

**Canadian On-Farm Food Safety COFFS Working Group
October 26, 2010
CFA Ottawa**

The October COFFS face to face meeting was held in Ottawa on Oct 26 and 27th.

The two new people that joined the COFFS WORKING GROUP from Goat and Turkey were welcomed. A discussion was had as to where the domestic mushroom people were at. AAFC told us that they were not ready. Veal discussed the pending structure between Quebec and Ontario Veal.

The previous minutes were reviewed, action items addressed, action items reviewed and explained (for the benefit of the new people at the table) and approved.

Action Items included

1. Re-instating the auditor Task Group
2. Finalizing Newsletter content
3. Communications Plan and COFFS Working Group review
4. Website updates and secure website launch
5. FPT Committee update and report from dialog with CFIA
6. Task Group Review of COFFS Working Group comments on new Recognition System and CFIA's responses
7. Audit frequency Pilot update
8. ISO 65 comparative analysis
9. Crisis Communications Workshop:
10. List of participants from the FPT Food Safety Committee;
11. Accounting and pending applications

Pending Conference Application

An application is in and on its way to final review. The proposed conference would incorporate the post-farm group and addresses a few issues, including:

- How do we stand in the international arena with our recognition program?
- What does that mean to us individually?
- What does that mean to us as a whole?
- Strengthening links in communication throughout the whole of the value chain including on farm and post farm.

Discussion was had on the importance of making sure conference also promotes the OFFS program both domestically and internationally. To ensure that the impact of the information discovered at the conference is tracked - a post conference meeting was proposed to explore its impact and next steps.

CFIA report

Anne-Marie St. Laurent, Director Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) Food Safety Division presented to the COFFS COFFS Working Group on day one. She described her history and present day position with CFIA. She not only presented but participated in a lively discussion about food safety systems in Canada. She described the Agency's action plan, which includes pathogen reduction, enhanced surveillance, and meat inspection standard review, in addition to the Listeria recommendations as high level priorities. She saw OFFS playing a significant role in the area of pathogen reduction.

A discussion was had surrounding the FPT Food Safety Committee, its composition and COFFS role. Martin Firth from CFIA described the latest in the recognition and review process and what the pending changes may be. The objective of this group is to establish the protocol and details around both forms of recognition, carry out any discussion that committee wants, and have the sub-committee as the main forum for discussion of issues that arise. The intent at the moment is to present the current terms of reference to the Parent Committee at the Nov. 26 meeting in Ottawa.

Martin Firth continued discussion on the final steps of the recognition process. The goal overall by CFIA is to add flexibility to the process and to reduce the number of audits.

A description was detailed on the role and structure of the auditing program at the present time. There also was discussion surrounding third party audits and the cost impact. A proposed criteria list of qualifications for these auditors is being explored.

Audit conformance for OFFS management systems were discussed as to allowing more latitude while still practicing due diligence. It is being proposed that sector seek their own external auditor. CFIA may have a checklist as to what they are looking for as an auditor. There is feedback being solicited on the proposed framework.

Jamie Sefton – CFIA gave an update on behalf of CFIA's OFFS recognition program including detailing retiring and potential new staff. Jamie is now the National Coordinator for Food Safety Recognition Program for on farm. In September, the Verified Veal program received their letter of completion for technical review part one. Sheep re-review of part one review is underway and a face to face meeting is scheduled in November. The Cervid program is in progress. The Turkey Farmers of Canada, has come forward for management technical review, which will be in the screening process shortly. Many of the 18 month reviews may be on hold until the new staff are in place and are trained. The recognition procedures manual, dispute resolution, and appeal process are being finalized. Once the comments are incorporated, it goes to Martin for final approval, which should be completed by end of December 2010. These are now available and are awaiting final approval.

Jamie also went over the compile comments received on the proposed changes to the recognition process.

Discussion on Records that National Producer Organizations should keep

A discussion was had about what documents should be kept by National Producer Organizations about the programs they are delivering. CFIA has asked for additional information to be able to tell their department updated. AAFC pointed out that the Baseline study done last year would be a good source for that information without requiring National Producer Organizations to collect more information.

Agri-Talent

Debora Hauer, from the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council, presented to the committee.

CAHRC is a relatively new Sector Council and has a two pronged approach:

- Labour Market Information: who works on the farm and what they do, as well as the supply of farm labour
- Skills and Knowledge that producers need to know

Agritalent.ca was set up a year ago to address the skills and knowledge part of the approach. Connie invited Deborah in order for the COFFS Working Group to get more information and see if this could be used to get more information about the training available to those who need it.

Agritalent.ca is a bilingual searchable database of agriculture learning opportunities. Launched in 2009, it was developed for farmers, their employers, and youth hoping to enter the industry. In 2010, they have focused on adding training offered by agriculture associations to the site. You can search by subject of training, commodity, learning institution or agricultural organization.

There are 1,060 learning programs in the system. Half of these are long term projects lasting longer than two years. Associations can either choose to show the particulars on the Agritalent site, or put a link to their site which may feature the particulars. In an advanced search you can narrow it down by region or method of instruction within a commodity. They are revamping the site to make it more user-friendly. You can also do a keyword search.

There is no cost to posting. Workshops, activities, or one day events can also be posted.

AAFC Roundtable Discussion

Luc Marchand, acting director of the food safety and traceability program division at AAFC, as well as Linda, Director General of the Adaptation Council of the Food Safety Division were present to learn more about the safety programs.

Mathieu Rochefort – AAFC gave an update on the programming status to date. There is funding for this fiscal year and the remaining two years.

The group sought clarification on what the objective was for the projects and their funding, as it seems like it is an increasingly rigorous process for applications. Mathieu clarified that they are not cutting back but the new program's scope is narrower in order to focus on the food safety system. Under APF, there was a broader mandate, including implementation. There are strict funding parameters aimed towards updating or developing the system itself. The program guidelines and funding parameters are on the website.

NATIONAL PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS Roundtable

The COFFS Working group did a round table to give updates on the status of their programs.

ISO 2200: Food Safety Management Systems

Canadian General Standards Board.

A discussion including the background and details of the potential of accepting the ISO 2200 as Canada's standard for Food Safety. The speaker outlined that acceptance of this ISO standard as the national standard would eliminate any other standard in that area and only the accepted National Standard. The COFFS Working Group had concerns about the impact of this on the CFIA recognition process and our developed systems that were built on ISO and HACCP standards.

COFFS set a motion to comment on the standard consultation outlining the concerns expressed.

A letter will be sent from COFFS stating that they appreciate the approach, but the current OFFS program works, and we would be willing to share what we've done with the committee. Government stakeholders would be copied

CHC stated they would have to abstain from supporting the motion, as some of the member groups would not support her support of the motion.

Maple Leaf Foods Food Safety Day

Heather Gale reported about the symposium in September. It was a full day symposium with a focus on GFSI. It started with a welcome by Michael McCain and noted that all of the Maple Leaf Food plants were committed to attaining GFSI recognition. They have chosen the British Retail Consortium program. The day basically focused on GFSI, what the implications are, and what the retailers want. There were two panels for customers including Sisco, Sobey's, Wal-Mart, and Kroeger (US) gave their endorsement of GFSI. A supplier panel including Heather Gale (CHC), Kraft Food and Maple Leaf bakeries. Discussed the different approaches with GFSI and their experiences with GFSI recognition.

There was a concern raised that this may end up at the on farm level for the meat producers. However, Heather clarified that this does not seem to be the case for the farm level at the present time but may be discussed in a long term vision.

Dr. Brian Evans, Chief Food Safety Officer for Canada, spoke about the Food Safety indicators at the production level, pathogen reduction efforts, and how they brand Canada for Food Safety

On Oct 26, 2010, Dr. Brian Evans, Canada's Chief Food Safety Officer (CFSO), met with the COFFS working group. In his discussion and presentation to the group he shared his views how he saw the contributions and value of the COFFS working group. "I see Food Safety as a Team Sport and COFFS WG is a critical player" In his role as CFSO, Dr. Evans is intensifying his outreach efforts with various stakeholders including, consumer roundtable, Chief Veterinary Officers, Chief Medical Officers of Health, provincial agencies with the aim to synchronize and align the activities of the diverse stakeholder groups involved in food safety and health.

Here are some of the key points he shared with the WG:

Realities and Consumer Perceptions

To put food safety in context, there are 100 million meals consumed daily - 36.5 billion annually and approximately 3000 food safety investigations and about 200-250 recalls in Canada per year. Changes involving cultural and food diversity through immigration, allergenicity, consumer perceptions and trust are impacting on consumer behaviours. For instance, 1 in 13 people have a food allergy now, from mild to severe to anaphylactic; medications and immunosuppressive diseases change human response to pathogens, meaning food safety is not black & white, no absolutes.

Other elements associated with the production of safe foods impact on consumers who are taking longer to trust again. For example, the humane slaughter issue at a California plant 2 years ago is still preventing 15% of Californians from eating beef

Cultural diversity drives food imports too, what we grew up with is what we want to eat. Immigration has amplified this fact through the demand for diverse food from countries that do not have comparable food safety regime to Canada's. This increase in the variety of food also drives the diversity in taste and preferences, for example a 17 day survey at the De Gaulle airport in Paris identified 280 tonnes of bushmeat going into that country (monkey, lion etc. from Africa).

Regulations and Adapting to Change

Dr. Evans also discussed whether or not changes to regulatory regimes make a difference. In some areas this works, but it is important to remember that a reduction of regulatory burden can have its rewards. It is important to focus regulatory interventions on the highest risks and develop workable solutions. If we are doing surveillance we need to invest in it so we do it well.

To further improve the controls around food safety, which is the responsibility of many stakeholders along the continuum from farm to fork, Statutes and Regulatory instruments provide one of many opportunities to lead the change.

Transparency of compliance and performance information could compliment this adaptation to the change through applying market power as well as consumer demands for safe and acceptable food.

Canada and Other Countries

There are different regulatory behaviours in different countries. While in Canada there are significant regulations associated with food safety, the market through retailers (a non-regulated sector in Canada) is driving food safety in Europe. On the other hand in the USA, public focus is on the company and the ensuing legal action undertaken by the consumer against that company; as compared to Canada where public focus is on the government during a food safety accident or incident.

Food Safety Culture and Transparency

Dr. Evans underscored the importance of transparency and the adaptation to a food safety culture that is continuously increasing the pressures on both industry and government. Food safety is a culture and a commitment along the chain. It's a reflection of ecosystem health, production practices, animal/plant health, plus attitudes, awareness and behaviours. He sees food safety as a team sport!

"If we're going to do food safety right, as part of transparency, consumers want to understand performance dynamics. Want to know what's being done, who is in compliance and who is not, who are the repeat offenders"

Many factors play a role in food safety and consumer perception including humane slaughter, antimicrobial resistance and animal handling. It is important to talk about what we are doing right now, ensure the good guys get recognized and rewarded for their investments and not just talk about food safety during a crisis.

Dr. Evans also emphasized that programming support needs to be the right fit to be effective. If our markets depend on export then food safety increasingly becomes part of Canada's brand when it comes to trade.

COFFS and Its Role

Dr. Evans reiterated the importance of COFFS at the producer level and encouraged the membership to continue to play an increasingly active role at the Farm Level.

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The first day was summarized including the issues and solutions brought to the table, a revisit of the CFIA comments sheets, a discussion on using Dr. Evans quote that “The COFFS WG sees food safety as a team sport” as a tag line and an added agenda item to discuss the two big issues for each sector to assist in workplan development.

Caroline Wilson - Chicken Farmers of Canada Presentation

Caroline handed out a package with some forms which relate to auditor training and conflict of interest from auditors. She also brought along the auditor training manual, management manual and checklist. She discussed their status in Canada, OFF Auditor training, auditor role and responsibilities, conflict of interest, what is required by farmers to keep their certifications, and audit cycle.

Ian Richardson

e-biz Professionals

What is new in Traceability?

Ian addressed food safety drivers and outlined what role each played in traceability

Customer Demands

Intermediaries, packers and processors in a variety of sectors tend to derisk for those groups, as they rely on the farmers and suppliers with food safety programs to supply them with safe supplies.

Competitors Actions (International)

Australia and New Zealand export so much, they have had to develop programs that work in order to safeguard their export material. Brazil is being monitored. The Scandinavians have come up because they trade a lot with Europe. Brunei is looking to set up operating procedures for food safety and traceability in their poultry systems. They are looking to expand to exports.

Wholesale and Retail

They are looking to commonly source traceability.

Speed of Commerce may drive some of the interest in traceability, as it is the ability to move the information through a supply train quickly. They see traceability as the ability to move information quickly through a supply chain in an integrated manner.

Consumers are making decisions on a much larger range of food attributes. It is important to see if food safety is one of those attributes.

Traceability to them is the ability to move information through a supply chain. What information is in this case is food attributes and in the supply chain means partners. It is not external to the business. It is central to the business. It is not about technology.

What's new is what is useful right now:

- Livestock and Poultry for 2011
- Presumably in 2012, there will be other industries that will be requested to follow.

In terms of building blocks, there is software that is being built and data mining (a set of advanced tool that allows you to do analysis) approaches that work for different sectors and are flexible enough to be integrated at the producer level.

Progress Ahead

- From the government, there are programs in place that may need tweaking going forward.
- With respect to consumers, they are absorbing more information at retail outlets.
- With competitors including Australia and Brazil, targeted sectors and geographies can be profitable.

Outcomes of the movement forward

- Government initiatives move towards framework building in a coordinated manner.
- Retailers have mentioned that they will not compete on safe food.
- There will likely be some form of facility certification to recognize the food safety standards that can then be delivered to supply chains.
- The idea of being able to enter additional market, we should begin to target specific markets beyond the traditional markets and use food safety and traceability to enforce that.

Chris Abott, Canada Brand Integration

The Canada Brand Advocacy initiative

It was part of the Economic Action Plan's AgriFlexibility Fund, 32 million over five years and they are in year two. The focus was to enable consumer oriented initiatives in their key target markets so it is under the competitiveness file, as they are focused on key export markets for Canada. They consulted with industry on priority markets to target. There was a desire to focus on a few key markets, such as Japan and Mexico, with sustained activity in those markets. South Korea was chosen due to beef access issues in order to soften the market in that area.

They have just completed phase four of a study in Japan, Mexico and South Korea. The purpose of the research was to identify the target audiences and who the food leaders were and who the consumers are.

Japanese consumers are savvier and healthier. They are willing to pay more for a certain brand and they are willing to spend time to save money. There is a growth of farmers markets and environmental awareness. They spoke to those who run the household, which are women generally. What emerged from the focus groups was that key factors included: price, country of origin, safety, taste, and familiarity. Price was a primary criteria for selection. Their perception on the safety of foods revolved around country of origin and labeling and price. They wouldn't trust something that is too cheap and the reputation of the country. There is a very strong domestic bias. They are active and aware consumers and organized campaigns by consumer groups are popular and influential.

There is very low awareness of Canadian foods across the board. Maple syrup had very high awareness, followed by salmon. Maple syrup has a very strong "Made in Canada" link and branding. Canadian pork has also been very successful in Canada. However, there is a perception, due to the lack of reporting of Canadian food recalls, that Canadian food is safe. BSE is viewed as an American event.

Japan and Korea have highly developed food safety systems. Canada Brand has a country image, so it how to take that perception and extend it to food.

Canada ranks very closely to Australia in terms of safe and trustworthy countries in terms of image. Brazil, who is seen as a threat in the future in terms of exports, did not have a good country image.

Canadian food is seen to be safe, hygienic and tasty, which also reflects on climate, as they see us as a cold climate which is seen to be more hygienic. We are seen as comforting or that we have their interests at heart. A lot of the things they want, including food safety factors, Canadian products have, so these will be capitalized on in the future.

Mexico is an important export market as well. They are brand conscious and very health conscious, especially given their issues with diabetes and obesity. They are open to purchasing foreign foods. They are concerned with quality and freshness. Food safety was not addressed specifically but they trusted a certain brand and price point to be safe.

Country of origin was not considered an important factor in buying food. They have favourable impressions of foreign food in that they have better quality. China does export a lot to Mexico, but it is seen as unsafe. The US dominates export of food to Mexico.

There is low awareness of Canadian foods but they do have broader views of Canada being able to produce safe food. There was very little top of mind awareness in Mexico when it comes to Canadian food products. However, tree honey (maple syrup) was top of mind as a Canadian product. Bacalhau (*salted codfish*) also rated high.

In South Korea, food safety is very important and they are very reactive. They are very brand conscious as well. The primary buyers as females. They are very health aware and see Canada as a positive country and a good country image, but very low food awareness. Those that are aware of our food think they are safe. Safety is seen as an extension of country of origin. They tend to think that Korean food is safer and have a poorer opinion of imported food products. The beef issue there is very sensitive. Canada, however, has a low brand awareness.

Buy Local is important to their country from a spiritual perspective, as they believe they should eat food that is from the land they live on. So, South Korea will be difficult to penetrate as a market, but it is good that Canada ranks almost as high as Australia. The more we can promote that our food is safe, the more successful we will be.

Positioning food in South Korea is a bit behind the marketing for Mexico and Japan, but will be shared with industry as it is developed. It is important to have food safety as a key message. On the policy side, they will be working with scientists and academics to develop this as they are seen as credible sources of information.

Comments on the CFIA Document

Discussion continues on the CFIA document.

Concerns raised and addressed included.

- it is difficult to address when they are drawing the line between adequate and inadequate. Clarification may be necessary on this point in the future.
- on presenting the sectors on an individual commodity basis to those sitting around the technical table.
- The Fed-Prov team is for part one and CFIA will take over for part two (but will inform the FPT team about part two),
- The implementation step will have FPT involvement.
- CFIA team leader having a vote at the Technical review table importance

- Adequately controlled and its meaning.
- Process targeted to be more cooperative than combative

A discussion was had on technical review one and two process, the successes and the concerns.

Tom Halpenny, CEO of Mustard Capital (on phone)

A roundtable was held to introduce the group to Tom. He is also a member of the Agri-Food Safety committee. He was on the call to explain a bit about exporting to Europe.

Mustard Capital mills seed into mustard and export that around the world. They were set up in 2007 and export to 18 countries (France, Germany, UK, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark in Europe). Specific to mustard, there is a GMO issue. There was an issue a year ago in Austria (which does not allow GMO products), where Greenpeace did some study on Unilever's mustard which resulted in recalls. Some customers do view it as a food safety issue. The public perceptions in Europe drive the market regardless of the science.

He gave an overview of exporting to Europe.

No prior registration is needed for Canadian grain products into Europe, so the pathway is pretty smooth, with the exception of some countries. There are no duty related issues going into the EU. Each member state of the EU has sovereignty over what is imported.

Greenpeace was the watchdog on the GMO issue. The presence of canola with a GMO marker can be found in grains. There can't be an expectation of no GMO as there may be cross contamination.

There are some opportunities from the grain perspective. Canada is well placed in the areas of traceability and pre-selection. Traceability will help to mitigate unwanted occurrences to attribute back the source or find liability in the event of a recall. Farm practices forms a part of the traceability and bulk handling system. There have been very little price premiums, but as the programs become more defined, price premiums may be found. Canada is very well placed for traceability because of the on farm segregation and storage that exists. At this time, we are underdeveloped in this area but opportunities do exist.

Pre-selection programs are emerging, for instance a limit of GMO in the product, before shipping. This is a first step towards more integrated programs.

Microbiological controls are emerging as another issue. Monitoring pathogens is not new. However, it is migrating to different commodities. Controls on the farms are very difficult as they are naturally occurring on the farm. Irradiation is not accepted into Europe.

Another issue that is not well understood in Canada is anti-terrorism measures. There is some sensitivity about potential contamination. That will eventually make its way back to the farm gate, but the control now rests with the manufacturer.

Sustainability is now a new accreditation for suppliers. CEDEX is a self-assessment protocol for environment, social and economic sustainability. These are now becoming integral for vendor approval. Europe is a long term longstanding market for Canadian products. We compete with Eastern European products but Canada has a better perception of its product. There is some sensitivity about GMOs. We are well positioned to take advantage of this opportunity.

Top two issues – roundtable

A group discussion resulted in the below top issues with continued discussion on solutions.

- Engaging producers/ getting value back to the producer
- Long term cost sharing public vs private
- Producer seeing need of the program without a premium the why
- Limited staff resources
- Funding requirement and timing
- Surrounding issues such as animal health, transgenetic concerns, environmental concerns
- How to keep the programs going while keep the lowest impact on the producer
- Monies to keep program going until they can come with self financing
- Ensuring that the programs we develop do what we need them to do and that if needed they are recognized internationally

Conference Application

It has been submitted and is in final review. The top two themes have been submitted and promotion ideas have also been submitted. This is more about bringing the post farm closer to the on farm as they are building a post farm recognition program, so it is more about building bridges.

COFFS Application

A discussion was had about the application process and it was felt that the application was now in the final stages of review.