

# Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working Group

Meeting Report

11<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> June 2003

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The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working (COFFS) Working Group met in Ottawa on 11th and 13<sup>th</sup> June. On 12<sup>th</sup> June, a 2<sup>nd</sup> National Farm Leaders meeting to discuss program delivery options was held. This report highlights the matters discussed, key issues and the directions taken during the Working Group meeting.

## **Review of AAFC APF Consultation Session**

Members present at the AAFC consultation session on the Canadian Food Safety and Quality Program (10 June 2003, Ottawa) reviewed the results of the discussions. The COFFS Working Group noted with appreciation that its advice on retaining the current administrative mechanism for the on-farm program had been accepted. AAFC intends to contract with CFA as the third party delivery agent. The funding split between program development of \$62 million (pre-farm, on-farm and post-farm) and on-farm implementation assistance of \$80 million was reviewed. AAFC had been pressed by all parties concerning the allocation within the development program amongst the various sectors. It was noted that the Working Group and the national commodity groups had suggested in December 2002 that the on-farm programs required between \$15 and \$20 million for program development, capacity building, collaborative initiatives, baseline research and communications and promotion over the five year period. Details of the development program were promised by mid-July. A commitment had been made by AAFC officials to negotiate the on-farm implementation program over the summer through a working group.

## **Update on Risk Management Projects**

Trevor Mapplebeck, Marsh Consulting, reported on three of the subprojects. He indicated that Marsh was prepared to quickly advance the development of a market submission respecting errors and omissions insurance for on-farm food safety auditors. There was a discussion of the various approaches that could be used by the auditors to access the product - through brokers, through a sole source, such as a certification body, via their employer. It was agreed that the submission would be prepared. It was also agreed that Marsh would prepare a survey for the national producer organizations and their proposed delivery agents that would assist the groups to determine the adequacy of their current insurance for directors, officers and employees with respect to their involvement in the national on-farm food safety programs. This will be circulated over the summer and the results discussed at the next Working Group meeting. On the third subproject, Mapplebeck reported that the survey of producers in horticulture, hogs and dairy had been completed. He provided results. Unfortunately, the number of respondents to the electronic survey was below expectations. The survey had identified producer perceptions of their financial and legal exposure to food safety incidents. Marsh had then analysed the risks associated with these and identified currently available management solutions and possible solutions. The Working Group agreed that member groups needed time to review the results and tabled further discussion on possible next steps until its fall meeting.

## **On-Farm Food Safety Auditors - Report of Task Group on Equivalency**

Bob Ford, reported on behalf of the Task Group (Nicole Unger, Dawn Leblanc and Bob Ford) established at the April meeting. The Task Group had identified seven (7) issues: HACCP

training; audit training; grand fathering; web-based training; on-farm perspective; administrative assessment; commodities' direction. Its report discussed these briefly and outlined some suggestions, including:

- forming a committee/review board to make decisions on claims of equivalence;
- developing procedures or management manual for the review committee (appeals, complaints, etc);
- converting the current course into a web-based format so that participants can do it on their own time and not have to incur travel expenses;
- establishing equivalence exams (for HACCP and auditing); and,
- developing continuing education resources for in-person and web-based use both as tools for on-going training of those who have taken the 5-day On-Farm Auditor Training course as well as those who may be grand fathered into the system.

After considerable discussion of the options and related issues, the Working Group agreed to modify the current requirements for acceptance into the COFFS On-Farm Auditor Training module to facilitate a broader range of applicants. It was also agreed that most of the other issues related to equivalency would be considered in both the discussions on the "administrative assessment" criteria and when the Working Group reviews the concept of certification of on-farm auditors.

### **COFFS On-Farm Auditors Training Program**

Jennifer Higginson reported on a meeting with SGS Canada in late May about the training program. She noted that the initial set of eight courses had been offered with higher than expected attendance. CFA and SGS had agreed that modifications were required to the course and that these would be undertaken over the summer so that improvements could be introduced and the necessary changes to bring the materials in-line with the new ISO audit requirements (ISO 19011) incorporated. A request for funding these revisions was being requested by the Working Group in its CARD 2 (5<sup>th</sup> year) application. It is anticipated that the revised course would be relaunched in September 2003.

### **Report of the Task Group on Communications**

Peter O'Malley, consultant/facilitator to the Task Group presented the results of the May 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. He noted the highlights of the discussion as follows:

- agreement that the communications environment has not changed fundamentally over the past year and that communications efforts closely focussed on pro-actively reaching farm audiences to promote program participation;
- communications with industry, media or the public remains generally reactive;
- increased awareness up the food chain about food safety issues means that a more proactive communications targeted at industry about the Canadian approach would be useful;

- interest in other issues (e.g. animal welfare) points to a need for a reactive communications capacity and tools, when and where required;
- sustained outreach to farm-focussed media about the COFFS Program initiatives and the Canadian approach to on-farm food safety would also be useful; and,
- an outreach program aimed at industry representatives, as well as at political and official decision-makers in government needs to be developed and implemented in close cooperation with the Working Group.

The Task Group's recommendations concerning the establishment of communicators network and the development of a set of brochures directed at specific audiences, PowerPoint presentations inserts, a re-invigorated quarterly newsletter, a public website and new display capacity were endorsed in principle by the Working Group and it was requested to develop and cost the proposals by September.

### **Official Recognition - Management Review of Technical Review Process**

Reports were presented on both the FPTAFIC sub-committee on on-farm food safety meeting in Edmonton (May 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>) and a sub-committee task group meeting in Quebec City on June 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Both these sessions considered various aspects of the CFIA management review report on the Technical Review Process. Walter Debicki, the Working Group's representative at the Quebec City meeting reviewed the highlights of the draft report on proposed changes to the Technical Review Process. The Working Group scheduled a conference call for June 20<sup>th</sup> to consider the full report and to prepare its comments and recommendations for a sub-committee conference call on June 26<sup>th</sup>.

Concerns were expressed about the impact of the suspension of the Technical Review Process on the implementation of the national programs. Momentum was being lost and several groups noted that activities funded by the COFFS Program that were dependent on completion of the Technical Review were now in danger of not being concluded by 31 December 2003 when the funding expires.

### **Management Manual Project**

Catherine Scovil provided an update from the perspective of the case study - the CQA™ Program and noted that the output would be extremely valuable to all the national producer organizations as they developed their own quality management systems. The final materials were expected from the consultant, Gerry Knapp of QuenPro International Inc by month end and copies of the compact disk version would be duplicated for all members of the Working Group and circulated shortly thereafter. Funding for translating the materials was being sought and this would be accomplished in co-operation with QuenPro.

### **Quality Management System Workshop**

In response to the suggestion made by CFIA's On-Farm Food Safety Recognition Program staff, the Working Group considered a proposal to hold a workshop on quality management systems for members and national co-ordinators. Funding for the project has been included in the Working Group's CARD2 (5<sup>th</sup> year) request. Members identified their preferred course suppliers, based on a detailed report, and concluded that a final decision on supplier, date and location would be taken following the completion of the course scheduled by CFIA for government officials in late June.

## **Future Training Initiatives**

Albert Chambers reported on a workshop with representatives of the Association of Community Colleges of Canada. Representatives from colleges in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia with interests in training in the agriculture sector had met in Vancouver in late May to discuss training opportunities related to on-farm food safety. The ACCC group was planning to survey colleges about current offerings and future plans. The Working Group had encouraged the workshop participants include not only the colleges but the degree programs and the vet colleges and to think broadly about curriculum change not just food safety training and about the requirements of the supply chain not just the on-farm sector. There was continuing support for the Working Group hosting an intensive workshop later in 2003 and it was noted that the college representatives had expressed an interest in November.

Jennifer Higginson reported that CFA and ITA Saint-Hyacinthe were continuing the discussions authorized by the Working Group about the two day introduction to on-farm food safety training course.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> National Farm Leaders Meeting on Delivery Options**

The positive results of the June 12<sup>th</sup> meeting were reviewed in detail by the Working Group. In response to the leaders request for a 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting in the early fall, the Working Group suggested that the consultants final report on the National Certification Body option be concluded as quickly as possible. They also recommended that two presentations be prepared for use by national commodity groups and others over the summer. The first of these would provide background on the concept, on official recognition, on the alternative options, etc.. The second would provide a summary of the presentations made by Don Wilson and Charlie Gracey on June 12<sup>th</sup>. The availability of funding in the 2003 budget to provide presenters from the Working Group was noted.

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