



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

### Meeting Report - December 2004

The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working (COFFS) Working Group met in Ottawa on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2004. This report highlights the matters discussed, key issues and the directions taken during the Working Group meeting.

**Canadian Food Safety & Quality Program:** Updates were provided on both the Systems Development and the On-Farm Implementation Components. It was noted there were currently 19 on-farm projects and that CFA, as the program manager, would be contacting other groups to determine whether or not they would be interested in starting projects. The target groups include: hemp, forage, rabbits, ratites, maple syrup and waterfowl. AAFC officials indicated that a revised application form would be on-line in the near future. Some new information would be required of applicants. They also stated that the program materials (brochure, application form, etc.) for the implementations should be approved and posted soon. Two applications were already being considered (dairy and cattle) and this would involve senior management participation given their scope and dollar costs. Groups were encouraged to start developing their applications in advance of completing technical review. There was further discussion of the eligible expenditures (workshops, on-farm training and equipment). AAFC had accepted the Working Group's suggestion about the definition of a farm (minimum \$2500 in sales). They noted that they were still considering the cap on workshop costs (\$50/workshop and \$100/farm) and suggested that groups establish a minimum of \$200 for equipment, given the requirements for issuing documents about the taxable benefit (AGR 1). It was agreed that a workshop on the implementation component application process should be considered once the program details are finalized.

**Official Recognition:** The Working Group considered the results of the October meeting of the Federal/ Provincial/ Territorial Subcommittee on On-Farm Food Safety. The Working Groups proposal concerning the use of a producer declaration of conformity had been accepted in principle if it was preceded by an initial assessment/audit. The subcommittee had also agreed to an eight (8) year cycle for on-farm registration and a five (5) year cycle for national program recognition. These would significantly reduce costs. Two new task groups had been formed. One was to continue the work of the earlier frequency task group and focus in particular on its recommendation of risk categories. The other was to prepare a set of definitions for types of audits and other conformity assessment tools (e.g. producer declaration and record reviews). It was hoped that these task groups would conclude their work early in 2005. The subcommittee would meet next in late February. The Working Group discussed in some detail the risk matrix concepts and the audit frequency proposals. Concerns were expressed about the cost implications for low risk commodities. The proposed definitions were reviewed and changes suggested.

CFIA officials provided an update on the next phase of recognition. They indicated that the first version of the government requirements document would be released shortly and that consultations would begin on gap analysis checklist and process. These would last until March. The piloting of the gap analysis would occur in the April/June period, assuming a national program was ready. Several groups indicated interest in being the pilot group. The Working

Group agreed that CFA should be asked to prepare a management system for the national auditor training module so that it could be reviewed during the pilot.

**Working Group Projects:** Updates were provided on several projects including:

**National Certification Body Project:** It was noted that almost all the requested presentations had been made. These included:

- Canadian Federation of Agriculture food safety committee - 27 July 2004
- Canadian Cattlemens Association food safety management committee - 12 October 2004
- Ontario On-Farm Food Safety Coalition - 12 October 2004
- Canadian Cattlemens Association food safety implementation group - 13 October 2004
- Canadian Herb and Spice Coalition food safety committee - 27 October 2004
- Canadian Honey Council food safety committee - 7 November 2004
- Dairy Farmers of Canada food safety committee - 15 November 2004
- Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada officials - 18 November 2004
- Canadian Broiler Hatching Egg Marketing Agency board of directors - 23 November 2004
- Canadian Sheep Federation food safety committee - 24 November 2004
- Canada Grains Council on-farm food safety committee - 29 November 2004
- Maritime multi-commodity groups - 30 November 2004

Others were scheduled:

- Alberta multi-commodity group - 8 December 2004
- Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan - 9 December 2004
- Saskatchewan multi-commodity group - 9 December 2004

Members provided updates on the status of discussions within their organizations. Several indicated that the option was under serious consideration or that comparisons of the options had been requested. The transition from development to implementation and the emergence of several programs from technical review were raised as factors that would stimulate decision-making. After a discussion, it was agreed that the national commodity groups and general farm organizations would be surveyed to determine whether or when the planned 4<sup>th</sup> Farm Leaders meeting should be held and that the Working Group would make a decision on this in January 2005.

**Research Task Group:** A meeting was scheduled for 5 January 2005 and would include participants from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Health Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Working Group. It would focus on the baseline research and monitoring but also consider the long-term research issues.

**Communication and Promotion Task Group:** A meeting was scheduled for 6 January 2006. The group would review and update the action plan and make recommendations for the 2005/6 workplan for consideration by the Working Group.

**Auditor Issues Task Group:** It was proposed that this group would meet for the first time in February 2005 and focus on the proposed code of ethics and the proposed bio-security protocol. Other items on its workplan - consideration of professional

development, refresher courses, etc. would be dealt with subsequently. An update was provided on the national training module delivery by SGS Canada Inc.

**Common IT project:** Four groups had indicated an interest in showcasing their systems for the Working Group. A set of presentations (internet and conference call) would be scheduled for late January or early February 2005. The groups would be using the CHEQ program auditor checklist as the basis of their presentations.

**Emerging Issues:** The Working Group reviewed current activities related to traceability (Can-Trace), US bio-terrorism requirements, prudent use of antimicrobials, Health Canada's consultation on imported drugs and toxic substance regulations. Based on recent government/industry meetings in Ontario, the Working Group added biomedical waste disposal to the list of issues to be monitored. The draft OIE report on animal production food safety was also discussed.

**Government Initiatives:** The status of various provincial government activities related to food safety were reviewed (e.g. Haines Report in Ontario, Parliamentary Commission report in Quebec) and Bill C-27, the proposed changes to CFIA's enforcement powers, was discussed in brief. The role of provincial governments in funding program implementation was raised and it was agreed that members would undertake further work in this area.

**Risk Management - Producer Issues:** The Working Group reviewed a revised draft proposal from Marsh Risk Consulting for a project under AAFC's Private Sector Risk Management Partnerships (PSRMP) Program on producer issues. CFA reported that it had started the application process on the Working Group's behalf. It was agreed that based on the discussions a workplan would be developed for submission to AAFC in early January.

**2005/6 Workplan:** Considerable discussion took place concerning the status of activities in the 2004/5 workplan. Some were identified for continuation in 2005/6. Several new initiatives were identified with the request that they be costed out and presented to the Working Group on a conference call on 12 January 2005 for consideration prior to the CFS&Q Program application date of 14 January 2005.

**Roundtable on Commodity Initiatives:** Updates were provided by: pork, dairy, eggs, herbs & spices, veal, grain, sheep, honey, feed mills, aquaculture and hatching eggs. Several groups indicated that major communications initiatives were underway or about to commence. For example, the CQA® Program's website had recently been thoroughly revised (see [www.cqa-agc.com](http://www.cqa-agc.com)) and now includes producer materials, program information, etc. much of which is available to the public. Others noted progress in program development, implementation including on-farm certification, training, etc..

## **Future Meetings**

The meeting concluded with a discussion of the dates for future meetings. Dates in late February or early March were discussed. [Note: The meeting is now scheduled for February 28<sup>th</sup> and March 1<sup>st</sup> in Ottawa.]

**Prepared 20 December 2004**

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