



Canadian Approach to On-Farm Food Safety Newsletter

October 2006

Volume 1 Number 2

Canadian Approach Showcased Around the World and in Canada

IAFP Conference - Calgary - August 2006

Participants from around the world were introduced to Canada's on-farm and post-farm food safety programs at the 93th annual conference of the International Association for Food Protection held in Calgary, Alberta, in mid-August. A symposium on the first day saw representatives of the Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working Group, the Canadian Supply Chain Food Safety Coalition and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency clearly demonstrate that the development of industry-led, HACCP-based programs is quickly leading to the establishment of a harmonized food safety system.

Dawn Lawrence, National Coordinator, CQA™ Program opened with an overview of the Canadian Approach. This was followed by presentations on developing and implementing on-farm programs by Heather Gale, National Coordinator, Food Safety at the Canadian Horticultural Council and Bill Laing, Alberta Coordinator for the Canadian Quality Milk (CQM™) Program. Heather Holland from the Canadian Produce Marketing Association and Justin Sherwood of the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors, then described the programs their associations are developing for produce packers and distributors and for retail distribution centres and retail outlets. The final presentation was made by Warren Smandych of the CFIA's National On-Farm Food Safety Recognition Program.

The symposium was attended by over 150 participants concluded with a lively question period that covered topics such as: the challenges of implementation on farms, the scope of the retail program, costs of development and implementation and the relationship of these programs to other international developments in food safety.

IFAP Congress - Korea - May 2006

The Canadian approach was also on the agenda at the 37th World Farmers Congress of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers in Seoul. The closing plenary session heard from Albert Chambers, COFFS Working Group Consultant, about the role that farm organizations have taken in the development of food safety programs, the success of the HACCP-based approach and the high level of collaboration amongst the commodity groups.

Showcasing Risk Management Solutions - Ottawa - September 2006

Sponsored by the Canadian Farm Business Management Council and the Private Sector Risk Management Partnerships Program of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, this two day session brought together for the first time a diverse group of financial industry experts in

insurance and risk management, federal and provincial government officials and farm group representatives who have been exploring new opportunities to manage the risks experienced by farmers. The COFFS Working Group's presentation at this event focussed on the advanced state of development of the on-farm programs and the opportunity that they present as a foundation program in areas such as bio-security, animal health insurance, etc.

Note: All the presentations cited above are available in English on the COFFS Working Group's website: www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca

Working Group Launches Promotional Activities

The August **IAFP Conference** also saw the launch of the COFFS Working Group's new promotional display. The banners in English and French formed the backdrop (see below) for a booth in the conference exhibition hall.



Next stop for the banners was the annual **Maritime Fall Fair** in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Here they formed the centrepiece of an on-farm food safety booth staff from October 12th to 15th by representatives of Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Agriculture Awareness Committee.

The banners are available for use by national and provincial commodity groups and general farm organizations to promote on-farm food safety and will increasingly be used by the Working Group for its communications and promotional activities. For further information please contact: Jocelyne Galloway at jgalloway@cfafca.ca

Feature Article:

Good Agriculture Practices: Safety, Quality Assurance & Traceability for the Natural Health Products Industry - Connie Kehler, Executive

Director, Saskatchewan Herb and Spice Association & Canadian Herb, Spice and Natural Health Product Coalition

Note: Starting with Volume 1 Number 2, members of the COFFS Working Group will be regularly contributing articles on the development and implementation the national, commodity-specific, on-farm food safety programs.

Canada's new Natural Health Products (NHP) Regulations recently came into effect. Although growers are not included in the regulations, they will be expected to follow Good Agriculture Practices (GAP). The Canadian Herb, Spice and Natural Health Product Coalition has been developing GAPs to flow directly into the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP's) that manufacturers are required to adhere to under Canada's new NHP Act. There are very specific requirements for incoming raw materials into GMPs, and the quality of raw materials is key to the safety and efficacy of finished products. Growers who provide raw materials for the manufacturing industry therefore play a fundamental role in ensuring safety and quality assurance.

One of the key issues surrounding safe natural health products is to ensure that what it says on the bottle is actually in the bottle. The majority of quality and safety issues that arise from raw materials are due to the failure to ensure correct identity and/or failure to ensure product purity. Botanical identity includes ensuring the correct species, correct variety or chemotype, correct plant part and correct processing. Correct identity is not enough, growers must also ensure the raw material is not contaminated with other toxic botanicals. (e.g. burdock, comfrey, or nettle contaminated with Atropa belladonna - deadly nightshade; plantain contaminated with foxglove).

The correct identity of plant material moving through the GAP (Good Agriculture Practices) process and into the manufacturing of natural health products has been identified as a very critical component, and a top priority for Health Canada – NHPD (Natural Health Products Directorate) and the Natural Health Products Industry as a whole. A comprehensive practice, the first of its kind in the world, that helps guide growers and collectors in properly identifying their raw material has been developed for international use.

The Coalition is very proud to have brought a prestigious team together to build this key element of the value chain for natural health products. There was direct participation from across Canada, and the U.S., including the American Herbal Product Association and the Herb Research Foundation, but also direct interest expressed by the GAP Development Team of the WHO. This module not only has become part of the Canadian HACCP based GAPs, but is designed to be stand-alone and is being used in North American and internationally. The Plant ID practice is available now at: <http://www.saskherbspice.org>

This practice has become the cornerstone of the CHSNC HACCP based GAPs (developed using the Canadian approach to on-farm food safety). These practices will ensure a strong value chain of traceability and safety tightly linked with the existing processing good manufacturing practices in both the culinary and medicinal worlds. Developing Good Agriculture Practices that connect with Good Manufacturing Practices up the chain is strengthening the chain, boosting consumer confidence and developing strong business relationships.

Upcoming Events

30 November/1 December - COFFS Working Group meeting - Ottawa

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Suite 1101, 75 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1P 5E7

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