



Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working Group

Groupe de travail canadienne de salubrité des aliments à la ferme

Meeting Report - May 2007

The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working (COFFS) Working Group met in Ottawa on 1st and 2nd May 2007. This report highlights the matters discussed, key issues and the directions taken during the Working Group meeting.

Task Group Reports:

Sustainability Task Group

After receiving a brief report on the completion of its second round submission on the Next Generation of Agriculture and Agri-food Policy (APFII), the Working Group discussed again the matter of the need for a transition from current programming to the expected new programs in April 2008. It was agreed that a follow-up letter would be sent to AAFC on this matter. The letter was drafted and then reviewed prior to the end of the second day of meetings and the Task Group was asked to finalize and forward it on behalf of the members.

National Auditor Training Module - Renewal

Chris Palmer, the Task Group chair, and Jocelyne Galloway (CFA) reported on the results of the piloting of Module 1 by Lakeland College (English) and ITA St. Hyacinthe (French). Several members of the Working Group, having participated in the pilot, added first hand comments. Note was taken of a meeting, scheduled with the delivery agents on May 11th and suggestions were made for changes and improvements to the revised Module. It was reported that pilot of Module 2 had not yet been scheduled but that it was expected that it might still take place in June. The impact of the uncertainty about funding for the management of the course, over the three years beginning April 2008, was also discussed. Various options were raised with the preferred solution being continued funding of CFA for this work by AAFC.

Delivery Options Project

The next phase of this project was discussed in detail. It was agreed that further information was required from the first phase consultant was required, prior to decisions being made on the final work plan at the June meeting.

Certifarm Project

Note was taken that this project, managed by CFA on behalf of several NPOs, would be completed at the end of June. The Working Group members suggested that as one of the final outputs further work might be done on the issues related to administration costs of a national certification body.

Communication and Promotion

France Lanthier, task group co-chair, reported on the Working Group's booth at the SIAL trade fair and on several other matters. The Working Group discussed engaging a consultant to develop a three year communications and promotion plan for the Canadian Approach to On-Farm Food Safety to replace the one developed in 2004. The Task Group was authorized to develop an RFP and engage the consultant. It was noted that it would be most helpful this project could be completed by the September meeting so that there could be a discussion prior to the next strategic planning session in late 2007. The current challenges of developing a newsletter that would have broader interest and more focus on the implementation of programs by producers were discussed. The draft of the May newsletter was reviewed and some changes suggested. It was agreed that the Task Group would proceed with engaging a writer to work on the next two issues.

Producer Liability Project

Dale Riddell (steering committee member) and Erin McBain (project manager) reported on the evaluation of the responses to the RFP by the steering committee. They indicated that one of the proposals was clearly superior and, after a discussion, the Working Group agreed that the firm would be approached with some suggested changes and that the Task Group would be authorized to make the final decision.

Producer Implementation Cost Survey Project

The Working Group reviewed the draft work plan for this project and assigned responsibility for it to the Task Group on Sustainability. The Task Group was authorized to circulate an RFP and to select the survey firm.

Recognition Update

Considerable time was devoted to the on-going discussions within the FPT Subcommittee on On-farm Food Safety. Germain Brazeau reviewed the agenda for the June meeting and reported on the current status of various applications. Connie Kehler announced that the herb and spice program had been submitted for Technical Review Part 1 and that the face-to-face meeting was scheduled for late June. The status of the work of the 3rd party audit task group was reviewed. Their report, which should be ready during the summer, was now exploring just two options: audits by CFIA or by the Standards Council of Canada. Work was proceeding quickly on the finalization of a revised protocol or policy document and on the merger of the procedural manuals for the various steps in the recognition process into one document. It was noted that the parent committee, the FPT Agri-food Inspection Committee would be devoting a significant part of its May 2007 agenda to a report from the subcommittee and to finalizing committee positions on a certain matters prior to the re-organization of the FPT food safety committees.

A presentation was made by the ad hoc group on minimum audit frequency with the assistance of the consulting statistician, Professor Jeff Babb of the University of Manitoba. The Working Group's two minimum audit frequency proposals had been reviewed in detail at various confidence levels and group sizes. The results and a position for submission to the June subcommittee meeting were discussed.

Presentations

CFIA Toxic Substances Regulations

Catherine Italiano and Linda Morrison (CFIA) made a presentation on CFIA's toxic substances initiative. They noted that this new regulatory framework would apply to live animals and to food products on the farm, such as bulk milk and eggs. The regulations were designed to the Agency powers on farm consistent with its powers in registered establishments. The draft regulations would be published in the Canada Gazette Part 1 in the early fall with the objective of having them published in Part 2 by December 2007. The impacts of the proposals on farmers and on the on-farm food safety programs were discussed.

WTO Discussions of Private Standards

Emmy Verdun and Jamie Baker (CFIA) provided the Working Group with a presentation on the discussions now taking place within the WTO's Sanitary and Phytosanitary Committee on the matter of private standards. This subject had been raised by several developing countries. They are concerned that private standards, such as EurepGAP, SQF, etc., would impose standards on imports that were not subject to international rules. During the discussion it was noted that the national on-farm food safety programs being developed by Working Group member organizations were also private standards and that Canada thus had a dual interest in the evolution of these discussions. The officials noted that it was far from certain that the appropriate place to deal with the developing countries concerns was the SPS committee or, indeed, any committee of the WTO. The officials indicated that the next discussion would take place at the end of June at an SPS committee meeting. Input from the Working Group would be welcomed and it was requested particularly from members experiencing the impact of private standards in the export market.

Other Activities

Food Safety Conference

Jocelyne Galloway provided an update on the preparations for a Working Group/CFIA food safety conference scheduled for June 26th. The draft agenda was reviewed as were the proposals for speakers. The Working Group agreed to proceed with the conference, subject to registrations being sufficient by May 30th.

Working Group Administration

The Working Group met *in camera* to consider a report from its Task Group on Process Improvement. A number of decisions were made and a further discussion was scheduled for the June meeting.

Task Group Formation

Its 2007/2008 funding application and workplan having been approved by AAFC, the Working Group proceeded to re-establish the following task group: auditor training, communications and promotion, research, sustainability, producer risk project and delivery options project and named its

representatives to the FPT Subcommittee on On-Farm Food Safety, etc. It agreed to postpone appointing the Medicated Feeds Module Task Group until such time as CFIA publishes the next draft of the regulations.

Next Meeting Dates

The Working Group's next meeting will be held in Ottawa on June 28th and 29th. It was agreed that September 18th and 19th would be canvassed as the dates for the subsequent meeting with a location to be determined.

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