



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

Meeting Report - June 2006

The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working (COFFS) Working Group met in Ottawa on 8th & 9th June 2006. This report highlights the matters discussed, key issues and the directions taken during the Working Group meeting.

Recognition Update:

Following a presentation Germain Brazeau (CFIA) and the Working Group the proposed vision version to the Technical Review Part I procedures manual, in particular the new section concerning the review of updated materials (i.e. generic models and producer manuals). Concerns were raised about potential administrative burden and suggestions were made for easing it.

A report was provided on the second pilot of the Technical Review Part II process - which had considered the management system for the Chicken Farmers of Canada's on-farm food safety program. The review had gone smoothly according to all parties and finished in a shorter than expected time. Consideration will now be given to improvements to the process based on the two pilots. The final pilot, which will involve provincial and territorial government representatives as commentators and observers, will be launched when the next national producer group submits its materials. Training will be provided to the provincial and territorial government participants.

The project on 3rd party audit services is now advancing with the engagement of a consulting group. A survey will be circulated to participants nominated by the members of the Working Group and telephone contact will be initiated. It is anticipated a workshop will be held in October or November to review the results and engage in further discussion.

Finally, the Working Group discussed the new audit cycle proposal for on-farm oversight. It was agreed that further information on the rationale would be requested from the federal/provincial/territorial subcommittee on on-farm food safety.

Task Group Reports:

National Auditor Training Module - Renewal

The task group reported on progress in the discussions with colleges for the delivery of the food safety component of the module. Considerable progress had been made during several conference calls and a further call was planned to ensure that the two colleges were in agreement on some of the administrative requirements for the operation of the course. There was a discussion of the proposed fees to be charged by the colleges and members expressed their ongoing interest in minimizing the costs to potential on-farm food safety auditors. The timing of the pilots was discussed. The Working Group approved entering into contracts, subject to the completion of the negotiations for the transformation of the revised course materials and the development of the French and English versions of the food safety course.

Baseline Research Project

The chair of the task group - Terry Grajczyk - reported that the draft concept paper had been received from the consultant (Dr. Sarah Parker of WVMC) and reviewed. There was an update on the Working Group's request for a funding extension until November 2006. The task group and the consultant were preparing for both options, an early completion or the extension.

The Working Group also discussed the recent announcement of a new national agri-food research strategy by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food. It was suggested that AAFC officials be invited to a subsequent meeting to review the strategy and that Working Group members should revisit their Form 9 and related research needs to assist in identifying common areas for consideration.

Delivery Options Project - Phase IV

The chair of the task group - Connie Kehler - reported on its progress to date. The questionnaire was in its final stages of approval and was designed to clearly distinguish between actual and projected costs for the areas to be reported. The consultants will be working over the summer with the national and provincial groups to complete the survey. The matter of development costs was considered and the chair agreed to bring the suggestions made to the attention of the consultants. An interim report will be made at the next meeting.

Producer Risk Management Project

An update was provided by Jocelyne Galloway (CFA). The final budget had been submitted and a list of consultants was being developed. It was agreed that Working Group members would be requested to nominate representatives for the task group to oversee the project once funding was approved.

Communications and Promotion

The task group chairs - Melissa Struthers and Connie Kehler - reported on its recent discussions. They noted that AAFC had requested the Working Group to consider some additional communications activities and had made some suggestions concerning the next newsletter. It was agreed that the dialogue with AAFC would be continued and additional information requested about the scope and cost of the additional activities prior to making any decisions or seeking additional funding.

The task group also reported on its discussions about messages related to the Canadian approach to on-farm food safety and raised a series of questions about target audiences, delivery mechanisms, the website's future development, etc. Feedback was provided by the members of the Working Group.

The new event reporting template was reviewed and approved as an addition to the members only section of the website. The chairs noted that further consideration was being given to the list of proposed events for promotional activity/display booth participation. Working Group members would be surveyed on their program's willingness to provide personnel to staff the events prior to final decisions being made on participation in the events.

The task group also solicited input on the nature and scope of the planned farm leaders meeting. Concerns were raised about the value of repeating the format previously used. It was suggested that this event could be transformed into an event for program stakeholders, including customer representatives and government officials, to showcase the achievements of the national programs and to discuss new issues and consider the results of the Working Group's delivery options, baseline research and sustainability projects.

An update was provided on the status of the website, the development of the display banners and other related initiatives.

Program Sustainability and the Next Generation of Agri-food Policy and Programming

There was an update on the timing of the governments' initiatives to develop the next generation of agri-food policy and programming to succeed the Agriculture Policy Framework. It was reported that Ministers would decide on the consultation approach and timetable in late June and that it was anticipated that consultations would commence in the fall and intensify in the November/December period. CFA reported that it was co-ordinating a group composed of members, non-member organizations and post-farm industry associations that is working on a common policy vision and set of programming proposals.

Nicole Sillet of task group on program sustainability reported that the it had used the Working Group's earlier survey results to develop a framework for its current activities. These currently focussed on five areas:

- support for National development, implementation, monitoring and recognition;
- support for provincial development, implementation and monitoring;
- support for auditor expenses;
- support for multi-commodity collaboration and communication; and
- support of CFIA's recognition system.

The task group will be working over the summer months and prepare its recommendations for the Working Group and the member organizations in time for the next meeting.

Emerging Issues

Under this agenda item, the Working Group discussed the Partnership for Prosperity and Security initiative, avian influenza, bio-security and industry/government activities related to pandemic preparedness planning in the agri-food sector.

Roundtable on Commodity-specific Projects

Working Group members provided brief updates on the status of their national programs. There was an exchange of views on updating program materials, training activities, the development of management systems, a project in Quebec on multi-commodity auditing, provision of materials to producers in hardcopy and electronic formats and the status of various Part I Technical Reviews.

Next Meeting Dates

The Working Group's next meeting will be held on September 20th and 21st in either Saskatoon or Ottawa depending on hotel and meeting room availability.

Prepared by Albert Chambers, Consultant, COFFS Working Group

Contact: Suite 1101, 75 Albert Street
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1P 5E7
T: (613) 236-6659 or 233-7175
E: afchambers@monachus.com