



**The Can-Trace Roadmap:
A Progress Report and A Look Ahead**



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Introduction

In the summer of 2003, a group of associations in the food industry convened to collaboratively develop voluntary industry traceability data standards for all food products grown, manufactured and sold in Canada. This initiative, called Can-Trace, had a compelling rationale – a standardized approach to traceability data elements would deliver efficiencies to the entire supply chain.

To provide leadership and governance to this new initiative, a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from across the food supply chain, government and consumers was formally established. (Steering Committee members are listed in Appendix A.)

During September and October 2003, Can-Trace conducted a series of consultation sessions across Canada to gather support for the initiative and to obtain feedback on:

- whether there was a need for a voluntary industry data standard for food product traceability;
- what key data elements a traceability data standard should include;
- the adoption of a common harmonized approach to food product traceability; and
- a strategy or a “roadmap” for achieving the objective.

The result was the publication of the “Roadmap 1” document in December 2003, which laid out a multi-step industry action plan to guide this ambitious undertaking.

Roadmap 1 Action Plan and Deliverables

The following is a summary of the strategic objectives outlined in Roadmap 1 [www.can-trace.org/About/docs/WEBRoadmap%20V2.pdf] and the actions taken to support those objectives:

1. Develop a generic food traceability data standard based on the EAN.UCC standards

- April 2004 – A draft Canadian Food Traceability Data Standard was published
- June-August 2004 – Pilot studies were conducted in beef, pork and produce sectors to verify the data requirements in the draft Standard
- November 2004 – The Canadian Food Traceability Data Standard (CFTDS) version 1.0 which identified the mandatory (minimum) data to “collect, keep and share” was approved and published
- March 2005 – A “Change Management Process” to support regular updates to the CFTDS was introduced
- May 2005 – A guidance document on data exchange protocols and their implications for transaction documents and physical markings on cases/pallets is developed

2. Develop a business case report and decision support tool

- August 2004 – Released the Business Case Report and Decision Support Tool to assess the business impact of implementing a traceability system



- 3. Establish a workgroup to look at the special needs of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)**
 - May 2004 – Released a report with recommendations specific to SME concerns

- 4. Implement a communications program to promote Can-Trace**
 - Communications Working Group and strategy in place
 - Regular newsletters and updates distributed

- 5. Develop guidelines for integrating the data standard within existing Canadian food safety and quality programs**
 - April 2005 – Work began on an Integration Guidelines document

Next Steps: Roadmap 2

As Roadmap 1 nears completion, Can-Trace is in the process of measuring what has been achieved and learned, and assessing next steps for activities and programs tailored to industry's needs.

At a recent strategic planning session, the Can-Trace Steering Committee agreed on the following Vision and Mission Statement:

Vision Statement

"Traceability is applied in the Canadian food supply to help address health, economic, and market risks and opportunities"

Mission Statement

"To address traceability standards and issues across the food continuum"

The Steering Committee also identified several core strategies to support the Vision and Mission Statements. The purpose of this round of National Food Traceability Consultation Sessions is to consult with stakeholders and validate or modify these strategies:

1. Maintain and Strengthen the Can-Trace Community

Can-Trace must maintain and build consensus for the work it conducts. The Steering Committee has identified the need to continue the ongoing collaborative process to ensure fair and adequate representation from across the food supply chain. A similar conclusion was endorsed at the National Traceability Congress held in Ottawa in February 2005.

The ability to build and maintain consensus both up and down the supply chain and across the different food sectors has been one of the most important reasons for the success of Can-Trace to-date. The consensus approach to Can-Trace has evolved into a model that global trading partners are studying more closely.

Collaborative work is an important approach to ensure success. Much of the work associated with supporting a collaborative process is administrative and involves communicating with stakeholders,



liaising with government, meeting and event planning, staying abreast of developments in all sectors, and providing a forum for new ideas and suggestions. Can-Trace has provided these essential administrative resources, as well as offered useful tools and other information to stakeholders interested in traceability. It should continue to do so.

2. Manage National Standards

When it published the first version of the Canadian Food Traceability Data Standard (CFTDS) in November 2004 (which had been preceded by several months of discussion, research and pilot testing), Can-Trace met one of its primary goals – to develop a set of voluntary industry data standards for food traceability that:

- Would be applicable to companies regardless of size;
- Would apply to any commodity in the food chain;
- Could be used by all components in the food supply chain in a one-up/one-down format; and
- Be consistent with international EAN.UCC standards.

Maintaining and updating the data standard on a regular basis in an orderly, transparent and open process is important to keep it relevant. As a result, Can-Trace has established a formal “change management process” to accommodate suggestions and amendments to the standard on an ongoing basis. Included as part of this formal process is an evaluation by the Secretariat, a thorough discussion and recommendation by the Can-Trace Standards Working Group, and final approval by the Steering Committee.

In addition to the CFTDS, other complimentary standards and guidelines are required to provide assistance to the community in implementing traceability. For example, work has begun on developing a guidance document on the best practices for transmitting the information between partners in a supply chain, both as they apply to the documents used in those transactions; and markings or labels on cases and pallets which actually move goods.

As the initiative evolves, stakeholders and supply chain representatives will inevitably identify other areas that require attention and collaboration. Can-Trace can facilitate this work.

3. Develop Relevant Education Materials

A final ongoing role for Can-Trace is to ensure that it communicates key learnings from its work to those interested in implementing a traceability system. Can-Trace should be the recognized “go to” resource for traceability information.

For example, some sectors, such as produce, chose to use the first version of the CFTDS as the basis for developing an implementation guideline specific to its industry. In the coming months, the Technology Working Group will release a report on best practices and recommendations for *how* data should be exchanged between supply chain partners. While this report will likely identify additional requirements and possible areas of enquiry for Can-Trace to undertake, it will more importantly provide a useful framework to guide others. Similarly, the production of a document “Can-Trace at a Glance” will provide a basic overview of traceability and the benefits of a standardized approach.

Can-Trace will continue to develop reports and guidance documents to meet real information needs and business requirements, regardless of an organization’s size.



Conclusion

Can-Trace was formed less than two years ago. Under the direction of the Steering Committee, the initiative will meet its mission through the three sector strategies outlined above. Interested stakeholders are encouraged to participate and welcome to contribute ideas and recommendations to Can-Trace. Finally, anyone interested is invited to subscribe to Fast Track, Can-Trace's regular newsletter by visiting the Can-Trace website at www.can-trace.org.



Appendix: Steering Committee Members

Voting Members

Canada Grains Council
Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance
Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors
Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers
Canadian Meat Council
Canadian Pork Council
Canadian Poultry & Egg Processors Council
Canadian Produce Marketing Association
Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association
Le Conseil de la transformation agroalimentaire et des produits de consommation
Fisheries Council of Canada
Le Fonds de développement de la transformation alimentaire inc.
Food & Consumer Products Canada
Saskatchewan Herb and Spice Association/ National Herb and Spice Coalition

Observers

Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Canadian Cattle Identification Agency
Canadian Livestock Identification Agency
Canadian Federation of Agriculture
Canadian Food Inspection Agency
Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Working Group
Consumers' Association of Canada
Grains Canada
Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives
Ministère de l'Agriculture, Pêcheries, et Alimentation du Québec
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture & Food