



Notes from COO Liaison Committee Meeting of January 25th 2010

Present: Gunta Vitins (SunOpta), Rochelle Eisen (COABC), Sally Blackman (CPMA), Betsy Hui (CHFA), Julie Belzile (FBQ), Kelly Monaghan, Deb Foote, Priscilla Reimer (MOA), Dag Falck (Nature's Path), Matthew Holmes (OTA), Keith Mussar (I.E Canada), Arnold Taylor (SOD), Gordon Nodge, Lucie Gionet (FABQ), Gary Lean, Larry Lenhardt, Ted Zettel (OCO).

COO office: Michel Saumur, Ken Bruce, Elizabeth Corrigan, Valeriya Staykova

Canadian National Standards

The CGSB Committee on Organic Agriculture [Technical Committee (TC)], chaired by Kelly Monaghan, met in Cornwall from 18 to 20 January to prepare amendment proposals for a 5th ballot on the Standards and PSL. 113 out of 119 Working Group proposals will be sent to ballot; the consensus building was very impressive and the COO is pleased with the efficiency of the TC. Kelly will post a summary on the CGSB Site Scape, asking for feedback on how to continue improving the Standards-PSL revision process. The Nav Canada Center is a good facility for TC meetings and Kelly is congratulated for her excellent work as chair, for keeping the meetings on track and completing the agenda.

The CGSB is preparing and translating the minutes of the meeting with the intent of sending out the ballot before March 31st.

Keith Mussar asks how the sector can be notified of the issues that are going to ballot. Arnold Taylor emphasizes that stakeholders should be informed through a wider list serve about the issues that are being voted on, who is voting and how to provide input.

Keith asks when and how the World Trade Organization is notified when there are changes to the Standards. Michel answers that notification is sent when the modifications have occurred.

Extract from CGSB website:

<http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/cgsb/prgsrv/stdsdev/policy/policy03-e.html>

3.8 Public Review

As part of Canada's commitment to WTO, CGSB shall give public notification of standardization activities to allow interested persons and organizations an opportunity for meaningful contributions to those activities. For the public review of an available draft standard, CGSB shall provide a 60-calendar-day comment period, commencing on the date of notification. The period for public review and the disposition of any comments received shall take place prior to committee approval of the standard.

International

EU Regulation – The COO met with EU representatives in November. Kelly Monaghan and the CGSB Committee on Organic Agriculture provided feedback to the COO on variances identified by the EU. Michel Saumur will be meeting with EU representatives at Biofach, Germany, on 18 or 19 February.

Australia has applied for an equivalency agreement with Canada and submitted documents for the comparison process. First step is the application; then documents are exchanged and an extensive comparison is done; regulation, administration, enforcement, certification, monitoring are reviewed.

At this point, 4/5 of the comparison with **Costa Rica** is completed. The TC has not yet been involved.

Canada-US Equivalency Agreement – The COO had a meeting with NOP representatives, which resulted in the COO submitting a list of action items for NOP approval. The COO is waiting for a response from the NOP. Upon approval, the COO will post the action items on its website. There will be a lot to report on the NOP-COO administration of the agreement.

A number of Canadian CBs are inquiring about their NOP accreditation because they feel that NOP certification is still required. The COO will extend an invitation to CBs asking them to describe examples or scenarios in which NOP certification is required. Rochelle Eisen asks how this information might be made available to the broader organic sector. Michel indicates that the COO communicates with CBs via the CVBs in compliance with the flow of communication already established by the COO. The COO has no control over NOP decisions but will represent the concerns of the Canadian CBs. The COO also encourages CBs who are worried about their NOP accreditation to contact the NOP directly.

Guelph Organic Conference – The COO will participate on a panel organised by the OCO on Friday, January 29 at the Holiday Inn in Guelph. The COO will also have a booth at the Guelph Organic Tradeshow.

A Note of Thanks – Matthew Holmes reminds participants about the announcement made in Cornwall by Jaspinder Komal that the standards and PSL will soon be available free of charge. This is great news!