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CanadaGAP holds first annual meeting, elects new board of directors

by Gerry Weaver | March 14, 2014

On Feb. 10, CanadaGAP (Good Agricultural Practices) held its first annual general meeting of members to elect a new board of directors. The new board will focus on rolling out the new Option D certification for re-packers and wholesalers.

The new board members are Jack Bates of Tecarte Farms, Hugh Bowman of Misionero Vegetables, Avia Eek of Eek Farms, Keith Kuhl of Peak of the Market, Stephanie Lariviere of Erie James Ltd., Paul Leblanc of Apple Growers of New Brunswick, Cathy McKay of Nature's Bounty, and Dean Thomson of Thomson Orchards.

CanadaGAP is a food-safety certification program for companies that produce and handle fruits and vegetables. Launched in 2008 by the Canadian Horticultural Council, by 2010 it had become the first Canadian food-safety program to be officially recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative for two of its certifications.

In 2012, CanadaGAP decided to merge with the Canadian Produce Marketing Association's Repacking and Wholesale Food Safety Program to create a single integrated standard and a standalone not-for-profit corporation called CanAgPlus.

In a press release, current chair of the CanAgPlus Board Jack Bates said, "We appreciate the confidence shown in us by members. We look forward to the continued growth and success of the CanadaGAP Program."

According to CanadaGap Executive Director Heather Gale, the merger with CPMA's RWFSP program has gone very well.

The integrated set of requirements are included in the 2014 CanadaGAP manuals, which can be downloaded at <http://www.canadagap.ca/manuals/manual-downloads/>.

The new requirements do have a few differences from the existing ones for packers. "A number of additions from the CPMA program were made to strengthen the CanadaGAP program overall," said Gale, citing additional information about cross-contamination and allergen control as examples.

"The result is now a seamless program that will meet the needs of vertically integrated businesses and ensure a consistent set of food-safety practices among fresh produce suppliers at different levels of the supply chain."

CanadaGAP certification for repacking and wholesaling operations, called Option D, will be available starting April 1, 2014.

The new board will focus on rolling out the new certification and seeking recognition of it by the GFSI as soon as the program is eligible to apply for a scope extension. GFSI requires at least ten accredited certificates be issued prior to benchmarking a new scope.

Option D's scope for repacking and wholesale covers all fresh fruits and vegetables except for mushrooms, sprouts, minimally processed fruits and vegetables, and products in hermetically sealed containers. To receive the new certification, repacking and wholesale operations must have a site-specific HACCP Plan.

Looking ahead to a busy year, Gale noted, "The Board is also focused on ensuring that CanadaGAP certification will continue to position participating companies to comply effectively with new produce safety regulations that are scheduled to come into force in 2015 in both Canada and the United States."



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