Fast Track

News from Canada's National Food Traceability Standards Initiative

Message from the Chair

Welcome to Can-Trace Fast Track, the first issue of a series of regular newsletters, providing regular updates on Can-Trace. As you may already know, Can-Trace is a significant initiative that has made important strides in food traceability over the past year and a half.

In response to market and regulatory requirements, companies around the globe have implemented varying degrees of traceability for their food products. The pressures to ramp up the breadth and depth of that traceability capacity has increased as a result of a number of external factors around the globe such as animal health and security. Many organizations have recognized significant opportunities to improve supply chain management by reducing costs, improving margins, and reducing liability, albeit through the implementation of what have largely been proprietary systems.

The Can-Trace objective has been to propose a single data standard which is multi-sector, whole-chain in scope and intended to be used by companies of all scale. This has been realized in the publication of Version 1.0 of the new data standard.

Canada has a vested interest in global standards that reduce costs, increase value and minimize damaging non-tariff barriers. The trends and pressures described above provide Can-Trace with a unique opportunity to proactively offer internationally compatible traceability standards, tools and services. In addition, Can-Trace is demonstrating how the process of whole supply chain collaboration can develop the national consensus necessary to take on such an ambitious effort.

Canada has taken a leadership role with Can-Trace, placing us at the forefront of food traceability, which will ultimately benefit all Canadians.

Jane Proctor, Chair

New Canadian Food Traceability Data Standard Created

Across the globe, the issue of food product traceability is gaining momentum. Governments in Canada have established the goal of 80% traceability by 2008. To help meet this objective, industry was invited to take the lead in defining traceability standards and solutions.

In response, major Canadian trade associations, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Electronic Commerce Council of Canada (ECCC) convened a tracking and tracing initiative named Can-Trace in July 2003. This initiative aims to identify requirements for a whole-chain Canadian food industry traceability program and define and develop minimum data standards based on the EAN.UCC system.

Can-Trace is directed by a Steering Committee composed of national, multi-sectoral industry association representatives and government observers. It is an industry-led, voluntary initiative that fosters open dialogue within the supply chain, ensuring that the necessary framework for Canadian traceability is designed for implementation.

Can-Trace Standard and Reports Available Online

Copies of the Canadian Food Traceability Data Standard Version 1.0, all Pilot Reports, the Business Case, including the Decision Support Tool, and SME Report can be downloaded from the Can-Trace web site at www.can-trace.org.

To date, Can-Trace has facilitated the development of a generic, internationally compatible standard for the minimum data requirements needed to support a one up/one down traceability model for single ingredient products, including fresh produce, beef and pork.

Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et
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Fast Track

New Standard

cont'd from page 1... In addition, reports on the results of beef, pork and produce traceability pilot projects, the business case for implementing traceability solutions, and traceability requirements specific to Canadian small and medium enterprises (SME) have been released. Highlights of each of the reports produced in this phase can be found on this page.

The Canadian Food Traceability Data Standard Version 1.0 and other reports are now available online at www.can-trace.org. A change management process is being developed to facilitate change requests to the data standard. In the meantime, feedback on the Can-Trace standard can be sent to info@can-trace.org.

Canada's development of a national system of food traceability that is internationally compatible will allow Canada to brand its products as secure, thereby increasing access to existing and new markets and providing a competitive advantage for exports.

Calendar of Events

Can-Trace travels nationally to present and share Can-Trace work. The following are recent and upcoming events at which Can-Trace has or will appear.

November 30, 2004 - Ensuring Food Safety and Security in Toronto, ON

December 3, 2004 - Canadian Meat Council Technical Committee in Ottawa, ON

February 2, 2004 - Canadian Meat Council Technical Symposium in Hull, PQ

March 2 - 3, 2005 - Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture Conference, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development in Calgary, AB

Results

Beef, Pork and Produce Pilots

Pilot traceability projects in beef, pork and produce were conducted after the announcement of the draft data standard in May 2004 with the objective of verifying whether the minimum mandatory data requirements were sufficient to establish traceability. The pilots provided useful recommendations for modifying the standard to establish traceability.

A secondary objective of the pilots was to collect information to support the development of the business case "Decision Support Tool" by identifying categories of costs and benefits of traceability to participating companies. A simultaneous produce pilot was conducted in the U.S. which built on the foundation of Can-Trace, demonstrating North American collaboration in this sector. Visit www.can-trace.org to access the pilot reports.

Report of the Can-Trace Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Working Group

The SME report addresses and examines the special traceability needs of SMEs and highlights areas of concern. The report has helped to increase awareness of the unique challenges faced by SMEs with respect to traceability. Visit www.can-trace.org to access the SME report.

Business Case

The Business Case report examined the benefits and costs of implementing traceability and produced an interactive "Decision Support Tool" that companies can use to better understand the benefits and costs of traceability to their organization. Visit www.can-trace.org to access the Decision Support System (Business Case).

For more information on Can-Trace, visit www.can-trace.org or contact the Can-Trace Secretariat, the Electronic Commerce Council of Canada, at info@can-trace.org.