

Low-Acid Foods Regulations and Requirements in Canada

Low-acid shelf-stable foods ($\text{pH} > 4.6$ and water activity > 0.85) packaged in hermetically sealed containers are regulated under the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR), administered by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). These requirements align with international standards such as HACCP and GMPs and aim to protect public health from *Clostridium botulinum* and other pathogens.

1. Regulatory Authorities

CFIA – Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR)

Health Canada – Guidance on food safety and processing requirements

SFCR Part 4 – Preventive Controls (including processing standards)

Food Labelling for Industry Guide – CFIA's labelling requirements

2. Scheduled Process Validation

All thermal or aseptic processes must be scientifically validated by a qualified Process Authority.

Retort processing: Time–temperature parameters must ensure commercial sterility.

Aseptic systems: Sterilization of the product, packaging, and processing system is required.

3. Preventive Control Plan (PCP)

Required for all SFCR-licensed facilities.

Must follow HACCP principles: hazard identification, critical limits, monitoring, sanitation, and verification.

CFIA's Food Safety Enhancement Program (FSEP) offers PCP guidance.

4. Documentation & Recordkeeping

Maintain detailed records for each production batch, including:

Temperature, pressure, and hold time logs

Deviations and corrective actions

Documentation must be retained and be readily available for inspection.

5. Training & Competency

Personnel involved in low-acid food processing must be trained in:

Thermal processing techniques

Monitoring and verification procedures

Sanitation and allergen control

Deviation response and corrective actions

6. Sanitation & Hygiene

Facilities must implement validated cleaning and sanitation programs.

Environmental monitoring for pathogens is required.

Cleanliness is non-negotiable to prevent contamination.

7. Traceability

All ingredients, packaging, and final products must be fully traceable from source to distribution.

Traceability ensures audit readiness and efficient recall management.

8. Labelling & Trade Compliance

Labels must comply with CFIA regulations:

Shelf life, storage conditions, allergen declarations, product identity and nutrition facts.

Facilities must hold an SFCR license to manufacture, import, or export low-acid foods.

9. Monitoring & Corrective Actions

Critical control points must be monitored routinely.

Immediate action is required for deviations, with product safety assessments and documentation.

10. Recall Preparedness

A written, validated recall procedure must be in place.

Plans should enable rapid product removal from the market to protect public health.

Key References:

[Health Canada: Guidance on Low-Acid and Acidified Foods](#)

[CFIA: Food Labelling for Industry](#)

[Safe Food for Canadians Regulations \(SFCR\)](#)

For expert assistance with process design, validation, or regulatory review:

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