



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

Meeting Report - December 2008

COFFS Working Group met in Ottawa on December 10 and 11, 2008.

The agenda of this meeting reflected the COFFS Working Group mandate to strengthen its partnership and improving its communications. This is the first of the meetings to invite partners as both guests and as an integral part of the agenda as part of the bridge building initiative.

On the day before the COFFS Working Group meeting a number of COFFS Working Group members attended and participated in the **National Strategy for Industry-led Food Safety Programs 2nd Workshop** by invitation from the Canadian Supply Chain Food Safety Coalition to review in detail the National Food Safety Strategy. The draft will be revised based on the comments during the session and re-circulated. This workshop recognized the importance of the work already done with the on farm side be recognized and used as a tool to build the post farm segment without duplication was discussed.

Agenda items included reports from Task Groups, and Projects including presentations from CFIA and AAFC; as well as presentations from the Small Scale Food Processor Association (SSFPA), the Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada (HWAC), Quality Assurance Programs offered by the USDA and a summary of a COFFS member attended workshop on How to Approach and Understand Farmers.

This meeting included the final reporting of two major projects, the Baseline Study and the International Scan Project.

Guest and COFFS working group member presentations.

The meeting started on December 10th with an update from all NPO program managers present on their individual programs. This helped update the group as a whole and also gave a good background to the guests present.

Candace Appleby from Small Scale Food Processor Association (SSFPA) discussed their program and the grey areas between post and on farm processing. The challenges include the concern of conflict of interest between advising and auditing roles, as well as training when working with languages other than French and English. Pictorial instruction was offered as an alternative. Discussion was also had on how the COFFS Working Group could work with this group to ensure a seamless food safety program from on-farm to post-farm eliminating the gaps.

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In the US Horses are considered companion animals and thus do not look at food safety programs for their animals. The Horse Welfare Alliance of Canada (HWAC) was formed Spring 2008. Their role is to provide information, educating owners and the public on the humane treatment of horses including the handling of those going to the meat market. Dawn Lawrence described their challenges and how they intend to proceed to address those challenges.

Since all OFFS programs work with producers and often have huge challenges in communicating the importance of integrating their OFFS programs into producers' busy schedules, the summary of the workshop on How to Approach and Understand Farmers was timely. This workshop gave tools and hints on how to present in a manner that was readily received by the producer and understand their perspective.

Task Group Reports

Auditor Training Committee

Auditor Training modules are now available on line for distance learning with one segment yet to be ready. Ensuring that delivery is both cost and time effective was discussed and a plan to move ahead put in place.

COFFS WG/Governments Liaison Committee

The COFFS Working Group/government liaison committee have finished developing their terms of reference. This group was formed when the FPT Sub-committee was disbanded to ensure that the relationship between both government and industry continued in a collaborative manner. Continued work needs to be done on 3rd party audit, liability insurance and audit frequency. How this group interacts with CFIA and the provinces is in flux due to the many changes on the CFIA side due to retirements and secondments and the development of a new food safety committee.

To provide Government and Industry with the tools needed to define audit frequency consultants have been hired to work with each commodity group to define their ideal commodity specific scenario.

Communication and Promotion Task Group

The December newsletter is ready for distribution. The revamping of the website will begin post meeting. Due to the AAFC initiative to provide funding for OFFS implementation at a provincial level the COFFS working group with AAFC support is developing an Issues and Common Messaging letter to the province to help bridge the provincial implementation and federal programs. This letter will be finalized and delivered in the new year.

Project Reports

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Baseline Data Study

This project was initiated by AAFC and the COFFS Working Group to assess in a clear and fair manner the stage each OFFS working group is at currently and equate that to the market pull or drivers for each program. Each NPO has worked with the consultant to provide this information. The way this project was approached was unique and productive as it respected the individuality of the programs being developed. AAFC has already make use of the results. This study was the first step in sub sequential studies at regular intervals in the coming years.

International Scan Project

Understanding how our international partners and competitors deal with the On Farm Food Safety programs and issues are vital to a competitive market for the NPOs. The consultant tasked with this study presented on his findings on sample segments of the industry. Additionally the consultant was asked to comment on what quality assurance programs are offered by the USDA.

Government presentations and updates

AAFC Traceability Update

AAFC in Growing Forward will be separating traceability from the Food Safety and Quality programming. Andy Dagenais from AAFC joined to make a presentation on Traceability programs.

AAFC Food Safety and Quality Update

Bob Nawolsky joined from AAFC to update and dialog with the COFFS Working Group on the Food Safety and Quality initiatives. Discussions were had on timelines for reporting and audits re projects finishing March 31/09. AAFC's goal is to have its programming in place for April 1/09. As soon as AAFC has its Growing Forward financial authority in place, program announcements will be made. Announcements are not expected before Parliament resumes on January 26/09. Growing Forward programming is anticipated to continue to support food safety systems development and implementation, with new programming available to support traceability and biosecurity. Discussion was had on the future ahead with melding the national OFFS programs and the funding for provincial implementation.

CFIA Update

Debra Bryanton, Martin Firth, Warren Smandych and Frank Massong joined us from CFIA to discuss the changes both at the programming and personnel level for this division of CFIA. Discussions were had on follow up on the Technical Review process. Procedures will be clarified, timelines tightened and communication will be more

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concise. COFFS working group will continue to be a conduit for feedback and communication.

The new CFIA food safety committee to be finalized shortly will address more than on-farm issues, thus the COFFS Working Group will be invited to participate when on-farm issues are being discussed. It is anticipated that an on-farm sub-committee will be formed.

There was support to continue auditing, by the COFFS Working Group, the technical reviews and provide feedback on the process. Connie Kehler audited the Eggs Pullet program Technical Review in November 2008. The next review will be Honey in January 2009.

Next Meeting

In a continuing effort for outreach the next meeting will be in Toronto in February 2009.