



Canadian Food
Inspection Agency

Agence canadienne
d'inspection des aliments

Canadian Food Inspection Agency



Our vision:

To excel as a science-based regulator, trusted and respected by Canadians and the international community.

Our mission:

Dedicated to safeguarding food, animals and plants, which enhances the health and well-being of Canada's people, environment and economy.

Canada taking new direction in seed marketing requirements?

Michael Scheffel, Seed Section, Field Crops Division, Plant Health and Biosecurity Directorate

The European Conference on Ensuring Seed Availability in the 21st Century, March 18, 2009, Brussels

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Canada's Flexible Variety Registration System



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Seed Program Modernization Initiative (SPMI)

- SPMI consists of focussed efforts to improve the Canadian seed policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks to:
 - remove or reduce barriers to diversification, innovation, competitiveness, profitability and sustainability
 - maintain and enhance consumer confidence, protect the environment, and contribute to food safety
 - be inclusive, transparent and responsive to emerging challenges

What is variety registration?

- The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) acts as a 'gate keeper' by overseeing the varieties available in the marketplace.
- The purpose of variety registration is to ensure that:
 - health and safety requirements are met,
 - information is available to regulator to prevent fraud; and to
 - facilitate seed certification and the international trade of seed
- Currently pre-registration testing and merit assessment are required to demonstrate that a variety performs equal to or better than reference varieties.

What is merit?

- A variety is determined to have merit if it performs as well as or better than standard reference varieties with respect to:
 - agronomic (yield, time to maturity)
 - quality (e.g. protein and oil content)
 - disease tolerance characteristics
- Evaluated by recommending committees approved by the Minister
- Includes field, and in some cases laboratory, tests
- The testing protocols and merit assessment criteria are regularly reviewed and approved by the CFIA
- The proposed flexible variety registration regulatory amendments remove the requirement for merit for some crops (potatoes and sunflower)

What crops require variety registration?

- Most agricultural crops are subject to variety registration
- Notable exceptions: corn, chickpeas, sorghum, food-type soybeans and turf grasses
- The value-chain for these crops decided that merit requirements posed undue regulatory burden
- There was no flexibility in the registration system to register varieties without merit

Why are changes to the variety registration system required?

- “One size fits all” approach no longer viable because different crop sectors have different challenges and opportunities
- An amendment to the Seeds Regulations is required to change the variety registration system to allow for varying levels of oversight with reduced regulatory burden
- The amendment will create a more flexible variety registration system that will aim to reduce regulatory burden, support innovation, enhance competitiveness and improve the diversity of varieties available to producers.

What are the changes to the variety registration system?

- Basic requirements to protect health and safety, prevent fraud and facilitate seed certification will not change (pedigree, variety description, legal reference sample, etc.)
- Three regulatory options with varying registration requirements:
 - Tier I: Pre-registration testing and merit assessment to ensure that varieties meet minimum standards (status quo).
 - Tier II: Pre-registration testing to provide official oversight of the validity of pre-registration testing.
 - Tier III: No additional requirements.
- The goal is to create the framework for the flexible system.
- Further amendments will place crops within these tiers.

What is the process for future crop placement?

- A clear rationale (cost : benefit) and a demonstration of an appropriate level of consensus for the change within the crop value chain are required
- CFIA is responsible for consulting with all crop sectors to ensure all crop types have the appropriate registration requirements.
 - Placement in a different tier requires further regulatory amendments
- Recommending committees are able to modify merit requirements by amending their Procedures
 - Does not require regulatory amendments
 - Requires approval by the CFIA on behalf of the Minister

Have stakeholders been consulted on the amendments?

- Extensive consultation with stakeholders since 1998
- Stakeholder consensus was difficult due to the lack of an effective stakeholder engagement forum
- An industry-led, government enabled stakeholder forum (the National Forum on Seed) was established in 2005
- 4 Variety Registration Working Group meetings provided input into the development of the flexible variety registration proposal
- Consultations on the proposal included a six-month online consultation as well as five regional and two national stakeholder meetings
- The proposed regulatory amendments were posted for public comment for a 75-day period in June, 2008

What overall impact will the amendments have?

- Reduce the impediments to timely and cost-effective variety registration
- Encourage innovation and competitiveness in the seed sector
- Fewer regulatory roadblocks prior to commercialization
- Timely access to new varieties
- Increased choice in the number of varieties available to producers and end users
- Cost savings for variety developers due to reduced testing

What are some of the similarities between the EU and Canadian seed systems?

- Based on variety identity, varietal purity and official certification
- Compliance with international standards and procedures such as the OECD Seed Schemes
- Allows authorization of private entities for implementation with official oversight.
- EU has SLIM (Simpler Legislation for the Internal Market) and Canada had “Smart Regulations” as drivers for change

What are some of the differences between the EU and Canadian systems?

- The EU affirmed the importance of Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU)
 - Canada has proposed new flexibility for merit requirements
- Canada does not have issues regarding
 - Free movement of treated seed
 - Non-harmonized authorization of plant protection products
 - National catalogue/Common catalogue
 - Different registration and VCU requirements among member states
- Canada has been an early adopter of GM technology



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