

Report from the

FOOD SAFETY COMMITTEE

To the 84th Annual General Meeting of the CANADIAN HORTICULTURAL COUNCIL The Westin Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario – March 1- 4, 2006

To The President and Members of the Canadian Horticultural Council

Food safety continues to climb the ladder of emerging priorities in both the political arena and the Canadian food industry.

The President of the largest food retail company in Canada, Mr. John Lederer, stated that “Food safety is the achilles heel of our industry, and Loblaws Cos. will absolutely be on the forefront of that issue.”

At recent CPMA regional workshops, food safety was quoted as one of the top two issues facing the food industry by all groups present.

Furthermore, in a recent article in one of our national newspapers, food safety was identified as one the three major challenges facing the new Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Within this background, the CHC has experienced an incredible year of activity in an effort to prepare and serve the interests of our membership in this important area.

With assistance from the federal government, we have secured the funding to generate a massive initiative that mobilized members from across the country and across the multitude of commodities represented by the CHC. We had no less than six working groups who met for countless hours in designing and developing a series On-Farm Food Safety Producer Manuals.

The CHC Food Safety Committee, which is made up of two appointed representatives from each province, has met to oversee the challenges and policy implications of the work done by the working groups, as well as to map out suggestions and ideas for the future direction for the CHC in the area of food safety.

Six working groups have worked diligently at developing manuals that will fit the requirements of a credible program, while being as *simple, affordable and doable* as possible. The groups are:

- Leafy Vegetables
- Bulb and Root
- Potato
- Small Fruit
- Tree and Vine Fruit
- Greenhouse Vegetables

Each manual is at different stages of development. The Potato Producer and Packer Manual is the furthest along and is in the final stages of CFIA Technical Review. Plans are under way for pilot projects on most of the others. Work on the remaining two groups (Other Vegetables and Fruiting Vegetables) will get under way in the very near future. A detailed report will be presented at the plenary session of the Annual General Meeting.

It is not easy work and for all the working group members who have toiled through the tedium and the controversies *A SINCERE THANK YOU!* As is often the case, the hard work of a few will benefit the many.

So, in looking ahead once we have completed the workplan we will have a suite of eight producer manuals. What, then, is the role for CHC after that?

The Food Safety Committee has reflected on this question and is suggesting the next step should be to work at protecting the integrity of our work by developing a basis for review, validation and auditing. This would establish a common standard by which our manuals could be looked at by outside interests.

Of course, we will continue to work with groups such as the Canadian Produce Marketing Association, the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors and individual food chains and other stakeholders in the supply chain in matters relating to our manuals. We cannot control what others will do with our manuals, but we can attempt to influence and motivate people to follow a direction that will be in our best interest.

I conclude with a sincere appreciation for the dedication and incredible abilities of all the staff and advisors who worked as support for all these meetings. Heather Gale and Amber Bailey in particular, have been the heart of this massive exercise. We are very fortunate to have people of this caliber serving the membership. Thank You – Thank You – Thank You, for a job very well done.

Respectfully submitted,



Paul LeBlanc
Chair, Food Safety Committee
March 2, 2006