

Report from the

FOOD SAFETY COMMITTEE

To the 85th Annual General Meeting of the CANADIAN HORTICULTURAL COUNCIL Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, Vancouver, British Columbia March 7 – 10, 2007

To the President and Members of the Canadian Horticultural Council

It is again time to step back and reflect on where this fast moving initiative has been and where we are headed.

Many significant events this past year have contributed to raising the profile of this process and much work continues to be done.

Of utmost significance is the November 21, 2006 CFIA letter congratulating the CHC on “successfully completing the requirements related to technical review for the Potato Producer and Packer On-Farm Food Safety Program”. The congratulations go to the tireless efforts of those who served on committees and the staff who supported the entire process. The potato industry is now positioned to have national program standards that will meet market demands.

Prior to that, on October 20, the CHC found it advisable to issue a media release advising “Canadian Farmers Proactive on Fresh Produce Safety”. This was in response to growing fears associated with produce originating from the USA. Such events fuel the public’s fear and the risk of having uninformed reactions by officials and politicians is of major concern.

The current debate in the USA over government regulations is critically important. The Canadian approach to food safety is to have a credible, effective and affordable program that is driven by market requirements. We must make every effort to build programs that will reassure consumers and avoid the need for government regulations.

While the work on all the various manuals continuing in tandem, the next to enter the “technical review vortex” will be the Tree Fruit and Vine manual. This coming year will hopefully see work on many others arriving to the stage of being submitted into the CFIA process.

Funding approval delays caused work on three fronts to fall somewhat behind. Funding has now been secured, and work has begun with three new initiatives/committees:

- Audit Protocol and other audit-related issues
- Training materials
- Development of proposals for a Program Management System

The coming months will see activities in these areas. These are complex issues and each will need to be addressed as we go further down the food safety road.

The CHC continues to work with our customers in making sure we do everything possible to keep in step with their requirements. While not always having all the pieces of the puzzle ready on time, we are working closely with the CPMA, the CCGD and others to develop audit protocols that fit with our manuals.

We are participating on a joint CHC-CPMA-CCGD committee tasked with looking at the major food safety programs being used around the world and making a comparison of program elements. This joint project will assist retailers in providing guidance for their commitment to us that they will indeed require "equivalent" food safety programs on all produce they import into Canada.

Much has been done, much is still ahead.

Thank You to all the committee members who are so wonderful with their time and their contributions. To our pleasant, competent and so patient staff, a very warm Thank You.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul LeBlanc', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul LeBlanc
Chair, Food Safety Committee
March 8, 2007