



## Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working Group Groupe de travail du Programme canadien de salubrité des aliments à la ferme

### **Meeting Report - April 2004**

The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working (COFFS) Working Group met in Ottawa on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> April 2004. This report highlights the matters discussed, key issues and the directions taken during the Working Group meeting.

### **Official Recognition - Preparations for FPTAFIC Subcommittee Meeting**

The COFFS Working Group devoted April 19<sup>th</sup> to a full discussion of the reports of the various working groups established by the FPTAFIC subcommittee on on-farm food safety and to preparing its positions for the meeting scheduled for Charlottetown on April 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>. The subcommittee at its last meeting in Vancouver in October had created three working groups and, in addition, CFIA and the COFFS Working Group had established an implementation pilot project.

The pilot project participants - CFIA staff and national co-ordinators from commodity groups currently drafting their policies and procedures - reported. The purpose of this project was to test the draft requirements against real-life administrative situations. The participants exchanged materials, held regular conference calls, reviewed the practicality of the requirements and identified issues and concerns.

Also reviewed were the reports from working groups on issues related to:

- “frequency” requirements both within the government criteria and within national programs;
- training, education and communication; and,
- auditors.

The later two groups were composed of federal, provincial and COFFS Working Group representatives and had worked exclusively by conference call and email. They had submitted final reports. The frequency group - composed of CFIA and COFFS Working Group representatives, including a consulting statistician - had requested additional time to complete its task.

The issues identified and the recommendations made by these groups were considered against a revised draft of the requirements. The COFFS Working Group identified a set of changes, proposals and positions and authorized its representatives on the subcommittee to pursue them at the Charlottetown meeting.

### **International Missions**

Participants on the COFFS Working Group missions to Europe and Australia reported. Both missions had been successful and the written reports were being prepared for circulation. The European mission, which had primarily enquired into the approaches and expectations of the European Union (the Commission) and the pan-European farm organizations as well as the state of on-farm food safety programs in the United Kingdom reported that Canada was still a

leader in the development of HACCP-based on-farm food safety programs. The mission had encountered growing resistance to management system implementation in Europe combined with a recognition that the new regulatory requirements and the cross-compliance mechanisms would force implementation. The Australian team reported a significant reduction in the number of farms actually participating in the “CARE” and other farm assurance programs. Early rates of adoption had not been matched on renewals. In addition, some commodity groups were revising their programs to provide for alternatives to certification and audit.

### **Canadian Food Safety & Quality Program - Update**

Officials from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada provided a status report on the new funding program for systems development. It was reported that the funding agreement between AAFC and CFA had been finalized and would be ready for signature. Once this was accomplished, contracts between CFA and the national commodity groups could be prepared and signed and funding would start to flow. There was a frank discussion of some issues concerning the new program. For example, the COFFS Working Group agreed to write to the department to request that translation costs be fully funded. Consideration was also given to a request from the Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance for support for federal government funding of the development and implementation of on-farm food safety programs in that sector. It was agreed that this matter would be reviewed by commodity groups and a motion dealt with by email.

### **Producer Implementation Program**

A dialogue was opened with AAFC officials on the terms and conditions of this new \$80 million program. Officials outlined their current thinking:

- on-farm food safety programs would only be able to access the funds after the successful completion of technical review;
- mechanisms would have to be put in place by AAFC and the commodity groups to ensure that farm operations did not access more than \$850 in total;
- restriction in the use of the funds to three categories - awareness meetings, on-farm implementation assistance, and, capital equipment specifically called for in the commodity-specific programs.

It was agreed that the AAFC and the COFFS Working Group would immediately form a task group to review the department’s proposals and provide advice. As well, the COFFS Working Group would prepare for national commodity group and general farm organization consideration a critique on the proposed terms and conditions. Action on technical matters would be reviewed at a later date by the COFFS Working Group. Policy issues would be dealt with by each organization.

### **Issues Related to CFIA Regulations**

Two CFIA regulatory proposals were reviewed in detail by the Working Group:

- changes to the Meat Inspection regulations concerning information reporting requirement by farms, including those on recognized on-farm food safety programs; and
- the revived proposals to amend the medicated feeds regulations.

In both cases, members of the Working Group expressed concern that the impact of the proposed regulations would be to discourage farm operations from enrolling in the national on-farm food safety programs. It was agreed that the Working Group would write to CFIA on each

regulation and also seek to engage the Agency at a senior level in a discussion of the inter-relationship of its regulations with the national programs.

### **COFFS Working Group Projects**

**Auditor Training:** It was noted that SGS Canada was embarking on a further set of training sessions during May and June and these had been posted on their website.

**Auditor E&O Insurance:** This project was nearing completion and Marsh Canada should be circulating the final materials shortly.

**Management Manual Template:** Quenpro should be completing this project as well and it would be referred to CFIA for review as an input into the pilot project. Thereafter, it would be circulated to all national commodity groups for their use or reference.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for late June with the dates to be determined following approval of the Working Group's funding application for its 2004/5 workplan by the CFS&Q Program.

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