

CanadaGAP and CPMA Repacking and Wholesale Food Safety Program Integration

Update – August 21, 2012

The Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) and Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) are making good progress on integrating CanadaGAP and the CPMA Repacking and Wholesale Food Safety Program (RWFSP). Integration of the two programs entails establishing an autonomous corporate entity that will function independently of the CHC and CPMA. The new corporation is expected to be in place this fall.

Background

The CHC and CPMA have participated in discussions since 2009 relative to the potential for integrated delivery of CanadaGAP and the CPMA RWFSP through a standalone corporate entity. This was recommended to limit CHC, CPMA and their respective directors' potential exposure to liability associated with administering a food safety program.

A formal study was undertaken in 2010 and concluded that integration was feasible. In the spring of 2011 the results were presented to members of the CHC and CPMA, who endorsed proceeding with the implementation plan in the study. In 2012, both organizations made a final decision to proceed with integration.

Benefits of Integration

In addition to the desirability of a separate corporate entity to minimize liability, integrating the two programs will result in some key benefits for the Canadian fruit and vegetable industry. Benefits include; ensuring consistent and complementary food safety standards from producers and packers to wholesalers and repackers, and adopting an industry-wide food safety system that meets customer requirements

An effective, integrated food safety program will allow for:

- Integration of Canadian government recognition processes (e.g., Management System Technical Review), thereby saving government and industry representatives' time and money.
- Expansion of scope for international recognition of the program (e.g., GFSI benchmarking).
- Integration and expansion of the available pool of food safety auditors, with potential to decrease audit costs and auditor travel expenses for the industry.
- Integration of audit checklists, auditor training programs and other tools.
- Merging/harmonization of food safety standards within a single user interface (e.g., manual) to ensure consistency between requirements, and ease of use for businesses whose activities span producing, packing, shipping, distributing, wholesaling and/or repacking within their operation.

Progress

The Food Safety Integration Project Steering Committee was set up in 2010 to oversee the initiative and is comprised of members from both CHC and CMPA. Meetings to manage the logistics and legalities of integration have been occurring since November 2011. The Committee has developed draft by-laws for the new corporation, determined the corporation's statement of purpose, established a governance process, created an integrated management manual, etc.

CPMA is currently in the process of undergoing Government Technical Review of the Repacking and Wholesale Food Safety standard. Once that process is complete, both of the technical standards, audit checklists and auditor training programs will be merged.

Next Steps

This month an interim board for the new corporation will be named, consisting of three CHC representatives and three CPMA representatives. The first meeting of the interim board will be held shortly after it is established to recruit and hire an Executive Director. Following incorporation, the interim Board is scheduled to meet in November 2012.

The first Annual General Meeting for the new corporation is anticipated for November 2013 and the election of the board by members will take place at that time. Board members of the new corporate entity will be drawn from CHC-approved representatives (four directors), CPMA-approved directors (two), and two directors from among program participants (members of the new corporation).

Work on this initiative will continue into 2013. Funding assistance has been received from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Canadian Integrated Food Safety Initiative under Growing Forward, to integrate the management systems and technical standards. The establishment of the new corporate entity is an industry initiative that is not funded by AAFC.

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