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COFFS WG

Newsletter



CANADIAN ON FARM FOOD SAFETY WORKING GROUP NEWSLETTER

Season's Greetings from COFFS Working Group



May your holiday season have been filled with family, friends and delicious safe food from our Canadian farms!

History of COFFS

The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety (COFFS) Working Group was formed in October 1998 by the national producer organizations (NPOs) and general farm organizations. The Working Group provides a forum for research into and the collaborative development of national commodity-specific on-farm food safety programs and the Canadian approach to on-farm food safety (OFFS).

The objective of the COFFS Working Group is to work together so that producers will have available to them a Canadian approach to on-farm food safety. This approach includes government recognized, national, commodity-specific, auditable, HACCP-based on-farm food safety programs. It ensures these programs are technically sound, consistent, practical, producer friendly, affordable and meet the requirements of both the Canadian and international marketplaces.

The COFFS Program is a unique partnership between producers, their NPOs and government departments, in particular the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). This collaborative approach of industry and government working together to develop a voluntary HACCP-based on-farm food safety program is considered unique to most other countries. Built in collaboration by industry and regulators, the HACCP-based program design provides for consistency across all NPOs, while allowing for flexibility in commodity-specific requirements. This ensures that long-term benefits will be realized throughout the supply chain, including consumers.

The members unanimously agree that the Working Group is a success of its own, and has brought the entire agriculture community closer together. As a forum, it provides a unique opportunity for very diverse commodity organizations to have one voice and one common approach to address very complex issues. This has strengthened relationships and collaboration with various government departments and regulators. The Working Group also provides a means to address other program management issues such as auditor training, producer liability, various delivery options and models, and risk management development.

Over the years, the COFFS Program has resulted in many significant achievements and advancements across the entire agriculture industry, including 19 NPOs developing and implementing 29 commodity specific programs. The COFFS model of program development and partnership with the federal, provincial and territorial governments is leading edge and an example of the profits of collaboration. This voluntary national program is a proven model of success for other national program priorities and new innovations. The benefactors include the entire chain from producers to consumers, domestic and international.

COFFS Vision and Mandate

That farmers will have available to them a Canadian approach to on-farm food safety that is composed of government recognized, national, commodity-specific, auditable, HACCP-based on-farm food safety programs that are consistent, affordable and meet the requirements of both the Canadian and international marketplaces and such other supportive elements as are required to ensure its credibility and sustainability.

The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety (COFFS) Working Group has been established by the national producer organizations as a forum for research into and the collaborative development of initiatives related to the national commodity-specific on farm food safety programs and the Canadian approach to on-farm food safety.

www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca



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Canadian Pork Council

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What is New in Traceability

Ian Richardson, eBiz Professionals Inc.

Ian Richardson addressed food safety drivers and outlined what role each played in traceability. The four main drivers of on-farm food safety include government initiatives, consumer concerns, customer demands and actions of Canada's competitors. Customer demands, such as intermediaries, packers and processors in a variety of sectors, tend to de-risk for those groups, as they rely on the farmers and suppliers with food safety programs to supply them with safe supplies.

Wholesale and retail customers are looking to commonly source traceability. The speed of commerce may drive some of the interest in traceability. They see traceability as the ability to move information quickly through a supply chain in an integrated manner. In terms of consumers, they are making decisions on a much larger range of food attributes at the retail level. It is important to see if food safety is one of those attributes. Food safety attributes are a competitive factor in the EU, but not in North America.

Traceability to customers 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, nor a new program. It is central to the business. It is not about technology.

New to traceability for 2011, livestock and poultry are mandated. 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. Tags and physical identifiers are becoming more cost-effective and hardware functionality continues to merge.

Market-Based Traceability

- Understand requirements
 - Align processes
 - Identify attributes and keys
 - Standardize terminology
 - Agree/conform among market partners
- Manage information flow

As the traceability movement progresses forward, Government initiatives are expected to 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. With respect to the idea of being able to enter additional markets, we should begin to target specific markets beyond the traditional markets and use food safety and traceability to enforce that.

In summary, Richardson explains that technology will be there to do what you need. Models exist, and piloting has been completed. Traceability is not sectoral, nor competitive; it's supply-chain-oriented and cooperative and provides an opportunity for differentiation. He recommends looking for early adopters – they are already doing it and they will share audiences hot spots were also very helpful.

www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca



Egg Farmers of Canada **Start Clean – Stay Clean™** **Clean Start (Pullet Program)**

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Majo

Why choose a National OFFS program?

On today's farm there are many choices for the farmer to make on what systems or system they should have in place.

Often producers are looking at environmental farm plans, traceability plans, organic systems, emerging biosecurity, and other quality programs and on farm food safety programs.

- **Simplicity** – national On-Farm Food Safety program provides a base to build on and a recognizable format. Modules can be added on to address biosecurity, animal welfare, etc.
- **Credibility** - programs were designed based on international standards (HACCP, ISO, etc.)
- **Government Recognition** - Under the Federal-Provincial-Territorial On-Farm Food Safety Recognition Program, the Canadian federal and provincial governments will recognize only one (national) program per commodity. Programs are reviewed for technical soundness and effective implementation.
- **Facilitate Trade** - Many agricultural products move across at least one border. National programs facilitate movement across inter-provincial and international boundaries.
- **Reduce duplication** of programs, avoiding confusion and minimizing extra costs to industry.

Confusion is not good for neither the buyer nor the consumer.

www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca



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Debra Hauer, Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council
www.cahrc-ccrha.ca

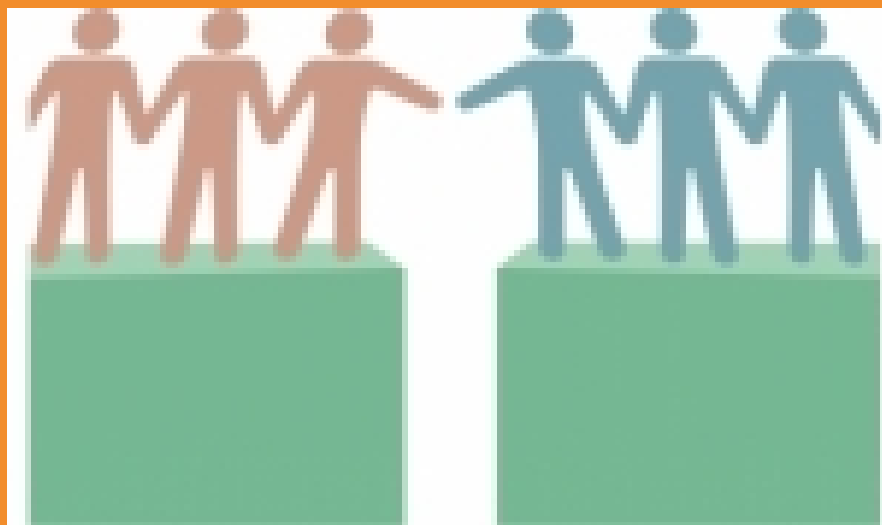
The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC) is a relatively new Sector Council with a two pronged approach. CAHRC focuses on labour market information, such as who works on the farm, what they do, and the supply of farm labour. CAHRC also focus on skills and knowledge that producers need to know.

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

By August 2010, there were 218 providers featured on Agritalent, with 74% educational institutions and governmental organizations, 20% associations and 6% private/for profit organization. There are 1,060 learning programs in the system. About half are full-time programs such as degree or diploma programs taking two or more years to complete. The other half are part-time programs such as certificate, apprenticeship, distance and continuing education, short courses, conferences or workshops,

Organizations can either choose to show the particulars on the Agritalent site, or put a link to their site that features the particulars. In an advanced search you can narrow it down by region or method of instruction within a commodity. There is also a keyword search function. The site is being revamped to make it more user-friendly.

Organizations are invited to contact CAHRC if they want to promote their learning opportunities. There are two forms to complete, one that describes the organization, and one that describes the program. CAHRC is responsible for the initial upload on Agritalent and the trainer provider keeps the course information updated. Every three months, CAHRC sends each organization an email with a link to update their learning programs. The link remains live for three months and can be set to active or inactive/deleted. There is no cost to posting. Workshops, activities, or one day events can also be posted.



The Canada Brand Advocacy Initiative

Chris Abbott, Senior Branding Officer, AAFC, Canada Brand Integration

The Canada Brand initiative, part of the Economic Action Plan's AgriFlexibility Fund (www.agr.gc.ca/agriflexibility), was announced in September 2009 with \$32 million allocated over five years. The initiative is in its second year with funding provided to enable consumer-oriented promotional activities in key export markets; it is designed to support the competitiveness (sales abroad) of the Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector. Consultations with industry identified key target markets to focus on, such as Japan and Mexico, with sustained activity in those markets.

Public Opinion Research (POR) studies of consumers in Japan and Mexico were completed in 2010. The research was conducted to acquire strategic and tactical information for the design and delivery of Canada Brand marketing campaigns in those markets.

The research identified key target audiences for the Canada Brand, such as food leaders and those primary grocery shoppers, often women from higher income households, who are most open to purchasing imported foods.

Research also revealed the importance of various factors in the food purchase decisions of respective country consumers. In Japan, for example, taste, safety, freshness, cleanliness and price were top factors. Japanese consumer perception of the safety of foods revolved around country of origin, product labeling and price. Their perception of Canada as being trustworthy, safe, clean, and having a good country image reinforces the perception that it is a supplier of safe food products. Japanese consumers are savvy and politically active with regard to food safety issues, and organized campaigns by consumer groups are popular and influential with agricultural lawmakers. In Mexico, the nutritional aspect of ingredients rated highest as a food purchase criterion.

The overall Canada Brand marketing approach will be to work with associations, companies, provinces and trade commissioners to undertake: media/public relations activities, influencers campaigns, special events, and point-of-sale (retail and restaurant) promotions. These activities will be supported by consumer-oriented websites and targeted advertising campaigns; the campaigns will incorporate food safety messaging and other proof-point information where appropriate. Co-branding opportunities will also be explored with foreign companies that use Canadian ingredients. Industry work will continue to be supported through current programs and initiatives, such as market development activities for buyers.



Agri-Food Trade Service

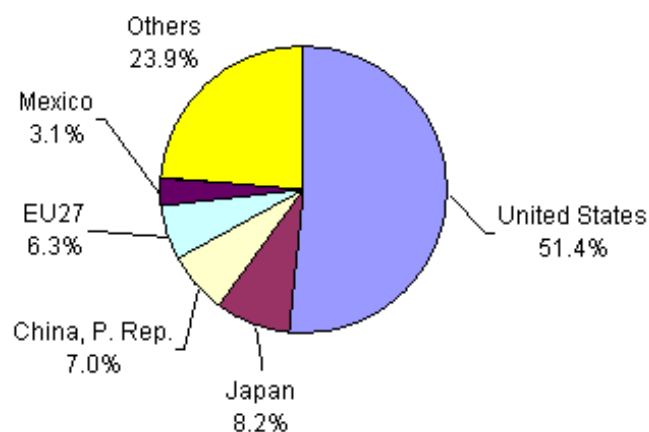
Exports - Agri-Food and Seafood for January to December 2009

Major Canadian Partners

Top 10 Agri-food and Seafood Markets (in \$ millions)
(2008 total) (2009-Dec) Same Period 2008

	(2008 total)	(2009-Dec)	Same Period 2008
United States	22,373	19,958	-10.8%
Japan	3,947	3,200	-18.9%
China, P. Rep.	1,798	2,712	50.9%
EU27	2,751	2,463	-10.5%
Mexico	1,568	1,207	-23.0%
Bangladesh	210	544	159.8%
Hong Kong	542	544	0.3%
India	430	539	25.6%
Saudi Arabia	303	468	54.3%
Iraq	119	436	265.0%

2009 January to December
Export Market Share



Progress on Food Safety

As of October 2010

A collaborative report prepared by:

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
Health Canada
Public Health Agency of Canada

In the summer of 2008, an outbreak of foodborne illness caused by the presence of *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat meat resulted in the deaths of 23 Canadians. The Government of Canada immediately took a number of preventive actions to reduce the risk posed by the possibility of similar outbreaks in the future.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) quickly tightened food safety controls in federally registered plants that produce ready-to-eat meat products. The Agency also strengthened its directives regarding the control of *Listeria*, based on Health Canada's policy on *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods. These directives include the requirement that processors of ready-to-eat meat conduct environmental testing in all plants and to immediately report any positive findings to CFIA.

CFIA, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) - the federal organizations with responsibility for food safety - each examined their operations and their actions during the outbreak. Each organization produced a "lessons learned" document and implemented action plans to strengthen their response to outbreaks of foodborne illness.

Because of the serious nature of the listeriosis outbreak, the Government of Canada also asked Ms. Sheila Weatherill to lead an independent investigation into its circumstances and to make recommendations to strengthen the food safety system.

In July 2009, the *Report of the Independent Investigator into the 2008 Listeriosis Outbreak* (the Weatherill Report) was submitted to the Government and publicly released. The Report outlines the events that led to the outbreak, describes the Canadian food safety system and the responsibilities of industry and government, examines what went wrong, and proposes 57 recommendations to help prevent future outbreaks.

In September 2009, the Government committed to act on all of the recommendations of the Weatherill Report. In the past year, the Government has made considerable progress in response to the Weatherill Report recommendations. This interim report at the one-year mark provides information on action that is being taken to implement the recommendations of the Report in relation to three key aspects of the food safety system - reducing food safety risks, enhancing surveillance, and improving emergency response. Collectively, these actions continue to improve the food safety system in Canada.

Read this full report at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/transp/prog/prog1010e.shtml>

New Forum Gives Consumer Associations a Clear Voice in Food Safety

Ottawa, December 8, 2010:

Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz launched a new roundtable focused on giving consumers an additional opportunity to raise concerns and discuss ways to further improve Canada's food safety system. This new forum is another way the Government of Canada is improving transparency, consultations and communications with Canadians, as recommended by the 2008 report of the independent investigator, Sheila Weatherill.

"Canadian families have always played a front-line role in food safety, whether it's in their kitchen or when providing valuable feedback to our Government," said Minister Ritz. "Food safety is a top priority for our Government and this new, consumer-focused forum will help make Canada's food safety system even stronger."

The roundtable will improve collaboration with consumer associations and will share information and ideas important to all Canadians. The forum will give consumers a stronger voice in food safety and related issues under the mandate of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Eight core consumer associations with national or significant regional representation will make up the roundtable. Additional representatives, experts and speakers will be invited to participate. See the backgrounder for more info.

Dr. Brian Evans, of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), and Chief Food Safety Officer and Chief Veterinary Officer for Canada, will chair the roundtable, which will take place at least twice annually, with contact being maintained throughout the year as issues requiring input arise.

For additional information, please visit the CFIA website at www.inspection.gc.ca.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency
Media Relations
613-773-6600

Read more at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/newcom/2010/20101208e.shtml>

Historic Reesor Ranch adds VBP to their business plan

VBP fits this ranch's direct-to-consumer marketing

It's been more than 100 years since Scott Reesor's great grandparents left Ontario for the big sky ranch country of southwestern Saskatchewan. In 1904 they filed their homestead claim in the beautiful rolling lands in the Cypress Hills.

Like many in that era of western migration, theirs was a legacy of challenge, perseverance and eventual triumph. Today, Scott and Theresa Reesor and their children, the fourth and fifth generations of Reesors still live on that original homestead, still run a cow-calf operation, and like their forefathers are still adapting to write their own success story.

Scott and Theresa are building on the beauty and history of their ranch by diversifying their business base for the future. They have transformed a bed and breakfast started by Scott's mother into a thriving guest ranch, including new guest cabins built around an historic theme that enables them to share their heritage with visitors. They sell a small amount of beef off the ranch to guests and have expanded into selling bottled water from a spring on their land under the Reesor Springs label.

With many direct-to-consumer opportunities and an obvious passion for their industry, the Verified Beef Production (VBP) program was an obvious addition to their operation.

They heard about VBP in the fall of 2009 and moved quickly to full participation. "It tweaked our interest when we first heard about it, and by December of that year we were at a VBP workshop and enrolled in the program," says Theresa.

Why VBP

At the year-round guest ranch, the Reesors have an opportunity to connect directly with consumers that most beef producers never get. VBP complements the conversations they are already having with guests and illustrates their commitment to livestock production.

"With our combination of tourism and the cattle business, we just thought it was a win-win for us. It gives us a chance to educate visitors about beef, on-farm food safety and to build consumer confidence as a Verified Beef Production operation," says Theresa who is a passionate advocate for the cattle industry and their way of life.

"People expect to eat beef when they come here so it is a great opportunity to talk about our beef and for them to take some Reesor Ranch beef home after their visit," she says.

The VBP process proved easy to adapt. After completing the workshop, they took the sample records and manual home to the ranch and haven't found much additional effort required in keeping things up-to-date. "They were all things we were doing already, it was just a matter of doing the paperwork and recording it," says Scott. "Any extra work that goes into it is outweighed by the benefits we get out of it."

The Reesors completed the initial validation audit in June and are happy with the process. "It was a really good day with our auditor. We went through the checklist and covered all the food safety issues, medication, safe injection sites and withdrawal times in just a few hours," says Theresa. Aside from reinforcing the best practices already in place, they picked up a few useful tips.

Historic Reesor Ranch adds VBP to their business plan continued

VBP ambassadors

The Reesors have become a standard bearer for the VBP program, discussing it with family, friends and neighbours. “People see the sign on the property and on our website and ask what that means. We are always looking for good things that we can talk about and good stories in the beef industry,” says Theresa.

“We get a lot of questions like ‘What’s that all about? Is that organic?’” she says. They take the time to explain how they raise their 100 - 150 head of cattle in a very natural setting which allows them to reduce the amount of additional work they need to do with the cattle.

Scott believes the majority of producers are already well versed in the Best Management Practices that are the basis of the VBP program. “They may not realize it and look at VBP as more work, but it fits within most programs. VBP could really build and have more people involved in it if the extra work was reflected in their pay-cheque at the end of the day.”

The ultimate industry goal, Theresa adds, is for the market to recognize the additional value to consumers of having a strong VBP program. Stronger recognition of good stewardship practices will encourage consumers to eat more beef and will add value to the producer’s business and to the industry as a whole.

For more information on the VBP program go to www.verifiedbeef.org. For more information on the Reesor Ranch go to www.reesorranh.com.



For more information please visit www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca

Crisis Communication Workshop

Trillium Corporate Communications **www.trilliumpr.com**

The objective of the Crisis Communications Workshop held in Ottawa in October 2010 was to help the COFFS WG communicate accurately and effectively during a crisis, maximize opportunities/minimize risk, and work with the media.

A Corporate Crisis is defined as: “A business or organizational problem, exposed to media attention, which threatens your organization’s reputation and ability to carry on its normal business.”

Crisis management is a critical business function and a crisis management plan should be developed ahead. Crisis are inevitable and should be planned for. A crisis could include any number of possibilities, such as food recalls, food poisoning resulting in illness or death, strike or supply chain interruption, environmental disaster, technical failures, etc.

Although good communications alone will not solve a crisis, bad communications can make it worse. Participants learned how to develop a crisis management plan, preparation and communications strategies, working with the media and managing information. Planning ahead, being prepared and having a trained crisis communications team is important for any business or organization to manage a corporate crisis.

“Yes, consumers—there is a Santa Claus!” The U.S. senate delivers an early gift - Passes the FDA Food Safety Act on Sunday, Dec. 19, 2010

19.dec.10

Consumer Federation of America

Consumer Federation of America applauded the U.S. Senate for passing the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (S. 510) by unanimous consent tonight. The bill must now be voted on by the House before being sent to the President for his signature. The House has passed the legislation twice before and is expected to do so again.

“S. 510 was down but never out,” said Chris Waldrop, Director of the Food Policy Institute at Consumer Federation of America. “Tonight’s Senate vote is an early gift to consumers across the country.”

Carol Tucker-Foreman, distinguished fellow in food policy said, “As a journalist once assured a young girl that her faith in Santa Claus was a justifiable extension of the spirit of the Season, we are gratified to have our faith in the U.S. Senate similarly sustained.”

The FDA Food Safety Modernization Act requires a fundamental shift in the Food and Drug Administration’s food safety program, emphasizing prevention instead of waiting until people become sick or die. The bill specifically directs the FDA to prevent foodborne illness and requires the agency, food processors and produce farmers to identify areas of risk and act to prevent contamination. It also requires the FDA to inspect food processing plants on a more frequent basis and requires the FDA to assure that imported food is as safe as domestically produced food.

In an era of rank partisanship, CFA is grateful to Senators from both parties who joined forces to pass this legislation. We are especially thankful for the leadership of Senators Durbin, Harkin, Dodd, Enzi, Gregg and Burr and the staff of the HELP Committee for their tireless efforts to pass this important legislation. We thank Senators Reid and McConnell for coming to agreement so the bill could pass tonight by unanimous consent.

We urge the House to act quickly next Tuesday to pass the Senate bill and send it to the President for his signature.

CFIA On-Farm Recognition Program

General Overview

Steps of the CFIA OFFS Recognition

The "recognition" process is 3 Steps. A National Producer Organization (NPO) must complete all three steps to be granted official CFIA Recognition of their On-Farm Food Safety Program. After "Recognition" the NPO will under go "on-going monitoring".

Step 1: Technical Review Part 1 & 2

- Technical Review Part 1 is a review of the NPO generic HACCP model and the producer manual.
- Technical Review Part 1 is carried out with the participation of the provincial, territorial, and federal governments.
- Technical Review Part 2 is a review of the NPO management system manual and associated documents.
- Technical Review Part 2 is completed by CFIA On-Farm Food Safety Recognition Program staff. The provinces and territories are informed of the initiation of the Technical Review Part 2.
- The tool used in the accomplishment of the Technical Review Part 2 is the Gap Analysis Check list. It is comprised of a reference column, a requirement description column and a check-off column.
- Letters of completion are given to the NPO upon the completion of technical review Part 1 and Part 2.

Step 2: Implementation by the National Producer Organization

- This step is the responsibility of the NPO.
- Using their management system the NPO implements the OFFS program and fills out records to show that tasks and procedures are being completed.
- It is proposed that the NPO will be responsible to contract a 3rd party auditor to conduct a complete assessment of the NPO On-Farm Food Safety Program. The report from this audit will be submitted to CFIA by the NPO as part of the "implementation assessment".

Step 3: Implementation Assessment

- Although in draft form it is expected that the final assessment will be conducted with the participation of CFIA OFFSRP, Federal, Provincial and Territorial government representatives.
- The proposed objective of the implementation assessment is to ensure that the NPO entire On-Farm Food Safety Program meets all CFIA requirements.

On-going Monitoring

- Upon completion of Technical Review Part 1 an NPO will be subject to a "Review of Changes" every 18 months.
- Once an NPO OFFS program has received official "recognition" it will be monitored at regular intervals to ensure that the program continues to meet the CFIA OFFSRP requirements and criteria.

Questions may be directed to;

James Sefton

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The Canadian Approach to On-Farm Food Safety

Today, there are four main drivers for on-farm food safety: consumer concerns, government initiatives, customer demands and the actions of Canada's competitors. To respond to these demands, and to demonstrate that Canadian food is among the safest in the world, the agricultural community worked with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to develop on-farm food safety programs. The farm organizations have also worked with the federal, provincial and territorial governments to establish a process through which these programs can be officially recognized by the CFIA for technical soundness and administrative effectiveness.

On-Farm Food Safety Programs

Today's national on-farm food safety programs are developed by national commodity groups working with industry experts and experts from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to ensure scientifically sound practices.

National producer associations follow a generic process for developing an on-farm food safety program. First, they develop a national strategy. Then they evaluate current production practices, develop a generic HACCP model and determine how to control food safety hazards through Good Production Practices (also known as Best Management Practices or Good Agricultural Practices). The program developers use a science-based set of principles known as HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) to identify food safety risks and determine how to monitor, control and prevent the food safety risks. HACCP principles help the program developers to identify which good production practices should be employed to ensure that food safety hazards are minimized on the farm. Lastly, they develop a Producer Manual which explains the program requirements to producers.

Following that, National producer associations, often with cooperation from provincial producer associations, help producers implement the on-farm food safety program. National producer associations can also offer certification or verification services to producers because the program requirements are designed to be auditable. Certified or verified farms can demonstrate to customers that they meet program requirements and are committed to maintaining them.

The Canadian Approach is resulting in technically sound programs that are based on a rigorous "HACCP-based" approach which is consistent with the Codex Alimentarius Commission's approach to HACCP. Almost every project has made use of input from suppliers and customers, and have availed themselves of both reviews by CFIA and by farmers and other experts. Farm organizations have openly shared information amongst the projects - both successes and challenges. As a consequence, the On-Farm Food Safety (OFFS) programs that have resulted and are being developed are technically sound, practical, producer friendly and auditable.

For more information about the Canadian Approach to On Farm Food Safety

Visit

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