

Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working Group
February 8 - 9, 2011
Meeting Summary

This third COFFS meeting was made possible by the diligence in flight spending by COFFS members.

Application

COFFS was invited in June to apply for funding to continue work for the next two years. Their existing funding ends March 31, 2011. No word on the funding application had been received by this COFFS meeting. The COFFS Working group members, three of the provinces and Lakeland college had sent strong support letters for this application.

Newsletters

The last two newsletters are posted at www.onfarmfood safety.ca. The last newsletter will focus on where each NPO is, based on the minutes from this meeting, in order to optimize communication.

Communication Plan

The Communication Plan is in the final stages and actions from it have been implemented throughout the year.

Implementation Challenges

AAFC has asked that the COFFS working group discuss the challenges surrounding implementation. A discussion was had on how to improve the implementation process and next steps towards working on those improvement suggestions. The next step will be to discuss the findings with the provinces. The goal is to ensure that all producers have equal access to on farm food safety programming regardless of size, commodity or location..

Roundtable – see March Newsletter

Risk Management – What is adequately controlled.

A discussion was had surrounding the CFIA and practical definition of Adequately Controlled and how it affects our programs. There is a varying opinion on what is adequately controlled depending on the particular perspective. One important observation is that striving to have adequate control seems to be a vital component in having due diligence.

The group then shared common language surrounding the due diligence and “adequately controlled” to ensure risk was mitigated.

Branding

A discussion was had surrounding the use of a brand or logo. Caution was advised to ensure that the process was branded not the product.

Task Group Reports

Auditor Training Group

The auditor training group has been reassembled. They have reviewed comments and focused on continuing the Lakeland portion of the training until the whole program can be revamped. Lakeland is very supportive and is offering to bring some of their own resources to the table. They are also sending a letter of support for our COFFS application. Lakeland has moved from

using blackboard and are using something more user friendly and will clarify the mentor/trainer role.

There is no current training at ITA but if there is a demand – the program manager will check with ITA and SGS again to see if there is a possibility of running the course again before the revisions.

Audit Frequency Update

Dairy and Pork are moving ahead with the consultants. Dairy is awaiting a final report that should outline the plan for their industry and determine a sampling plan, which will determine the population size and non conformance rate. Pork is in the midst of reviewing the preliminary report from the consultants.

The rest of the NPOs will have an opportunity to do the same study if the new application is approved. The consultant exercise will give you an idea of how many random audits to perform to catch the level of non-compliance.

A discussion was had on the merits of paper vs full audit and the frequency surrounding it.

Nicole from Dairy learned from the Food Safety Conference with the speaker from Australia is that they had self declarations all the time and as she understood it, they may have someone come on the farm after 10 years. It was a program completely based on self-declarations.

FPT Task Group

The FPT Task Group met with Martin Firth (CFIA) the day before the meeting to discuss where CFIA was heading and addressed the points the task group had submitted earlier.

An issue raised was that of the federal government understanding the credibility that the OFFS program has and what it means to Canada. The importance of a clear message out there was outlined and it was emphasized that without it, the credibility of the program becomes an issue.

COFFS discussed its role at the FPT table and tried to find out what that role looked like. It looked like COFFS will more likely to be invited as needed to the table. Martin Firth had outlined that we may be invited to a meeting in March.

ISO 65

Terry said there was semi-final report draft which the subcommittee has comments on it so we aren't ready for that yet. The final version will be out in March.

This project had a consultant look at the Canadian approach to OFFS recognition programs and what recognition compared to in the states and in Europe, 3 different commodities in 3 different countries making a matrix of 9. One of the recommendations was to drill down further to find out the equivalencies for our approach versus one in the states for instance.

ISO Guide 65 – requirements that certification bodies or delivery agents have to follow in issuing certification or audits so it is rules for those Certification Bodies. This project compared that to the government requirements for NPO management systems and what the differences are.

The Value of COFFS

A round table discussion was had as to where the value of COFFS lies and how it could be improved. NPOs and AAFC described how the interactions at this table saved money, built bridges, educated and strengthened the OFFS program as a whole.

It was thought that more guest could be invited to the table. One suggestion was Health Canada.

FCC Management Software

Mathew Van Dyke and Glen Kroeker, Farm Credit Canada

http://www.fccsoftware.ca/en/ManagementSoftware/managementsoftware_e.asp

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) described various software programs that may be of value to farms doing OFFS safety programs. /They are presently working on a program that would help farms with more than one OFFS program.

Other tools such as *Field Management Pro*, is a producer focused software and management tool that was designed to eliminate paperwork. The program is intended for producers to use to track seeding, spraying, harvest and storage, and is primarily crop focused. Farmers can enter that information from their tractor using a hand held device. It is very user friendly and has a customizable set up wizard, which is adaptable to the commodity they are farming. It does track costs and provides an accurate cost of production. Inventory management is also significant as well as sales tracking. The software creates reports and sorts information in different ways. Crop insurance report generation is now possible; however, crop insurance forms differ from province to province, providing a unique challenge.

Field Manager Commercial is used by processors and crop input retailers, where they need to compile many different producers into one system. Annual releases of new software features are provided to users.

FCC has also auto populated Canada GAP forms into the software, and all CanadaGap forms are editable. Integration of the Excel Grains program with the software is ongoing and they hope to include that in the next version. The Excel Grains program should be available in the program by January 2012, and it would be ready to be auditable by March 2012.

Food Safety Modernization Act

Jessie El-Choueiry, of the Americas division of AAFC on bilateral relations and technical trade side presented on two areas. One focused on the snapshot of measures of food safety modernization issues that have an impact on exporters and the second is a set of advocacy lines that AAFC has drafted along with industry, provinces and other departments. They focus on the trade side of the food safety modernization act, rather than the technical side.

Research

Presentation by Gabriel Piette, PhD

Directeur scientifique / Science Director AAFC

Over the past five years, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) has restructured its research departments, and now have a very public national plan with clear priorities in science. In the area of Food safety, It is a result of 15 years of thinking to really define why AAFC should be involved. Their partners, like the Public Health Agency, CFIA, and Health Canada, are there to protect the public. AAFC is there to help farmers and food processors to produce safe food and meet regulations. It is more of a support role to the sector, rather than dealing directly with the public.

AAFC has identified three priorities that focus on food safety and one focusing with food quality. There are two major groups of projects in food safety, with the first one focusing on providing knowledge and tools to deal with bio-ecological food safety risk. The second one is almost a subset, as it deals with finding viable alternatives to antibiotics in livestock production. The third relates to intentional contamination of the food system.

The types of food safety activities conducted by AAFC federal partners include surveillance of diseases that arise across Canada, as well as evaluating compliance. AAFC is concentrating on finding ways to mitigate these risks. Through research, they are trying to determine how and when the agent enters the food chain (eg. at the farm or later by transportation or processing), and to evaluate what happens. With this information, they are trying to find mitigation strategies that are efficient and avoid losses.

Gabriel Piette provided an overview of the types of things the AAFC Research Branch are working on. There are general research themes and what happens on the farm. They are particularly interested in pathogens in meat, both because we eat meat and because animals are considered reservoirs of pathogens in the food chain. They also look at the pathogens in soil, crops, and produce.

Piette acknowledges that although the AAFC Research Branch has not had an area focusing specifically on on-farm food safety, he has asked his scientists for ideas. He personally feels that a better method of identifying and counting pathogens on site is needed because the environment at the farm level is so complex, with the environment on the farm, manual management and antibiotics. He refers to this as mapping pathogens on farm. Piette hopes to hear from the COFFSWG about what their concerns are and what the COFFSWG has been asked to do by CFIA. Piette provided a link within his presentation that lists all the public projects.

Gabriel's presentation was followed by a group discussion on Research needs identified during OFFS program implementation.

Next Meeting

Until COFFS hears from AAFC regarding funding a next meeting cannot be confirmed. But the group decided to tentatively hold June 8-9 in case the funding came through.

The meeting was adjourned.