

# Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working Group

Meeting Report

6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> March 2003

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

## **Codex Alimentarius Commission Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Task Force on Animal Feeding**

Judy Thompson, CFIA Feeds Division and Canada's representative on the Codex task force presented the updated working draft for review [[ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/ccaf04/af03\\_05e.pdf](ftp://ftp.fao.org/codex/ccaf04/af03_05e.pdf)]. The task force's work is scheduled to be completed at its next meeting (March 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>), however, given the discussion still required this seems unlikely. The Working Group discussed in detail *Section 6: On-farm Production and Use of Feed and Feed Ingredients* and offered comments and suggestions for changes. The references to HACCP and HACCP-based were strongly supported. As minimum standard, the requirements were endorsed. The lack of farm organization representation at the task force meetings (with the exception of the International Dairy Federation delegation which includes Rejean Bouchard from DFC) was noted and is of concern given the importance that Codex deliberations and standards now have for primary producers.

## **Update on Proposed Amendments to the Medicated Feeds Regulations**

Thompson also reported on the status of the proposed regulations. Work is continuing on the file and it is expected to move forward in the new fiscal year. There may be funding under the APF. The steering committee is expected to be reconvened for a meeting sometime in the spring in order to resolve some issues. Then, the regulatory process would be restarted with the revised proposals being printed in the Canada Gazette Part 1 and a new comment period. Current thinking would suggest an implementation date of either January or April 2004.

## **Discussion of Relationship between On-Farm Food Safety Programs and CFIA Initiatives**

To follow-up its discussion of the relationship between the commodity specific programs and key CFIA initiatives, such as the proposed licensing and inspection program for medicated feed mixing and the proposed information transfer requirements under the HACCP-based Inspection Programs (HIP), the Working Group met with Dr. Brian Evans, Executive Director, Animal Products Directorate, CFIA. He noted that the Agency was fully in support of the development of on-farm food safety programs and that it recognized the need to minimize duplication and costs at the farm. He also noted that the international climate was shifting again with some governments putting more emphasis on regulation. The impact of this on the Canadian approach which was emphasizing more industry responsibility and greater reliance on voluntary programs was as yet unclear. Members of the Working Group raised concerns about the fit with CFIA programs, the importance of differential treatment of farms certified under the officially recognized programs, and the importance of having good clear messaging. The discussion concluded with an agreement that CFIA and the Working Group needed to "re-engage" on this matter and that a process should be developed.

## **Task Groups Formed**

With the funding finalized for its 2003 workplan (see January Meeting Report), the Working Group formed task groups to undertake specific activities. These include:

- Activity #5 - development of common GPP's for on-farm mixing of medicated feed;
- Activity #7 - further research into the adoption of a common information technology system for use by national programs, delivery agents and auditor/validators;
- Activity #10 - implementation of the action plan for the promotion of Canadian on-farm food safety programs;
- Activity #11 - a characterization study of the requirements for program effectiveness studies (baseline research and on-going requirements);
- Activity #13 - representation on the Federal/Provincial/Territorial On-Farm Food Safety Sub-committee; and,
- Activity #16 - further research into a National Certification Body

## **International Activities**

At the suggestion of the COFFS Program Review Committee, the Working Group considered two matters related to the concept of internationalizing the Canadian approach to on-farm food safety. Several commodity groups, including DFC through the International Dairy Federation and CHC and CPC through Eurepgap, have the opportunity to participate in the development of international on-farm food safety programs or guidelines. The importance of being able to take advantage of these opportunities and others as they arise was strongly supported. It was noted that DFC's request for funding from the COFFS Program had to be turned down as being outside the program's parameters. The recent announcement by AAFC of the new Canadian Agriculture and Food International (CAFI) Program was discussed and it was agreed that funding under this program would be explored as would including it as an eligible activity under the revised COFFS Program.

The second issue discussed was a proposal for an international conference on on-farm food safety. It was suggested that such a conference would provide opportunity for those active in the development and implementation of on-farm food safety programs to engage in dialogue about the current status of their initiatives and to explore future directions. It could also provide an opportunity for showcasing the Canadian approach. The Working Group members strongly supported the concept but cautioned that a conference of this nature takes both significant time and resources to succeed. It was agreed that the proposal would be discussed with selected stakeholders and that an update would be provided at the next meeting.

## **On-Farm Food Safety Auditor Training Program - Update**

A report from SGS Canada Inc., based on its evaluation of the first training course, was discussed. Overall, the reaction from participants and instructors had been positive. It was noted that there were some elements that needed revision and that concerns had been expressed about the translation of the course manual. The Working Group agreed to explore a re-editing of the english text as quickly as possible. Other revisions to the course, including the updating of the audit materials to be consistent with ISO 19011 requirements, would be reviewed after the completion of the initial round of courses.

The Working Group also agreed to a revision in the eligibility requirements for the national module. The new requirements for training and for work experience will be:

- with two (2) years post-secondary education in agriculture or a related area then a minimum of two (2) years experience in production agriculture;
- if a candidate has other post-secondary education (diploma or degree) then, the minimum experience in production agriculture will be three (3) years; and
- if the candidate does not have any post-secondary qualifications, the minimum experience will be five (5) years.

The recognition of the course by CFIA was also discussed with both Dr. Evans and with the Germain Brazeau, Manager, On-Farm Food Safety Recognition Program, CFIA. It was agreed that further discussions would be held and a proposal made to the Working Group when the revision process is discussed.

### **ITA Proposal for a New Course - Introduction to On-Farm Food Safety**

The Working Group discussed an unsolicited proposal from the Institut de technologie agroalimentaire de Saint-Hyacinthe (ITA), the developer of the Working Group's auditor training course, for the development of web-based course on on-farm food safety. The Working Group had previously authorized ITA to deliver a two (2) day short course using the text book from the auditor training course. It was agreed that the proposal for a web-based course would be explored further.

### **Progress Report on Technical Review Process**

Germain Brazeau provided a status report as follows:

- dairy program - face to face review completed in December 2002 and applicant reviewing requested changes;
- feed mill program - face to face suspended part way through in January 2003 and applicant revising program prior to the process restarting;
- table eggs program - face to face review completed during late February and applicant reviewing requested changes;
- hatching eggs program - screening completed and review meeting scheduled for week of March 31<sup>st</sup>; and,
- pork program - screening completed.

There was a discussion of the technical review process. Working Group members shared experiences and asked questions. The role of the expert review, a key step in the COFFS Program process, was discussed in detail with Frank Massong, Manager of the Canadian Food Safety Adaptation (CFSA) Program which now supplies this service on behalf of CFIA. It was agreed that steps would be taken to strengthen this review as new resources have been allocated and to ensure that groups still working on their generic models and producer materials were fully aware of the expectations of the recognition process. It was also agreed that it would be useful to schedule further discussion of this matter. Members were asked to prepare written comments and to identify areas where changes were requested and issues of concern.

### **Administrative Assessment Criteria**

The Working Group began its discussion of the summary report from the Task Group regarding issues related to Guide 62 - certification body criteria. It reviewed several issues in detail and concluded that more time would be required for a full discussion. It was agreed that this matter would be the focus of the next meeting and that Working Group members would review the report in detail and look to developing suggestions for alternate language. In the meantime, the Task Group would continue its work. A list of questions would be prepared for

consideration by the Standards Council of Canada and work would begin on the outline of the non-certification body aspects of the criteria.

### **Canadian Food Safety Adaptation Program Update**

Frank Massong reviewed the progress of post-farmgate program and the projects that it had funded to date. He noted that the CFSA Program had been modelled on the COFFS Program and commented on the areas and projects that were being handled co-operatively (e.g. the on-farm and post-farm work in the grains sector). There was discussion of opportunities for further joint projects, in particular in the area of research, validation and verification. Based on progress to date, the CFSA Program was now mapping where the gaps are and working to interest groups in tackling them. As a possible gap, members of the Working Group raised the issue of auction markets and assembly yards as a key step in both the supply and marketing process for livestock producers. It was agreed that the CFSA Program would provide the Working Group with its regular written updates for circulation and that further presentations would be scheduled.

### **COFFS Program Update**

Joan Champagne, COFFS Program Administrator, reported that all the available funds had been allocated by the Review Committee at its meeting on February 20<sup>th</sup>. Where required the funding had also been approved by AAFC. Applicants had been informed and contracts were being prepared for signature.

Earlier in the meeting, the Working Group had also had the opportunity to meet with Bobby Matheson, the new CARD Program director for food safety and quality, and to be updated on the status of the APF, the fifth year of CARD funding, etc.. Further details were to be made available in April.

The Working Group also discussed the current proposals for funding on-farm food safety programs under the APF. Jennifer Higginson, CFA and COFFS Program Manager, indicated that in recent discussions with AAFC officials that CFA had emphasized the importance of adequate funding for implementation, particularly for pre-certification assistance. She also reported that AAFC had asked questions about assisting with a farm's first audit and that new estimates had been provided based on lower implementation target numbers than those used in December 2002.

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