



THE ORGANIC FEDERATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

Notes from COO Liaison Committee Meeting of January 17th 2011

Present: Anne Macey (COABC), Stephanie Wells (COTA), Priscilla Reimer (MOA), Betsy Hui (CHFA), Kelly Monaghan (Chair of CGSB TC & PSL WG), Dave Lockman (ProCert), Julie Belzile (FBQ), Ted Zettel (OFC), Dwight Brown (PACS), Dag Falck (Nature's Path), Lorraine Beaudette (COG-Organic Connections), Ken Commins (IOAS), Joanne Jackson Johnson (GoOFY/Yukon), Tomas Nimmo (Guelph Conference), Sally Blackman (CPMA), Byron Hamm (ProCert), Lucie Gionet (UPA), Clark Philips (NB Organic WG), Samantha Simon (USDA).

COO – CFIA – AAFC: Carmen Hamilton (AAFC), Ken Bruce (COO), Michel Saumur (COO), Elizabeth Corrigan (COO), John LeVatte (CFIA).

The Canada Organic Office

COO Activities The COO is implementing cross-country training sessions for CFIA inspectors and CBs. Elizabeth will deliver inspectors' training to review organic labelling requirements, monitoring and enforcement of the COR. One session is planned next week in Toronto, another one in BC in March. Training will be online; inspectors are asking a lot of questions about the labelling requirements and the COR as they have to enforce regulations as they are. They don't report to the COO but when the training will be done, the COO will have a better understanding on how enforcement is handed.

The CB training will be done by Valeriya Staykova and will include COO requirements and procedures for certification of organic producers. Sessions will be held in Guelph (January 28th), BC (March 4th), Moncton (March 10th) and in Nuremberg (Germany) February 17th for international CBs at the BioFach tradeshow. The COO feels that it is very important to clarify policies and present consistent communication.

There will also be a CVB meeting in Guelph (January 27th) in order to assure that communication COO-operators-COO flows efficiently.

Canada Organic Regulations

The COO is planning to send an industry advisory concerning the Stream of Commerce Policy (SOC) that will end June 30th 2011. It will be a posting, not a consultation but people who have comments are free to send them to the COO. The actual enforcement approach is educational; after the SOC will have expired, the CFIA enforcement will be applied as usual. The industry had a reasonable amount of time to comply with the COR.

Standards

- Anne Caron, the CGSB standards specialist, is moving on to a new position. She will be replaced by Mark Schuessler who already talked by phone with Kelly Monaghan, Priscilla Reimer and Elizabeth Corrigan and who is enthusiastic about his new job.

- CGSB is finalizing dealing with the comments sent with the ballot and is getting ready to have the revised standards approved at SCC level. The publication of the revised standards is planned for March.
- Ted Zettel reports that an important face-to-face meeting is under preparation with OFC and CFIA Vice-president and Executive Director in February to discuss about the funding of the Standards Interpretation Committee (SIC) and of the on-going organic standards revision process. COG, COTA and Kelly Monaghan are cooperating to the preparation of this meeting. The COO reports that the funding for their internal activities (training, representation, etc) is generally approved but when funding is solicited for third party activities that are outside COO office, it becomes more difficult, though the COO confirms that the SIC and the work of the Committee on Organic Agriculture are necessary for the administration of the COR. Dag Falck comments that the PSL working groups have resumed their meetings looking at substances and that the funding issue has been on the table for a long time.
- The SIC activities are on hold because of the lack of funding but the OFC has completed the voting process to replace the three SIC members ending their terms. The announcement of the three elected members will be made when the OFC Board will have approved the election results.

International Equivalency Arrangements

Canada/US

- A technical working group has been created to resolve technical issues related to the Canada-US Equivalency Agreement; then a steering committee co-chaired by John LeVatte has been set up to help deal with points linked to the trade perspective. The Steering Committee is also composed of US participants from US Trade Department and from USDA and gets the support of the technical working group as well. The terms of reference for those two groups are almost finalized to make processes very clear and the next Steering Committee meeting will be held in Quebec City, in March.
- The COO received January 10th the draft of the US report following the review of the Canadian Organic Regime conducted by the USDA. Canada will send comments; the SOC interacts with some of the US findings.
The Canadian report on the review of the US organic system was completed in December and is under approval by superior management.
Once finalized and approved by both partners, the peer review reports will be published on their respective websites.

Canada/EU

Canada received a peer review in May 2010; the EU reviewed the Canadian system and provided a report in November 2010; the COO sent comments about their findings. The COO and the EU mission team will meet in Germany at the BioFach tradeshow and resume discussions. Canada sent its review report of the EU system in December and is waiting for comments. Comments have to be exchanged and well understood before equivalency could be determined.

It is not currently possible to set a date for the settlement of an agreement with the EU. Canada would move fast but EU will set the pace on how they will exchange reports and comments. The Canadian embassy is cooperating with the EU.

Communication Project about the Canada Organic Regulations

The Market Development Working Group of Organic Value Chain Round Table (OVCRT) drafted and submitted a communication project to CFIA in order to promote the COR and educate consumers. The COO included this project in their own communication plan that will be submitted to higher management – Karen McIntyre (CFIA) and Suzie Miller (AAFC). A decision will be made on what can be delivered.

National Organic Data Base – Organic Management Informatic System

The COO is preparing a tool to provide statistics on the organic sector to the industry and to the government. To prepare this tool, AAFC is doing a fit-gap review to know what information business actually has, what the needs are, look at various models (EU, CARTV) and determine what is needed and how to go forward.

A preliminary project will be presented to stakeholders by mid-March and be sent through consultations with the industry. The OVCRT, that has already stated the importance of getting statistical data and of creating a framework for compiling data, will meet in Winnipeg March 22-23 and will comment the preliminary management system that will be submitted.

Next COO public activities

Guelph Organic Conference (ON) – Lecture on Canada/US Equivalency Agreement and on the SOC (January 28-30)

BioFach in Germany - Nuremberg - February 16-19

ACORN Organic Conference – Fredericton (NB)- March 10-12

FABQ - Drummondville (QC) – February 18th

Next Conference Call: When Announced