

COFFS WG *Newsletter*



CANADIAN ON FARM FOOD SAFETY WORKING GROUP
NEWSLETTER

On-Farm Food Safety Activities

COFFS Working Group - Snapshot

National in scope, the HACCP (Hazardous Analysis Critical Control Points) based programs make food safety “pre-competitive” and accessible activities to firms or farms of all sizes across the country. The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety (or COFFS) Working Group funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada gave concrete examples of the achievements the industry-government partnership has developed at the June conference in Ottawa. Collaboration amongst the national commodity groups and the general farm organizations has been instrumental. An example of this collaboration is the COFFS Working Group established in 1998. Since then this working group has provided an opportunity for the development of the national



commodity-specific programs, farm leaders and other stakeholders to work together and to discuss common matters, initiate collaborative projects and undertake joint research. In addition, this group has been the focal point for monitoring Canadian and international developments related to food safety, liaison with the federal, provincial and territorial governments and communication. These producer-led initiatives and the unique and very successful partnership has helped to create a **WORLD LEADER** in on-farm food safety.

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The “Road Ahead” for On-Farm Food Safety

On June 26th, 2007 - One hundred and forty of Canada’s primary producers, industry organization leaders, government officials and consumers merged in Ottawa to discuss the future of on-farm food safety. Cooperatively, the COFFS WG and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) brought together international industry leaders from Canada, China, Australia and the USA to discuss a broad range of global food safety issues. Canada’s industry-led, HACCP-based food safety initiatives have reached an important stage. Drivers in the food safety industry took the stage in four panel groups to highlight initiatives and share commonal-

ities in such areas as:

- Canadian Achievements in program development, implementation and recognition
- Emerging issues in food safety
- International approach to food safety and quality programs
- Exploration of new initiatives in partnerships along the supply chain

Canadian Food Safety and Quality Program (CFSQP) Program Manager at Canadian Federation of Agriculture

Jocelyne Galloway gave an overview of the development of on farm food safety programs, an update on the HACCP-based, industry-led programs in Canada. The producer-led initiative has been key to the program development and implementation.

National Program Manager, Steve Leech of the **Chicken Farmers of Canada** provided an in-depth view of the Canadian context with on-farm food

safety and how it has developed. Particular attention was given to the movement through the federal/provincial/territorial government recognition process. Leech highlighted a positive outlook for the road ahead to the future of the COFFS programming and policy in Canada. **Larry Dworkin, Director of Government Relations for the Packaging Association of Canada**, clearly stated that “HACCP is a necessity for the packaging industry.” The industry has developed separate standards for rigid and flexible plastics packaging materials, paper based packaging, glass and metals in addition to the generic

Leech highlighted a positive outlook for the road ahead to the future of the COFFS programming and policy in Canada.

prerequisite program. Field trials have been met with positive benefits to companies, with metal and glass standards scheduled for completion for February 2008.

Germain Brazeau, Policy Analyst, Food Policy Coordination Division, Canadian Food Inspection Agency covered the development and the implementation of a recognition process to recognize the achievements of the voluntary food safety program led by industry.

Larry Dworkin, Director of Government Relations for the Packaging Association of Canada, clearly stated that “HACCP is a necessity for the packaging industry.”

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Full House International Conference



Attentive participants at the Lord Elgin Hotel in downtown Ottawa



Hank Giclas, Vice President Strategic Planning, Science and Technology for the Western Growers Association in California



Paul LeBlanc, Chair, On-Farm Food Safety Committee for the Canadian Horticultural Council

Leading the way for the international speakers, **Duncan Bruce-Smith, Coordinator, Livestock Quality Systems Meat and Livestock** in Australia spoke of the three main primary production sectors: grains, horticulture and livestock. Major focus was the Australian red meat industry and what has been done with the food safety. Traceability goes back to 1960/70's in Australia's history, and during that time food safety indicatives have adapted to what has been happening within the country and on the world stage. Australia is a major exporting country that has had to be proactive in this area. Bruce-Smith outlined cattle care and flock care programs and the links these programs had as animals are moved from their property of birth, Australia's approach to auditing of programs and the certification process was illustrated. Bruce-Smith explained how this has met customer and government expectations. **Hank Giclas, Vice President Strategic Planning, Science and Technology for the Western Growers Association in California**, gave insight to the 2005 outbreaks of leafy greens episode and how the market recovered. In 2006 Western Growers along with trade organizations published commodity specific guidelines on lettuce and leafy greens. However, September of 2006 the FDA announced an E. coli outbreak on spinach that brought the entire produce industry to a standstill. Western Growers Board of Directors developed "best practices" and implemented a system for ensuring that industries are being consistently and universally employed first in California and then nationally. The California Marketing Agreement, then a California Marketing Order was recommended as a progressive approach to American federal regulatory framework.



Duncan Bruce-Smith, Coordinator, Livestock Quality Systems Meat and Livestock Australia

Next was a joint presentation by **Paul LeBlanc, Chair, On-Farm Food Safety Committee for the Canadian Horticultural Council** and **Heather Holland, Senior Technical Manager, Food Safety and Government Relations for the Canadian Produce Marketing Association**, highlighted components of a collaborative supply chain project undertaken to compare national-level food safety programs and fresh fruits and vegetables from around the world. The need for this project arose from questions posed by Canadian produce suppliers as well as sellers of imported produce, about whether the global supply of fruits and vegetables is produced under comparable food safety programs. Analysis is underway comparing numerous programs from Canada, USA, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Europe, Chile and New Zealand, also gathering information to describe contents of food safety programs in Africa, Asia, South and Central America. Preliminary results are indicating that programs developed by the Canadian industry

compare favorably to the international counterparts. A final report is due out later this summer.

Luncheon speaker **Larry McIntosh, President and CEO of Peak of the Market** spoke avidly to "Agriculture, it's not just a commodity" and how the organization branded this idea to create consumer awareness and demand on commodities like vegetables. Doubling its sales, Peak of the Market's last 13 years has been the best in the company's 65-year history. Community and charity work has brought consumer awareness of their brand and company. Peak of the Market has taken a leading role in the food safety program within the Canadian horticultural industry.





Anita Stanger, Director, Food Safety and Quality Program division Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada



Conference participants are: 43% "farm", 21% "post farm" and 35% government.



Wenran Jiang Acting Director of the China Institute of University of Alberta

From the Challenges in Food Safety panel, **Mary L'Abbe, Director, Bureau of Nutritional Sciences, Health Products and Food Branch, Health Canada** brought attention on nutrition and health by government, disease and health organizations and consumer groups. L'Abbe outlined specific examples of recommendations to reductions in saturated and trans fats, free sugars and salt put forth by the 2004 World Health Organization of Diet, Physical Activity and Health. Calls for change can be loud and swift once mobilized. Technical challenges of finding suitable alternatives and in reformulating products, opportunities for new crop varieties or product innovations have occurred. Next on the consumer perspective was **Mary Alton Mackey, President of Alton Mackey Associates**. Consumers applaud the industry's concern with improving its safety practices but see two major drawbacks: process and voluntary participation. Standards, guidelines and regulations are in place by government but no notice for comment is given to the public for their feedback. The lack of transparency does not provide assurance to consumers. Alton Mackey says that consumers must be effective risk managers at point of purchase and in their own homes.

From Canada to China's food safety in the midst of globalization, **Wenran Jiang, Acting Director, China Institute at the University of Alberta** gave an overview of life in China. Jiang's presentation put China's food safety issues in the context of its current state of development which examines major problems that may pose risk to both Chinese consumers and others worldwide. China has identified a number of key factors in China's ability to confront public safety issues. Jiang's heart-felt, description gave an in-depth human perspective to the rise of China in the realm of food safety.

Key note speaker **Anita Stanger, Director, Food Safety and Quality Program division Agriculture and Agri-Food Can-**

ada spoke to the vision to help industry develop and implement government recognized food safety and food quality process-control systems throughout the entire food chain. Stanger applauded the collaborative involvement producers, industry and all levels of government have taken to create a positive atmosphere to protect human health, increase consumer confidence, increase sector capability and provide value-added opportunities. **Craig Bellamy, Biosecurity Officer, Canadian Food and Inspection Agency** gave insight on the Office of Animal Biosecurity (OAB) created in 2006 to respond to the threat posed by avian influenza (AI) virus. OAB was created not only to deal with the threat of AI but to help Canada's livestock, poultry and aquaculture industries develop disease prevention programs to counter the risks posed by contagious diseases.

Tracy Bryksa, Manager of Public Affairs and Marketing Manitoba Pork Council explained that food safety is a critical issue for producers and consumers alike. Development of a comprehensive quality assurance program has helped the pork industry in Canada ensure a commitment to safety that begins on the farm and continues through the supply chain, from gate to plate. **Dennis Stephens, Secretary, Canada Grains Council**, has worked with farmers and the grain industry to create a HACCP based on-farm and post farm food safety module for Canada's grain industry. Pilot projects confirm that the system is operationally feasible but it's critical any adoption must be based on market factors and supported by farmers and their industry. Currently, niche market demands for grains, produced under the guidelines, are being met when buyers are prepared to pay market premiums. Stephens encouraged governments to cost share items such as program administration, farmer training and on-farm audits as a means to increase HACCP based grain production.

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SIAL 2007 - The North American Marketplace

By COFFS - Communications and Promotions Task Group

Up Coming Events

September 18,19th
COFFS WG meeting
in Edmonton

The COFFS Working Group exhibited at the 4th edition of SIAL Montreal – The North American Food Market place from March 28th–30th, 2007

The Working Group's booth, located in the Canadian Pavilion, featured the national on-farm food safety programs. Staffed by representatives of the national commodity groups, it provided visitors with an introduction to the Canadian ap-

proach and emphasized Canada's leadership in developing implementing, national, HACCP-based programs under the leadership of primary producers and the links that these programs have with each other's along the supply chain.

The SIAL Montreal event is held every two years. This year, more than 750 exhibitors from Canada and around the world showcased new products, new technologies and new services to buyers from North America.

Successful Pilot - Auditor Course Update

By Chris Palmer— COFFS Auditor Working Group

The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working Group appointed the Auditor Task Group to revise and update our old auditor training material and commission the delivery of a new web-base on-farm food safety auditor training course. A course such as this will qualify prospective on-farm auditors who wish to audit Canadian On-Farm Food Safety programs. Graduates will then require commodity specific training to complete their qualifications.

The National On-farm Food Safety Auditor Course consists of two components; Module 1 is the Basics of HACCP based On-Farm Food Safety and Module 2 is the Basics of On-Farm Food Safety Auditing. The course will be available in both English and French. Lakeland College in Sherwood Park Alberta will deliver the English course and Institut de technologie agroalimentaire (ITA) in St. Hyacinthe, Quebec will deliver the course in French.

We ran a successful pilot this spring for the Module 1 – HACCP course. This provided valuable feedback from the participants, instructors and Colleges delivering the course. The Task Group and Colleges met to evaluate the course and suggest improvements to both the delivery platforms and the course presentation. The primary goal of these improvements is to ensure consistency between the courses and to improve delivery to the students.

Several changes were made. It was decided the course should be extended from 6 to 8 weeks to allow

for more practical exercises, additional course material and extra exam preparation time. The importance of the discussion forum and questionnaires, both for evaluation and practice, were emphasized. Significant changes to the platform will be made to make the course more user friendly and provide better instructions to guide the student through the program.

As improvements continue to be made, both Colleges agree the revised course should be ready for delivery this fall.

SGS will be the firm that delivers Module 2 – On-farm Auditing course. Progress on the contracts with SGS is proceeding. There are several intellectual property issues to deal with before the final launch, but it was agreed that they would not effect the pilot. It will be a four-week course taught in both English and French.

We expect the Module 2 pilot will run in late August of this year. All participants will be provided sufficient notice regarding the start date. After the pilot, the team will evaluate the course from the feedback provided and make the necessary changes to improve the material and delivery of this Module. Following that process, the new web-based National On-farm Food Safety Auditor Course will be officially launched proceeded by its delivery.

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