

# Executive Summary - What We Heard Report

## Background

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) recently contracted a consultant to undertake a review of the Food Safety Recognition Program (FSRP).

The FSRP provides federal government recognition of on-farm and post-farm food safety assurance systems developed and implemented by national industry organizations (NIO) in order to enhance food safety, maintain the confidence of Canadian consumers and facilitate market access.

The FSRP was developed in 2001 following an agreement by federal, provincial and territorial ministers of agriculture that all levels of government have a responsibility for enhancing Canada's integrated food safety systems.

In support of the Agricultural Policy Framework and also under the Growing Forward Framework, the federal, provincial and territorial governments in collaboration with industry developed a recognition process for industry-led, voluntary on-farm food safety programs known today as FSRP.

The FSRP is a voluntary program, led by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) with the participation of the federal, provincial, territorial governments and industry. The CFIA, supported by federal governments, provinces and territories, conduct a systematic review of the national applicant's on-farm food safety program producer manual and generic HACCP model to ensure they are technically sound, which means that they:

- reflect the HACCP principles;
- reflect current scientific knowledge; and
- comply with federal and provincial regulations and with current industry codes of practice.

The recent review was the first formal assessment of the program since its inception. The objectives of the review included, but were not limited to:

- analyzing the current relevance of the FSRP to Canadian industry organizations in light of the length of time the program has existed, the increased use of voluntary third party assurance programs and CFIA's own modernization agenda;
- looking for efficiencies in how the FSRP could be administered and making recommendations that would reduce the administrative burden on both industry and CFIA and as well as the duration of the recognition process; and
- exploring and recommending concrete ways to enhance the uptake of FSRP by national industry organizations (NIOs).

The consultant did both material research and conducted interviews with key program stakeholders to acquire information for analysis purposes.

A total of 13 people were interviewed in late 2021/early 2022 and included FSRP subject matter experts and management team, a representative of an AAFC Assurance program, representatives from national industry organizations at various stages of the recognition process (fully recognized NIOs and those that have completed Technical Review Part 1 and/or Technical Review Part 2) and provincial partners.

## Summary and Recommendations

This is a summary of the feedback received by the consultant who conducted the review of the FSRP using a series of interviews with various stakeholders, internally and externally.

### **Disclaimer**

In the spirit of openness and transparency, the CFIA is sharing the summary of this review for information purposes only. This “What We Heard” Report (WWHR) and resulting recommendations are those of the consultant’s alone and do not constitute action items that the CFIA has committed to implementing at this time. Any future work or changes to the FSRP would be put forth by the CFIA as an official proposal for consultation with all concerned parties.

### **Program Effectiveness**

This review found that the FSRP remains highly effective in ensuring that food safety systems developed by industry through national industry organizations meet federal government standards, that they are audited regularly, and meet consumer and industry demands and requirements.

### **Jurisdictional Oversight**

The review also found that the program has tremendous benefit for and impact on producers (farmers). While there is a limited number of NIOs in Canada, the impact of the food safety program benefits tens of thousands of Canadian producers, thereby giving the federal government access and influence at the farm level, which is outside their jurisdiction.

### **Integration of Assurance Programs**

There were views among respondents that the FSRP suffers from limitations to its scope, and has not evolved to encapsulate other assurance programs that could support industry and export markets. The FSRP is considered by many as a Canadian government-industry collaboration success story; however, it is largely unknown by

other government departments (OGDs), federal, provincial and territorial, including within the CFIA itself.

### **Consultant's Recommendations**

The consultant has made the following recommendations to the CFIA for consideration when modernizing the FSRP:

1. The CFIA should consider expanding the scope of the FSRP to include other assurance programs in the areas of biosecurity, traceability, sustainability, animal welfare, etc.
2. The FSRP should be appropriately resourced to allow for expansion and the modernization, streamlining and digitization of all program materials, and manuals be updated and undertaken in the context of this revised scope and mandate.
3. The CFIA should consult extensively with provinces and territories to include their perspective in the ongoing development and modernization of the FSRP, thereby strengthening ties of shared responsibility for program outcomes.
4. The CFIA should also consider levels of FSRP recognition that facilitate full recognition for those NIOs that require it, as well as partial recognition through verification of NIOs that only require phase 1 (technical) and/or phase 2 (administrative) capacity for their assurance programs.
5. Lastly, the CFIA should address the issue of program visibility not only within the CFIA itself, but with OGDs, including provincial and territorial governments, as well, ensuring that the FSRP is included in the Agency's Departmental Results Framework.