

**Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working Group**  
**February 16 - 18, 2010**  
**CFA Office, Ottawa**

COFFS held a face to face meeting in Ottawa February 16 -18, 2010.

A day and a half workshop/training session on Internal QMS Auditor Training Course was held

February 16-17, 2010 before the COFFS Working Group meeting was well attended. The course was offered by Ashbrooke Quality Assurance International Limited. Ashbrooke Quality Assurance Ltd., a company certified to ISO 9001:2008, is an independent consultancy and IRCA registered training organization, which uses its years of experience in the field of quality to help small, medium, large and multi-national companies work toward the internationally recognized ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO / IEC 17025, ISO 13485, OHSAS 18001 management system standards.

This training was offered to address continuing education for the On Farm Food Safety Industry, to assist in development of management plans, to facilitate better understanding of external and internal management auditing and to possibly address the external audit requirement under the CFIA management. The training could potentially help NPOs in assisting each other with management system internal audits.

This was a pilot of this training for this purpose and the attendees felt it had great value. They saw merit in offering it again in the future with work done to tailor it to this group's specific needs.

Participants had to do a final exam that resulted when passing a certificate. A series of exercises were successfully completed for participants to be certified.

The COFFS Working Group meeting started immediately after the training session. The meeting was well attended with almost all NPOs present. It was a very interactive meeting with good dialog with all partners at the table.

**NPO Round Table, Discussions and Presentations**

Cervids have a new agreement in place. They have seen a significant interest amongst the producers in the program. Alberta has made the program mandatory for Cervid Farms by 2012. They are also looking at traceability. They hope to complete technical review by October or November this year.

Sheep is undertaking a major review of their HACCP model and producer manual. When this is complete they will reapply for technical review part one. Auditors are being trained within the provinces. In the western provinces implementation is going well. There are issues in the eastern province due to the lack of staff and resources in their provincial organizations.

Grains have completed technical review of its management plan. They are resubmitting an application for further funding to support their management committee. They have also held an industry conference to generate awareness of the plan as well as to discuss demand and evaluate a plan for the future of the program. Auditors are being selected across the country. There is a growth in specialty identity preserved

cargo that is shipped to Great Britain and consequently there was a pull to have farmers in western Canada to be in on the program. The audit is done by grain company representatives. Overall demand is continuously monitored.

Chicken is anticipating their second review will most likely be done this Spring. They are presently getting ready for third party recognition. Eight provinces have made the program mandatory. Close to 100% of farmers are certified and audited. A deal was made with all the provincial boards to make clear the rules and responsibilities that are part of the OFFS programs and ensure consistency in the application of the program across Canada. A new animal care program has been combined with the audit and the OFFS assurance program. They are kept as two different certificates and two different producer manuals

Eggs now have two programs on the go (Egg Layer program and Pullet program). The Pullet Program has now received a Letter of Acknowledgement of Technical Soundness. The Start Clean/Stay Clean program is now 5 years since they passed technical review. The management manual technical review part 2 has been completed. They also have been reviewing the possibility of folding the layer and pullet program producer manuals into one while leaving other manuals separate (HACCP Plan; Prerequisite / Background). Eggs are now also looking at tracking and tracing of both birds and eggs.

Horticulture has rebranded OFFS program as CanadaGAP and launched a new website to coincide with it. There are six modules to the CanadaGAP program and the Technical Review Part 1 has been completed for each. It took five years to get through all six modules. There is strong buyer demand for the program. Over 700 producers have gotten on the program in its initial year. They are marketing and benchmarking CanadaGAP internationally. This process will proceed once the GFSI recognition is completed. Heather Gale also did a presentation on GlobalGAP, the scope of the program, the costs and benefits of being part of this process and the possibility of synergies between groups interested in this process.

Turkey undertook a review of the program and has submitted changes to CFIA. They are preparing new revisions to the OFFS for 2010 review. They are incorporating recommendations of the Avian Biosecurity Advisory Council and Flock Care into the program. There will still be two separate certificates issued. They are now moving ahead with Technical Review Part 2. Implementation is only mandatory in Ontario, but rate is increasing. Over 60% are certified and over 80% are train.

Goat had an application in for pre-screening of the technical review in September 2009 but has been delayed due to human resource issues. They are exploring options to move ahead.

Hatching Eggs's program is being delivered to 300 producers. The changes submitted to CFIA will begin to be implemented on July 1, 2010. There is an 85% implementation across the country with the program being mandatory in 5 out of 6 provinces.

Pork's CQA program is stable despite industry downturn and loss of producers. Approximately 90% of pigs coming from CQA farms. Electronic validation reports hopefully to be piloted this year. They are presently working on better communication between developers and stakeholders. A survey has gone out to the producers, validators and processors last fall. The report from that survey will help them map the way forward. Rail cards to be displayed at the store level that make reference to the OFFS program. They are presently doing their 18 month technical review. Their program will include additional materials to the producers manual regarding Trichinella Free Certification Program. They have also developed a self-

declaration form that allows producers to get on to the animal care program, but they are still required to go through the full validation at the next CQA evaluation. Canadian Swine Health board has come together and working together to medication use and drug administration. Looking at the needle issue

Beef has been focusing on training producers. There are over 12000 trained and over 400 fully registered in the Verified Beef Production program. There is an increased interest in online training programs. It is done by request only, through a coordinator on a private site. Beef has finished Technical Re-Review Part 1 last summer. They are continually training auditors. There is an interest from the sheep side to have combined beef and sheep auditors

Herbs & Spice has completed their technical review part one and their 18 month review. They do not have provincial delivery agents so have been spending a good portion of the year working with the Provincial Department of Agriculture trying to get funding for training across the country in place. Their GACP program can only be used with training. They are targeting the highest demand first with training available in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. There is a need in Ontario for training but as of yet no solution for funding for that training. They are starting a second phase on their traceability project this year and will continue to evaluate the viability of going for technical review part two to validate their management program.

Veal was not at the meeting as they were at their face to face meeting for technical review part one.

Honey was also not present as they are in the midst of hiring a new person for their program. They have not completed technical review part one because of pressing issues with honey that needed addressing first. They intend to go back to review shortly.

Bison was also not at the meeting and their food safety program is on hold. They are now focusing on traceability. The bison markets have started to move again and thus may have to re-examine food safety program

Dairy has a number of provinces with mandatory dates, and most are moving forward. They have recently received funding for the national electronic administrative system, which creates a database that all provinces can use. Validators will be able to use this from the farm via handheld systems. A major revision was made to the program (involving information and simplifications) which is now under technical review with CFIA. The information about the electronic system can be shared amongst the other commodities to help them determine whether or not the system can be applied there

Canadian Organic Growers also were present at the meeting and detailed their plan/funding to work with the existing OFFS programs to verify compatibility with the organic regulations.

A round table discussion was held on how producer manuals were addressing provincial regulations.

### **Administration**

Joan Champagne is no longer with the organization. Karen de Blois is now working on the financial side of things and the website. Connie Kehler is covering the administrative side as program manager.

COFFS contract was received late in 2009. One face to face meeting and one workshop will happen in this fiscal year. Two contract projects, one on review of the HACCP/Auditor Training program and the second on the Internal QMS Auditor Training Course. There has been an reduction in funding for travel and AAFC

indicated if expenses for the present meeting was frugal there was a potential to reallocate the remaining funds into the next fiscal year to have two face to face meetings in that fiscal year. The group agreed to getting their expenses in immediately.

**The COFFS working Group mandate under this contract is to:**

- Facilitate networking amongst COFFS WG membership of NPOs, governments and other stakeholders on OFFS topics
- Lead solution building forums dealing with arising OFFS system development issues
- Develop Program tools in collaboration with governments
- Provide training to COFFS NPOs members
- Liaise and share lessons learned with Agriculture, Agri-Food and Agri-based product groups along the supply chain
- Communicate/Awareness with non-Coffs industry groups

Activities in the coming year include;

- Provide input to CFIA, Agriculture Canada and other government departments in regards to food safety.
- Provide feedback on emerging OFFS issues.
- Examine international food safety guidelines
- Communicate better about the COFFS group and the benefits of working together
- Hold a crisis communication training workshop
- Hold a how to communicate with producers workshop
- Update the communication action plan
- Develop a new secure portion of the website will be developed for NPO and Provincial information exchange.
- Develop a *Did you know* portion of the website to ensure we have clear communication
- Review and develop of the Technical Review and Protocol requirements with CFIA Amending committee.
- Continue with the audit sampling plan
- Look at international programs and equivalency
- Include and invite more non COFFS groups

**Task Groups**

Four task Groups were established;

- Communication and Promotion,
- COFFS WG/Government Liaison Committee,
- COFFS WG/Government Liaison Committee – Sub Group on Audit Frequency
- ISO 65/Equivalency

**Communications and Promotions**

A discussion was had on reviewing the COFFS communications plan. It was felt the work needed to be done on vision and mission statement. While the group is doing a good job on internal communication, external communication needs work as the value and the work done at the COFFS table is not understood nor valued

as it should be. The current newsletters and the new website are great sources of information and the first steps are going to be to promote these to a wider audience. A conference will be discussed in the next fiscal year. A discussion was had surrounding on what COFFS should be doing. Items identified were being a one stop shop for on farm food safety, a resource for speakers, developers of protocols, resource sharing and a forum for the industry to come to the table to move on farm food ahead in Canada.

#### **AAFC/CFIA Updates**

AAFC reported that the application process has been improved. There are no more deadlines for the applications now to allow for more flexibility. Currently 17 food safety projects have been received of which 13 have been approved. There have been 16 traceability projects of which 12 projects have been approved. Department is working on service standards to help deal with delays.

CFIA reported reorganization with inspection is now part of the food safety division. The recognition group and the application review process have been combined into one unit. Development of recognition process will happen by the end of March 2011. They will be working with FPT safety committee to reestablish a working group. They are currently implementing the first part of the recognition process. There has been a need to revisit the 3<sup>rd</sup> party requirements. Communication especially to non COFFS parties was identified as needing more clarity. Documents for feedback were distributed for COFFS review.

#### **Future Meeting Dates and Locations**

Tentative dates for the next face to face meeting and also the conf call were discussed. Decisions on face to face meetings will have to be delayed until the issue surrounding reallocation of travel funds is resolved.