



Madame Dominique Malack
Présidente-directrice Générale
Office québécois de la langue française
dmalack@oqlf.gouv.qc.ca

Subject : Request for clarification of Bill 96 regulations to facilitate their application to our member companies

Dear Ms. Malack,

Our organizations bring together member companies from the entire produce distribution chain in Quebec, from field to table: growers-packers-shippers, wholesalers-importers-exporters, distributors, transporters, brokers and retailers. Our mission is to mobilize industry players, facilitate marketing and promote the health benefits of fruit and vegetables for the industry and Quebecers.

Members of the fruit and vegetable industry are committed to developing and applying best practices to offer fresh, healthy and safe produce to Quebecers. They market products from Quebec and elsewhere that meet consumer expectations. They therefore make every effort to meet the requirements of local laws and regulations, particularly with regard to labeling, in order to satisfy their demands.

However, there remains significant uncertainty, particularly among Canadian companies outside of Quebec as well as foreign companies exporting products to Quebec, regarding the correct interpretation and implementation of the *Regulation respecting the language of commerce and business*, as updated under Quebec's *Official and Common Language Act* on June 26, 2024.

Section 51.1. of Chapter C-11 of the Charter of the French Language states that as of June 1, 2025:

*“Notwithstanding section 51, on a product, a registered trademark within the meaning of the *Trade-marks Act* (*Revised Statutes of Canada, 1985, chapter T-13*) may be written, even in part, solely in a language other than French where no corresponding version in French is found in the register kept under that Act. However, if the mark includes a generic or descriptive description of the product, it must appear in French on the product or on a medium permanently attached to it.*”

In addition to several detailed questions about the application of these regulations (outlined in Appendix A), we wish to draw your attention to the following key concerns raised by our members:

1. Lack of guidance to support industry compliance

This legislation imposes stringent language requirements, but many businesses are struggling to understand how to comply effectively. For example, confusion around labelling terms such as “generic” and “non-descriptive,” even following the release of [Trademark labelling guidance](#) by the Office québécoise de la langue française (OQLF), has left companies uncertain around how to apply the rules to their products and services. The lack of clear, practical guidance for industry may lead to inconsistencies or misinterpretations in the application of the new requirements, leaving businesses vulnerable to penalties.

2. Brand identity issues



For businesses, these regulations pose challenges to maintaining their brand identity in a competitive marketplace. Requiring adjustments to trademarks may dilute brand recognition and diminish consumers' ability to connect with brands with which they are already familiar.

3. Increased costs and food insecurity

The new requirements may lead to additional labelling costs for businesses, which could result in price increases for consumers and exacerbate food insecurity in Quebec. An increasing number of shippers and suppliers from outside Quebec may choose to avoid doing business in the province, leading to higher costs for consumers, limited product availability and increased food insecurity.

4. Challenges to sustainability goals

The implementation timeline for these regulations will require companies to make changes to their labels in a very short timeframe, which could result in the disposal of hundreds of thousands of labels. This will increase waste and undermine industry efforts to reuse existing materials and prioritize environmental sustainability.

5. Additionally, we note that the [regulatory tools and compliance guides](#) are currently only available in French. This creates accessibility challenges, particularly for Canadian companies outside Quebec and international exporters, posing a major barrier to compliance and increasing administrative burden.

To better support compliance with Bill 96 and minimize potential disruptions to Quebec's supply chain, we propose several actionable recommendations designed to provide businesses with the necessary time, resources, and clarity to adapt effectively to the new regulations, while supporting sustainability and mitigating cost impacts:

1. **Introduce a 2-year transition period for the fresh fruit and vegetable industry:** A 2-year transition period is the minimum standard transition period when labelling changes are required at the federal level. We recommend that the Office Québécois de la langue française (OQLF) provide this transition period for the fresh fruit and vegetable industry. It is also important that the OQLF consider the implementation timeline of any other labelling changes happening in the marketplace, such as the Government of Canada's front-of-package nutrition labelling regulations (compliance date as of January 1, 2026) and the Competition Bureau's enforcement of [environmental claims](#) (enforcement guidelines currently being developed), to avoid industry having to change their labels again after a short period of time. This approach would:
 - a. Provide companies with sufficient time to adapt their packaging to meet new labelling requirements,
 - b. Minimize disruptions in supply chains, particularly for suppliers outside Quebec unfamiliar with the requirements of Quebec's regulations, and
 - c. Support sustainable practices by allowing the industry to deplete their labelling inventory, prior to developing new labels.
2. **Provide education and resources to support industry compliance:** To foster understanding of, and compliance with, the new regulations, the OQLF should offer educational resources for industry, particularly during the first year following the transition period. These could include:
 - a. Clear, written guidance and practical examples of compliant labels across a variety of sectors.



- b. Webinars, workshops, and training sessions tailored to various sectors, including international exporters.
 - c. A dedicated hotline and/or email support service for businesses to seek clarification on specific scenarios.
 - d. Given that many companies shipping to Quebec are not French-speaking, all educational documents and resources should be provided in both official languages to support compliance and a clear understanding of the regulations.
3. **Monitor and evaluate progress:** Conduct regular assessments during the transition period to:
- a. Identify common challenges faced by businesses.
 - b. Adjust guidance or timelines if needed to avoid unintended consequences like increased costs, food insecurity, or supply chain disruptions.
4. **Establish an Industry Liaison Committee:** To further support compliance, the OQLF should consider creating a committee comprised of OQLF representatives, industry associations, and other key stakeholders to:
- a. Regularly review and address challenges businesses face during the transition period.
 - b. Provide feedback on the clarity and practicality of the regulations.
 - c. Serve as a collaborative forum to enhance understanding and compliance and find workable solutions to challenges raised.

By adopting these measures, the OQLF can facilitate smoother compliance with Bill 96, reduce the regulatory burden on businesses, and ensure a balanced approach to achieving linguistic and economic objectives.

In addition to the concerns and recommendations above, we would also like to request written responses to several technical questions raised by our members that require clarification and attention to ensure the successful implementation of Bill 96. These are outlined in Appendix A, enclosed with this letter.

Our organizations look forward to further discussion and collaboration to clarify answers to the questions noted above and to find workable solutions to the concerns raised by our members to maintain and increase the supply of fruit and vegetables in Quebec.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R Lemaire', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Ron Lemaire