

## Notes from COO Liaison Committee Meeting of July 6th 2009

Present: Betsy Hui (CHFA), Gunta Vitins (Sunopta), Rochelle Eisen (COABC), Stephanie Wells (OTA), Dag Falck (Nature's Path), Nicole Boudreau (OFC/FBC), Julie Belzile (FBQ), Priscilla Reimer (MOA), John Hollinger (MAFRI), Deb Foote (CHFA), Sally Blackman (CPMA), Ann Macey, Dwight Brown (PACS), Byron Hamm (Procert), Michelle Kinkead, Tomas Nimmo, Dave Lockman (Procert), France Gravel (EcoCert), Kristen Wasylenchuk (OPAM)

COO office: Elizabeth Corrigan, Valeriya Staykova.

**Regulations** - The regulations are in force. The list of CBs and CVBs, the Stream of Commerce Policy and the Q&A on the Equivalency Agreement are posted on the COO website. The COO is working on the Operations Manual that will be published very soon, with all the information that the sector needs to comply with the Regulation. Elizabeth proposes that all questions be sent by email in to allow the COO to consult with other programs when necessary and to provide definitive answers. The Q&A section on the COO website will be updated monthly. Questions can be addressed to any COO office members.

**Standards** - The COO is still waiting for the Standards Interpretation Committee budget to be allocated. In the meantime, Standards and PSL questions can be sent to Elizabeth, the COO Regulatory Standards Officer, who will consult the CGSB Committee on Organic Agriculture to answer those questions. The sector will build a temporary database for Q&A as the need for information is urgent and vital for a majority of operators.

The fourth ballot closed July 2<sup>nd</sup>. The COO confirmed that the use of substances approved on this ballot will be allowed as soon as the CGSB has compiled the results, before the formal revisions are published.

**Equivalency Agreement** – France Gravel ask when the COO will notify CBs regarding the status of their NOP accreditation as per the application of the Equivalency Agreement with US. The COO says this notification is the responsibility of the NOP management. (See Appendix added to the minutes to know the USDA directives on that issue).

Byron Hamm requires clarification on a note the USDA sent to its accredited CBs that clearly states that the critical variances do not apply to products used in processed products.

This USDA message:

TO: All USDA-ACAs

FROM: Barbara C. Robinson, Acting Director, National Organic Program  
Deputy Administrator, Transportation & Marketing Programs, USDA-AMS

SUBJECT: U.S.-Canada Determination of Equivalency  
Effective Date: July 1, 2009

1. ACAs must inform their clients that effective July 1, for raw produce intended to be shipped to Canada, no field from which such produce is intended to be harvested may be treated with sodium nitrate (Chilean nitrate). Fields do not have to undergo a three-year transition to meet this requirement. However, fields must be designated free from the application of sodium nitrate, OSPs must be amended, records kept, and the OSP must be auditable. This does not apply to products used in processed products.
2. ACAs must document and collect livestock density ratios for all operations certified for livestock, poultry, and eggs. Data required are animal units per acre or per square foot (for swine and poultry) for all certified operations. ACAs may use their own format for collecting such data, such as an Excel spreadsheet. During the next year, NOP will call on ACAs to submit this data to the NOP in a form needed by the NOP so that such data can be reported to CFIA. More details will be forthcoming as necessary. This does not apply to processed products.

Links to information on the NOP Website [www.ams.usda.gov/nop](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop)

Byron asks what is included in the processing definition: Packaging? Labelling? Washing? The COO will investigate and provide clarification.

As the Equivalency Agreement was signed before the OPR came into force, the sector needs more information as to how it will work. The COO says instructions on certification under the Equivalency Agreement will be posted very shortly. Sally Blackman asks that the instructions include examples to help the sector understand the scenarios. Clarifications are also required on the scope of the Stream of Commerce Policy.

Questions regarding;

Regulation/ Standards: Elizabeth Corrigan - [Elizabeth.Corrigan@inspection.gc.ca](mailto:Elizabeth.Corrigan@inspection.gc.ca)

CBs and CVBs: Valeriya Staykova - [Valeriya.Staykova@inspection.gc.ca](mailto:Valeriya.Staykova@inspection.gc.ca)

International issues: Ken Bruce - [Ken.Bruce@inspection.gc.ca](mailto:Ken.Bruce@inspection.gc.ca)

Frequently Asked Questions on Canada/US Equivalency on the COO website:

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/orgbioimporte.shtml>

**Next Meeting is scheduled for 1pm EST on Monday, July 20th.**

Call-in Number is: 1-866-646-2080. Pass code is 2217165.

## Appendix

The following directives were published on the USDA website lately.

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5077863&acct=nopgeninfo>

### **Additional Q&A related to accreditation and certification under the U.S.- Canada Determination of Equivalence**

Q: I am an NOP ACA, residing in Canada, and all of my NOP clients are in Canada. Do I need to maintain my direct accreditation with the NOP?

A: No. As of June 30, 2009, if you are on the list of certifying bodies (CBs) provided to the NOP by the CFIA, NOP will no longer provide accreditation to Canadian CBs who do not certify to the NOP outside of Canada.

Q: I am an NOP ACA residing in Canada, but I have clients that I certify to the NOP in the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Do I need to maintain my direct accreditation with the NOP?

A: Yes. You must maintain your accreditation with the NOP in order to certify operations in the United States and Mexico; (and other countries outside of Canada); the CFIA will not take responsibility for your certification activities outside of Canada for products being shipped to the U.S.

Q: I am an NOP ACA based in a South American country. May I continue to certify operations producing organic products to the NOP standards for direct shipment to Canada?

A: Yes. USDA-foreign ACAs may continue to certify operations producing products to the NOP regulations with the expectation that those products will be eligible for sale in Canada under the US-Canadian equivalence arrangement.

Q: I am a Canadian CB, and certifying operations in Canada to the NOP. I have been recognized by a Canadian accrediting body to do this certification work. Will this recognition continue after June 30, 2009?

A: No. The agreements will no longer be necessary since all organic production in Canada will be supervised by the Canadian authorities.

Q: I am an NOP ACA in a European country that certifies operations to the NOP standards under a recognition agreement with USDA-AMS. Will operations I certify be eligible for direct shipment to Canada under the equivalence agreement?

A: No. Your government must apply directly to CFIA for recognition in order for you to be recognized to certify operations to be eligible to export products to Canada. Only ACAs that are directly accredited by USDA may certify operations to NOP standards for shipment to Canada under the equivalence agreement.

Q: I am a domestic (U.S.-domiciled) ACA, but I have several clients outside the U.S. that are certified to the NOP standards. Are those operations eligible to label and ship products to Canada?

A: Yes, if the products meet all NOP regulations and conditions for shipment to Canada (produced without the use of Chilean nitrate).