

For immediate release

Attention: Health/Lifestyle/Science/Public/Government Editors

AllerGen NCE Inc. Supports New Federal Government Food Labelling Changes
*AllerGen-funded research findings inform government decision to
update Canadian food labelling regulations*

Hamilton, ON (25 February 2011) – Last week in Ottawa, Canada's Health Minister, Leona Aglukkaq announced new regulations that will require food manufacturers and importers to clearly indicate certain food allergens, gluten sources, and added sulphites on the label of most prepackaged food products. Industry was given 18 months to implement the new regulations, with the coming into force date set as August 4, 2012. Changes to Canadian *Food and Drug Regulations* will require the declaration in plain language of allergens in food products including almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, walnuts, peanuts, sesame seeds, wheat and triticale, eggs, milk, soybeans, crustaceans, shellfish, fish and mustard seed.

AllerGen NCE Inc. congratulates the Minister on this announcement and supports the introduction of these changes in order to better protect Canadians with food allergies. AllerGen's research into food labelling, in partnership with Health Canada, contributed key research evidence that factored into the Minister's decision.

These changes to the Canadian *Food and Drug Regulations* are important for affected Canadians. Grocery shopping and label reading will become less confusing for parents with children suffering food allergies. The clearer language and the declaration of priority allergens, gluten sources or sulphites, will also assist new Canadians and those with lower literacy levels to easily identify foods that can be harmful, or in some cases fatal, if consumed.

AllerGen research teams led by investigators Drs. Ann Clarke (McGill University) and Susan Elliott (University of Waterloo) are actively involved in allergen studies. AllerGen investigators work closely with patient stakeholder organizations including Anaphylaxis Canada and policy makers such as Health Canada.

AllerGen funded research findings from the *Surveying Canadians to Access the Prevalence of Common Food Allergies and Attitudes towards Food Labelling and Risk* (SCAALAR) project, undertaken in partnership with Health Canada, confirmed that "allergic consumers place importance on the role of government to provide accurate, consistent, and meaningful information to people to make good choices thus decreasing accidental exposures and, therefore, adverse events."

Co-Principal investigator, Dr. Susan Elliott, University of Waterloo added, "Our research also shows that a large gap exists between Canadians' perception of food allergy prevalence and actual food allergy prevalence. Food allergy is the primary trigger of anaphylaxis, which we know can be life threatening. It is, therefore, essential that through research, we compile a comprehensive picture of food allergy prevalence and perception in Canada to appropriately inform regulatory decisions and reduce the overall burden."

Given the findings from the SCAALAR study and with a particular focus on vulnerable Canadian populations including low income families, Aboriginals and new Canadians, a new AllerGen-funded

research project partnered with Health Canada, the *Surveying Prevalence (of food) Allergy (in) All Canadian Environments* (SPAACE) Study, is in progress and set to be completed in early 2012.

These projects are part of a national research focus in food allergy research and development in association with AllerGen's CanGoFAR research team, led by Dr. Jean Marshall at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

The final project contributing to understanding the causes of allergy and anaphylaxis is the Canadian Healthy Infant Longitudinal Development (CHILD) Study. In 2008, the Canadian Government, through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and AllerGen NCE provided seed funding (\$12M) to examine the roles of indoor and outdoor environments, immune systems, and genes in the development of allergy and asthma in early childhood. This Study will also confirm risk factors for allergies and asthma.

AllerGen NCE Inc., the Allergy, Genes and Environment Network, (est. 2004), is a national research network dedicated to improving the quality of life for people suffering from allergic and related immune diseases. AllerGen is funded by Industry Canada through the federal Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program. The Network is hosted at McMaster University in Hamilton.

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Canada


Allergy, Genes and Environment Network



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