



THE ORGANIC FEDERATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

Notes from COO Liaison Committee Meeting of December 21st 2009

Present: Gunta Vitins (SunOpta), Rochelle Eisen (COABC), Stephanie Wells (OTA), Sally Blackman (CPMA), Jackie Crichton (CCGD), Betsy Hui (CHFA), Carl Carter (CHFA), Tomas Nimmo, Julie Belzile (FBQ), Jim McCullagh (CSI), John Hollinger (OMAFRA), Dave Conrad (QAI), Kelly Monaghan, Deb Foote, Anne Macey, Priscilla Reimer, Dag Falck (Nature's Path), Matthew Holmes (OTA), Tomas Nimmo, Keith Mussar, Nathalie Doré (AAFC), Roger Riverin (AAFC), Julie Belzile (FBQ), Isabelle Bouffard (FABQ), Michelle Weir, Tiffany Priestley (OPAM).

COO office: Michel Saumur, Stephane O'Neil, Ken Bruce.

Standards

TC Working Groups reconvened in October with a goal to have recommendations ready by early December. This would enable translation and distribution before the next TC meeting scheduled for Jan. 18-20 at the NAV CANADA Training and Conference Centre in Cornwall, ON. There were some difficulties getting access to documentation in the early stages of this work due to a change in the funding and oversight body; the TC hopes to create a more streamlined process. Most working groups have been meeting via conference call and working via email -- all have been active along with two specific task groups (maple & honey) during this period. The livestock working group held two in-person sessions in early November to work through poultry and swine issues and have handed in their recommendations. Almost all of the recommendations planned for discussion at the January meeting have been forwarded to the CGSB for translation as of this date. The CGSB has been posting the meeting information on SiteScape, and groups of recommendations will be posted on SiteScape for TC review as they are received back from translation. The CGSB has stated that this meeting should result in changes to only 1/3 of the pages of the standard and PSL. The TC awaits a response on what the procedures will be if indeed their recommendations impact more than 1/3 of the pages. The TC is also planning for a larger revision in 2011, the time when the first five-year revision of the standard must be conducted, as per CGSB protocol.

International

Canada-US Equivalency Agreement – The COO had a meeting with NOP representatives, which resulted in the COO submitting a list of action items to the NOP for their approval. Once this list is approved, both countries will post it on their web sites to clarify the administrative arrangements between Canada and US. The posting will hopefully be done before the January CGSB balloting. The two parties will meet annually to review the agreement, or anytime in the course of the year as needed or when changes are made to either regime. Both parties will have to agree to the new terms.

EU Standards – The EU representatives have met in Canada with the COO. Kelly and the CGSB Committee on Organic Agriculture have provided feedback to the COO on EU variances. The COO hopes to sign an agreement with the EU by February.

Costa Rica has submitted a recognition request.

Australia and Taiwan are exchanging information with the COO.

Under equivalency arrangements, a given country leaves responsibility of certification to the country of origin.

Jim McCullagh asks if a Canadian product now certified to NOP and JAS for export to Japan and processed for the US market (as well as Canadian and Japanese markets), will be accepted in the US if the NOP certification is dropped and replaced by the COS certification. The COO answers that all those scenarios are discussed with USDA.

USDA has not listed the CBs based outside of US that it accredits, which creates a technical trade barrier. CBs need to have this worked out otherwise business operations will be in jeopardy. The COO recommends CBs maintain all national accreditations while the scenarios are clarified with the USDA. Julie Belzile adds that one of the objectives of the COR is to provide access to all markets with one accreditation and it is important for our industry to be able to issue EU and NOP certificates to conduct international trade.

Standards Interpretation Committee

The SIC met December 8-9, and Elizabeth Corrigan of the COO attended the entire meeting. Matthew Holmes reports the first half day was spent discussing process: how the SIC will function and interact with the COO. Some 20 questions were analyzed, and only two had to be tabled until further technical information could be provided.



The members of the Standards Interpretation Committee, meeting in Ottawa December 8 & 9.

From left to right:
G rard Bouchard,
Matthew Holmes, Ted
Zettel, Jean Duval, Dag
Falck et Laura Telford

The interpreted questions and the SIC answers will be posted on the CFIA website for a comment period of 60 days. The various stakeholders associations (OFC, OTA, COG, etc) will notify the sector on the publication of the SIC interpretations. In the meantime, the COO will set up an email notification service that should be completed soon.

Next Meeting at 1pm EST on Monday, January 4th 2010.

Call-in Number is: 877-413-4785 or 613-960-7512

Pass code is 7939430 #