

Spotlight: 21st Century Food Labels Part 2 of 4

June 2017

"The inevitable never happens. It is the unexpected *always*."

Attributed to the economist John Maynard Keynes, 1938. (1883-1946)

"In Ireland, the inevitable never happens and the unexpected constantly occurs." Attributed to John Pentland Mahaffy. (1839-1919)

☀ Traceability

The CFIA defines traceability as:

"Traceability is the ability to follow an item or a group of items - be it animal, plant, food product or ingredient - from one point in the supply chain to another, either backwards or forwards.

☀ Livestock Traceability

Livestock traceability systems are based upon three basic elements: animal identification; premises identification; and animal movement."

☀ Ahead of the Curve

In the mid-'90's, a forward-thinking, entrepreneurial Saskatchewan hog farmer, wanting to differentiate his product in the marketplace, developed a traceability plan such that pork products which originated on his farm could be directly linked to the hog which was the source of the pork. Fast forward to to-day, and such a program has progressed from a voluntary option in some provinces, to a Canada-wide mandatory requirement of most species of farm animals, positioning Canada as one of the first countries to mandate hog identity and movement.

☀ Direct and Indirect Benefits

Improved emergency management in the event of a food safety issue or disease outbreak in the hog sector, is the dominant benefit. Additional advantages include asset protection, maintenance of or faster regain of market access, and, market share retention.

☀ Hog Sector Pull

The impetus came, early on, from within the hog producer sector. In 2002, the Canadian Pork Council received a mandate from its members to implement nationwide traceability, from birth to slaughter. In 2014 [PigTrace Canada](#) was launched to enable hog producers to comply with [regulated hog traceability](#), violation of which is subject to fines and/or penalties. Immediate uptake by registered hog producers was expected; an unexpected surprise was the prompt engagement by previously unknown small-scale hobby hog farmers, the total of which is ~1,000.

☀ Still at the forefront, and, hogs plus

The province of Saskatchewan has extended eligibility of its [Livestock Traceability Rebate](#) from a voluntary regime to the mandatory hog program, and offers coverage to those who "own, lease, sell, custom feed, house, care for, or slaughter cattle, hogs, sheep, bison, cervids (deer), and/or goats."

☀ USA and CDA Mandatory Traceability

In 2012, the USDA implemented [mandatory traceability of interstate livestock movement](#). In Canada, [Part XV \(Animal Identification\)](#) of the *Health of Animals Regulations* became law in 2014 and includes farmed cattle, bison, sheep, hogs and wild boars. The legislation requires that all such animals be tagged (identified), their movement documented, and records maintained for a minimum of five years.

☀ Processed Food Traceability

Canada's proposed [Safe Food for Canadians Regulations](#) and the USA's [Food Safety Modernization Act](#) requires food processors who distribute nationally or internationally to be held accountable for the identity and safety of the food exchanged during these transactions. Traceability, built upon the Codex Alimentarius template of "one step forward, one step back", applies to every link in the supply chain, such that both the supplier from whom an ingredient was obtained, and the customer who purchased the processed food which contains the ingredient, are documented. Records are to be kept for a minimum two-year period, in a data format accessible to a regulator within 24-hours.

☀ Set for the Inevitable and Unexpected

Mandatory traceability facilitates recalls and serves to contain and minimize the spread of contaminated food. Some stakeholders who have implemented traceability systems report a clearer and broader degree of market insight, as the data provides an in-depth knowledge of which customer segments, and individual companies within those segments, buy which specific products. **FF**

© 2017 International Food Focus Ltd., 211 Carlton Street, East Office, Toronto, ON M5A 2K9 E: focus@foodfocus.on.ca
T: 416-924-3266 Food Fax is archived at www.foodfocus.on.ca

Sign up for Food Fax at our website www.foodfocus.on.ca