



Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working Group

Groupe de travail canadienne de salubrité des aliments à la ferme

Meeting Report - June 2007

The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working (COFFS) Working Group met in Ottawa on 28th and 29th June 2007 following its very successful conference - Canada's Industry-led Food Safety Programs: The Road Ahead. This conference was co-sponsored by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and undertaken with financial assistance under the Agricultural Policy Framework, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The presentations made at the conference are published on the Working Group's website:

www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca

This report highlights the matters discussed, key issues and the directions taken during the Working Group meeting.

Task Group Reports:

National Auditor Training Module - Renewal

Chris Palmer, the Task Group chair, reported on the evaluation of the Module 1: Basics of HACCP-Based On-Farm Food Safety pilot by the Task Group and the course delivery agents Lakeland College (English) and ITA St. Hyacinthe (French). A number of changes will be introduced as a result of the pilot. The time available for participants to complete the course will be lengthened to eight (8) weeks, some exercises will be revised and a new exercise that re-enforces the concepts related to HACCP will be introduced. Changes were also made to the participant evaluation process and to the criteria for retaking the final examination. These changes are expected to be completed by the end of August. While regular delivery of Module 1 will begin in the fall, it was noted that ITA had received a request for a special offering of the course in June and was, with the agreement of the task group, providing this based on the pilot version materials. Work on Module 2 - Basics of On-Farm Food Safety Auditing is also proceeding. It was reported that the pilot for this module should begin in late summer and that regular delivery should be expected in the late fall.

Delivery Options Project

Connie Kehler, Task Group chair, reported on its discussions with the consultants - Scott Wolfe - about further analysis of the data collected in the first phase of the project. The Task Group recommended that the consultants be asked to rework their final report on the basis of a new set of instructions. This proposal was accepted by the Working Group. It was also agreed that the Working Group would request the organizations that participated in the original survey to review the restrictions that they set on sharing information.

Certifarm Project

Heather Gale (project steering committee member) and Charles Gracey (project consultant) presented the final work undertaken by the group of interested organizations. This had entailed

revised calculations on the costs of farm audit approaches, based on the most recent discussions in the FPT subcommittee on on-farm food safety and revisions to the original models developed in 2003/4 for the national certification body. The recalculations of audit costs were also used by the Working Group representatives in their discussions at the FPT subcommittee on June 28th. The new calculations show some significant savings in audit costs based on both the changes in audit frequencies considered and in the time allocated to audits, record reviews, etc. based on current experience in established OFFS programs. The revised administration costs were based on a slow ramping-up of resource requirements in the central office and on reduced numbers of farms participating in the early years. The Certifarm project final results will be shared with the Working Group and all the NPOs. The project concluded on June 30th.

Communication and Promotion

Connie Kehler and France Lanthier, Task Group co-chairs, reported on the work undertaken since the May meeting. The Task Group was working on a request for proposals (RFP) concerning the development of a 3-5 year communication and promotion plan which would be circulated to consultants in July. The consultants would be asked to review the Working Group's current activities, undertake a gap analysis and make proposals for activities starting in 2008. The co-chairs then reported on the discussions concerning the semi-annual newsletter. The Task Group was exploring reformatting the newsletter, scheduling additional issues and restructuring the content to make it more interesting to producers, OFFS program staff and other stakeholders. The proposed emphasis would be on Working Group projects, the activities and news from commodity-specific OFFS programs, etc.. The next issue of the newsletter is now scheduled for July 2007 and will be produced by the Task Group and the new part-time resource person - Jennifer Milton. The co-chairs also reported that the Task Group had concluded that there are insufficient resources available for stand alone exhibits on the Canadian approach at industry events. The Working Group agreed to continue to promote the availability of its banners and to provide assistance in for printing national promotional materials to members and others interested using these at meetings and conferences or as part of their organization's exhibits.

Producer Liability Project

Dale Riddell (Task Group chair) and Albert Chambers (project adviser) reported on the project. They indicated that further information had been solicited and evaluated. The Task Group had then met on June 27th to consider this information and to make its final recommendation to the Working Group. The Working Group agreed, subject to the conclusion of an agreement, on the selection of consultant. The Working Group also discussed some of the implementation steps in the proposed action plan and were informed that further assistance from producers representing member organizations would be required over the next several months.

Producer Implementation Cost Survey Project

Steve Leech (Chair, Sustainability Task Group) reported on the conclusion of the selection process for a survey firm to undertake this project. He noted that three firms had submitted proposals and that all were judged to be of high quality. The Task Group had evaluated each on the basis of its technical and financial merits and concluded that one proposal was both superior and the lowest bid. Reference checks had been made on the firm and these were positive. The Task Group made its recommendation, which was agreed to. Next steps were also discussed. Working Group

members were to be contacted to determine if their organization was interested in participating in the survey. NPOs national programs will have to have successfully completed Technical Review Part 1 to be eligible for inclusion. NPOs will be responsible for identifying a positive list of producers willing to participate in the survey by no later than the end of August. The final decisions on the number of producers to be selected from each commodity, the stratification to be used in the survey, etc will be decided by the Task Group in conjunction with the consultants. The survey is proposed to run through the final quarter of 2007 with the final report in early 2008.

Recognition Update

Dale Riddell reported to the meeting on behalf of the Working Group's representatives on the FPT subcommittee on on-farm food safety. This report dealt with the discussions held earlier on June 28th concerning minimum audit frequency. The Working Group's detailed proposal had been reported to the subcommittee by Nicole Sillett (Working Group member) with the assistance of Charles Gracey. There had been considerable discussion and several questions had been identified for further consideration by the Working Group's consulting statistician, Professor Jeff Babb of the University of Manitoba. The subcommittee will be finalizing its discussions on this matter at its October 2007 meeting.

Presentations

Health Canada Regulatory Modernization

Bill Ross, Director, Integrated Food Policy, Food Directorate, Health Canada made a presentation on Health Canada's new initiative "Toward a Regulatory Modernization Strategy for Food and Nutrition". This strategy has as one of its key priorities working with industry-based food safety programs to facilitate research and other mutually beneficial activities.

Other Matters

Canadian Food Safety & Quality Program

Anita Sanger, Director, Food Safety and Quality Programs Division, AAFC provided an update on the status of the program. The final application date has been set for September 14th with funding available in December for the final few months of the program. It was noted that federal, provincial and territorial ministers are aware of agri-food industry's interest in there being transitional funding to bridge any gap between the current APF programs and those that may be initiated in 2008.

Working Group Administration

The Working Group met in camera to give further consideration a report from its Task Group on Process Improvement.

Next Meeting Dates

The Working Group's next meeting will be held in Edmonton on September 18th and 19th. Dates were also suggested for the November meeting which will be held in Ottawa.