500 employees or more	6	TERMINATE
Don't know [DO NOT READ]	8	TERMINATE
Refused [DO NOT READ]	9	TERMINATE

IN GROUP 1 TO 4, AIM FOR THE FOLLOWING MIX: 4 MICRO/SMALL, 2 MEDIUM

8. And which of the following reflects the approximate size of your business by gross annual revenue for your Canadian operations? Again, if you are a franchisee, please only consider your location. **[READ LIST] [IF REFUSE: Just as a reminder, please understand that we use this information for classification purposes only and do not record or share the identity of any company participating in the study.]**

Less than \$100,000 per year	1	
Between \$100,000 and less than \$500,000 per year	2	
Between \$500,000 and less than \$1 million per year	3	
\$1 million or more per year	4	
Don't know [DO NOT READ]	5	TERMINATE
Refused [DO NOT READ]	6	TERMINATE

9. Are you an owner or manager of this business?

Yes, business owner	1
Yes, a manager of the business	2
No	3

10. Can you please provide me with your job title? _____

IF RECRUITING FOR GROUP 5, SKIP TO QX1

11. What is your gender?

- | | |
|---|---|
| Man | 1 |
| Woman | 2 |
| Or please specify: _____ | 3 |
| [Do not read] Prefer not to answer | 4 |

AIM FOR 50/50 SPLIT OF MALE AND FEMALE, WHILE RECRUITING OTHER GENDER IDENTITIES AS THEY FALL

IF Q9= 1 OR 2, RECORD AS FEMALE OWNER/MANAGER – AIM FOR AT LEAST 1 IN EACH GROUP

12. **[ASK IF Q9 = 1 OR 2]** We are looking to invite business owners and managers with different backgrounds as well. In which of the following categories do you belong?

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| You were born in Canada | 1 |
| You immigrated to Canada within the past 5 years | 2 “NEWCOMER” |
| You immigrated to Canada over 5 years ago | 3 |

AIM FOR A MINIMUM OF 4 NEWCOMERS ACROSS ALL FOCUS GROUPS 1 TO 4 COMBINED

ONLY ASK QX1 TO QX4 IF RECRUITING FOR GROUP 5

QX1. To the best of your knowledge, does your company hold a Safe Food for Canadians licence, which is obtained from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)?

- ☐ Yes **SKIP TO QX3**
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

IF “DON’T KNOW”, ASK: *Since licencing will be one of the themes discussed, is there someone else in your company who would be more familiar with the federal licences your business holds?*

IF YES, ASK TO SPEAK WITH THAT PERSON INSTEAD

IF NO, THANK AND DISCONTINUE

QX2. To the best of your knowledge, has your company applied for a Safe Food for Canadians licence within the past 2 years?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

THANK AND TERMINATE

IF "DON'T KNOW", ASK: *Since licencing will be one of the themes discussed, is there someone else in your company who would be more familiar with the federal licences your business holds?*

IF YES, ASK TO SPEAK WITH THAT PERSON INSTEAD

IF NO, THANK AND DISCONTINUE

QX3. Has your company applied for or amended a Safe Food for Canadians licence within the past 2 years (since January 2024)?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

THANK AND TERMINATE

IF "DON'T KNOW", ASK: *Since licencing will be one of the themes discussed, is there someone else in your company who would be more familiar with the federal licences your business holds?*

IF YES, ASK TO SPEAK WITH THAT PERSON INSTEAD

IF NO, THANK AND DISCONTINUE

QX4. How involved are you in the licencing process when it comes to the CFIA Safe Food for Canadians licences held by your business?

- Very involved
- Somewhat involved
- Not involved
- Don't know

GROUP 5 PARTICIPANTS MUST BE "VERY INVOLVED"

IF NOT, ASK TO SPEAK WITH SOMEONE MORE INVOLVED IN THE CFIA LICENCING PROCESS

OTHERWISE, THANK AND DISCONTINUE

13. Participants in discussion groups are asked to voice their opinions and thoughts, how comfortable are you in voicing your opinions in front of others? Are you... **READ OPTIONS**

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| ☐ Very comfortable | MIN 5 PER GROUP |
| ☐ Fairly comfortable | |
| ☐ Not very comfortable | TERMINATE |
| ☐ Not at all comfortable | TERMINATE |

14. Have you ever attended a discussion group or interview on any topic that was arranged in advance and for which you received money for your participation?

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| ☐ Yes | MAXIMUM 5 PER GROUP |
| ☐ No | GO TO INVITATION |

15. When did you last attend one of these discussion groups or interviews?

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| ☐ Within the last 6 months | TERMINATE |
| ☐ Over 6 months ago | |

16. How many discussion groups or interviews have you attended in the past 5 years?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| ☐ Fewer than 5 | |
| ☐ 5 or more | TERMINATE |

C. INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

17. I would like to invite you to participate in an online focus group session where you will exchange your opinions in a moderated discussion with other individuals in your region. The discussion will be led by a researcher from the national public opinion research firm, Quorus Consulting. The session will be recorded but your participation will be confidential. The group will be hosted using an online web conferencing platform, taking place on [DAY OF WEEK], [DATE], at [TIME]. It will last 90 minutes (one and a half hours). People who attend will receive \$200 to thank them for their time.

Would you be interested in taking part in this study?

- | | | |
|-----|---|------------------------------|
| Yes | 1 | |
| No | 2 | THANK & TERMINATE |

18. The discussion group will be video-recorded. These recordings are used to help with analyzing the findings and writing the report. The results from the discussions will be grouped together in the research report, which means that individuals will not be identified in anyway. Is this acceptable?

Yes	1	
No	2	THANK & TERMINATE

19. Individuals from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and/or the Government of Canada involved in this research project may be observing the session. They will not take part in the discussion, and they will not know your full name. Is this acceptable?

Yes	1	
No	2	THANK & TERMINATE

20. The recordings may also be used by the CFIA client team solely for presenting research findings internally however you would not be identified by name and nobody from the client team would contact you as a result of any feedback you provide. Is this acceptable?

Yes	1	
No	2	THANK & TERMINATE

21. Thank you. Just to make sure, the group will take place on **[DAY OF WEEK]**, **[DATE]**, at **[TIME]** and it will last 90 minutes (one and a half hours). Following your participation, you will receive \$200 to thank you for your time. Are you interested and available to attend?

Yes	1	
No	2	THANK & TERMINATE

To conduct the session, we will be using a screen-sharing application called **Zoom**. **We will need to send you by email the instructions to connect**. The use of a computer or a tablet (not a smartphone) in a quiet room is necessary.

We recommend that you click on the link we will send you a few days prior to your session to make sure you can access the online meeting that has been setup and repeat these steps at least 10 to 15 minutes prior to your session.

As we are only inviting a small number of people to attend, your participation is very important to us. If for some reason you are unable to attend, **you cannot send someone to participate on your behalf** - please call us so that we can get someone to replace you. You can reach us at **[INSERT NUMBER]** at our office. Please ask for **[INSERT NAME]**.

So that we can contact you to remind you about the focus group or in case there are any changes, can you please confirm your name and contact information for me? **[READ INFO AND CHANGE AS NECESSARY.]**

First name _____

Last Name _____

Email _____

Day time phone number _____

Night time phone number _____

Thank you!

If the respondent refuses to give his/her first or last name or phone number please assure them that this information will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with the privacy law and that it is used strictly to contact them to confirm their attendance and to inform them of any changes to the focus group. If they still refuse THANK & TERMINATE.

Appendix B: Moderation guide – Federally Regulated Businesses

A. Introduction to Procedures (15 minutes)

Thank you all for joining this online focus group!

- Introduce moderator/firm and welcome participants to the focus group.
 - Thanks for attending.
 - My name is [INSERT MODERATOR NAME] and I work with Quorus Consulting, an independent marketing research company, and we are conducting research on behalf of the Government of Canada / CFIA.
 - Today we will be talking about food regulation in Canada, some of the challenges your business might encounter and the CFIA.
 - The discussion will last approximately 90 minutes.
 - If you have a cell phone or other electronic device, please turn it off.
- Describe focus group.
 - A discussion group is a “round table” discussion, meaning we will discuss something and everyone has an equal chance to express an opinion.
 - My job is to facilitate the discussion, keeping us on topic and on time.
 - Your job is to offer your opinions on the topics I’ll be presenting to you tonight/today.
 - Your honest opinion is valued. There are no right or wrong answers. This is not a knowledge test.
 - Everyone’s opinion is important and should be respected.
 - We want you to speak up even if you feel your opinion might be different from others. Your opinion may reflect that of others
 - To participate in this session, please make sure your webcam and your microphone are on and that you can hear me clearly. If you are not speaking, I would encourage you to mute your line to keep background noise to a minimum...just remember to remove yourself from mute when you want to speak!
 - We might use the chat function. **[MODERATOR EXPLAINS HOW TO ACCESS THE ZOOM CHAT FEATURE DEPENDING ON THE DEVICE THE PARTICIPANT IS USING]**. Let’s do a quick test right now - please open the chat window and send the group a short message (e.g., Hello everyone). If you have an answer to a question and I don’t get to ask you specifically, please type your response in there. We will be reviewing all chat comments at the completion of this project.

● Explanations.

- Please note that anything you say during these groups will be held in the strictest confidence. We do not attribute comments to specific people. Our report summarizes the findings from the groups but does not mention anyone by name. Please do not provide any identifiable information about yourself.
- The final report for this session, and others, can be accessed through the Library of Parliament or Library and Archives Canada once it's posted.
- Your responses will in no way affect your dealings with the Government of Canada.
- The session is being audio-video recorded for report writing purposes / verify feedback. Short portions of the recordings will also be used internally by the client research team to support their internal communication of the research results.
- Some of my colleagues involved in this project are watching this session and this is only so they can hear the comments first-hand.

● Please note that I am not an employee of the Government of Canada and may not be able to answer questions about what we will be discussing. If questions do come up over the course of the group, we will try to get answers for you before we wrap up the session.

Any questions?

So, let's go around the table and have everyone introduce themselves...I'll be curious to know the following:

- You are all involved in the food industry in one way or another - what type of business exactly do you own/operate/manage?
- What is your role or your position?

B. Safe Food for Canadian Regulations (SFCR) (45 minutes)

Let's turn our attention to The Safe Food for Canadians Regulations.

- Who in the group has heard of these regulations?
 - To the best of your knowledge, what are the key safety requirements in the SFCR?
 - Probe: which ones do you find most challenging?

LICENSING

We'd like to spend a few minutes talking specifically about the Safe Food for Canadians licensing process, as this is often one of the first regulatory interactions businesses have with CFIA.

- Has anyone here applied for or renewed a Safe Food for Canadians licence?
- Talk about how that experience was for your business.

Probes

- Easy vs. challenging?
 - Clear vs. confusing?
 - Time required?
 - Cost/resource burden?
 - Support from CFIA?
 - Use of My CFIA portal?
- Thinking back to when your business first applied for a licence, what were the biggest challenges?

Probes

- Understanding the requirements
 - Meeting food safety-related requirements
 - Developing or implementing a Preventive Control Plan (PCP) – if so, what aspects?
 - Probes: Providing evidence control measures are effective, writing procedures, keeping records, etc.
 - Portal navigation
 - Communication with CFIA
- How did you confirm or ensure you met SFC requirements before you applied for a licence?
 - When you indicated you had a Preventive Control Plan, or PCP, what did you do to ensure that attestation was correct and that your required PCP was complete?

ADDITIONAL ESTABLISHMENT INFORMATION (AEI) QUESTIONNAIRE

MODERATOR'S NOTE: DO NOT REFER TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE BY NAME

CFIA recently implemented changes (October 2025) to the application process for Safe Food for Canadians (SFC) licences. These changes apply when businesses are applying for, renewing, or amending a licence for domestic activities.

MODERATOR NOTE: NOT CURRENTLY REQUIRED FOR IMPORT/EXPORT-ONLY ACTIVITIES.

- Have you had to complete the now required additional information questionnaire as part of a licence application, renewal, or amendment?
 - **If yes**, what was that experience like for your business?
- From a business perspective, what would you want the CFIA to know about completing this questionnaire?

Probes

- clarity of expectations
- timing in application process
- burden on businesses
- suggestions for improvement

SERVICE STANDARDS / TIMING

- Have you noticed any difference in licence processing times since these additional questions were introduced?
 - **If so**, positive or negative?
- What are your thoughts on CFIA's current service standards for licensing?
 - **Probe:** The current service standard is approximately 70 business days from receipt of a complete application— how does that align with your experience?

MODERATOR NOTE: SERVICE STANDARD CAN VARY IN SOME SCENARIOS AND MORE TIME MAY BE REQUIRED IF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR PRE-ISSUANCE INSPECTION IS REQUIRED

- If the CFIA could improve one aspect of the licensing process for food businesses, what would you suggest?

PREVENTIVE CONTROLS

- Thinking specifically about **preventive controls** — whether related to sanitation, food handling, allergen controls, or documentation — which areas tend to be the most difficult to consistently maintain over time?

Probe:

- Creating a written preventive control plan
 - Implementing the preventive control plan
 - Employee competency and qualifications
 - Time and resource pressures
 - Interpreting requirements
- What role, if any, can the CFIA play in helping you address these challenges?

PROBE IF NECESSARY: If the CFIA could focus on one thing to better support your food businesses in meeting preventive control requirements, what should that be?

- Helps clarify expectations
- Drives consistency
- Preventive actions

INSPECTIONS, COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS

We have talked about SFCR requirements and licensing. Now let's talk about what happens in practice - how businesses learn about expectations, what inspections are like, how non-compliance is communicated, and what steps CFIA can take when issues are found.

- When you think about 'CFIA inspections' what comes to mind first?
- How consistent do inspections feel across inspectors or regions?
- Thinking about the past few years, has your experience with CFIA changed in any way?
- When the CFIA identifies an issue or non-compliance, how clear is it what the issue is and what you need to do next?
- How well do you feel you understand the different ways the CFIA can respond when non-compliance is identified?
- When you hear the term 'CFIA enforcement' what do you think of first?
- In your opinion, how transparent is the Agency about when and why enforcement actions are used?
- Any other thoughts on inspections or enforcement?

Groups with “Manufactured Food Sector”

Some of you may be aware that the CFIA recently conducted a focused inspection initiative in the manufactured food sector.

- Before today, had you heard anything about this initiative or inspections of this nature?
 - **If yes:** What did you hear, and from where?
 - **If no:** What would you have expected to hear about something like this?

Follow-up probe:

- When you hear about a focused inspection initiative like this, what is your initial reaction as a food business?

Probe as needed:

- Reassuring / concerning / neutral
 - Helpful for compliance / disruptive to operations
 - Expected / unexpected
-
- Are you aware of the *Health Canada Listeria in ready-to-eat food policy*?
 - How relevant is it to your operations?
 - Are you aware of the CFIA guidelines on control measures for Listeria in ready-to-eat foods?
 - Thoughts on it?

C. Searching for information and CFIA Tools (20 minutes)

Let’s now discuss how you search for information in general but also specifically when you need regulatory or food safety information.

Think about a recent or new issue or topic related to food safety or safety regulations:

- Where do you go first?
- What search terms do you use?

AI Tools

- Do you ever use AI tools such as Chat GPT, Gemini, Co-pilot, Claude, etcetera?
- Do you use the AI summary provided when using search engines such as Google?

[EXERCISE - TIME PERMITTING: do a Google search and review the AI summary – discuss what it says and thoughts about accuracy and completeness]

CFIA Website

- Have you visited the CFIA website recently? **SHOW OF HANDS**

SHARE SCREEN AND SHOW PARTICIPANTS MAIN PAGE (*inspection.gc.ca*)

IF YES:

- Do you have any feedback on this website?
- Is it easy to find the information relevant to your business / or what link is most relevant to your food business?
- Did you visit this page during the licensing process?

IF YES:

- Did you find the information you were looking for?
- What information did you use to make sure you met all the applicable SFCR requirements before applying for your licence?
- Was there information missing? If so, how did you proceed?
- What other information are you looking for when you visit the web site?
- What search terms do you think would bring you here?

SHOW PARTICIPANTS EACH PAGE BELOW GIVING TIME TO REVIEW

Feedback on the following pages:

- [Own or operate a food business? Start here - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca/en/food-safety/own-or-operate-a-food-business/start-here)
- [Toolkit for new food businesses - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca/en/food-safety/toolkit-for-new-food-businesses)
- Is there any key information that you want to know that is not being covered by the links/headers on this page?

- Thinking of your specific challenges, where would you click next?
 - **Probe:** Layout preference (show both pages, they each have a different layout).
 - **Probe:** Did you see either of these pages when you were looking for information the last time? If you had seen them, how would that have changed your experience?
 - **Probe:** Which pages do you think are most relevant? Are there any that you see as not relevant at all to your situation?
- What could be improved to make this page more relevant to someone working in the food industry?
 - **Probe:** Was there any terminology you didn't understand?
- If the goal is to keep the headlines and titles short and impactful, do you have any wording suggestions that would make a message more relevant for you? For example, what language would help you recognize yourself in the title?
- Are there any specific images or resources related to the food industry that come to mind that you believe would help you comply with the regulations?
 - **Probe:** Are they looking for PDFs to download and print off?
- Imagine your business had recently been inspected and issues related to preventive controls were identified. What information or tools would you want immediately afterward to help you understand what to do next?

Probe:

- Plain-language explanations
- Checklists
- Examples
- One-on-one support
- Industry-specific guidance
- Explanation of requirements: Safe Food for Canadians Regulations' page

D. Effectiveness of SFCR Communications (8 minutes)

I would like to turn our attention to communications from the CFIA as we near the end of our conversation.

- How would you describe the communications you receive from the CFIA?
 - What works well?
 - What needs improvement?
 - Do you follow CFIA on any social media?
 - For those that do what are your thoughts on the Agency's social media
- If CFIA could change one thing about how it communicates with businesses, what would have the biggest impact?
- What are some examples of communications from the CFIA you thought were good?
 - Probe:**
 - Notices to industry
 - Web content/email distribution
 - Webinars / videos
 - Through industry associations

E. THANK AND CLOSE (2 minutes)

[MODERATOR CHECKS WITH CLIENT TEAM REGARDING ANY NEW QUESTIONS / CLARIFICATIONS NEEDED]

In parting, is there anything that you think I should have asked but I didn't?

Thanks again! The team that invited you to participate in this session will contact you regarding the manner in which you can receive the incentive we promised you. And have a great evening!

Appendix C: Moderation guide – Intraprovincial Businesses

A. Introduction to Procedures (15 minutes)

Thank you all for joining this online focus group!

- Introduce moderator/firm and welcome participants to the focus group.
 - Thanks for attending.
 - My name is [INSERT MODERATOR NAME] and I work with Quorus Consulting, an independent marketing research company, and we are conducting research on behalf of the Government of Canada / CFIA.
 - Today we will be talking about food regulation in Canada, some of the challenges your business might encounter and the CFIA.
 - The discussion will last approximately 90 minutes.
 - If you have a cell phone or other electronic device, please turn it off.
- Describe focus group.
 - A discussion group is a “round table” discussion, meaning we will discuss something and everyone has an equal chance to express an opinion.
 - My job is to facilitate the discussion, keeping us on topic and on time.
 - Your job is to offer your opinions on the topics I’ll be presenting to you tonight/today.
 - Your honest opinion is valued. There are no right or wrong answers. This is not a knowledge test.
 - Everyone’s opinion is important and should be respected.
 - We want you to speak up even if you feel your opinion might be different from others. Your opinion may reflect that of others
 - To participate in this session, please make sure your webcam and your microphone are on and that you can hear me clearly. If you are not speaking, I would encourage you to mute your line to keep background noise to a minimum...just remember to remove yourself from mute when you want to speak!
 - We might use the chat function. **[MODERATOR EXPLAINS HOW TO ACCESS THE ZOOM CHAT FEATURE DEPENDING ON THE DEVICE THE PARTICIPANT IS USING]**. Let’s do a quick test right now - please open the chat window and send the group a short message (e.g., Hello everyone). If you have an answer to a question and I don’t get to ask you specifically, please type your response in there. We will be reviewing all chat comments at the completion of this project.

● Explanations.

- Please note that anything you say during these groups will be held in the strictest confidence. We do not attribute comments to specific people. Our report summarizes the findings from the groups but does not mention anyone by name. Please do not provide any identifiable information about yourself.
- The final report for this session, and others, can be accessed through the Library of Parliament or Library and Archives Canada once it's posted.
- Your responses will in no way affect your dealings with the Government of Canada.
- The session is being audio-video recorded for report writing purposes / verify feedback. Short portions of the recordings will also be used internally by the client research team to support their internal communication of the research results.
- Some of my colleagues involved in this project are watching this session and this is only so they can hear the comments first-hand.

● Please note that I am not an employee of the Government of Canada and may not be able to answer questions about what we will be discussing. If questions do come up over the course of the group, we will try to get answers for you before we wrap up the session.

Any questions?

So, let's go around the table and have everyone introduce themselves...I'll be curious to know the following:

- You are all involved in the food industry in one way or another - what type of business exactly do you own/operate/manage?
- What is your role or your position?
- We will be moving on to food safety regulations soon, but I am curious about your business plans, I am not looking for confidential information or any specific numbers, but how many of you are considering expanding sales into other provinces?
- What are some of the obstacles you face in expanding into other provinces or potentially exporting internationally?
- What do you think you need to grow your market?

Probes

- **If tariffs are not mentioned:** Are any of you impacted by the ongoing tariff disputes?

B. General Attitudes Towards and Awareness of Food Regulation and Compliance (15 minutes)

- Our conversation today will touch on a range of topics related to food safety regulation and regulatory compliance in Canada. To get us started on this topic, how would you generally describe your attitude toward Canadian regulations for food businesses?
- To the best of your knowledge, how do federal regulations and rules differ from provincial regulations and rules?
 - Do you see any confusion over jurisdiction? Are there sometimes what you might consider to be mixed messages? **Probe:** Can you provide examples?
- Approximately how much time does it take you to meet all the administrative tasks related to the licences you need for your business?
 - **Probe:** To what extent do these administrative requirements get in the way of/ are a barrier to doing business?
- Do you feel there would be more, less or the same amount of paperwork to be federally licensed compared to only provincial?
- Who in your business is responsible for ensuring food safety requirements are met?
 - **IF NEEDED:** Do you have a quality assurance manager, use a food safety consultant, etc.?

C. Canadian Food Safety Regulations (SFCR) (20 minutes)

Let's turn our attention to specific regulations that the CFIA enforces: The Safe Food for Canadians Regulations.

- Who in the group has heard of these regulations?
 - To the best of your knowledge, what are the key safety requirements in these food safety regulations?

- **RAISE HANDS:** For each of these terms, raise your hand if you feel you are VERY familiar with the concept: **[MODERATOR SHOWS LIST ON SCREEN]**
 - Hazard identification and analysis
 - Control measures
 - Preventive control plans
 - Traceability
 - Food recall procedures
- Which safety requirements do you think you would find most challenging?
 - What role, if any, can the CFIA play in helping you address these challenges?
- Has anyone here considered applying for a Safe Food for Canadians Licence, which would be one of the requirements for preparing food for trade across provincial boundaries or for export or import?
 - **Probe:** why or why not?

IF YES:

- Where did you go to get information on the SFCR and on the licensing process?
 - Was the information clear and easily understandable?
 - Was there anything that could be improved?
 - Was there information you were looking for but couldn't find?
- Can you talk about your experience and any challenges you saw in meeting the requirements or in the application process?
 - How could CFIA support you to overcome the challenges/meet the requirements?
- The CFIA is a federal regulator for food safety. What could they focus on to support you if you were interested in becoming federally licensed?
- Does anyone use a third-party auditor such as SQF, FSSC 22000 or other HACCP based certifiers?
 - To the best of your knowledge, how would you describe their process compared to meeting SFCR requirements?

Moderator note on acronyms:

SQF = Safe Quality Food

FSSC = Food Safety Systems Certification

HACCP = Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point

- Is there any other area related to food safety regulations that has been challenging for your business or perhaps may seem problematic in the near future?
 - What role, if any, can the CFIA play in helping you address these challenges?
- In your experience, where should the balance be between enforcement and compliance support when it comes to food safety?

D. CFIA Role in Food Safety Regulation (5 minutes)

I'd like to spend some time discussing the CFIA.

- In your own words, what is the role of the CFIA or the Government of Canada when it comes to food safety regulation? **MODERATOR TO GET FEEDBACK FROM A FEW PARTICIPANTS**

E. Searching for information and CFIA Tools (30 minutes)

Let's now discuss how you search for information in general but also specifically when you need information on food safety regulations or food safety information.

Think about a recent or new issue or topic related to food safety or safety regulations:

- How and where would you get information?
- What search terms might you use?

AI Tools

- Do you ever use AI tools such as Chat GPT, Gemini, Co-pilot, Claude, etcetera?
- What is your typical approach? Do you just type in the problem? E.g. "required drainage", or, "mold in the refrigerator unit"?

- Do you use the AI summary provided when using search engines such as Google?

[EXERCISE - TIME PERMITTING: do a Google search and review the AI summary – discuss what it says and thoughts about accuracy and completeness]

CFIA Website

- Have you been to the CFIA website in the last couple of months? **SHOW OF HANDS**

SHARE SCREEN AND SHOW PARTICIPANTS MAIN PAGE (*inspection.gc.ca*)

IF YES:

- Do you have any feedback on this website?
- Do you use the search function on the website once here?
- Were you on your mobile phone or a computer/ laptop? Is that how you usually visit this site?
- When you come to the CFIA website, what information are you looking for?
 - What prompted you to visit the site?
- Is there a recent scenario that comes to mind when you visited the website and you felt that the website was not well suited for what you were trying to accomplish? Tell me more about that.
- Are you the only one in your company who might visit this website or are there others who might do so for your business (e.g. owner/lawyer/intern/other)?
 - Is information found on this site typically shared with others, and if so in what way? E.g. link sharing, word of mouth, PDF print out, other ways
- If you were here for the first time and were interested in obtaining information on trading or selling your food in different provinces, where would you go first and what would you hope to find?

SHOW PARTICIPANTS EACH PAGE BELOW GIVING TIME TO REVIEW

Feedback on the following pages:

- [Own or operate a food business? Start here - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca)
- [Toolkit for new food businesses - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca)
- Is there any key information that you want to know that is not being covered by the links/headers on this page?
- Thinking of your specific challenges related to meeting food regulation requirements, where would you click next?
 - **Probe:** Layout preference (show both pages, they each have a different layout).
 - **Probe:** Did you see either of these pages when you were looking for information the last time? If you had seen them, how would that have changed your experience?
 - **Probe:** Which pages do you think are most relevant? Are there any that you see as not relevant at all to your situation?
- What could be improved to make this page more relevant to someone working in the food industry?
 - **Probe:** What specific wording, details or labels should be used?
 - **Probe:** Was there any terminology you didn't understand?
- If the goal is to keep the headlines and titles short and impactful, do you have any wording suggestions that would make a message more relevant for you? For example, what language would help you recognize yourself in the title?
 - **Probe:** Do they consider themselves "industry".
 - **Probe:** What does "Trading" mean to you?
- Are there any specific images or resources related to the food industry that come to mind that you believe would be more likely to get your attention?
 - **Probe:** Are they looking for PDFs or guides to download and print off?
- What information or tools would/might help you better understand the federal food requirements?

Probe:

- Plain-language explanations
- Step-by-step guides
- Checklists
- Examples
- One-on-one support
- Commodity-specific guidance

F. Effectiveness of SFCR Communications (8 minutes)

I would like to turn our attention to communications from the CFIA as we near the end of our conversation.

- Who has had contact with the CFIA and received communications?
- How would you describe the communications you receive from the CFIA regarding the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations?
 - What works well?
 - Do you recall receiving anything helpful?
 - Do you follow CFIA on any social media?
 - What do you think about the CFIA social media you have seen?
- Moving forward, how can communication from the CFIA be improved?
- What are some examples of communications from the CFIA you thought were good?

Probe:

- Notices to industry
- Email distribution
- Web content
- Webinars
- Videos

Taglines Testing

We wanted to get your thoughts on a campaign the CFIA is considering. We are going to show some taglines: **MODERATOR SHARES CONTENT ON SCREEN**

G. Inspiring Confidence. Ensuring Protection. Enabling Prosperity.

H. Securing Canada's food, animals and plants for generations to come.

I. Safeguarding food, animals, plants — Protecting Canada's future.

- What do you think? Which one do you think best reflects the CFIA mandate?

G. THANK AND CLOSE (2 minutes)

[MODERATOR CHECKS WITH CLIENT TEAM REGARDING ANY NEW QUESTIONS / CLARIFICATIONS NEEDED]

In parting, is there anything that you think I should have asked but I didn't?

Thanks again! The team that invited you to participate in this session will contact you regarding the manner in which you can receive the incentive we promised you. And have a great evening!

Appendix D: Moderation guide – Intraprovincial Businesses

A. Introduction to Procedures (25 minutes)

Thank you all for joining this online focus group!

- Introduce moderator/firm and welcome participants to the focus group.
 - Thanks for attending.
 - My name is [INSERT MODERATOR NAME] and I work with Quorus Consulting, an independent marketing research company, and we are conducting research on behalf of the Government of Canada / CFIA.
 - Today we will be talking about food regulation in Canada, some of the challenges your business might encounter and the CFIA.
 - The discussion will last approximately 90 minutes.
 - If you have a cell phone or other electronic device, please turn it off.
- Describe focus group.
 - A discussion group is a “round table” discussion, meaning we will discuss something and everyone has an equal chance to express an opinion. We may also be asking you to answer survey questions from time to time to help guide the discussion.
 - My job is to facilitate the discussion, keeping us on topic and on time.
 - Your job is to offer your opinions on the topics I’ll be presenting to you tonight/today.
 - Your honest opinion is valued. There are no right or wrong answers. This is not a knowledge test.
 - Everyone’s opinion is important and should be respected.
 - We want you to speak up even if you feel your opinion might be different from others. Your opinion may reflect that of others
 - To participate in this session, please make sure your webcam and your microphone are on and that you can hear me clearly. If you are not speaking, I would encourage you to mute your line to keep background noise to a minimum...just remember to remove yourself from mute when you want to speak!
 - We might use the chat function. [MODERATOR EXPLAINS HOW TO ACCESS THE ZOOM CHAT FEATURE DEPENDING ON THE DEVICE THE PARTICIPANT IS USING]. Let’s do a quick test right now - please open the chat window and send the group a short message (e.g., Hello everyone). If you have an answer to a question and I don’t get to ask you specifically, please type your response in there. We will be reviewing all chat comments at the completion of this project.

● Explanations.

- Please note that anything you say during these groups will be held in the strictest confidence. We do not attribute comments to specific people. Our report summarizes the findings from the groups but does not mention anyone by name. Please do not provide any identifiable information about yourself.
- The final report for this session, and others, can be accessed through the Library of Parliament or Library and Archives Canada once it's posted.
- Your responses will in no way affect your dealings with the Government of Canada.
- The session is being audio-video recorded for report writing purposes / verify feedback. Short portions of the recordings will also be used internally by the client research team to support their internal communication of the research results.
- Some of my colleagues involved in this project are watching this session and this is only so they can hear the comments first-hand.

● Please note that I am not an employee of the Government of Canada and may not be able to answer questions about what we will be discussing. If questions do come up over the course of the group, we will try to get answers for you before we wrap up the session.

Any questions?

So, let's go around the table and have everyone introduce themselves...I'll be curious to know the following:

- You are all involved in the food industry in one way or another - what type of business exactly do you own/operate/manage?
- What is your role or your position?

Our conversation today will touch on a range of topics related to food safety regulation and regulatory compliance in Canada.

- To get us started on this topic, how would you generally describe your attitude toward Canadian regulations for food businesses?
- Do you see regulation primarily as a burden, a safeguard, or a competitive advantage? Why?
- How many licences does your business require? (e.g. federal, provincial, municipal etc.)
- Approximately how much time does it take you to meet all the administrative tasks related to the licences you need for your business?
 - What percentage of that time would you say relates to the federal licences?

- Is the bigger challenge clarity of the rules, the cost of meeting them, or the administrative process?
 - Do these challenges apply across the board or are they specific to only the federal, provincial, or municipal requirements?

B. Safe Food for Canadians Licence (45 minutes)

LICENSING

We'd like to spend a few minutes talking specifically about the Safe Food for Canadians licensing process, as this is often one of the first regulatory interactions businesses have with CFIA.

- Thinking back to when your business first applied for a Safe Food for Canadians licence, what were the biggest challenges in getting the licence?
- Talk about how that experience was for your business.

Probes

- Where did you feel you were most on solid ground, and most unsure?
 - Was it understanding or meeting certain requirements?
 - Developing or implementing a Preventive Control Plan (PCP)?

If so, what aspects?

Probes: Hazard identification and analysis, using control measures, providing evidence control measures are effective, writing procedures, keeping records, etc.

- How did you confirm or ensure you met SFC requirements before you applied for a licence?
- If you were required to indicate that you had a Preventive Control Plan (PCP), what did you do to ensure that your required PCP was complete?

Again, thinking back to when your business first applied for a Safe Food for Canadians licence...

- ...how was your experience finding resources to help you through the process?
 - Did you reach out for **support from CFIA** and if so, how did that go? Was it helpful?
 - Did you use the **CFIA portal** and if so, how did that go? Was it helpful?
 - What did you **Google**? Did you use an **AI** summary?
 - What **external help**, if any, did you rely on?

- How much time did it take?
- What would you tell a new business starting tomorrow, looking to sell food nationally and applying for their SFC licence?
- Thinking of the challenges that you had, what could CFIA do to better support licence applicants through the process?

Probe:

- create or improve guidance on a specific topic, develop a certain tool or resource, more one-on-one assistance?

ADDITIONAL ESTABLISHMENT INFORMATION (AEI) QUESTIONNAIRE (ALSO REFERED TO AS THE FOOD SAFETY SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE)

CFIA recently implemented changes (October 2025) to the application process for Safe Food for Canadians (SFC) licences. These changes apply when businesses are applying for, renewing, or amending a licence for domestic activities.

MODERATOR NOTE: NOT CURRENTLY REQUIRED FOR IMPORT/EXPORT-ONLY ACTIVITIES.

- Have you had to complete the now required questionnaire as part of a licence application, renewal, or amendment?
 - **If yes**, what was that experience like for your business?
- From a business perspective, what would you want the CFIA to know about completing this questionnaire?

Probes

- clarity of expectations
- timing in application process
- burden on businesses
- suggestions for improvement

SERVICE STANDARDS / TIMING

- Have you noticed any difference in licence processing times since these additional questions were introduced?
 - **If so**, positive or negative?
- What are your thoughts on CFIA's current service standards for licensing?
 - **Probe:** The current service standard is approximately 70 business days from receipt of a complete application— how does that align with your experience?

MODERATOR NOTE: SERVICE STANDARD CAN VARY IN SOME SCENARIOS AND MORE TIME MAY BE REQUIRED IF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR PRE-ISSUANCE INSPECTION IS REQUIRED

PREVENTIVE CONTROLS

- Thinking specifically about **preventive controls** — whether related to sanitation, food handling, allergen controls, or documentation — which areas tend to be the most difficult to consistently maintain over time?

Probe:

- Creating a written preventive control plan
 - Implementing the preventive control plan
 - Employee competency and qualifications
 - Time and resource pressures
 - Interpreting requirements
- What role, if any, can the CFIA play in helping you address these challenges?

PROBE IF NECESSARY: If the CFIA could focus on one thing to better support your food businesses in meeting preventive control requirements, what should that be?

- Helps clarify expectations
- Drives consistency
- Preventive actions

INSPECTIONS, COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS

We have talked about SFCR requirements and licensing. Now let's talk about what happens in practice - how businesses learn about expectations, what inspections are like, how non-compliance is communicated, and what steps CFIA can take when issues are found.

- When you think about 'CFIA inspections' what comes to mind first?
- How do you feel about the consistency of CFIA's inspections?
- Thinking about the past few years, has your experience with CFIA changed in any way?
- When the CFIA identifies an issue or non-compliance, do you clearly understand what the issue is and what you need to do next?
- How well do you feel you understand the different ways the CFIA can respond when non-compliance is identified?
- When you hear the term 'CFIA enforcement' what do you think of first?
- In your opinion, how transparent is the Agency about when and why enforcement actions are used?
- Any other thoughts on inspections or enforcement?
- Is it fair to say that it is industry's responsibility to meet applicable legislation and regulations?

If Participants are from the Manufactured Food Sector

Some of you may be aware that the CFIA recently conducted a focused inspection initiative in the manufactured food sector.

- Before today, had you heard anything about this initiative or inspections of this nature?
 - **If yes:** What did you hear, and from where?
 - **If no:** What would you have expected to hear about something like this?
- When you hear about a focused inspection initiative like this, what is your initial reaction as a food business?

Probe as needed:

- Reassuring / concerning / neutral
- Helpful for compliance / disruptive to operations
- Expected / unexpected

- Are you aware of Health Canada's policy on Listeria in ready-to-eat food?
 - How relevant is it to your operations?
- Are you aware of the CFIA guidelines on control measures for Listeria in ready-to-eat foods?
 - Thoughts on it?

C. Searching for information and CFIA Tools (25 minutes)

Let's now discuss how you search for information in general but also specifically when you need regulatory or food safety information.

Think about a recent or new issue or topic related to food safety or safety regulations:

- Where do you go first?
- What search terms do you use?

AI Tools

- Do you ever use AI tools such as Chat GPT, Gemini, Co-pilot, Claude, etcetera?
- Do you use the AI summary provided when using search engines such as Google?

[EXERCISE - TIME PERMITTING: do a Google search and review the AI summary – discuss what it says and thoughts about accuracy and completeness]

CFIA Website

- Have you visited the CFIA website recently? **SHOW OF HANDS**

SHARE SCREEN AND SHOW PARTICIPANTS MAIN PAGE (inspection.gc.ca)

IF YES:

- Do you have any feedback on this website?
- Is it easy to find the information relevant to your business / or what link is most relevant to your food business?

- Did you visit this page during the licensing process?

IF YES:

- Did you find the information you were looking for?
- What information did you use to make sure you met all the applicable SFCR requirements before applying for your licence?
- Was there information missing? If so, how did you proceed?
- What other information are you looking for when you visit the web site?
- What search terms do you think would bring you here?

SHOW PARTICIPANTS EACH PAGE BELOW GIVING TIME TO REVIEW

Feedback on the following pages:

- [Own or operate a food business? Start here - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca/own-or-operate-a-food-business?start=here)
- [Toolkit for new food businesses - inspection.canada.ca](https://inspection.canada.ca/toolkit-for-new-food-businesses)
- Is there any key information that you want to know that is not being covered by the links/headers on this page?
- Thinking of your specific challenges, where would you click next?
 - **Probe:** Layout preference (show both pages, they each have a different layout).
 - **Probe:** Did you see either of these pages when you were looking for information the last time? If you had seen them, how would that have changed your experience?
 - **Probe:** Which pages do you think are most relevant? Are there any that you see as not relevant at all to your situation?
- What could be improved to make this page more relevant to someone working in the food industry?
 - **Probe:** Was there any terminology you didn't understand?
- If the goal is to keep the headlines and titles short and impactful, do you have any wording suggestions that would make a message more relevant for you? For example, what language would help you recognize yourself in the title?

- Are there any specific images or resources related to the food industry that come to mind that you believe would help you comply with the regulations?
- **Probe:** Are they looking for PDFs to download and print off?
- Imagine your business had recently been inspected and issues related to preventive controls were identified. What information or tools would you want immediately afterward to help you understand what to do next?

Probe:

- Plain-language explanations
- Checklists
- Examples
- One-on-one support
- Industry-specific guidance

All things considered...

- What would make compliance easier?
- What does CFIA not fully understand about your operational reality?
- If you could redesign one CFIA process, what would it be?

D. Tagline Slogan Review (5 minutes)

- In your own words, what is the role of the CFIA or the Government of Canada when it comes to food safety regulation? **MODERATOR TO GET FEEDBACK FROM A FEW PARTICIPANTS**
- If you had to describe CFIA in three words, what would they be?
 - What three words should describe it?
- Just a quick review, who has had contact with the CFIA and received communications?

Taglines Testing

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E. THANK AND CLOSE (2 minutes)

[MODERATOR CHECKS WITH CLIENT TEAM REGARDING ANY NEW QUESTIONS / CLARIFICATIONS NEEDED]

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Food Business Line Questionnaire (2025/2026)

Quota Management

- Select sample to call at random, from businesses on list of approved NAICS codes (n=700, 500 nationally regulated parties and 200 provincially regulated parties – flagged as INTRAPROVINCIAL ONLY)
- Employees responsible for regulatory compliance from small, medium, and large-sized food businesses
- Representation from all provinces and territories in Canada. The regional distribution of the interviews will follow the natural distribution of the targeted industry verticals.

Introduction

Hello/Bonjour [**IN QUEBEC:** Bonjour/Hello], (**PAUSE...**) I am calling on behalf of the Government of Canada as we are conducting a brief survey of food businesses. I want to assure you that this is not a sales call. It is research sponsored by the Government of Canada. The survey we're conducting is voluntary, confidential and anonymous. This important research will help the Government understand industry's views on food safety practices and regulations. I won't ask your name, but I am asking for 15 minutes of your time.

I am hoping to speak with the person in your company who is most responsible for the safety of the food products that your business imports, produces or sells. This could be the owner of the company or a manager who oversees the sale of food products, the food safety manager or quality assurance manager. Are you the right person to speak with?

[**IF NO:** Can you please direct me to the correct person?] [**REPEAT FROM BEGINNING IF TRANSFERRED**]

[**ONCE CORRECT PERSON IDENTIFIED**]

Would you prefer that I continue in English or French? Préférez-vous continuer en français ou en anglais?

[NOTE: IF AT THIS POINT THE RESPONDENT PREFERS TO RESPOND IN FRENCH, THEN THE INTERVIEWER MUST BE ABLE TO EITHER PROCEED WITH THE INTERVIEW IN FRENCH OR READ THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "Je vous remercie. Quelqu'un vous rappellera bientôt pour mener le sondage en français."]

My name is _____ calling from _____. The Government of Canada has hired our company to do the survey.

The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete. We can call back at a more convenient time if you prefer [IF SO: Schedule a follow up call]. The information you provide will be administered according to the requirements of the *Privacy Act and the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*. This is designed to protect your privacy.

PERSUADE IF NEEDED: This survey is registered with the Canadian Research Insights Council (CRIC). Should you have any questions about the survey, I can give you a contact person within the CFIA: Ric Hobbs, 343-993-4352.

Screeners and Classification

S1. [Record from sample – not asked] Province/territory

S2. [Record from sample – not asked] Full 8-digit North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code

S5. Before getting started we wanted to confirm that your business either imports, exports or sells food.

Yes	1
No [THANK AND TERMINATE]	2
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ] [THANK AND TERMINATE]	99

S6. Do you: **[READ LIST – SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]**

Import food [QUALIFIES AS FEDERALLY REGULATED]	1
Export food [QUALIFIES AS FEDERALLY REGULATED]	2
Do you make food to be sold in more than one province or territory [QUALIFIES AS FEDERALLY REGULATED]	3
[IF WHOLESALE AT S2] Send food products to another province or territory [IF ASKED: For example, selling, wholesaling, distributing] [QUALIFIES AS FEDERALLY REGULATED]	4
None of the above [EXCLUSIVE]	9
Don't know / Prefer not to say [EXCLUSIVE] [DO NOT READ] [THANK AND TERMINATE]	99

[IF S6 = 9]

S6B. Do you make food to be sold only in your province (or territory)?

Yes [QUALIFIES AS INTRAPROVINCIAL ONLY]	1
No [THANK AND TERMINATE]	2
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ] [THANK AND TERMINATE]	99

[ASK ALL]

S3A. Which of the following activities do you conduct as part of your business? **[READ LIST – SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]**

Manufacture, process, treat, preserve, grade, package or label food for trade	1
Manufacture, process, treat, preserve, grade, package or label food for export (including labelling for export)	2
Slaughter food animals from which the meat products will be traded or sold	3
Store and handle an imported meat product for inspection by CFIA	4
Grow and harvest fruits or vegetables for trade, sale, or export	5
Handle fish on a vessel for trade, sale, or export	6
Sell food at retail	7
Act as a wholesaler or a distributor	8
Sell food products <u>online</u>	9
None of the above [EXCLUSIVE]	99

[IF S3A = 9]

S3B. Do you:

Sell food products <u>online</u> only within your province/territory	1
Sell food products <u>online</u> to other provinces or other countries	2

[IF S6 ≠ 1 OR 2 AND IF ONLY RESPONSES TO S3A ARE: 7, 8, AND/OR 9 – THANK AND TERMINATE]

[IF S6 ≠ 1 OR 2 AND IF ONLY RESPONSE TO S3A = 9 AND S3B = 2 THEN ASK A5 AND TERMINATE]

[IF S6 ≠ 1 OR 2 AND S3A = 99 – THANK AND TERMINATE]

S11. Which food commodity do you produce, manufacture or sell? **[DO NOT READ LIST – SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]**

[ONLY PROMPT FROM LIST AS NEEDED]

Dairy products	1
Egg and processed egg products	2
Fish	3
Fresh fruits or vegetables	4
Honey	5
Maple syrup or maple products	6
Meat products and food animals	7
Processed fruit or vegetable products such as canned or frozen fruits and vegetables	8
Other foods, including confectionary, snack foods, beverages, fats and oils, infant food, nuts, seeds, spices, condiments, cereals and pastas	9
Or anything else? [SPECIFY: RECODE IF RELATED TO ANYTHING ON LIST ABOVE]	77

Q1AA. Thinking about the past two years, have the following been a high, medium or low priority for your company?

RANDOMIZE

- a. Managing regulatory issues
- b. **[INTRAPROVINCIAL ONLY]** Expanding sales beyond provincial boundaries (which requires following federal regulations as well as provincial)

Low priority	1
Medium priority	2
High priority	3
None of the above [DO NOT READ]	99

[ASK IF INTRAPROVINCIAL ONLY]

S12. You may be interested in expanding to include activities such as importing or manufacturing, processing, treating, preserving, grading, packaging or labelling food for trade between provinces or exporting or importing food products. What do you think your timeline would be for expansion. **[READ LIST]**

Within the next 2 years	1
2 to 5 years	2
6 to 10 years	3
More than 10 years	4
Not considering expansion [DO NOT READ]	9

Q1AAA. What is stopping your business from trading outside of your current province (or territory) at present? Would it be...? **[READ LIST – SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]**

RANDOMIZE 1-5

Not interested in expanding to other provinces at this time	1
Not sure what the first step would be	2
Too many challenges to meet federal food safety regulations	3
Resource challenges (e.g. time, cost)	4
No buyers or market	5
Other [SPECIFY] [DO NOT READ]	88
None of the above [DO NOT READ]	99

[ASK IF Q1AAA = 3 TOO MANY CHALLENGES]

Q1AAA1. Why do you think there are too many challenges to meet the federal food safety regulations?

Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ, PROMPT IF NECESSARY]	99
--	----

Awareness of Food Safety Regulations

Let's turn to the subject of food safety regulations, specifically the ones that are overseen by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, commonly known as the CFIA.

A2ii. How familiar are you with the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations*? Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means “not at all familiar” and 7 means “very familiar”.

Not at all familiar	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
Very familiar	7
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ]	99

[IF A2ii = 1, 2 OR 99 SKIP TO A9A]

A2. Have you seen, read or heard anything recently about the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations*?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ]	99

[ASK IF S3A = 9]

A5. As far as you know, do you think the *Safe Food for Canadians Regulations* apply to on-line sales of food products?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ]	99

[ASK IF S6 = 1]

A6. Were you aware that a Safe Food for Canadians licence is required to import food products into Canada? Would you say you were... **[READ LIST]**

Clearly aware of this requirement	1
Somewhat or vaguely aware, or,	2
Not aware of this requirement	3
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ]	99

[IF INTRAPROVINCIAL ONLY SKIP TO A9A]

A6A. Were you aware that your SFCR licensing information must be updated when you add or remove activities or food commodities? Would you say you were... **[READ LIST]**

Clearly aware of this requirement	1
Somewhat or vaguely aware, or,	2
Not aware of this requirement	3
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ]	99

A7. From your perspective, which of the following food safety requirements of the SFCR is your biggest challenge? Would it be...? **[SINGLE RESPONSE]**

RANDOMIZE 1-8

Obtaining or maintaining a Safe Food for Canadians Licence	1
Identifying and analyzing hazards	2
Implementing preventive controls	3
Preparing or implementing a written preventive control plan	4
Developing a recall procedure	5
Maintaining traceability records	6
Implementing traceability labelling on products	7
Developing a complaints procedure	8
Other [SPECIFY] [DO NOT READ]	88
None of these are challenges [EXCLUSIVE] [DO NOT READ]	99

[IF INTRAPROVINCIAL ONLY]

A9A. How likely are you to apply for a Safe Food for Canadians Licence in the near future? Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means “not at all likely” and 7 means “very likely”.

Not at all likely	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
Very likely	7
Company has an SFCR License [DO NOT READ]	98
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ]	99

[IF A9A = 1 TO 7]

A9B. Can you expand on why you would or would not apply for a Safe Food for Canadians Licence?

Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ, PROMPT IF NECESSARY] 99

A11A. Are you aware of the Health Canada Listeria policy? Would you say you were...
[READ LIST]

Clearly aware of this policy 1
Somewhat or vaguely aware, or, 2
Not aware of this policy 3
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ] 99

Information Search and Understanding

I1. Have you ever accessed the CFIA website to learn about the federal food safety requirements?

Yes 1
No [SKIP TO I6] 2
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ] [SKIP TO I6] 99

I3. Did you find the information you were looking for?

Yes 1
No [SKIP TO I6] 2
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ] [SKIP TO I6] 99

I4. How easy was the information to find? Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means "not at all easy" and 7 means "very easy".

Not at all easy 1
2
3
4
5
6
Very easy 7
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ] 99

15. How well do feel you understand the information? Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means “did not understand at all” and 7 means “understood completely”.

Did not understand at all	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
Understood completely	7
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ]	99

16. What sources of information about food safety regulations do you go to or have you used in the past? **[DO NOT READ LIST – SELECT ALL THAT APPLY – PROMPT IF NEEDED]**

[NOTE: IF TWITTER, INSTAGRAM, OR FACEBOOK SELECTED PRODUCE MERGED SOCIAL MEDIA CODE FOR DATA TABLES]

Internet/website (SPECIFY: _____)	1
AI (e.g. Chat GPT, Co-pilot, Gemini or other Artificial Intelligence)	2
Google or other non-AI search engines	3
X (formerly Twitter)	4
Instagram	5
Facebook	6
LinkedIn	7
Media (TV, newspaper, industry publication)	8
Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)	9
Government of Canada	10
Provincial government	11
Industry association	12
Financial institution	13
Colleagues/other producers/my network	14
Or anything else? [SPECIFY: RECODE IF RELATED TO ANYTHING ON LIST ABOVE]	77
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ – EXCLUSIVE]	99

I7B. How has your business received information from the CFIA in the past year? **[DO NOT READ LIST – SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]**

Mail documents/letters	1
Telephone calls	2
Email notifications	3
Notices in My CFIA portal	4
Personal interaction with CFIA representative	5
CFIA website	6
CFIA social media	7
Through an industry association	8
Or anything else? [SPECIFY: RECODE IF RELATED TO ANYTHING ON LIST ABOVE]	77
Have not received anything [SKIP TO I9B]	98
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ] [SKIP TO I9B]	99

I8. Overall, how satisfied are you with the communications you have received from CFIA? Please use a number between 0 and 10, where 0 means “not at all satisfied” and 10 means “very satisfied”.

Not at all satisfied	0
	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7
	8
	9
Very satisfied	10
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ]	99

I9B. Is there a particular information product you would most prefer to receive from the CFIA? **[READ LIST – SELECT ONLY ONE OPTION – MOST PREFERRED]**

Videos	1
General web content	2
Digital Infographics	3
Chatbot	4
Checklists	5
Or anything else? [SPECIFY: RECODE IF RELATED TO ANYTHING ON LIST ABOVE]	77
Depends on the type of content [DO NOT READ] [SKIP TO I10]	98
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ] [SKIP TO I10]	99

I9A. How would you most prefer to receive information from the CFIA? **[DO NOT READ LIST – SELECT ONLY ONE OPTION – MOST PREFERRED]**

By mail	1
Telephone	2
Email	3
Notices in My CFIA portal	4
Personal interaction with CFIA inspector or program expert	5
CFIA website	6
Social media (SPECIFY: _____)	7
Newsletter	8
Through an industry association	9
Or anything else? [SPECIFY: RECODE IF RELATED TO ANYTHING ON LIST ABOVE]	77
I don't want the CFIA to send me future communications [DO NOT READ]	98
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ]	99

I10. Over the past few years, have you had difficulty getting information you needed from CFIA?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ]	99

Ask CFIA

C4. *Ask CFIA* provides the food industry with one point of entry through the “Contact us” page of the CFIA website. Canadian food businesses and non-resident importers can submit questions about food regulatory requirements using an online form and “Ask CFIA” provides written answers.

Based on this definition, have you used the *Ask CFIA* service in the past year?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ]	99

[SKIP TO CFIA REPUTATION IF C4 = 2 OR 99]

C7. Rate your overall level of satisfaction with the Ask CFIA service. Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means “not at all satisfied” and 7 means “very satisfied”.

Not at all satisfied	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
Very satisfied	7
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ]	99

CFIA REPUTATION

R1. Rate your overall agreement with the following statements about the CFIA. Please use a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means “strongly disagree”, 4 means “neither agree nor disagree”, and 7 means “strongly agree”.

RANDOMIZE

- a. CFIA guidance on regulations is clear
- b. The CFIA provides better information and support to food businesses compared to other regulatory organizations we deal with

Strongly disagree	1
	2
	3
Neither agree nor disagree	4
	5
	6
Strongly agree	7
Don't know / Not applicable [DO NOT READ]	99

Demographics / Language requirements

Thank you for your answers. We just have a few final demographic questions to classify your responses.

D3. Would you classify your company as Indigenous-owned or -operated?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ]	99

D4. And which of the following reflects the approximate size of your business by gross annual revenue for your Canadian operations? Again, if you are a franchisee, please only consider your location. **[READ LIST] [IF REFUSE:** Just as a reminder, please understand that we use this information for classification purposes only and do not record or share the identity of any company participating in the study.]

- | | |
|--|---|
| \$30,000 or less per year | 1 |
| Between \$30,000 and less than \$100,000 per year | 2 |
| Between \$100,000 and less than \$500,000 per year | 3 |
| Between \$500,000 and less than \$1 million per year | 4 |
| Between \$1 million and less than \$5 million per year | 5 |
| \$5 million or more per year | 6 |
| Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ] | 9 |

S3. Which of the following best represents the number of people your company employs in Canada, including yourself? If you are a franchisee, please only consider your location. **[READ LIST] [Including part-time and casual employees]**

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1 – [Self-employed] | 1 |
| 2-4 employees | 2 |
| 5-10 employees | 3 |
| 11-99 employees | 4 |
| 100-499 employees | 5 |
| 500 employees or more | 6 |
| Don't know / Prefer not to say [DO NOT READ] | 99 |

D5. Can you provide an approximate percentage of individuals in your company with a senior management role that identify as women?

Women _____ % [minimum: 0, maximum: 100]
 Don't know / Prefer not to say **[DO NOT READ]** 999

[PERSUADER IF ASKED: The Government of Canada has a policy that is designed to ensure that the diverse population of Canada is equally supported and in order to better understand the composition of leadership at Canadian food businesses we are asking about gender and other demographic characteristics of the leadership group. An estimate is fine for this question and if you do not know, that is fine as well.]

Conclusion: thank respondent for their time and remind them that the feedback is very valuable to the CFIA.