

Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working Group
June 16-18, 2010
Ottawa, Ontario

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

A pre meeting workshop on Talking to Producers was held and was well attended. Attendees learned from an agricultural psychologist about the dos and don'ts when trying to introduce new concepts to producers specifically. The psychologist explained the different personalities, their specific hot buttons and what concerned each personality the most. She also helped attendees understand in how to deliver the training and OFFS information in a manner to avoid the listener's specific hotspots.

This interactive workshop gave COFFS members new tools and training to more effectively communicate and train about their specific on farm food safety programs.

The attendees felt that the training could be used in many of their communication delivery of their OFFS program.

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.

The meeting started with introductions around the table and then continued to the first agenda item. The group had decided to discuss definition of various terms used in the food safety industry that were not necessarily understood by all the program managers or were used in different ways by different groups. The definitions of and difference between Global Gap and the Global Food Safety Initiative were presented in detail by Heather Gale from the Canadian Horticultural Council. A discussion followed about whether these initiatives impacted and were the ultimate destination of most OFF programs. The group found it varied depending on markets, scope of industry and range of production. It was also discussed that without the initial OFFS program it would be impossible for any group to pursue either of both programs.

Another term that was discussed was certification and how the term was used differently by different groups while others were staying away from it entirely. The term enrollment was often used instead but also defined differently from group to group. There also was a discussion about how term translated to French and the care that needed to be taken to ensure the intent was not lost in the translation.

A discussion on international standards included whether Canada meets or exceeds or where Canada places internationally. It was decided that we needed to investigate where the CFIA OFFS requirements fit in this comparison.

A concern was raised about the promotion of Canada's approach to On Farm Food Safety and the federal government's role in that promotion. It seems that little is known internationally about OFFS. CFIA informed the group that their division unlike in the past was not allowed to promote OFFS and had started doing international presentations. The group felt that Canada should be promoted as

trustworthy, that the best way to generate acknowledgment for the program is to have government to government communications and that there needs to be a more structured process to get the message out.

A motion was made to work with CFIA to achieve the goal of having the Canadian government present the On-Farm Food Safety Recognition Program to CODEX by July 2011 or earlier.

Caroline from the COFFS working group reported on a two day conference/workshop that was held for the post farm food safety group. This group is patterning its program on the OFFS program with very little variances. The workshop was interactive and introduces and worked through the applicable concepts.

Day two started with the Round Table update on the OFFS programs, AAFC funding and CFIA program changes. Each member describe in detail where they were at, what they saw the future holding and what their next steps were. In addition if and who they were working with outside their program and how the international programs impacted them. AAFC reported on the funding left to be applied for along with how they felt the program was going. CFIA summarized the three steps of technical review, described how the manual comments were coming and talked about timelines and how they saw the future.

Working groups reported on the Auditor training program, the Governments Liaison Committee, Audit Frequency Project Report and the Task Group for ISO 65. CFIA reported on the scientific division of this department.

The Auditor Training program is under review and the group discussed recommendations to move forward. A new auditor training group was established to move this item ahead.

The Government Liaison Committee discussed the industry/government relationship and how work was being done to continuous improve and utilize that relationship to the benefit of both sides. It was strongly emphasized and discussed about the vital importance of COFFS' involvement on the FPT food safety committee. Discussion was held to find solutions to achieve that.

The Audit Frequency Task group discussed next steps and the working group discussed who should be the selected groups in moving ahead the project assigned to this task group.

The Task Group on the ISO65 project was re-established to help commence the contract work in the area.

Garth Sundeen from CFIA discussed his role as the scientific arm of Martin Firth's shop at CFIA.

Day three started with a discussion on the multi commodity approach to OFFS. Laura Telford from the Canadian Organic Growers joined the group and the discussion. She also described the new Value Chain Round Table on Food Safety and what she felt this groups role was at that table.

During the Multi Commodity discussion it was found that a lot of work had already commenced in that area by most groups around the table. In each case there had been discussion about what could and

could not realistically be done. It was also discussed about the collaborations or dialog throughout the value chain on food safety and how linkages worked or did not work.

Discussion was also had about the relationship between OFFS and other programs such as the Environment Farm Plan and the Organic production. It was found that there was cross over in the case of the EFP but that it was not an auditable system – so it had to be explored on a case by case situation. Laura Telford explained that they were in the midst of dialog with NPOs on how their OFFS program would work in an certified organic farm and she felt they could in most cases just adapt or work within existing programs and that there was no need for additional programs to be developed.

COFFS Administration and Business

COFFS has been invited to put an application in for the rest of Growing Forward and for a conference to be held before the end of March 2011. The group discussed what was to be included in both applications.

The part two of three of the communication plan implementation and revision was discussed. This section focused on the website and introduced changes and explored more changes to come. A new secure portion of the site was introduced and suggestions for improvement were put forward.

A discussion was had on process improvement for the COFFS meetings and several suggestions are being implemented.

The next COFFS working group meeting will take place Oct 26th, 27th, and 28th 2010 in Ottawa including a post meeting workshop on Crisis Communication.