



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

Meeting Report - July 2008

COFFS Working Group met in Quebec City on July 8 and 9, 2008.

Agenda items included reports from Task Groups and Projects including a presentation from the Canadian Organic Growers. In addition guests from Quebec and BC provincial governments attended an update of the commodity programs.

On July 4th the COFFS Working Group and the Commodity groups all received news of cutbacks to CFSQP funding. A part of the meeting was dedicated to reports and discussion on this topic.

As a result of the strategic plan and communication plan the COFFS Working Group has been looking at strengthening its partnership and improving its communications. Inviting these partners as both guests and as an integral part of the agenda has been one route to the strengthening of partnerships.

Guests and Presenters

At this meeting an information session was held with Honey welcoming in French and Cattle and Grains doing an overview in addition to Chicken and Pork talking about their specific experiences. There was enough time to have the entire group do updates. This session was well received by the guests and COFFS Working Group members. It was agreed that this should be a regular part of the agenda. A take home information package was developed and handed out. Extra copies were mailed to offices of those invited but unable to attend.

Laura Telford, Executive Director of Canadian Organic Growers, presented who COG was and what they were looking at for OFFS programming. Many in the Organic sector do not see OFFS programs as necessary but that is changing. Concerns included additional costs and duplication with Certified organic programming. COG is discussing how they should proceed in terms of organics being on OFFS programs. Do they develop their own program or could they be part of the NPOs? A study (COABC OFFS Assessment Project) was previously done but it is now partially out of date and was a very small study. Multi commodity farms may be an issue. COG felt it would be efficient to integrate the audit function so that there is only one auditor going on farm. Discussion followed with the NPOs as to how they managed Organic producers now and how they saw the future. COG needs to do a research phase to see what programming is available; what are the issues; and ensure that there is no duplication of activities.

Lucie Verdon presented the UPA Pilot Project – Joined Conformity assessment (audit) of Canadian on-farm food safety programs for multi-commodity farms. There are savings to be obtained and it may be from the reduced amount of travel that would be involved.

Meetings attended and held

Heather Gale (CHC) spoke at the 4th Annual Food Safety Summit on COFFS behalf. Heather's presentation spoke about who COFFS is and used Horticulture as an example. There was good discussion especially regarding international recognition. 80-100 people were in attendance including a range from producers to retailers. The summit included about 20 speakers.

The COFFS working group met with CFIA to discuss common communication and also future programming initiatives and improvements.

Task Group Reports

Auditor Training Committee

Albert Chambers updated the group with his follow up with the delivery agents. The delivery agents are not fully ready to deliver. It is hoped the course will be launched by mid July. The management system for the auditor training has been developed and should be finalized by the end of July.

COFFS WG/Governments Liaison Committee

COFFS WG/Governments Liaison Committee hasn't met since May 2008 but a strong need was expressed to have Jeff Babb to assist in the pilot of the audit frequency. Germain Brazeau and Martin Firth from CFIA discussed the revisions to the documents. Key discussions were also had on liability insurance and audit patterning. It is hoped to have the manual on-line by the end of the summer. There is support for industry to participate on the new Food Safety Committee.

International Program Recognition

Discussion was surrounding on how to proceed with this task group. One topic of interest was international recognition and how the government is proceeding on this front. CFIA is to investigate and report back to COFFS on this topic.

Baseline Data Study Project

The consultant Bob McDonald provided the update. Bob McDonald has contacted all the NPOs. Individual chapters will be ready for review by the end of July. It was also noted that the funding cut may affect the data for the year affected and this should be

reflected in the report. AAFC plans to use the results of the project to analysis where the programs are now and where they need to go and the associated funding needed.

International Scan

EMS Croscan was selected to conduct this project. This project should be completed by the end of September 2008. Honey, beef, grains and horticulture are participating with support from Pork. The countries that will be compared are the ones the NPOs anticipate trading with.

Producer Risk Project

Discussion was had as to where more work was needed to be done on legal issues/confidentiality issues in using provinces as delivery agents or on the liability coverage CFIA requires.

Other Business

AAFC's 40% budget reduction

AAFC has requested applicants to CFSQP to cut their budgets by 40%. NPOs were informed on July 4, 2008. New applications submitted will not be considered at this time. AAFC phoned into the meeting to explain the situation and to answer questions. The COFFS working group outlined the impact this reduction would have on their programs. Anita Stanger (CFSQP Director, AAFC), asked that those impacts be documented. It was decided that the COFFS working group would outline those impacts in a letter that would be sent to AAFC as per their request. This letter could then be used as a template for commodities to develop their own specific letter. At the end of the meeting there were still questions as to how this all would be managed and what it would mean to future programming. AAFC described this to be a transition year situation only and that the new fiscal year would be business as usual. The loss of momentum and people were of big concern to the NPOs.

Medicated Feeds

The group discussed how groups are interpreting medicated feeds as the requirements are not clear. Do records have to be kept for 10 years? It has been heard that there will be consultations with industry, but no time lines have been set. It was decided to add this to the list to bring to the attention of Debra Bryanton, CFIA, as this is something that may affect beef, pork, eggs, and hatching eggs. Beef and pork will further discuss and perhaps send a joint letter.

Update on Records Assessments

CCA asked the group for feedback on what written procedures groups are using and how they were managed. Examples given included flagging items for next audit to timelines regarding corrections to when to eliminate someone from the program.

National Food Safety Strategy

The report from the February 2008 meeting was circulated to all stakeholders with opportunity for input. The follow-up meeting will be held in September 2008, thus any comments must be submitted before then. This group has funding for National Strategy across the food chain and recognition for off-farm.

Next Meeting: The COFFS Working Group's next meeting is to be confirmed for Fall 2008.