

Allergens

• To learn more about food safety contact the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs at 1-888-466-2372 ext 64752, follow the food safety links at www.omafra.gov.on.ca or email haccp.advantage@omafra.gov.on.ca

What is an Allergen?

Allergens are substances that cause adverse or negative reactions in sensitive individuals. These reactions can range from minor to serious and in some instances they can be fatal.

Labelling Regulations

You are responsible for ensuring that all food products imported, sold or distributed by you meet the requirements of the *Food and Drugs Act and Regulations*, including those related to ingredient labelling. The common allergens, gluten sources and sulphite, are required to be included on your labels when present as ingredients or compounds.

For More Information on Recalls:

Please see Fact Sheet #5 Recall Readiness.

Common Types of Allergens

There are nine common food allergens in Canada, also called Priority Food Allergens. Most reactions to food are caused by the following food or products derived from these foods:

1. Peanuts
2. Tree nuts
3. Sesame seeds
4. Milk
5. Eggs
6. Fish, crustaceans and shellfish
7. Soy
8. Wheat
9. Sulphites

Although this list contains the common allergens, other foods have been reported to cause allergic reactions as well.

Recalls due to Allergens

A large portion of food recalls occur as the result of allergens not being declared on the ingredient list of products containing them. Recalls can be expensive and damaging to your reputation. If your company has made a product that may contain undeclared allergens and you have sold the product to someone else, you must recall the product. The Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has the authority to order a recall if you do not do so voluntarily, as does the Medical Officer of Health.

How do undeclared allergens occur in food?

- Carry-over through incomplete cleaning of food contact surfaces and utensils, sometimes because of poor equipment design
- Inappropriate use of rework containing allergenic ingredients
- Ingredient changes, substitutions or additions not reflected on the label
- Incorrect labels put onto products
- Incorrect or incomplete list of ingredients
- Unknown ingredients in raw materials
- Misrepresentation of common names to describe products/ingredients (e.g. mandelonas for reformed, re flavoured peanut)
- Labelling exemptions under the *Food and Drug Regulations*

Protecting Yourself

As a food processor, it is your responsibility to ensure that the food you produce is safe and meets all labelling requirements. Here are some steps to take in order to help prevent allergen sensitivities in a consumer:

- Ensure that known allergens are included on your ingredient list under their common names when present as components or ingredients
- Evaluate your manufacturing and ingredient control procedures
- Schedule production activities to reduce the potential of allergen cross contamination
- Clean and sanitize equipment between processing of allergen-containing products
- Designate storage and holding areas for ingredients and products that contain allergens
- Ensure that ingredients or products that contain allergenic components are suitably identified
- Verify that all prepackaged foods used are correctly labelled
- Develop strategies such as an allergen prevention plan to manage the risk associated with allergens
- Source ingredients from suppliers with an allergy prevention plan

Accurate and complete labelling of foods will reduce the need for costly food recalls. It will also assist consumers with food sensitivities to make safe choices.

Additional Information

Additional information can be obtained from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency by calling 1-800-442-2342 or visiting the website at: www.inspection.gc.ca.
