



Canadian Approach to On-Farm Food Safety Newsletter

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COFFS Working Group - 2006/7 Workplan Funded

The 8th workplan (2006/2007) of the Canadian On-Farm Food Safety (COFFS) Working Group has been approved by the Industry Review Committee of the Canadian Food Safety and Quality Program ensuring the continuation of this unique collaborative initiative by national commodity groups, national and provincial general farm organizations and other interested stakeholder groups. The Working Group is "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".

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) is providing \$467,675 for this year's projects and the farm organizations are contributing \$183,000. The 2006/2007 workplan focuses on the following initiatives:

- regular meetings of the Working Group;
- monitoring of international developments in on-farm food safety, emerging issues, government initiatives, etc;
- communications and promotion activities (including this newsletter, its website and participation in a series of agricultural and food industry events);
- a 4th national farm leaders meeting to provide policy direction to the Canadian approach;
- continued negotiations with the federal, provincial and territorial governments on the CFIA led official recognition program;
- restructuring of the Working Group's national auditor training module to an elearning model;
- a project on the costs of delivering on-farm food safety programs;
- a review of future training needs; and
- completion of a common module to meet the proposed medicated feed mixing regulations.

AAFC Improves On-Farm Implementation Program Funding

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has improved access to its funding program for the on-farm implementation of commodity-specific food safety programs. This positive development is a direct response to suggestions made by the COFFS Working Group.

Originally announced in April 2004 the \$80 million OFI program channels funds to participating producers through their national organizations and provincial delivery agents. Producers are eligible for partial funding of three types of activity:

- workshops to develop an understanding of on-farm food safety systems;
- technical support to adapt and implement food safety systems on their farms; and
- the purchase specialized equipment required by a commodity-specific program.

The improvements which came into effect in March 2006 triple the funds available for workshops from \$100 to \$300, allowing producers to attend sessions on up to three programs. Funding for technical support and/or the purchase of equipment continues at \$750 per farm.

National producer organizations and their delivery agents will now have greater flexibility to meet the demand for workshops, especially in remote areas. AAFC has funded implementation of two national projects to date - Canadian Quality Milk Program and Verified Beef Production. Several other applications are in the pipeline for approval. National on-farm food safety programs must have completed Technical Review Part I of the CFIA-led official recognition process to be eligible for funding.

Canadian Quality Milk (CQM) Program Pilots Technical Review Part II

Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC) recently submitted its registration system for the Canadian Quality Milk (CQM) program to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) for review under Technical Review Part II. DFC previously completed the Technical Review Part I (HACCP Generic Model and Producer Manual review) and is the first national producer organization to continue to Technical Review Part II (management system review).

DFC agreed to participate in CFIA's pilot of Technical Review Part II, using the Gap Analysis Checklist tool, which compares the CQM registration system to the Government Requirements for a Management Manual. The registration system simply explains how DFC manages the CQM program; covering topics such as training validators (auditors), validating producers and maintaining the producer requirements. The registration system is designed to ensure consistency, maintenance and improvement of the CQM program.

DFC found the Gap Analysis to be a good learning experience that identified areas for improvement. CFIA demonstrated excellent expertise and a willingness to ensure their requirements are flexible enough to enable industry to develop a system that works best for them.

DFC is on the verge of completing the Gap Analysis. Next, DFC will implement the changes and continue to encourage dairy producers to implement the CQM program and be registered. To achieve full recognition, DFC would have to undergo a third part audit and CFIA assessment. The federal, provincial, territorial subcommittee on on-farm food safety is currently working on defining these processes.

Working Group selects consultants for two projects

Dr. Sarah Parker, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food - On-Farm Food Safety Research Chair at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatoon, has been engaged to assist the COFFS Working Group in developing **research guidelines and monitoring programs** to evaluate the implementation of On-Farm Food Safety Programs.

The first phase of this project is a concept paper that will identify the general characteristics of an effective baseline monitoring program and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of such programs. Sources of currently collected information pertinent to baseline monitoring will also be identified, including programs operating provincially, nationally, and internationally. The paper will also identify a framework for assisting with developing research and monitoring programs by the COFFS Working Group.

The 2nd phase will provide an overview of current published research applicable to baseline monitoring, including current diagnostic test

research, prevalence of microbial and chemical hazards and surveillance tools. It will also review current research into the effectiveness of intervention strategies implemented at the farm level. The concluding phase, for delivery by the end of June, will recommend future directions for research and surveillance efforts in on-farm food safety programs.

Scott Wolfe Management Inc. of Headlingly, Manitoba and Collis Consulting Inc. of Winnipeg, Manitoba have been contracted to work on the 4th phase of the Working Group's **Delivery Options Project**. This project builds on previous initiatives, including the development of a business plan for a national certification body, to "determine the current and projected cost of delivery of on-farm food safety programs at the national and provincial level".

The consultants will be working with a steering committee composed of Working Group members, provincial groups from Quebec, Ontario and Alberta and government officials. The consultants will survey a select group of national and provincial program delivery agents and assemble costing information from a variety of other studies. Participating groups will benefit by having their costs benchmarked in key areas. The report is expected to be delivered in October 2006.

Upcoming Events

5/6 June 2006 - COFFS Working Group meeting - Ottawa

14 August 2006 - Symposium on the Canadian Approach to Food Safety, including presentations on the development and implementation of on-farm and post-farm programs - International Association for Food Protection Annual Conference - Calgary (for details see: www.foodprotection.org)

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