Operations. It is responsible for enforcing the Food and Drugs Act and Regulations, the Narcotic Control Act and Regulations, the Proprietary or Patent Medicine Act, and the Radiation Emitting Devices Act and Regulations.

Food. Standards of safety and purity are developed through laboratory research and maintained by means of a regular and widespread inspection program. The inspection of food-manufacturing establishments plays a major role in the production of clean, wholesome foods containing ingredients that meet recognized standards. Changing food technology requires the development of methods of laboratory analysis to ensure the safety of new types of ingredients and packaging materials. The Food and Drug Regulations list chemical additives that may be used in foods, the amounts that may be added to each food, and the underlying reason. Information on new additives must be submitted for careful review before they are included in the permitted list. Considerable emphasis is placed on studies to ensure that the levels of pesticide residues in foods do not constitute a health hazard. The effect of new packaging and processing techniques on the bacteria associated with food spoilage is also of special concern.

Human nutrition. The field work for Nutrition Canada, the first survey of the nutritional health of Canadians throughout the country, was completed in the fall of 1972 in collaboration with the provinces. This consisted of physical and dental examinations, anthropometric measurements, detailed dietary studies and biochemical tests on blood and urine samples from approximately 20,000 people representative of the populations of all provinces and the banded Indian and Inuit population segments. The first report of results, released on November 6, 1973, was an overview of the nutritional status of the general, Indian and Inuit populations. This revealed a very high prevalence of obesity. It also revealed that some members of the population had sub-optimal intakes and/or amounts in blood or urine of certain vitamins and minerals, particularly iron, vitamin D, vitamin C and folic acid. The nutritional status of native peoples was worse than that of the general population. Vitamin C deficiency was particularly common among Inuit. Goitre of unknown cause (but not related to iodine deficiency) was frequently observed, particularly in the prairie region. Protein status was generally satisfactory. Individual detailed reports on the findings in each province and for the Indian and Inuit groups have been released, and will be followed by reports on food consumption patterns, dental health, and anthropometry. National priorities for corrective action to improve nutritional status have been developed, and are beginning to take shape. These involve all parts of the national community — the federal, provincial, and local governments, industry, the health professional, educational activities, and the consumer at the community level.

Drugs. The Health Protection Branch regulates both the manufacture and distribution of drugs in Canada. The conditions under which drugs are to be manufactured are described in the Manufacturing Facilities and Control Regulations. They relate to facilities, employment of qualified personnel, quality control procedures, maintenance of records, and a suitable system to enable a complete and rapid recall of any batch of drugs from the market. Pharmaceutical plants are regularly visited by inspectors to ensure that the drugs produced meet the quality standards required for sale in Canada.

When a new drug with unknown properties is to be placed on the market, the manufacturer is required by law to provide specified information, including a quantitative list of all ingredients, evidence of safety and effectiveness, the formulation of dosage forms and reports of any adverse effects. This information is studied carefully to ensure that the drug is safe and effective for the purposes claimed. Even after a new drug is on the market, its sale can be banned by the Health Protection Branch if the Drug-Adverse-Reaction Reporting Program indicates that the drug is unsafe and injurious. The Drug Quality Assessment Program aims at producing objective evidence of the quality of drugs already on the Canadian market and disseminating it to members of the health professions, governments, and the general public. Plants manufacturing biologicals such as serums and vaccines must be licensed according to specifications of the Food and Drug Act and Regulations, whether they are located in Canada or abroad.

Another major objective of the Branch is to enable the public to purchase high quality drugs at a reasonable price. This program includes integrated action involving inspection of manufacturing facilities, assessment of claims and clinical equivalency of competing brands, and providing information to professionals concerned and to the general public.