

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER



FOOD

Food watchdog asks who's minding the store

Canadians drawing more and more from foreign sources for food, but domestic regulation isn't keeping pace, internal audit finds

BY GLORIA GALLOWAY OTTAWA

The amount of imported food landing on Canadian dinner plates is growing, but the federal agency responsible for inspecting what Canadians eat relies to a large extent on inspectors in other countries to ensure it is safe.

An internal audit of the

way the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) manages the safety of imported food says the agency has failed to develop a strategy to ensure that health hazards are not entering Canada in cans of spices and jars of cooking oil.

While meat, seafood, fish and eggs – foods which are

Things like coffee and bananas that we don't produce in Canada are not regulated.

Rick Holley, University of Manitoba

regulated for trade – are subject to a wide range of controls, "imports of other food commodities rely almost exclusively on destination inspections and projects," the audit says. In other words, the safety of those foods is in the hands of the exporting country.

The problem is largely relat-

ed to a lack of resources, which has dogged the agency for many years.

Rick Holley, a professor of food safety and food microbiology in the department of food science at the University of Manitoba, says the imported food that is not regulated, and therefore not part of a comprehensive food-safety re-

gime, accounts for about half of what we eat.

And sorting what is regulated from what is not regulated is no easy task for consumers.

"Things like coffee and bananas that we don't produce in Canada are not regulated," Prof. Holley said. Nor is peanut butter, he said.

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DEMENTIA: CONFRONTING THE CRISIS



AWAKENINGS

» Insulin shows potential as treatment for Alzheimer's. NEWS, PAGE 17
» Dementia takes its silent toll on children. GLOBE LIFE
» The full series, including videos, portraits, discussions and archived articles. TGAM.CA/DEMENTIA

'Since her illness, she just grips so tight,' says Thuy Crawford of her 80-year-old mother, Tuyet Nguyen. PETER POWER/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

CELL ESTEEM

Behind bars in Bogota, and feeling like a queen

Drug traffickers, ex-paramilitaries put on a 'new face' in jailhouse beauty pageants

BY NADJA DROST BOGOTA

The inmates have been training for months. The battleground – a courtyard in a women's prison – is ready for the biggest showdown of the year that pits assassins, drug mules and former illegal combatants against each other for one thing incarceration hasn't denied them: the chance to be queen.

As a former drug-trafficker dressed as a mermaid covered in gold body paint is paraded on a stretcher by her cellmates to the stage, there is little question that in a country ob-

sessed with beauty-queen competitions, the annual pageant at Bogota's Good Shepherd prison is the most unusual.

For the participants, the pageant offers an escape from the monotony of prison life, the chance to feel alive and get an injection of self-worth absent in many of their lives.

"The fact that they made a mistake in their lives doesn't mean they aren't allowed to be a human being or feel like a woman," said Virginia Camacho, secretary of the prison and the pageant's co-ordinator.

» SEE 'PAGEANT' PAGE 19



Here she comes, Miss Cellblock No. 9: Karina Lopez is serving a six-year term for drug trafficking. HELKIN RENE DIAZ FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

DIVERSITY

Mounties want more than always getting their man

Women, minorities take focus in force's recruitment effort

TODAY'S REALITY

WOMEN 17%
VISIBLE MINORITIES 7%
ABORIGINALS 2%

TOMORROW'S GOAL

30%
20%
10%

In 2006, Statscan reported Canada's population as 51% women, 13.3% visible minorities and 3.8% aboriginal.

BY COLIN FREEZE

The RCMP plans to make white, male police officers a minority on the force within a generation as it struggles to better reflect the multicultural face of Canada.

Under new hiring benchmarks set this month, senior Mounties say that new classes of recruits should comprise 30 per cent women, 20 per cent visible minorities and 10 per cent aboriginals. The Globe has learned. If the bench-

marks are met, it would be the first time "minority" hires would actually represent a majority of RCMP recruits.

These benchmarks amount to a near doubling, tripling and quintupling of the respective categories of cadets recruited last year. Figures show that, under less ambitious employment-equity goals then, the RCMP graduated classes that were 17 per cent women, 7 per cent visible minorities and 2 per cent aboriginal.

» SEE 'MOUNTIES' PAGE 10

INSIDE TODAY'S GLOBE AND MAIL

The seat of heat

Harper makes an impassioned pitch for Canada's seat on UN Security Council.

NEWS, PAGE 4

50th time's the charm

Jose Bautista gets his coveted 50th home run as Jays wrap up series against Seattle.

GLOBE SPORTS

Power to the people

Energy regulators quietly ramp up costs for Ontario consumers to pay for new electrical systems.

NEWS, PAGE 11



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FROM PAGE 1 » PAGEANT

Beauty contest a break from jailhouse monotony

Salsa music burst through the normally grim interior of the prison as elaborate floats made their way to a stage surrounded by hundreds of screaming inmates cheering for their cellblock. Besides choosing an overall beauty queen, the competition, which runs three days over one week, chooses the best cellblock. Each is given the task of representing a theme or region of Colombia and is judged on creativity, drama-turgy and choreography.

Diana Layton, 21, comes to her elected position as queen of Cellblock No. 4 with a raft of leadership experience. Ms. Layton joined a right-wing paramilitary when she was 12. By the end of her eight years as a member of a death squad, she had been a squadron commander and the No. 2 instructor at a clandestine training camp for a faction 3,000-men strong.

"I came from a place where you had to act like a man. I walked in rubber boots, wore camouflage, and carried a machine gun," says Ms. Layton, scantly clad in a bikini top and bottom covered with dangling plastic gold medallions.

"To feel so feminine preparing for the competition is so nice. I feel beloved and admired," she said as she peeled off a golden fake eyelash, one of several details of her costume depicting India Catalina, an indigenous woman from Colombia's Atlantic coast who worked with the Spanish conquistadores.

The pageant, held every year in September, honours not only the Virgin of Mercedes, patron saint of prisons, but the 1,400 inmates here. Make-up artists are brought in, musicians play salsa, mariachi and vallenato to the crowd, and designers from some of the country's most important pageants help the inmates develop costumes.

"With this pageant, it's like an opportunity to re-create myself," Ms. Layton says.

Perhaps more than anything, the pageant lets some inmates present a "new face" to the world, as Ms. Layton calls it,



Diana Layton, 21, a member of a right-wing paramilitary group since the age of 12, won the pageant. HELKIN RENÉ DÍAZ/FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

"

I came from a place where you had to act like a man. I walked in rubber boots, wore camouflage, and carried a machine gun.

Diana Layton, pageant winner and former paramilitary commander

and be judged on different criteria than the crimes that landed them here.

There are nine cellblocks with anywhere from 100 to 250 women. Each cellblock selects one representative to be its candidate for beauty queen.

Karina Lopez, the queen of

Cellblock No. 9, otherwise known as the "Punishment Cellblock," says the pageant takes a great deal of intellectual, emotional and physical preparation.

"Not just anyone can represent their cellblock," she says. Ms. Lopez, 23, who is serving a six-year sentence for drug-trafficking, has been training since July. She has been studying history, because she expected the judges to ask questions dealing with Colombia's bicentennial celebrations, and doing stomach exercises.

As chaotic as the pageant can be, it can also bring calm to a motley crew of women. When prison officials wanted to limit the pageant to the cellblock competition and do away with making a queen last year, the prison's director,

Magnolia Angulo Acevedo, was faced with protests and a near riot.

"We didn't have a choice but to keep the competition for beauty queen," she says. It was a decision in which Ms. Angulo was happy to let the inmates run the prison. She said that peace comes with the chaos of the pageant: "There's more harmony, they work in teams, they don't have time to look for problems."

Giving the inmates a beauty pageant is to let them take part in a national obsession. Towns can shut down during local pageants and television ratings during Miss Colombia week spike to levels seen only during World Cup Soccer.

"Beauty pageants are everything in this country," said Alex Lopez, a judge who works with vulnerable popu-

lations of women. "For a woman to become queen of the prison is the best thing that could happen to her."

In some cases, that's no exaggeration. Inmates hold the belief that she who wins the crown will also win liberty. With prison officials able to recommend early releases based on good behaviour, Ms. Angulo confirms it's happened.

With that in mind, and if confidence is any measure, Ms. Lopez might walk out of these prison doors sooner than her cellmates. Why does she think she will win?

"Because I act like a queen."

But for Ms. Lopez, her wish for a crown was not to be. Thursday night's winner was Ms. Layton - who won a gift bag and a tiara.

» Special to The Globe and Mail

INSURGENCY

No. 2 FARC commander killed in raid

Bogota — Colombia's military killed the No. 2 leader and top military strategist of the country's main rebel army in blistering bombardments of a major jungle camp, officials announced Thursday, saying rebel informants helped prepare the demoralizing shock to an already weakened insurgency.

The death of Jorge Briceno is a huge setback for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, which has been reeling from a decade of pressure by the U.S.-backed military.

President Juan Manuel Santos said the attack is "the most crushing blow against the FARC in its entire history" — more important than the March, 2008, raid across the border with Ecuador that killed FARC foreign minister Raul Reyes or the bloodless rescue that July of former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, three U.S. contractors and 11 other hostages without firing a shot.

Mr. Santos, who was defence minister during both operations, got the news while jogging in New York's Central Park. He explained to The Associated Press what Mr. Briceno's death means to Colombians: "It is as if they told New Yorkers that Osama bin Laden had fallen."

Mr. Briceno, 57, joined the FARC as an illiterate teenager and spent the rest of his life in the jungle, becoming a feared and charismatic commander of a force that a decade ago controlled nearly half of Colombia. Analysts predicted that his loss could lead many rebels to give up the fight and might nudge the FARC to seek renewed talks. » AP

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