

RCC Agriculture and Food 2 Working Group: Common Approach to Food Safety

Canada Leads: Neil Bouwer, Vice President, Policy and Programs, Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)

Paul Glover, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Products and Food Branch, Health Canada (HC)

U.S. Leads: Murray Lumpkin, Commissioner’s Senior Advisor and Representative for Global Issues, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Preamble:

A goal of collaboration between CFIA, HC and the FDA is to better align our regulatory systems, reduce unnecessary duplications, enhance our sharing of information, and, to the extent feasible, better leverage resources to help both agencies meet their public health missions. Improved public health outcomes resulting from international collaboration will enhance food safety for consumers in both countries while providing strategic benefit to both countries’ resource management efforts.

Building on the strong, extensive and long-standing bilateral regulatory cooperation between the agencies, the FDA, CFIA, and HC will identify ways to help facilitate on-going systemic alignment of regulatory systems, strategies, and practices between CFIA, HC, and FDA, particularly in areas of mutual reliance, such as inspections of manufacturing facilities. FDA, CFIA, and HC will pursue opportunities to examine enablers and barriers related to implementation and will identify options for addressing barriers.

CFIA, HC and FDA will periodically update stakeholders on progress and developments emanating from this CFIA-HC-FDA RCC initiative.

Deliverable outcome	Assessment of the "comparability" of Canadian and U.S. food safety systems within the mandates of Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This initiative would leverage the strong, collaborative bilateral regulatory relationships that already exist between CFIA/Health Canada and the FDA with a view to jointly enhancing the safety of the food supply in North America, and minimize the need for routine food safety surveillance inspections by FDA in Canada and by Canadian authorities in the U.S. Further strengthening of the existing bilateral regulatory alignment mechanisms to enhance cooperation and information exchange between Canada and the US during the development of regulations and guidances with respect to the implementation of FSMA and new Canadian food safety initiatives in order to proactively identify and mitigate health and safety issues in an effort to collectively strengthen food safety in both countries.	
Action items	Action Item 1: Advance system comparability based on FDA's Comparability Review process as outlined in the public hearings held in March 2011.	Action Item 2: FDA - Canada are committed to collectively strengthening food safety in both countries, with the CFIA-HC-FDA Joint Committee on Food Safety (JCFS) working to develop an arrangement, based on the Canada-U.S. relationship, that will focus on regulatory cooperation on common food safety priorities (e.g., collaboration on imports)
Timeline	Interim Deliverables	

<p>3-6 Months</p>	<p>1. Canada and the FDA are currently collaborating on a comparability assessment of Canada's food safety system based on the process outlined in the March 2011 public hearings. The objective of the assessment is to build on the knowledge of the food safety systems in both countries that will support the proposed arrangement under Action Item 2.</p>	<p>1. A working group composed of officials from FDA, CFIA and HC, has developed a discussion paper, that has been circulated for comment, with the objective of enhancing information sharing on common key food safety priorities, thus enhancing regulatory alignment.</p> <p>2. A steering committee has been established under JCFS to draft an information exchange arrangement and continue to manage information exchange on food safety.</p>
<p>6-12 Months</p>	<p>1. The comparability assessment is a government to government process, consistent with the principles established by the Codex Alimentarius and will be based on objective criteria. The comparability assessment should be completed by early 2013.</p> <p>2. The RCC process will be used to keep stakeholders informed of progress on the action item.</p>	<p>1. Presentation of the draft framework, with proposed options and recommendation(s) to senior officials (including the JCFS) to seek their agreement.</p> <p>2. Confirmation of common food safety priorities requiring enhanced collaboration by JCFS.</p> <p>3. Technical working groups meet and report back to steering committee.</p> <p>4. Steering committee reports back before next JCFS meeting.</p> <p>5. Technical working groups added and disbanded as needed per JCFS guidance.</p> <p>6. The RCC process will be used to keep stakeholders informed of progress on the action item.</p>
<p>12-18 Months</p>	<p>1. If the comparability assessment is favorable, the results will be used to inform a comparability arrangement between the United States and Canada. This arrangement will specify how U.S. and Canadian food safety regulators will interact under a status of comparability.</p>	<p>1. JCFS will consider the results of the comparability assessment in finalising the arrangement.</p> <p>2. Priority work on enhancing food safety to continue, particularly with respect to modernisation agendas underway in both countries: FDA - Food Safety Modernisation Act; CFIA - HC Regulatory modernisation projects.</p> <p>3. Regular reports to JCFS on progress and, where necessary, decisions on proposed initiatives and guidance with respect to priority areas for information sharing.</p>

<p>Beyond 18 Months</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain and enhance information sharing in the confirmed common food safety priorities, under the oversight of the Steering Committee, and reporting back to JCFS. 2. Update and refine areas of US-Canada technical collaboration per direction from the JCFS.
--------------------------------	------------	--

Contact Information:

Canada - CFIA: Mary Ann Green - MaryAnn.Green@inspection.gc.ca; Health Canada: Dr. Samuel Godefroy - samuel.godefroy@hc-sc.gc.ca

U.S. - FDA: Julie Callahan - julie.callahan@fda.hhs.gov (comparability); Gorka Garcia Malene - gorka.garcia-malene@fda.hhs.gov and Jeffrey Read - Jeffrey.Read@fda.hhs.gov (information sharing)