



News Release

For Immediate Release

Government of Canada establishes centre for food virology

St-Hyacinthe laboratory to strengthen ability to detect food safety hazards

July 23, 2015 – St-Hyacinthe, Quebec – Office of the Minister of Health

Today, the Government of Canada announced the establishment of the Food Virology National Reference Centre at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) laboratory in St. Hyacinthe, Quebec. This CFIA reference centre will enhance Canada's ability to effectively detect viral contaminants in food, such as noroviruses and hepatitis A.

Also announced was an agreement between the CFIA and Génome Québec that will develop genomics-based analytical methods for pathogen detection and epidemiological support. This partnership is expected to lead to the development of more precise, molecular-based methods for identifying specific strains of foodborne viruses. This ultimately could help the CFIA trace outbreaks of viral foodborne illness back to a specific source and take a more targeted approach to recalling contaminated products. It will also allow public health officials to identify high-risk strains of foodborne viruses.

Over the next five years, the CFIA will continue to improve its laboratory services in St-Hyacinthe by modernizing its facilities and equipment as well as conducting research and developing new methods of detection. Additionally, the laboratory has been increasing professional and technical staff and is developing advanced technologies for food surveillance.

The Food Virology National Reference Centre will be a part of the Food Safety Information Network [announced](#) earlier this year. The FSIN will be implemented incrementally over five years, linking federal and provincial food safety authorities and accredited laboratories across the country.

Quick Facts

- Viruses account for about 65 per cent of known cases of foodborne illness in Canada.
- The joint expertise of Génome Québec and the CFIA will help trace the sources of food contamination during outbreaks more efficiently.

Quotes

"Our Government has a strong record at improving food safety and we are working to further strengthen it by enhancing Canada's expertise in food virology. This will allow the CFIA and its partners to better manage emerging issues and respond to food safety incidents and emergencies."

– Rona Ambrose, Minister of Health

"We are pleased that our partnership with the CFIA will provide better access to new technologies and contribute to a safer food supply."

– Marc LePage, CEO (*Génome Québec*)





Associated Links

[Backgrounder](#) [Link to be provided]

[Génomique Québec](#)

[Healthy and Safe Food for Canadians Framework](#)

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