



Canadian Food Inspection Agency On-Farm Food Safety Recognition Program

In June 2001, the Canadian federal government announced that it would set up a system with provincial and territorial governments to officially recognize on-farm food safety programs. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) was chosen to lead the process.

What is recognition?

There are two main components to CFIA recognition of on-farm programs. The first is the examination of the technical merits of the program. The second looks at how well the program is working, or its administrative effectiveness. While CFIA describes the process using several more steps, these are the main components.

Technical Review

Looking at the technical merits of the program begins with CFIA screening an initial document package submitted by a specific industry group. This package includes the generic HACCP model and the on-farm food safety program's producer manual. The package also must contain a letter of intent that includes the organization's commitment to implement and maintain the on-farm food safety program. If the documents are deemed satisfactory, the CFIA will establish a full-review team to thoroughly examine the technical merits of the program. Each provincial and territorial government is invited to have an expert involved in the review. This review involves significant work on the part of the reviewers, to ensure the HACCP model has been appropriately developed, potential food safety hazards adequately identified, and control measures documented. It also ensures that the corresponding producer materials adequately address the hazards and control measures identified in the HACCP model. Part of the review includes a

five-day meeting where reviewers come together to share their findings and settle on recommendations for changes.

At the conclusion of the five-day session, the review team establishes a list of "adjustment needs requests", which then must be addressed by the industry group. These adjustments could be related to the HACCP model or the producer materials. The industry responds to these requests, and once the review team and the CFIA are satisfied with the responses, the CFIA will provide the industry with a Letter of Completion. This concludes the first stage.

Administrative Assessment

The next stage of recognition examines how the program is working. The details of this phase are not yet finalized, but they will evaluate how an organization ensures that the program is working, and that it is being delivered consistently across the country. One confirmed requirement for this stage of recognition will be the need for the program to have a third-party audit.

Government recognition of industry developed on-farm food safety programs provides excellent external oversight. The rigorous review of the program's technical content affirms that industry has done its job in developing the best on-farm program possible. The review of the administrative aspects of the program, once completed, will also provide external review and added credibility to the program.

For more information on the Canadian Food Inspection Agency On-Farm Food Safety Recognition Program, please visit: www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/polstrat/reco/recoe.shtml