

COFFS WG

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CANADIAN ON FARM FOOD SAFETY WORKING GROUP NEWSLETTER

Collaboration!

Anyone who says farmers cannot work together needs to watch the COFFS working group. As far as I am concerned it is the poster child for collaboration.

We have 19 different programs all working toward the same goals. Not only do they tirelessly address all the concerns surrounding on-farm food safety with their own organizations, but they also work equally tirelessly to ensure that the national program this is built on works equally for all of them. And that is no easy task.

Take for example the two groups profiled in this newsletter, Horticulture and Grains. They work side by side within the COFFS working group to ensure that the requirements of the national program work for all the groups, they attest their own programs to those requirements, they publicly support the national initiative, but they deliver their programs very differently.

You will see Horticulture actively and as fast as they can getting their program implemented on the farm. For horticulture this is important. Their sales often depend on proving to their buyers that the food safety concerns so publically out there are addressed. They address those concerns and go above and beyond to try to anticipate any future risks. Not an easy task for the organization or the producer, but both understand the need and are acting on it.

You also see Grains, who at this point have not had the same public concerns about their crops, using a different approach. Without the same public concerns, one would think that human nature would keep them from developing a program. But this is not the case. They have taken an active role to make sure this tool is ready, flexible and in place, and have built it to anticipate future risks. If the pull for this program arises, then this industry will not be flapping its arms in the air saying what will we do, what will we do? No, they will be immediately ready for implementation of their program to address that pull.

So which is right? They both are!

Both programs are built on the same platform, they both are strongly national and they both are acutely aware of the food safety issues in their industries. That is what is unique and very important about this program and our National Producer Organizations. They really are serving both the public and their industry at the highest level. From one end of this country to the other they are working to ensure that their industries are reacting appropriately - ready to actively address any on-farm food safety needs. All of the programs are at-testing to the same requirements.

The strength here is in the intelligence and collaborative efforts. These groups understand that they stand together as a country to address on-farm food safety on the farms. They do it in a manner that works for their industry, all the while collaborating at the highest level. Differences are not only put aside at the COFFS table, they are respected.

The collaboration does not even stop there. COFFS working group and its members are always reaching out to work with others in the agriculture field, whether it be up the chain or a group with a different focus. In this newsletter you will see the collaboration with the Canadian Organic Growers.

All of this is definitely no easy task and definitely not the only issues these groups tackle day to day. But the drive and the work continues together and for their own industries.

Brand Canada says that the consumers around the world trust us.

They are right to!!

ExcelGrains Canada

Canada Grains Council

The OFFS program, ExcelGrains Canada, for cereals, oilseeds, pulse and special crops is now built and has successfully completed technical review. Financial support is being sought from federal and provincial sources. Funds will be used to maintain currency, technical correctness and communication with farmers, and to make the program available to Canadian farmers.

ExcelGrains will be adopted at the farm on a voluntary basis, when market demand is evident. Producer Manuals are now available for Identity Preserved cargoes and the independent farm audit process will be put in place as required.

The immediate need is to advise farmers of program availability and to negotiate support with each province for making this national on-farm food safety program available to interested farmers.

Further details are available by contacting Dale Riddell at the Canada Grains Council.

Dale Riddell

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Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Auditor Training Course Now Available On-Line

The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Auditor Training Course is now available as an internet-based training course. This course, developed by the Canadian On-Farm Food Safety (COFFS) Working Group, was originally offered as a five-day on-site training course. Recognizing the need to provide easier access and lower cost delivery, the COFFS Working Group has now made it available on-line in two Modules and in both official languages.

Module 1: Basics of HACCP-Based On-Farm Food Safety - introduction to the Canadian approach to on-farm food safety, the basic concepts of food safety (food microbiology, micro-organisms, toxicology), various food quality programs, HACCP principles and its application on-farm.

- French by L'Institut de technologie agroalimentaire de Saint-Hyacinthe

http://www.ita.qc.ca/Fr/formationcontinue/perfectionnement/agricole/liste_produceurs/salubrité+des+aliments/

- English by Lakeland College

http://www.lakelandcollege.ca/continuing_ed/courses/con_ed09120801.aspx

Module 2: Basics of On-Farm Food Safety Auditing - introduction to the basic principles of auditing and the application in the context of on-farm food safety programs.

<http://www.us.sqs.com/canadian-on-farm-food-safety-auditor-training-course-module-2-learning>



This group is helping to build the foundation for the future of agriculture in Canada

Programs in:

Beef Cattle
Bison
Broiler Hatching Eggs
Chicken
Dairy
Table Eggs
Goats
Herbs and Spices
Hogs - Pork
Honey
Horticulture
Cervids
Sheep and Lamb
Turkey
Veal

Visit

www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca

For links to specific programs

www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca



CanadaGAP

CanadaGAP

Canadian Horticultural Council

The Canadian Horticultural Council rebranded their on-farm food safety program to become CanadaGAP a year ago. In December 2009, CanadaGAP launched its updated website to provide a one-stop shop for producers and packers who have already enrolled, or are looking for information about enrolling in the program.

"The website upgrade was a result of the work we did with a communications consultant to help make the information more accessible not only for users, but also the general public and media," says Heather Gale, National Program Manager for CanadaGAP. *"The site offers a fresh new look and feel, is much easier to navigate and contains new content to inform users about On-Farm Food Safety for fresh produce and assist participants of the CanadaGAP Certification Program."*

To date, 722 farms have enrolled in CanadaGAP from across Canada. About one-third of the farms are from the potato sector and the rest are a mix of the other crop groupings from PEI to BC. "This is about double where we expected to be in terms of uptake, so it has been very busy over the past few months," adds Gale. "Most of the activity occurred last season, with a few year-round operations undergoing audits over the winter." One of the reasons for the increase in demand is because Loblaw's announced last year that they were requiring all of their fresh produce suppliers to be cer-

tified on the program.

Certified companies are publicly listed on the QMI-SAI Global registry at: http://qmi-saiglobal.com/qmi_companies/Default.asp?language=english

The CanadaGAP program has completed all six of the program technical reviews Part 1. After negotiations with CFIA, the remaining three modules for field vegetable crops were merged into one 'Combined Vegetables' Module. "We are now in the 18-month review process for all of the modules," explains Gale. "We've negotiated a synchronized timeline with CFIA so we can update all six modules at the same time and submit them at once. This has made it easier to ensure consistency across all of the modules and synchronization of activities. We have moved past a lot of difficult challenges and are able to set our own timelines for a manageable review cycle within the CFIA requirements, and expect the process to get easier."

Program Certification

The certification program for CanadaGAP is based on a private third party certification body delivery system. "We license private certification bodies to conduct the audits and issue the certificates so it is arms length from CHC," explains Gale. Until now, QMI-SAI Global has been the only CanadaGAP Certification Body. CHC recently announced that they will be accepting applications from other third parties who may be interested in doing certification audits for CanadaGAP.

"This certification step is required for CHC to benchmark CanadaGAP against others such as the Global Food Safety Initiative or GlobalGAP," says Gale. *"They are looking for that separation from the owner of the program the entity conducting the audits and making certification decisions."*

Auditors

The CanadaGAP program is looking for additional auditors for the program. "We have had success with a few cross-commodity and multi-commodity auditors," says Gale. "We are asking other NPOs to let their auditors know that if they are interested in conducting fresh produce audits, we have a demand for auditors." Future CanadaGAP auditor training sessions will be available. Those who are interested in becoming auditors of the CanadaGAP Program can find information on qualifications and requirements, course pre-requisites and upcoming training sessions at: www.canadagap.ca



Heather Gale,

CanadaGAP National Program



Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI)

Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI)

The Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) is a collaboration between some of the world's leading food safety experts from retailer, manufacturer and food service companies, as well as service providers associated with the food supply chain. GFSI sets requirements for food safety schemes through a benchmarking process in order to improve cost efficiency throughout the food supply chain.

As Chair of the International Federation for Produce Standards (IFPS) Food Safety Committee, Heather Gale was invited to sit on the GFSI Technical Committee. "This invitation to participate is an excellent opportunity to be involved and find out what is going on while things are happening rather than after the fact," says Gale. "This has been very beneficial to the IFPS members, which include the whole fresh produce supply chain and other similar organization in countries like Australia, New Zealand and Europe."

"Wearing my CHC hat, we have also made a submission to GFSI to benchmark our CanadaGAP program," says Gale. "We are nearing the end of the benchmarking process, which is somewhat similar to the CFIA technical review process where you have to submit all of your documents and a cross reference checklist to indicate where in your program you fulfill the requirements they have set out."

A technical expert and the Benchmarking Committee review the submission. There is an opportunity for communication and to answer any questions they may have. The submission cost for CanadaGAP was about 5000 euros. "No decision has been made yet, but we are finishing the last stages of the process and are confident in a positive result fairly soon."

GFSI have established a set of requirements that any food safety program has to meet in order to be accepted by their board. One of the key components is the third party certification approach, which also requires all certification bodies to be accredited to ISO65. The GFSI guidance document is being revised and new requirements will come into effect in 2011. All programs will have to update their programs to show they meet any new requirements issued, which are available on the GFSI website: www.mygfsi.com

"There is a strong customer recognition of the GFSI program and increasingly seems to be the way industry is going, particularly US retailers many who are requiring GFSI benchmarked programs from their suppliers," explains Gale. Loblaws is moving towards this approach, especially for their Loblaws Brands. Walmart expects GFSI or GlobalGAP, which is GFSI benchmarked.

Sobey's Compliments Brand is also requiring GFSI benchmarked programs.

"GFSI is well accepted in Europe where it started, and increasingly offshore markets are looking for GFSI equivalent programs," adds Gale. "GFSI is actively promoting the concept of recognition of a series of different equivalent programs." For CanadaGAP participants, having the CanadaGAP program recognized by the GFSI benchmarked program means they only have to meet one set of standards, auditing and certification requirements to be recognized by both programs.

Heather Gale



COG Launches Organic On-Farm Food Safety Study

COG Launches Organic On-Farm Food Safety Study in Collaboration with COFFS WG

Canadian Organic Growers (COG) is Canada's national membership-based education and networking organization representing farmers, gardeners, consumers and supporters in all provinces and territories. The Organic Products Regulations (OPR) came into effect in June 2009, making the Canadian Organic Standards (COS) mandatory. The OPR will legally require organic products to be certified according to the COS if they are traded across provincial or international borders or use the Canada Organic Logo.

"The organic sector has been concerned for some time that food safety programs developed in Canada have not necessarily been designed with the needs of organic farmers in mind," says Laura Telford, National Director of COG. "Recently there have been a growing number of food safety and biosecurity issues that have put organic standards and principles in conflict with mainstream food safety and biosecurity protocols. Canadian Organic Growers wants to get ahead of these issues and figure out how we can work with different commodity groups to address them. We recognize that most of these issues can be resolved by just sitting down and figuring them out together."

In the livestock industry, many organic farmers rely on homeopathic treatments for animals, which to date are not regulated nor approved by Health Canada, making

it difficult for food safety programs to recognize them. A concern has also been raised by mainstream commodity organizations that organic farms may face greater food safety threats because of their increased reliance on manure and compost as a source of fertility.

COG Food Safety Program Study Planned

COG has applied for funding under the AAFC Growing Forward Program to work with five priority commodities to assess their programs and determine how these programs could be adapted to meet the needs of organic farmers. "We will choose five priority commodities to begin with, and we will select areas where there are a lot of organic farmers as well as food safety issues," explains Telford. "Some of the adaptations may be fairly simple, while others may have to be addressed individually." Once the funding has been approved, the project will begin and is expected to be completed in November 2010.

One of the challenges that COG has faced with the federal food safety programs is that the organization works with all commodities across the value-chain. "This is the first project where a group has suggested working with existing programs to adapt their systems for a particular group of farmers and we are interested to see how it will work," says Telford. "We are very pleased to have this study move forward as a first step." Tel-

ford attended a previous COFFS meeting in Quebec City where she spoke to some of the COFFS NPOs who have expressed interest, such as CHC who already have some organic growers in their program. Telford will be attending the COFFS WG meeting in mid-February and invites NPOs to consider collaborating on the project.

The final deliverable is a business plan that clearly states how COG can work with these five identified commodities and adapt the programs to meet the needs of organic farmers. One of the priorities is the need to develop an integrated auditing system. Telford explains, "COG farmers are telling us that they do not want to have two audits, they do not want to pay twice and they do not want two farm visits." A sentiment that other NPOs already hear from their farmers as well.

Laura Telford

www.cog.ca

www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca



A few things to consider as you move forward on your Food Safety initiatives and programs.

What does the Consumer think about Food Safety? - A Retailers Perspective

Rick Thompson, Senior Manager of Product Integrity, Overwaitea Food Group made a presentation about consumers and food safety to the COFFS WG last year. Here are a few interesting points as a reminder of what consumers think.

What are Consumers Specifically concerned about?

- Farming practices – antibiotic and growth hormone use in livestock: pesticide residues in crops/ genetics
- Bacteria contamination
- Food additives and preservatives
- Perishable/freshness concerns
- Poor food handling/improper preparation
- Animal disease

What the consumer thinks are the most important areas in Food Production?

- Safe Food Handling 44%
- Cleanliness 17%
- Proper Storage 13%
- Production 8%
- Freshness 3%

Source: *Compas Research*

Who does the consumer think is Responsible for Food Safety?

Ispos Reid Survey indicates 5 stages in the production of food where issues occur:

- Farm
- Food Processing
- Grocer/Retailer
- Restaurants
- Home

Of those surveyed, 41% view Food Processing as the most likely place for a food safety issue to occur.

6th Annual North American Summit on Food Safety

6th Annual North American Summit on Food Safety Conference March 9 & 10, 2010 Toronto ON

This upcoming two-day summit addresses various food safety issues, with a focus on audits, regulatory updates, technology improvements, pathogen management and an update on allergens. Keynote speaker Dr. James Adams, Director of International Audit Staff, FSIS, USDA Washington will provide a USDA Policy Update.

COFFS WG own Heather Gale, CanadaGAP National Program Manager has been invited to speak at the Summit about 'On-Farm food safety: Understanding what your suppliers are doing to ensure food safety'. "The summit attracts several food service representatives, as well as retailers, manufacturers and a broad cross-section of the supply chain. Fresh produce is obviously high on the agenda, and I will be addressing what is being done in terms of minimizing risk at the primary production level and that food safety can truly be managed from 'farm to fork'."

Gale has also been asked to talk about some of the linkages between industry and government and ways they are working together, a particular focus of this year's summit. "I think this focus may be a result of the Maple Leaf crisis of last year and the Weatherall report, and looking at the connection between industry and government," says Gale. "I will talk about our experience and the rigor of the government recognition process we went through for

CanadaGAP from an industry perspective." Gale's New Initiative presentation is at 4:15 pm, Tuesday March 9, 2010.

The conference also includes case study presentations from major food companies, including Cargill's Angie Siemens, VP Technical Services, Animal Protein of Wichita. Her Case Study is: addressing the human element in food safety: Building better verification strategies into your processing line.

For all food producers, delivering a safe, quality product is their most important task. How to do this effectively, when there are so many opportunities for mistakes, is what keeps food safety officers up at night. Although technology can help, dealing with human error must also be addressed. Some of the key highlights:

- Determine how best to design processes into production.
- Hear what Cargill is doing differently, and how it can improve your food safety practices.
- Learn how to create and implement verification and auditing checks along your production line. Understand how Cargill is continuously improving their inspection and verification processes.

[http://
www.strategyinstitute.com/030910
fs6/dsp.php](http://www.strategyinstitute.com/030910/fs6/dsp.php)

FYI Corner

February 24, 2010

Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors' Atlantic Conference 2010
Halifax, Nova Scotia
www.ccgd.ca

March 4, 2010

Safe Food Canada 2010 - Establishing Food Safety and Traceability
Pearson Convention Centre, Brantford, ON
www.gftc.ca

April 1 - 3, 2010

SIAL Montreal / The International Food, Beverage, Wine & Spirits Exhibition Location: Palais des Congres des Montreal - Montreal, Quebec
www.sialmontreal.com

April 27 - 28, 2010

Food Processors of Canada Annual Conference
Fairmont Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, Ontario
www.foodprocessors.ca

April 12-14, 2010

Food Safety Summit

Washington, DC Convention Centre,
Washington, DC

www.foodsafetysummit.com

Apr 20-23, 2010

United Fresh 2010

Las Vegas, NV
[unitedfresh2010.org/uf2010/public/
enter.aspx](http://unitedfresh2010.org/uf2010/public/enter.aspx)

Why Choose a National On Farm Food Safety Program

Canada Grains Council
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Canadian Cattlemen's Association
Verified Beef Production™ Program
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Chicken Farmers of Canada
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Canadian Honey Council
Canadian Bee Industry Safety Quality Traceability (CBISQT)
Ms. Heather Clay
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www.honeycouncil.ca

Canadian Herb Spice and Natural Health Product Coalition
Good Agriculture and Collection Practices (GACP):
Ms. Connie Kehler
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Email: shsa@sasktel.net
www.saskherbspice.org

Canadian Pork Council
CQA®
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Canadian Quality Assurance
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Email: lawrence@cpc-ccp.com
www.cqa-aqc.com

Chicken Farmers of Canada
Safe, Safer, Safest
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Email: cwilson@chicken.ca
www.chicken.ca

Egg Farmers of Canada
Start Clean – Stay Clean™
Clean Start (Pullet Program)
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www.eggs.ca

Turkey Farmers of Canada
TFC On-Farm Food Safety Program
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Canadian Cervid Alliance
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Canadian Hatching Egg Producers
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Canadian Horticultural Council
CanadaGAP – On-Farm Food Safety for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables
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Canadian National Goat Federation
Mr. Garry Claassen
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Canadian Sheep Federation
Food Safe Farm Practices
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Interim National On-Farm Food Safety Coordinator
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Dairy Farmers of Canada
Canadian Quality Milk (CQM)
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Why choose a National OFFS program?

On today's farm there are many choices for the farmer to make on what systems or system they should have in place.

Often producers are looking at environmental farm plans, traceability plans, organic systems, emerging biosecurity, and other quality programs and on farm food safety programs.

1. As the Canadian On Farm Food Safety Working Group and its members who sit around the table and develop the national programs it is our role to ensure that the programs that are developed meet the demands faced by the producers they represent. This makes it cost-effective, producer-responsive and a true partnership between industry and government.
2. The national programs have been built on the same platforms. They have been tested by producers and extensively reviewed and recognized by external bodies (CFIA and the provincial representatives). The COFFS working group National Producer Organizations have built programs with producers, tested them on the farms and developed appropriate workable on farm practices to be part of their programs.
3. The COFFS working group has analyzed the best way to have the common approach that works for industry as a whole. This working group included the National Producer Organizations, the relevant Canadian Food Inspection Agency partners and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Together they have built programming that will withstand the scrutiny of both your buyer and the consumer.
4. Are there other options available? Yes but not equal options. Should you take a chance taking the time and effort to put in place a program that your buyers may not accept and the consumer may be confused about?
5. A national program, federally accepted/ approved, should (will) not impede marketing across Canada, and facilitates international marketing efforts, of your farm product.

Confusion is not good for neither the buyer nor the consumer.



The Canadian Approach to On-Farm Food Safety

Today, there are four main drivers for on-farm food safety: consumer concerns, government initiatives, customer demands and the actions of Canada's competitors. To respond to these demands, and to demonstrate that Canadian food is among the safest in the world, the agricultural community worked with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to develop on-farm food safety programs. The farm organizations have also worked with the federal, provincial and territorial governments to establish a process through which these programs can be officially recognized by the CFIA for technical soundness and administrative effectiveness.

On-Farm Food Safety Programs

Today's national on-farm food safety programs are developed by national commodity groups working with industry experts and experts from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to ensure scientifically sound practices.

National producer associations follow a generic process for developing an on-farm food safety program. First, they develop a national strategy. Then they evaluate current production practices, develop a generic HACCP model and determine how to control food safety hazards through Good Production Practices (also known as Best Management Practices or Good Agricultural Practices). The program developers use a science-based set of principles known as HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) to identify food safety risks and determine how to monitor, control and prevent the food safety risks. HACCP principles help the program developers to identify which good production practices should be employed to ensure that food safety hazards are minimized on the farm. Lastly, they develop a Producer Manual which explains the program requirements to producers.

Following that, National producer associations, often with cooperation from provincial producer associations, help producers implement the on-farm food safety program. National producer associations can also offer certification or verification services to producers because the program requirements are designed to be auditable. Certified or verified farms can demonstrate to customers that they meet program requirements and are committed to maintaining them.

The Canadian Approach is resulting in technically sound programs that are based on a rigorous "HACCP-based" approach which is consistent with the Codex Alimentarius Commission's approach to HACCP. Almost every project has made use of input from suppliers and customers, and have availed themselves of both reviews by CFIA and by farmers and other experts. Farm organizations have openly shared information amongst the projects - both successes and challenges. As a consequence, the On-Farm Food Safety (OFFS) programs that have resulted and are being developed are technically sound, practical, producer friendly and auditable.

For more information about the Canadian Approach to On Farm Food Safety

Visit

www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca

Or

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