



THE ORGANIC FEDERATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

Notes from COO Liaison Committee Meeting of May 17th 2010

Present: Rochelle Eisen (COABC), Sally Blackman (CPMA), Kelly Monaghan (Chair of CGSB TC & PSL WG), Priscilla Reimer (MOA), Dag Falck (Nature's Path), Matthew Holmes (OTA), Keith Mussar (I.E Canada), Jackie Crichton (CCGD), Jim McCullagh (CSI), Cathy Holtstander, Julie Belzile (FBQ), Michel Saumur (COO), Ken Bruce (COO), Elizabeth Corrigan (COO), Valeriya Staykova (COO).

Canada Organic Office – Michel reports that Stephane O'Neil has not yet been replaced. He now recognizes and appreciates the good work Stephane was accomplishing at the COO.

Canadian National Standards – Proposed amendments to the standards (11th Meeting / 5th Ballot) are posted on CGSB Site Scape for Technical Committee members. The organic sector can access the amendments and comment on the CGSB website as at:

<http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/cgsb/prgsrv/stdsdev/nsa/pubrevdoc/pubrevdoc-f.html>

The public comment period closes on May 23rd. Comments will be sent to the Committee on Organic Agriculture for review .

OFC has created a blog for collecting opinions on two specific issues: parallel production and feed for fattening phase of slaughter animals. <http://ofcfc.wordpress.com/>

Standards Interpretation Committee (SIC) – The SIC's response to the first round of interpretation questions is now posted on the COO website: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/comqueste.shtml> ; the public and organic stakeholders may comment until July 7th at OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca .

The SIC is meeting monthly; questions needing interpretation should be sent to the COO at: OPR.RPB@inspection.gc.ca.

The sector will be notified through OFC, OTA, COG distribution lists; the COO list serve will be up and running soon.

Codex meeting – Elizabeth attended the CODEX Nutrient Committee meeting in Quebec City (May 3rd to 7th). She will submit proposals made at the meetings to the organic sector; some substances already allowed by other standards need to be processed by the PSL Working Groups for inclusion or exclusion from the Canadian PSL.

Accreditation – There are six Conformity Verification Bodies; 3 surveillance audits have been conducted; one more this year; the COO website will be updated shortly <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/cvbliste.shtml>. The current listing of accredited Certification Bodies is up-to-date <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/cbliste.shtml>. The COO is meeting with Conformity Verification Bodies in Ottawa on May 28th to discuss revisions to the Operating Manual <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/man/orgbiomane.shtml>. The amended Manual should be published by June 2010.

Equivalency Agreements –

1. **Canada-EU** - The EU assessed the Canada Organic Regime, May 6-12. The EU delegation carried out an assessment of the control system and the monitoring and enforcement of the regulation. Delegates also audited certification bodies and operators and concluded that operators have a solid understanding of organic standards and procedures. The COO thanks the operators and managers that have cooperated with them. CAN-EU variances were not discussed. Seven critical variances were identified last November and documents were exchanged; the COO got positive feedback but has nothing official to report. The COO did not discuss the CAN-US Equivalency Agreement with EU delegates but they are aware that the US and EU are meeting at the end of June to initiate discussion on an equivalency agreement. The EU audit of the Canadian system went well and a report will be generated soon. Canada will review the EU system at the end of June.
2. **Canada-US** –The COO and NOP met in December 2009; the COO submitted minutes of the meeting and a plan of action a few days later. The NOP response was received May 7 and another discussion is scheduled for May 20. The 8-page minutes submitted by the COO were condensed into 2 pages by NOP managers. The COO wants to consolidate what is agreed upon before publishing more information.

The COO will perform the NOP peer review in August; the COO needs to get proper information about what does not work with US. An official form has been created to get the appropriate information on sensitive issues.

Valeriya Staykova reports that a directive was sent to all CBs to develop a list of CAN-US scenarios; 15 CBs responded; the list of scenarios is being compiled. Michel Saumur says it may appear as though the COO and the NOP are working independent of each other but the COO is making every effort to achieve concurrence and to put out joint announcements.

Michel Saumur met with Miles McEvoy, Deputy Minister of the NOP, in Vancouver at the CHFA 2010 Expo West (13 & 14 May) and confirms that the final list of ACAs will be published as soon as possible; it will provide the names of NOP accredited certification agents that are certify under the Canada-US Equivalency Agreement in third countries.

Michel reports that McEvoy gave an excellent presentation in Vancouver; McEvoy recognizes that Canadians may not be thoroughly familiar with the NOP and is committed to doing similar presentations across Canada. Rochelle Eisen agrees that he did a great job; for example, he clarified the difference between NOP “instructions” and other NOP directives.

Rochelle raises the question of CAN-US variances like parallel production. What is the mechanism to revisit the current agreement and future agreements? Michel suggests that these kinds of issues are up to the sector and that discussion occurs via the CGSB Organic Technical Committee. The decision regarding parallel production has already been made but there is always opportunity to return to an issue when modifications to the standard occur. Kelly Monaghan suggests that the Technical Committee focuses on standards revisions and asks whether the TC should be fielding questions and concerns related to equivalency issues. Ken Bruce suggests that there are two different processes 1) standards issues and 2) equivalency issues and that he would work with Kelly on the second process.

Dag Falck: Points out that the TC is a CGSB not a COO committee; the sector needs an agreement or understanding which function(s) belong to which committee; we need clarity on processes and priorities if both processes remain with the TC. Ken thinks it must remain with the TC. MS suggests that the COO will consult with Kelly (Chair of the TC) to develop a process or

protocol. Issues that require harmonization will inevitably be identified and the sector's response will be important. Eisen suggests that sensitivity is required when responsibility is downloaded on volunteers; at the previous round TC members were expected to respond to equivalency issues at the same time as they were preparing for standards amendments. Julie Belzile reiterates that the CGSB TC takes care of standards issues and asks to whom variances on regulatory issues should be addressed. For example, the practice of rotating fields in and out of organic production which still occurs in the US, is an administrative not a standards issue (Some observes that in-out rotation can be found in 32.310 para 5.1.6). There are two sources of variances, standards and regulations; what is the channel for input on variances related to regulations? The sector needs clarity on the appropriate channels of communication; the COO will make an effort to understand the issues raised in today's discussion and develop appropriate procedures.

The COO will issue a notice regarding CAN-NOP before the end of May.

3. **Other Countries** – The COO has nothing substantial to report on other countries requesting equivalency with Canada.

Michel reports that he plans to attend the OVCRT meetings in Quebec City, in June.

The call is opened for Questions:

Jim McCaullagh, CSI, asks about the CB scenarios regarding CAN-US equivalency and suggests that solutions are required. Michel Saumur says that the scenarios will be sent to the NOP for a solution and that the status quo applies until we hear from the NOP.

Dag Falck asks about the [Stream of Commerce policy](#) and whether any changes are planned. Michel says that no changes are planned. He reports that the COO has had questions about extending the Stream of Commerce period and that he plans to work on policy issues in January.

Next Call: The next COO teleconference call will take place on Monday, 31 May 2010.