



Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working Group

Groupe de travail canadienne de salubrité des aliments à la ferme

Meeting Report - February 2008

The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working (COFFS) Working Group met in Ottawa on 6th and 7th February 2008. This report highlights the matters discussed, key issues and the directions taken during the Working Group meeting.

Task Group Reports

Renewal of Auditor Training Module: The Auditor Task Group chair, Chris Palmer, reported that the pilot of the Module 2 - Basics of On-Farm Food Safety Auditing had concluded. He then outlined the evaluation process which is modeled on the process used for Module 1. This process is due to be completed in early March with any changes to the Module content and the on-line platform to be completed as soon as possible thereafter. It is anticipated that both modules can be officially launched in May 2008.

Recognition Task Group: Nicole Sillett, Task Group chair, reported the on-going discussions with the FPT On-farm Food Safety Subcommittee. She noted that the FPT protocol and procedural documents are nearly complete. It is hoped the audit frequency issue will be resolved at the last meeting of the FPT OFFS Subcommittee in March 2008. Several matters will be outstanding when the subcommittee completes its work and reports to the parent committee in May. However, there is agreement to proceed with an approach for the first three years and then review the experience within the various programs to determine a future course of action. The Working Group agreed to continue with its work on this important subject. A task group was established to work with CFIA on technical issues related to recognition following the completion of the subcommittee's work. The Working Group renewed its commitment to seeking full participation on future FPT committees dealing with on-farm food safety.

Working Group Projects

Producer Implementation Cost Survey Project: The update was provided by Heather Gale. The survey company had completed the interviews with 153 farmers in January. The Task Group had received a draft report and would be reviewing it on a conference call later in the month. When the report is finalized it will be circulated to the Working Group and made available to other stakeholders. To date the data collected is showing some very interesting results and the outcome of this project should be useful to both national producer organizations and others.

Delivery Options Project: Bob Hyde, Scott Wolfe Management Inc., made a presentation on the findings of the second phase of the project. He reported on the analysis of delivery options with particular reference to the requirements, challenges and

opportunities provided by each. The models considered ranged across national and provincial options involving one or more commodities and through stand alone delivery agents to outsourcing. He noted that given the range of expectations from commodity groups, it was clear that no one option “fits all”. The final report is to be completed by the end of March 2008.

International Scan Project: The Working Group reviewed a comparison of two recent “scan” projects: a review of the Canadian and US pork quality assurance programs and a review of three Canadian fresh producer programs for producers/packers and re-packers/wholesalers with fifteen (15) similar programs from other countries. The scope and the reported information from these two projects were detailed. The Working Group agreed that further work should be done on finalizing the scope of its next steps in this field with a discussion to take place at its next meeting. The interests of other parties, AAFC and CFIA, in this subject are to be explored further.

Producer Risk Project: Ariela Abecassis and Trevor Mapplebeck of Oliver Wyman made a final presentation on their work. The final report is being prepared and will be submitted in March. The presentation focused on the primary findings and recommendations building on the interim report provided in November 2007. The consultants grouped their comments in 7 categories: steps that could be taken to refine the current programs over time including linkages that could be made between the OFFS programs and other initiatives such as traceability; research activities; opportunities for the inclusion of food safety into the evolving business risk management programs provided by governments; the development of standard contract wording for use by farmers and their customers; and, collaboration with insurers and others to develop either new insurance tools or protection funds. Following a review of the report and the recommendations by the member organizations, the Working Group will consider what further steps it might take with respect to the producer risk project at subsequent meetings.

Baseline Data Research Project: This new project in collaboration with AAFC was discussed. It was noted that while a request for proposals had been circulated following the November meeting the responses had indicated that the timeframe for completion of the work was too short. It was agreed that the project scope would be reviewed and new RFP circulated with a longer time frame for the project.

Canadian Supply Chain Food Safety Coalition - Gap Analysis and National Strategy Workshop

On the morning of February 7th, the members of the Working Group joined representatives of other supply chain associations and service providers as well as representatives of the federal and provincial governments for a review of the state of industry-led food safety programs in Canada. This workshop was part of the Canadian Supply Chain Food Safety Coalition’s project to develop a national strategy for both on-farm and post-farm industry-led food safety programs through 2013. The members participated in a discussion of existing gaps in food safety programming along the supply chain and within government and then worked through visioning exercise to identify areas for inclusion in the national strategy. Following these sessions, the Working Group members reconvened to continue their own strategic planning project.

Strategic Planning Session - Part 2

The Working Group followed up on its November planning session with a review of the draft communications and strategic plans. Tracey Bryska, joined the meeting via a conference call to review the draft communications plan and Mary Ellen Hodgins later joined by conference call to review the draft strategic plan. Amendments and revisions were made to both drafts. The final plans are slated for completion at the next Working Group meeting.

Update on Canadian Food Safety & Quality Program - Transition

AAFC officials provided a brief update on the status of the transition year. It was noted that final government approval for the extension of the program into 2008/9 is expected to be announced in March. AAFC is preparing for a smooth transition and the extension of existing applications where this is requested. Early notification was encouraged. The Working Group agreed that it would look to extend its application for several months in the new fiscal year while it finalized existing projects and completed a workplan based on its new strategic plan.

Other Business: Members raised and reported on a number of initiatives. There was discussion of the new federal Food and Consumer Safety Action Plan, the Growing Forward Initiative and on-going discussions with various federal government departments about matters of interest to the on-farm food safety programs. A proposal from the Canadian Agricultural Policy Institute on regulatory change was discussed and referred to the member organizations for response.

Next Meeting: The Working Group's next meeting was tentatively scheduled for April 16th and 17th in Ottawa.

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