



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

### **Meeting Report - November/December 2006**

The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working (COFFS) Working Group met in Ottawa on 30<sup>th</sup> November and 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006. 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, and Jocelyne Galloway (CFA) reported on the status of this project. Contracts had been prepared and circulated to the selected delivery agents for the food safety and auditor training modules. A meeting was planned for mid-December with the two colleges who will provide the food safety module (in French and in English) to discuss course related issues (e.g. common examinations, reference material sources, etc.) and course management. It is expected that the pilots of both modules will be started in January 2007 and that the new distance learning versions of modules will be officially launched in April. The Working Group discussed the evaluation of the pilot sessions and the selection of pilot participants.

#### **Baseline Research Project**

Viki Sikur reported on behalf of the task group. She noted that the project consultants - Drs. Sarah Parker, SAF On-Farm Food Safety Research Chair at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine and her colleague, Dr. Sherry Hannon, had done an excellent job for the Working Group. Their three part report which covers the basic principles for research and surveillance vis-a-vis on-farm food safety programs, the research and surveillance framework for developing baseline estimates and initiating evaluation of these programs and recommendations to the national commodity groups on implementing research and surveillance provides a solid foundation for discussions within the Working Group and inside each national program on this important issue. The Working Group agreed that they required further time to review the materials provided by the consultants prior to a discussion of next steps and agreed to allocate portion of their next meeting for this topic and to invite participation in that discussion by other key stakeholders such as Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, CFIA and Health Canada.

#### **Sustainability Task Group**

The draft document developed by the task group for use in the federal/provincial/territorial consultations on the “next generation of agriculture and agri-food policy” was discussed several times over the two days of the meeting. The task group chair, Steve Leech reported on the work undertaken since the September meeting and the Working Group requested some changes and

additions to both the executive summary and the main text. The revised executive summary was reviewed and agreed to and direction was provided for the amendment of the main text prior to the circulation of the discussion paper to the Working Group members and its use during the first round of consultations on food safety in Ottawa on December 6<sup>th</sup> and in Vancouver on December 8<sup>th</sup>. The key messages to be presented by the Working Group are, in summary:

- that the development of national on-farm food safety programs is based on an on-going partnership between producers, the national commodity groups, and the federal, provincial and territorial governments;
- these programs are a direct response to consumer expectations for the demonstration of good food safety practices and a public good and that on-going government funding is, therefore, fully justified;
- that the federal government and producers (directly and through their organizations) have made significant investments in these initiatives and that under utilization of the currently available APF funds does not reflect a lack of commitment to food safety programs, but rather the challenges of developing these programs and the stepwise process of requiring completion of recognition steps prior to accessing the next level of funding.;
- that current funding programs, covering systems development and on-farm implementation should continue with modifications to help national producer organizations and producers to continue to develop, implement and improve on-farm programs which contribute to the public good;
- that future funding for systems development should be modified and extended to include an on-going commitment to second generation program development and program implementation costs and that this component should continue to be delivered by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the national producer organizations;
- that future funding for on-farm implementation should be modified and extended so that uptake which has been limited by application requirements and eligibility criteria and can be significantly improved for efficiency and optimum value for taxpayers and producers and that consideration should be given to alternate delivery approaches that would involve both national and provincial producer organizations;
- that the next generation of funding must also involve an on-going financial commitment to the national on-farm food safety recognition program so as to ensure that this cornerstone of the Canadian approach to food safety continues to make its unique and world leading contribution to the domestic and international acceptance of the national programs; and
- that governments should plan now to ensure that there will be a seamless transition from the Canadian Food Safety and Quality Program to its successor program and that there are no interruptions in funding for development and implementation of national programs or on farm.

It was agreed that the task group would undertake further work on the discussion paper by revising the detailed proposals concerning program modifications to include specific funding criteria and levels prior the start of the second round of consultations and that the Working Group would either review these at its next meeting or, if required on a conference call.

## **Delivery Options Project**

The results of the current work on delivery options were presented by the task group chair, Connie Kehler and Bob Hyde of Scott Wolfe Management Inc., the project consultants. He report results of the research on current costs of delivering national and provincial on-farm food safety programs. This had involved 21 national or provincial commodity groups providing detailed information on their current or anticipated costs across the full range of activities. A survey instrument had been prepared with the assistance of the steering committee and one-on-one sessions had been held with each group to ensure that as complete a set of data as possible was provided. The terms of reference for the project provided that in return for its cooperation, each group would receive a detailed report benchmarking its costs and that the Working Group would receive aggregate numbers. The results of this phase of the project were discussed in some detail and the Working Group reviewed its objectives for the next phase. It was agreed that the plan for the next phase should be amended to include further analysis of the new data and a re-engagement with some of the participating groups to refine the results prior to proceeding with the planned review of a selected set of options and the development of business cases for these. The task group was asked to revise its proposal and budget for the next phase in parallel with the work on the 2007/8 Working Group funding application (see below). The final report on the current phase of the project is due by year end.

## **Communication and Promotion**

Melissa Struthers reported on the task group's on-going discussions with CFIA and with AAFC on the format and funding of a conference on on-farm food safety. She noted that the Working Group's discussion of its expectations for the conference had been distilled into a new proposal and that several discussions had been held with CFIA officials since the September meeting. The option of holding a joint conference in this fiscal year was reviewed. This would have seen the Working Group's conference and CFIA's proposed industry/government session on on-farm and post-farm recognition combined. This option was reluctantly rejected as the Working Group's request for an amendment to its funding agreement would not be dealt with until March 2007. The Working Group agreed to proceed, subject to funding approval from the Canadian Food Safety and Quality Program, with a conference in mid to late June 2007 and to invite CFIA to consider participating in that session as well. The conference would be designed to attract farm leaders, other supply chain participants and government officials. The conference would include presentations food safety initiatives from along the supply chain, international perspectives, future opportunities for integration and case studies and it would be structured to permit opportunities for networking.

## **Producer Liability Project**

The new project manager, Erin McDuff (CFA policy analyst) was introduced to the Working Group and reported that CFA, on behalf of the Working Group, and AAFC had signed the contribution agreement. The Working Group reviewed and revised the draft request for proposals which was to be circulated to interested consultants as soon as possible. The selection of the consultant was scheduled for early January and the start of the project for February with a completion date for the interim report of early September 2007. The task group for this project will be established by the end of 2006.

## **International Scan Project**

Albert Chambers, Working Group consultant, reported on progress to date in the piloting of internet based review of on-farm food safety programs in other countries. This project will be completed in the new year and its findings shared with other stakeholders as part of a discussion about undertaking a broader assessment involving more countries and more programs/commodities.

## **Recognition Update**

Valeryia Staykova and Germain Brazeau of CFIA reviewed the results of the October meeting of the federal/provincial/territorial subcommittee on on-farm food safety and discussed other active files related to the development of the national recognition program. It was noted that the Working Group's representatives on the subcommittee were preparing additional information on the Working Group's proposals concerning audit frequency and that these would be shared prior to submission. CFIA's proposals concerning adherence verification and the review of changes to national program materials (e.g. generic models, producer manuals, management systems manuals) were discussed in detail. There was an agreement that options to introduce further flexibility in the filing and review procedures would be considered. The report of the two 3<sup>rd</sup> Party audit services risk assessment workshops (see September meeting report) was tabled and summarized by Walter Debicki, the Working Group's representative on the task group. The participation of a second Working Group member was requested and agreed to. The final report of this task group is expected prior to the next subcommittee meeting in April.

## **Medicated Feeds Update**

Judy Thompson, CFIA (Feeds Section) provided the Working Group with an update on the Agency's initiatives related to medicated feeds. She noted that since 2004/5, when CFIA was provided with additional funding for feed inspections, there had been an increase in visits to farms. This could be expected to continue with the target of on-farm visits climbing to 2000 per year. Inspections of feed mills, rendering plants and other facilities that handle medicated feeds were also being increased. The on-farm inspections were within the current regulatory framework and looked at both specified risk materials and medicated feed mixing. Ms. Thompson noted that while the current checklist, which dates from 2002, looked intimidating, the actual visits were being used by CFIA to gauge compliance and provide opportunities for improvement to the visited farms. She also reported that industry/government discussions on the proposals to revise the medicated feeds regulations had restarted earlier in the week. These would be continued in the new year and might lead to a revised set of regulations being published in the Canada Gazette by the end of 2007. Prior to this CFIA and Health Canada were intending to launch an exercise to classify medications used in feed on the basis of risk in order to identify low risk groups and perhaps to modify the proposed requirements accordingly.

## **Presentations on Approaches to Conformity Assessment and Auditor Training**

France Lanthier, national co-ordinator for the Canadian Sheep Federation's on-farm food safety program reviewed its draft proposals concerning conformity assessment and training. She noted that CSF was working with CFIA officials on the management manual and that this would be shared with other interested groups. The challenges of operating a system for with large numbers of small farms were discussed and other Working Group members shared their experiences.

## **2007/8 Workplan**

The Working Group members began their preparations for the Group's activities in the 2007/8 fiscal year by reviewing their activities in 2006, identifying those that were on-going and including several new items for consideration. Direction was provided concerning meetings and monitoring, communication and promotion, official recognition, research, risk management, program sustainability, medicated feeds, etc. There was a general agreement that the number of task groups should be reduced. It was also agreed that an application would be prepared for review in early January prior to its submission to the Canadian Food Safety and Quality Program on January 12th.

## **Next Meeting Dates**

The Working Group's next meeting will be held in Ottawa in late February or early March in conjunction with a workshop on the recognition of HACCP-based, industry-led food safety programs planned by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

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