



COMPENDIUM OF CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS

Canada–US Bilateral Agreement on Shellfish Sanitation

SUBJECT CATEGORY:

Marine / Oceans

TYPE OF AGREEMENT / INSTRUMENT:

Canada - United States

FORM:

Bilateral Agreement

STATUS:

- Signed by Canada March 4, 1948
- In force in Canada April 30, 1948
- In force internationally April 30, 1948
- Ongoing - Remains in force unless one of the parties gives 30 days' notice

LEAD & PARTNER DEPARTMENTS:

Lead: Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)

Partners: Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), CFIA, ECCC and DFO are signatories to Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program MOU

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**Web Links:**

- [Text of Canada-US Bilateral Agreement Regarding Sanitary Practices in the Shellfish Industries and Related Matters](#) (website link modified)
- [ECCC Shellfish Water Classification Program](#)
- [Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program](#) (CFIA website)
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada [Shellfish Harvest Closures](#)

Contacts:

[ECCC Inquiry Centre](#)

COMPENDIUM EDITION:

February 2022

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

The Canada – United States Bilateral Agreement on Shellfish was developed to put in place control mechanisms to improve hygiene practices in the bivalve molluscan shellfish processing industry in Canada and the United States, thereby protecting the health of consumers. Canada was the first country to sign this type of agreement with the United States to facilitate the export of shellfish between countries.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this agreement is to ensure that bivalve molluscan shellfish traded between the two countries is harvested and processed in accordance with accepted food safety / sanitary principles.

KEY ELEMENTS

The agreement requires both signatories to:

- maintain common sanitary principles governing the harvesting and processing of shellfish;
- inform one another on compliance with those principles;
- facilitate international evaluations of its shellfish processing facilities and growing areas if requested.

EXPECTED RESULTS

Adhering to the sanitary principles under this agreement ensures that the U.S. market is open to exports of Canadian molluscan shellfish. In 2017, Canadian exports were valued at approximately \$207M.

CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT

This agreement is important to Canada in maintaining market access for our exports to the U.S. Canada's shellfish sanitation commitment is delivered by the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program (CSSP), a program shared by ECCC, the CFIA, and DFO under a memorandum of understanding.

RESULTS / PROGRESS**Activities**

Canada meets key commitments by adhering to the protocols and standards of the CSSP. ECCC conducts annual bacteriological marine water quality surveys of shellfish growing areas, and performs assessments of land-based sanitary pollution impacts. CFIA regulates

the handling, processing and export of shellfish and conducts monitoring for biotoxins in growing areas. DFO regulates fishery closures and harvester licencing, and manages the shellfish resource and aquaculture operations in some provinces. In the U.S., the program is delivered by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) under its National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP).

Under the terms of the Bilateral Agreement, Canada and the U.S. each reserve the right to evaluate the other country's shellfish sanitation program on a periodic basis to ensure compliance with the agreed-upon sanitary principles. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) conducted its evaluations of the CSSP on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts in 2016. In return, the CSSP partners audited FDA's NSSP delivery in the U.S. Pacific Northwest in 2018.

Reports relevant to the Bilateral Agreement are those associated with the cross-border program evaluations. Findings from the 2016 FDA evaluations concluded that Canada had no significant deficiencies in shellfish sanitation and that the CSSP is providing an equivalent level of public health protection as the U.S. NSSP. Similarly, findings from the 2018 CSSP evaluations concluded that US North West had no significant deficiencies in shellfish sanitation and that these regions are providing an equivalent level of public health protection as the CSSP.

Results

In order to ensure Canada maintains shellfish sanitation standards under the Agreement, ECCC since 2009 has tripled water quality monitoring frequency in all approved shellfish harvest areas of Canada, and has employed world-class hydrologic computer modelling to provide greater confidence that sanitary contamination risks in adjacent harvest waters are mitigated.

To improve of knowledge and application of sanitary practice identified in the Agreement, Canada and the US are collaborating on a joint food safety risk assessment on noroviruses in molluscan shellfish. The results of the assessment will inform the refinement of shellfish sanitation policies in both countries.

Reports