



## Notice of intent: Amendments to Canada's vodka standard

This notice of intent is to inform stakeholders that the Government of Canada is proposing to modernize the standard of composition for vodka to:

- reduce regulatory burden and enable product innovation
- facilitate interprovincial and international trade by harmonizing more closely with trading partners
- enable distilleries to be more competitive and grow

### Drivers for change

On November 28, 2018, the Government of Canada announced its intent to revise the federal vodka standard to contribute to enhancing economic competitiveness and improve trade between provinces and territories.

In Canada there is a growing distillery sector with a desire to trade products nationally. The current compositional standard for vodka, under the [Food and Drug Regulations](#) (FDR), regulates what can be labelled as vodka when that product is traded inter-provincially or imported. Not updated since 1959, the standard may not be serving the needs of some industry members or consumers and there have been requests to revise it to be more inclusive and promote innovation.

### Regulatory context

The Food and Drugs Act requires that a product made in one province and sold in another must meet the federal standard.

The FDR sets out conditions regarding health and safety, composition, labelling, packaging, treatment, processing, sale and advertising requirements for food, including alcoholic beverages like vodka.

A compositional standard identifies a particular food by setting out what ingredients it must contain and may contain and any processing requirements (for example, fermentation). Compositional standards may also include technical specifications (such as methods of analysis) or food safety requirements. The non-health and safety aspects of the compositional standards set out in the FDR apply only to foods that are imported or traded inter-provincially. There are over 300 compositional standards prescribed under the FDR.

Vodka traded intra-provincially is not subject to this standard, unless provinces or territories have chosen to use it.

### Current Canadian vodka standard

The FDR (B.02.080) vodka standard is:

"Vodka shall be a potable alcoholic beverage obtained by the treatment of grain spirit or potato spirit with charcoal so as to render the product without distinctive character, aroma or taste."

In other words, "vodka" must be

- made from grain or potato spirits
- treated with charcoal, and be without distinctive character, aroma or taste
- labelled as vodka

There is interest in allowing the use of the term "vodka" when it is produced from other agricultural material, such as fruit, dairy products, or honey.

### Alignment with international partners

The U.S. and the EU vodka standards are similar. Both allow vodka to be produced from a wider range of raw material.

In the U.S. the end product must be neutral in character and is called vodka.

The EU is more flexible on the characteristics of the end product: by-products formed in fermentation may be selectively reduced rather than completely removed. The EU requires the source of agricultural material to be disclosed on the label when it differs from potatoes and cereals.

The following proposal will bring the Canadian standard into greater alignment with the U.S. and EU approaches.

## Proposed changes to the vodka standard

Below are the proposed elements that are being considered to modernize the vodka standard.

### 1. Ingredients

Expand the permitted raw ingredients from potato or grain spirits to any agricultural material.

### 2. Characteristics

Allow for the use of other materials or processes, beyond charcoal, to fully or partially (in the case of raw ingredients other than potato or grain) render the product without distinctive character, aroma, or taste.

### 3. Labelling

Require additional labelling when sources other than potato or grain are used and when some characteristics from the raw ingredients remain in the finished product, such as "apple vodka" produced from apples with the taste of apples in the finished product.

## Comment on the proposed changes


The CFIA is seeking your feedback on this proposal. Interested parties have until March 15, 2019 to provide their comments on this notice of intent, in writing, via email to:

[cfia.labellingconsultation-etiquetage.acia@canada.ca](mailto:cfia.labellingconsultation-etiquetage.acia@canada.ca).

Comments can also be sent to the position described below at the address provided:

Director  
Consumer Protection and Market Fairness Division  
Food Safety and Consumer Protection Directorate  
Canadian Food Inspection Agency  
1400 Merivale Road  
Tower 2  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0Y9

A survey will also be distributed via e-mail to affected stakeholders during this comment period to gain a better understanding of costs and benefits of these proposed changes.

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