

# COFFS WG

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CANADIAN ON FARM FOOD SAFETY WORKING GROUP NEWSLETTER

## Successfully Uniting National Commodity Groups

### Message From COFFS WG Chair

The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety (COFFS) Working Group, an industry-led organization, has successfully united national commodity groups to address food safety issues. The COFFS WG works in partnership with the government to promote Canada's approach to on-farm food safety.

"Our WG met in February and we're refreshed and re-energized and ready to deal with the issues upcoming over the next year," says Eugene Legge, Chair, COFFS WG. "We are very grateful that the federal government still sees the importance for this group to be together and to continue to work to further the cause of on-farm food safety systems."

One of the efforts is to assist the commodity groups that are just starting down this path of on-farm food safety. "Many of the organizations have limited resources and people, so it is a real benefit to be part of the Working Group where a lot of people have already blazed the trail and have gone through the hurdles and pitfalls often at great expense to their own commodities," explains Legge. "These new groups have the benefit of following the path that has already been blazed for them, reducing their costs, resources and time required to move forward. Time seems to be of the essence for everyone."

Further addressing time, the COFFS WG is also reviewing auditing requirements and current training programs and opportunities. "Some of the groups are stepping into new territory and trying to address cross-commodity auditing and combining audits where possible," says Legge. Most farmers would like to have one auditor on the farm once a year to complete all of their requirements, such as OFFS, Animal Welfare, Environmental Farm Plans, Nutrient Management, etc. Farmers don't want to see all of these programs having people parading through they farm, they want to see one person come and do it all to minimize the preparation and reporting time. Everyone is short of time and for most farmers the audit is another burden of cost and time they have to incur without compensation. "This is a concept we have talked about for years of having more than one audit completed at the same time and something I think will be the way of the future."

The COFFS WG plans to continue working towards improving and strengthening their work on food safety issues, including increased emphasis on external communications and networking opportunities with industry and non-industry groups and organizations.

**Eugene Legge**  
Chair, COFFS WG

# 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 onfarm food safety.

[www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca](http://www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca)



### **Canada Grains Council**

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# COFFS Workplan Priorities 2010/11

The two overarching priorities for the COFFS WG in 2010/11 are the development of a formal communications strategy and a review of the equivalency of OFFS with international programs. Another issue to be addressed is audit frequency.

## Key messages

- The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working Group is an industry-led organization that has successfully united national commodity groups to address food safety issues.

The COFFS WG works in partnership with the government to promote Canada's approach to on-farm food safety.

## *The COFFS working Group mandate under this contract is to:*

- Facilitate networking amongst COFFS WG membership of NPOs, governments and other stakeholders on OFFS topics
- Lead solution building forums dealing with arising OFFS system development issues
- Develop program tools in collaboration with governments
- Provide training to COFFS NPO members
- Liaise and share lessons learned with Agriculture, Agri-Food and Agri-based product groups along the supply chain
- Communicate/Awareness with non-Coffs industry groups

## *Activities in the coming year include:*

- Provide input to CFIA, Agriculture Canada and other government departments in regards to food safety.
- Provide feedback on emerging OFFS issues.
- Examine international food safety guidelines
- Communicate better about the COFFS working group and the benefits of working together
- Hold a crisis communication training workshop
- Hold a how to communicate with producers workshop
- Update the communication action plan
- Develop a new secure portion of the website for NPO and Provincial information exchange.
- Develop a 'Did you Know' portion of the website to ensure we have clear communication
- Review and development of the Technical Review and Protocol requirements with CFIA Amending committee.
- Continue with the audit sampling plan
- Look at international programs and equivalency
- Include and invite more non-COFFS groups to meetings

[www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca](http://www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca)



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

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## 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.*

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### **Dairy Farmers of Canada**

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# COFFS ROUND TABLE UPDATE

## COFFS Government Update

**AAFC** reported that the application process has been improved. There are now no more deadlines for the applications to allow for more flexibility. Currently 17 food safety projects have been received of which 13 have been approved. There have been 16 traceability projects of which 12 projects have been approved. AAFC is working on service standards to help further reduce delays.

**CFIA** reported there has been some reorganization, with Inspection now part of the Food Safety Division. The recognition group and the application review process have been combined into one unit. The development of the recognition process will happen by the end of March 2011. They will be working with Federal Provincial Territorial Food Safety Committee to reestablish a working group. They are currently implementing the first part of the recognition process. There has been a need to revisit the 3rd party requirements. Communication especially to non-COFFS parties was identified as needing more clarity. Documents for feedback were distributed for COFFS review.

## ExcelGrains Canada

ExcelGrains Canada, with assistance from the Canada Grains Council, has completed technical review of the grains food safety management plan. We are now resubmitting an application for further funding to support the farmer management committee, national program updates, currency and communication. We have also held an industry conference to generate awareness of the plan, to discuss market demand and evaluate a plan for the future of the program. The overall demand for the program is continuously monitored. Auditors will be selected across the country based on market demand and when funding is available.

There was a demand for the programs Producer Manual in specialty identity preserved cargos and consequently there was a pull to have participating farmers on the program. The audits for these shipments are being done by grain company representatives.

*Dale Riddell*

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## Canadian Cattlemen's Association Verified Beef Production™ Program

The Verified Beef Production™ Program has been focusing on training producers. Over 12,000 producers have been trained and over 400 are fully registered in the Verified Beef Production program. There is an increased interest in online training programs, which are being done by request only, through a coordinator on a private site. Technical Review Part 1 was completed in 2009.

The Verified Beef Production Program is continually training auditors. They are working with the Canadian Sheep Federation to address the interest in having cross-commodity auditors trained in both beef and sheep and able to complete a combined audit.

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# COFFS ROUND TABLE UPDATE

## **Chicken Farmers of Canada**

### **Safe, Safer, Safest**

The Chicken Farmers of Canada are anticipating their second review will most likely be completed in the spring of 2010. They are presently getting ready for third party recognition. Eight provinces have made the program mandatory and close to 100% of farmers are certified and audited. A deal was made with all the provincial boards to make clear the rules and responsibilities that are part of the OFFS programs and ensure consistency in the application of the program across Canada. A new animal care program has been combined with the audit and the OFFS assurance program. They are kept as two different certificates and two different producer manuals.

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## **Canadian Honey Council**

### **Canadian Bee Industry Safety Quality Traceability (CBISQT)**

The development of the Canadian Honey Council's CBISQT program is currently on hold as they prepare another project proposal to move it forward. The industry is also facing pressing issues with honey that need addressing in the short-term.

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## **Canadian Herb Spice and Natural Health Product Coalition (CHSNC)**

### **Good Agriculture and Collection Practices (GACP)**

The Canadian Herb Spice and Natural Health Product Coalition has completed their Technical Review Part One and their 18-month review. They do not have provincial delivery agents so have been spending a good portion of the year working with the Provincial Department of Agriculture trying to get funding for training across the country in place. Their GACP program can only be used with training. The CHSNC are targeting the highest demand first with training available in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. Over 200 producers were trained in the past few months. There is a need in Ontario for training and CHSNC will be applying for funds to do so. CHSNC is also starting a second phase on their traceability project this year and will continue to evaluate the viability of going for Technical Review Part Two to validate their management program. CHSNC has an MOU with Canadian Hort Council but it should be noted that they are an independent group that is not part of CanadaGap. Because of the unique markets for their industry CHSNC has strove to meet the WHO and EU Good Agriculture and Collection Practices. The executive director met with some of the EU GACP committee in Milan, Italy in April 2009 to compare and discuss collaborations. Buyers now are inquiring about compliance with the EU GACP standards.

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# COFFS ROUND TABLE UPDATE

## **Canadian Pork Council CQA®**

The Canadian Pork Council's CQA® program is stable despite industry downturn and loss of producers. Approximately 90% of pigs are coming from CQA farms. Plans are to pilot electronic validation reports in 2010. They are presently working on better communication between developers and stakeholders. A survey was sent out to producers, validators and processors last fall. The report from that survey will help the Canadian Pork Council map the way forward. They are also working on having rail cards displayed at the store level that make reference to the OFFS program.

The Canadian Pork Council is presently working on their 18-month Technical Review. Their program will include additional materials to the producers' manual regarding the Trichinella Free Certification Program. They have also developed a self-declaration form that allows producers to get on to the animal care program in the short-term, but producers are still required to go through the full validation at the next CQA evaluation. The Canadian Pork Council and the Canadian Swine Health Board are working together on medication use and drug administration practices, such as the needle issue.

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## **Egg Farmers of Canada**

### **Start Clean – Stay Clean™ and Clean Start (Pullet Program)**

### **Cluck cluck ... Announcing a new chapter for Start Clean-Stay Clean™**

Egg Farmers of Canada's (EFC) Start Clean-Stay Clean™ program has taken yet another major evolutionary step with the development and implementation of a new on-farm HACCP-based pullet program. EFC's inspectors and provincial delivery agents are now completing ratings of pullet operations across the country.

Pullets are the young birds, under 19 weeks of age, being grown out until they are mature and ready to be transferred to a table egg layer barn. Growers receive day-old chicks and place them in clean and disinfected production facilities.

EFC was approached by the provincial egg organizations and pullet producers themselves about five years ago to develop a national pullet food safety program. "We wanted to be sure that we were not only providing the healthiest pullets possible to egg farmers, but that we could document the steps we take to do that," said Andy DeWeerd, Chairman of the National Pullet Growers Association.

The program was developed over three years and implementation began in late 2008. It was fully implemented nationally last year and was recognized as technically sound by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

As a HACCP-based program, Start Clean-Stay Clean™: Pullet, follows the seven principles of HACCP to reduce and prevent the biological, chemical and physical hazards that exist with on-farm food production. The program emphasizes the key process areas pullet growers need to pay special attention to and its checklist helps farmers to identify potential areas of risk.

Like its parent Start Clean-Stay Clean™: Layer, the pullet program insists that records be kept to document monitoring, deviation and verification procedures.

The Start Clean/Stay Clean program passed technical review 5 years ago. The EFC has also completed their management manual Rechnical Review Part 2. They also have been reviewing the possibility of folding the layer and pullet program producer manuals into one while leaving other manuals separate (HACCP Plan; Prerequisite / Background). The EFC are now also looking at tracking and tracing of both birds and eggs.

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# COFFS ROUND TABLE UPDATE

## **Turkey Farmers of Canada**

### **TFC On-Farm Food Safety Program**

The Turkey Farmers of Canada (TFC) On-Farm Food Safety Program (OFFSP) shows that the Canadian turkey industry is proactive with respect to food safety and helps turkey farmers prove that they are meeting the increased consumer demands placed on the food-producing industry. Canadian turkey farmers have embraced the TFC OFFSP and implementation is well underway across the country. By March 2010, over 80% of registered turkey farmers have been trained and over 60% have been fully certified under the Program. Currently, TFC is in the process of reviewing the current program version to ensure it is based on the most current science and production practices.

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## **Canadian Bison Association**

### **Canadian Quality Bison**

The Canadian Bison Association have put their food safety program on hold for now, and are focusing on traceability. However, the bison markets have started to move again and they may have to re-examine their food safety program.

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## **Canadian Cervid Alliance**

The Canadian Cervid Alliance continues to aim for completion of development of the Cervid On Farm Food Safety Program by February 2012. They are refining training materials now – for producers, trainers and auditors. The Canadian Cervid Alliance is developing an on farm management system that will assist producers in recording the data they need for the OFFS Program. That system will include software that is designed to facilitate compliance with the OFFS requirements, plus enhance biosecurity and farm management in general, including reporting of essential information to a national database. The national database will collect, store and make available data required for animal health managers to respond to emergency situations, conduct surveillance programs, maintain and improve animal and human health, and enhance market access for cervid products.

In the past two years since our initial Technical Review, cervid producers have invested much time and thought in ensuring the Producer Workbook and HACCP Plan are as accurate, complete and useable as possible. The Alliance has discussed their needs with other producer groups and have observed gradual changes in the approach and goals of other NPO's OFFS Programs. "With all this accumulated wisdom, we have substantially revised both the Workbook and Plan, and consequently expect that we will request a new Technical Review," says Ian Thorleifson. "More work and time, yes, but we anticipate a much better product and foundation for our producers will be the beneficial results.

*Ian Thorleifson*

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# COFFS ROUND TABLE UPDATE

## **Canadian Horticultural Council CanadaGAP**

The Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) has rebranded their OFFS program as CanadaGAP and launched a new website to coincide with it. There is strong buyer demand for the CanadaGAP program, and over 700 producers have enrolled in the program in its initial year. There are six modules to the CanadaGAP program and the Technical Review Part 1 has been completed for each. It took five years to get through all six modules. CanadaGAP is being marketed and benchmarked internationally.

The CanadaGAP On-Farm Food Safety Program, which currently offers three different certification options for producers, storage intermediaries and packers who are enrolled in the program, is set to offer two additional options beginning April 1, 2010.

### **Option A2: For Individual Companies**

Option A2 is similar to the previously available "Option A" (which will be renamed option A1). For a facility to be certified to the program in the first year the operator must successfully complete a full on-site audit. Annually for the next three years, the operator completes a self-declaration and self-assessment checklist and submits it to the Certification Body. Randomly selected farms will be chosen for an on-site audit during Years 2, 3, 4. If selected for a random audit, the next scheduled audit will be extended to four years from the random audit date.

### **Option A3: Group Certification**

Option A3 combines Group Certification with elements of the four-year audit cycle. Similar to the existing Group Certification Option B, producers can be certified to the CHC OFFS Program by organizing themselves as a Group and running their own food safety management system. The Group's internal audit program must cover all member sites over a four-year period. Certified members must submit self-declarations and self-assessment checklists to the Group Management in the intervening years. Every three years, the Group must undergo a third-party (Certification Body) audit of the Group Management System, including sampling of central sites and internally audited members.

The new certification options were created at the request of some customers in the domestic market. Before enrolling in CanadaGAP, it is important that producers and packers check with their customer(s) to confirm acceptance of the various CanadaGAP certification options.

For more information, and to view a complete list of Canada-GAP certification options, visit the CanadaGAP website at <http://www.canadagap.ca/en/becoming-certified/certification-options.aspx>.

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## **Canadian Hatching Egg Producers Canadian Hatching Egg Quality CHEQ™**

The Canadian Hatching Egg Quality CHEQ™ program is being delivered to 300 producers. The changes submitted to CFIA will begin to be implemented on July 1, 2010. There is an 85% implementation across the country, with the program being mandatory in 5 out of 6 provinces.

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# COFFS ROUND TABLE UPDATE

## Canadian National Goat Federation

The Canadian National Goat Federation had an application in for pre-screening of the Technical Review in September 2009, but have been delayed due to human resource issues. They are exploring options to move ahead.

*Garry Claassen*

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## Canadian Sheep Federation

### Food Safe Farm Practices

The Canadian Sheep Federation is undertaking a major review of their HACCP model and producer manual. When this is complete, they will reapply for Technical Review Part One. Auditors are being trained within the provinces. In the western provinces implementation is going well, and interest is once again sparking in the eastern provinces.

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## Dairy Farmers of Canada

### Canadian Quality Milk (CQM)

The Dairy Farmers of Canada have a number of provinces with mandatory dates, and most are moving forward. They have recently received funding for the national electronic administrative system, which creates a database that all provinces can use. Validators will be able to use this from the farm via handheld systems. The information about the electronic administration system can be shared amongst the other commodities to help them determine whether or not the system can be applied in their programs. A major revision was made to the CQM program (involving information and simplifications), which is now under technical review with CFIA.

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## Verified Veal Program

The Verified Veal On Farm Food Safety Program officially began the 14 week technical review process on November 30, 2009. The purpose of the Technical Review process is to evaluate programs for technical soundness, adherence to existing regulatory standards, successful translation of critical control points into good production practices, and the overall practicality of the program.

The Ontario Veal Association (OVA) in collaboration the Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec (FPBQ) worked very hard to prepare the documents for submission to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to begin the Technical Review process. The Producer Manual and the 11 Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) forms were required to be submitted in both official languages. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency then invited each province to participate in the Verified Veal technical review process. Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec responded. Each participating province in addition to a specialized CFIA committee reviewed the Verified Veal Program documents and submitted comments back to the CFIA. The comments were provided to the Verified Veal Program team in order to prepare for the Face to Face meeting of the Technical Review.

The Face to Face meeting was held in Guelph on February 15-19th, 2010. A representative of each participating province and a representative from the specialized CFIA committee participated in the face to face meeting. Robert Wynand and André Roy of the FPBQ and OVA represented the VV program. Behind the scenes Nadia and Nathalie provided technical support to André and Robert during the meeting. Each comment submitted was thoroughly reviewed during the meeting and a list of required modifications was prepared. The Verified Veal Program team will now review and make the required modifications by May 2010. Once the final versions of the Producer Manual and the HACCP Forms are approved, they will be translated and formatted into a user friendly layout. Producer awareness programs will be developed and launched by 2011. Stay tuned for more details!

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# Wanted - Auditors and Cross Commodity Auditors

Many COFFS WG members are seeking trained On-Farm Food Safety auditors and auditors who may be interested in cross-commodity training, including the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC). The CHC has developed training for their CanadaGAP Program (On-Farm Food Safety for Fresh Fruit and Vegetables), and is interested in working with other NPOs who may have trained auditors already in their rosters that may also be interested in taking the CanadaGAP training as well.

CanadaGAP auditors are trained by the Certification Body using training materials developed by and specific to CanadaGAP's On-Farm Food Safety requirements. The next training session is being offered by QMI-SAI Global in Toronto, April 20-22, 2010. For information on registration fees and to sign up for the course, contact Maryana Glavan at (416) 401-8708 or [maryana.glavan@qmi-saiglobal.com](mailto:maryana.glavan@qmi-saiglobal.com).

The CHC training materials are designed to train potential auditors specifically to understand the CanadaGAP Program requirements. The course content includes an intensive review of the OFFS manual requirements, with the incorporation of practical examples specific to commodity or region. Visit the CanadaGAP website at <http://www.canadagap.ca/en/canadagap-program/auditors.aspx> for a copy of the general course outline.

Before signing up for training, participants must first pre-qualify by: taking the pre-requisite courses (See: <http://www.canadagap.ca/en/canadagap-program/auditors.aspx#prereq>) ensuring they review and meet the CHC auditor qualifications and requirements (See: <http://www.canadagap.ca/en/canadagap-program/auditors.aspx#training>)

- familiarizing themselves with a CHC OFFS Manual in advance of the training
  - successfully completing a pre-course assignment
- providing a copy of their résumé and credentials to the Certification Body.

Further details on these requirements are available on the CanadaGAP website, through the CHC National Office (email: [offs@hortcouncil.ca](mailto:offs@hortcouncil.ca); tel: 613-226-4880, ext. 206), or by contacting the certification body that you are interested in contracting with. See the list of CanadaGAP certification bodies at <http://www.canadagap.ca/en/becoming-certified/certification-bodies.aspx>

# Overview: Internal QMS Auditor Training Course

COFFS held an *Internal QMS Auditor Training Course* on February 16 and 17, 2010 in Ottawa, with about 20 participants. The course included presentations, group activities, case studies and a final exam. The course was offered by Ashbrooke Quality Assurance Ltd., a company certified to ISO 9001:2008 and an independent consultancy and IRCA registered training organization.

This training course was offered to address continuing education for the On Farm Food Safety Industry, to assist in development of management plans, to facilitate better understanding of external and internal management auditing and to possibly address the external audit requirement under the CFIA management. This course, which has a focus to the ISO 9001:2008 standards,

was a pilot and the attendees felt it had great value. They saw merit in offering it again in the future with work done to tailor it to this group's specific needs.

*"The Internal QMS Auditor Training Course was a very valuable session for me as Coordinator of Food Safety Projects for the Cervid Alliance," says Ian Thorleifson. "As we move to design our Auditor Training Program, we need substantial, accurate and current knowledge of Quality Management Systems auditing processes and standards. I will need further training and direction as we proceed, and this course of training and experience has contributed to my knowledge and abilities."*

## FYI Corner

**April 27 - 28, 2010**

Food Processors of Canada Annual Conference  
Fairmont Chateau Laurier, Ottawa, Ontario  
[www.foodprocessors.ca](http://www.foodprocessors.ca)

**April 12-14, 2010**

Food Safety Summit

Washington, DC Convention Centre,  
Washington, DC

[www.foodsafetysummit.com](http://www.foodsafetysummit.com)

**Apr 20-23, 2010**

United Fresh 2010

Las Vegas, NV

[unitedfresh2010.org/uf2010/public/](http://unitedfresh2010.org/uf2010/public/)

## Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Auditor Training Course Now Available On-Line

The Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Auditor Training Course is now available as an internet-based training course. This course, developed by the Canadian On-Farm Food Safety (COFFS) Working Group, was originally offered as a five-day on-site training course. Recognizing the need to provide easier access and lower cost delivery, the COFFS Working Group has now made it available on-line in two Modules and in both official languages.

**Module 1: Basics of HACCP-Based On-Farm Food Safety** - introduction to the Canadian approach to on-farm food safety, the basic concepts of food safety (food microbiology, microorganisms, toxicology), various food quality programs, HACCP principles and its application on-farm.

- French by L'Institut de technologie agroalimentaire de Saint-Hyacinthe

[http://www.ita.qc.ca/Fr/formationcontinue/perfectionnement/agricole/liste\\_producteurs/salubrité+des+aliments/](http://www.ita.qc.ca/Fr/formationcontinue/perfectionnement/agricole/liste_producteurs/salubrité+des+aliments/)

- English by Lakeland College

[http://www.lakelandcollege.ca/continuing\\_ed/courses/con\\_ed09120801.aspx](http://www.lakelandcollege.ca/continuing_ed/courses/con_ed09120801.aspx)

**Module 2: Basics of On-Farm Food Safety Auditing** - introduction to the basic principles of auditing and the application in the context of on-farm food safety programs.

<http://www.us.sqs.com/canadian-on-farm-food-safety-auditor-training-course-module-2-learning>

# Review of OFFS Online Auditor Training

The COFFS WG has launched a Program Review of the OFFS Online Auditor Training Program, including Module 1: *Basics of HACCP-Based On-Farm Food Safety*, an online course offered by Lakeland College in English and in French by L'Institut de technologie agroalimentaire de Saint-Hyacinthe; and Module 2: *Basics of On-Farm Food Safety Auditing*, an online course in English and French offered by SGS North America.

Dawn Lawrence, National Coordinator, CQA Program is an instructor for Module 1, and has recently completed the first full course that ran from October through December 2009. "Lakeland offered the course once as a pilot and once as a full course," explains Lawrence. "We now have the opportunity to review the program, both from a technical point of view and a course content point of view. There were some technical glitches and student support issues that need addressing." There were 8 participants in the Fall 2009 Lakeland course from across Canada representing a good mix of livestock and crops.

Module 1 was designed to be delivered in a classroom setting and then adapted for online training. "We're learning as we go and are going through some growing pains figuring out exactly what kind of information we need to provide adult learners for this type of learning platform," explains Lawrence. "Just because a lot of us work on computers every day, it doesn't mean we are prepared to go into this type of online learning platform and be able to grasp and easily navigate through everything."

The COFFS WG asked Brad Dowell, Master Instructor at Olds College to conduct a formal review of the online Auditor training. "We see the review as a good opportunity to address some of the technical issues that have come up, as well as a good opportunity to review the course content and determine if we are delivering the information we need to," says Lawrence. "We're looking forward to getting the final report, which will help us make decisions on changes that may need to be implemented to the program."

## Review Process

Dowell is a Master Instructor and teaches online courses and in the classroom at Olds College. He brings his experience in adult learning and online teaching to the review, as well as an understanding of the technology platforms and a good working relationship with several Agricultural Colleges across Canada. "Since I'm not familiar with the OFFS Auditor Course, I am able to bring an objective set of Master Instructor eyes to the review," explains Dowell. "I was able to conduct the review from a student point of view and then from a teaching and support point of view."

Dowell has completed the review and will be presenting the Final Report to the COFFS WG. "This is a fantastic program with excellent potential and it is very important to get people trained with these skills to do the OFFS auditing," says Dowell. "There is a great resource package to work from and I'm providing some constructive suggestions to help improve and strengthen the program. Nothing but great things will come from the collective work of good people!"

Here is a brief overview of some of the Review Conclusions focusing on different areas of the program.

## Fulfillment of Program Objectives

Dowell identified that creating a detailed program description outlining the skills that the graduate or certificate holder will gain is important. To start the review, Dowell sat down as a potential student and started to investigate what the requirements would be to become a full-fledged OFFS auditor. "It took me some time to try and find the answers and although I understood the general requirements, it wasn't clear to me the steps or timelines or who would eventually 'recognize' me as an auditor qualified to do OFFS auditing procedures and assessment."

# Review of OFFS Online Auditor Training cont'd

Dowell also recommended that a program and/or course competency profile outlining what skills students require to perform their job(s) would be an important document to verify the training outcomes. “In my initial searching through the internet, written OFFS materials and online modules it wasn’t clear what skills graduates would gain by going through the training process,” says Dowell. “If we can outline the skills that students need to perform their jobs on a competency profile, then it makes the verification and assessment of those skill sets much easier to measure. It is also easier to clarify whether or not students have achieved the outcomes.”

## An example of a start to a competency profile design for Auditor Training in Module 1:

General Area of Competency

<p><b>The Food Safety Environment</b></p> <p>Band A</p>	<p>Explain the factors that make an on-farm food safety program necessary</p> <p>A1</p>	<p>Evaluate the importance of legislation governing the agri-food industry</p> <p>A2</p>	<p>Outline the roles of selected stakeholders</p> <p>A3</p>	
<p><b>Explain key concepts of food safety and quality control systems</b></p> <p>Band B</p>	<p>Explain food microbiology and how it impacts food safety</p> <p>B1</p>	<p>Identify selected microorganisms and their impact on food quality</p> <p>B2</p>	<p>Outline toxicology issues as they relate to food safety</p> <p>B3</p>	<p>Analyze quality control systems and how it impacts food safety</p> <p>B4</p>

### Promotion

Clearly outlining or profiling the steps to becoming a certified “On-Farm Food Safety Auditor” at all relevant sites such as COFFS, SGS, federal and related provincial government sites, and others, is important. “Any prospective student who is searching about On-Farm Food Safety Auditor training in any province, wherever they are, should be able to click and search and get the same messages from everybody,” says Dowell.

Another important step is to ensure all of the hyperlinks are active and working, particularly for commodity specific training opportunities. “Although I recognize the challenges of small teams behind these various websites, it is important to ensure that prospective students have access to live information and current and active websites,” adds Dowell. “In my review many of the hyperlinks weren’t working or I received the dreaded 404 webpage error. Some prospective students may assume what they are looking for isn’t available and decide to delay their entry into the program.”

### Course Structure – On-line Platforms

There were some technical issues with the on-line platforms, both on the hosting side and the home/student side, that are in the process of being rectified. “Some of the solutions could be working with E-Campus Alberta for example that offer a 24/7 technical support option to help students with the technology,” says Dowell. “Clearly mapping out the course and timelines would be helpful along with making sure all of the hyperlinks are active and working properly.”

Dowell recommends some additional work needs to be done on the assessments and outcomes and to add more rigor into the assessment activities. “This goes back to the competency profile and to make sure students can demonstrate their competency in the various areas. “It would seem reasonable that auditors should be challenged to think, reason and assess – given the work that they will be doing,” says Dowell.

The Final Program Review was completed at the end of March 2010, and will be presented to the COFFS WG at a future meeting.



## 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**

[www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca](http://www.onfarmfoodsafety.ca)

Or

**Contact:**

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