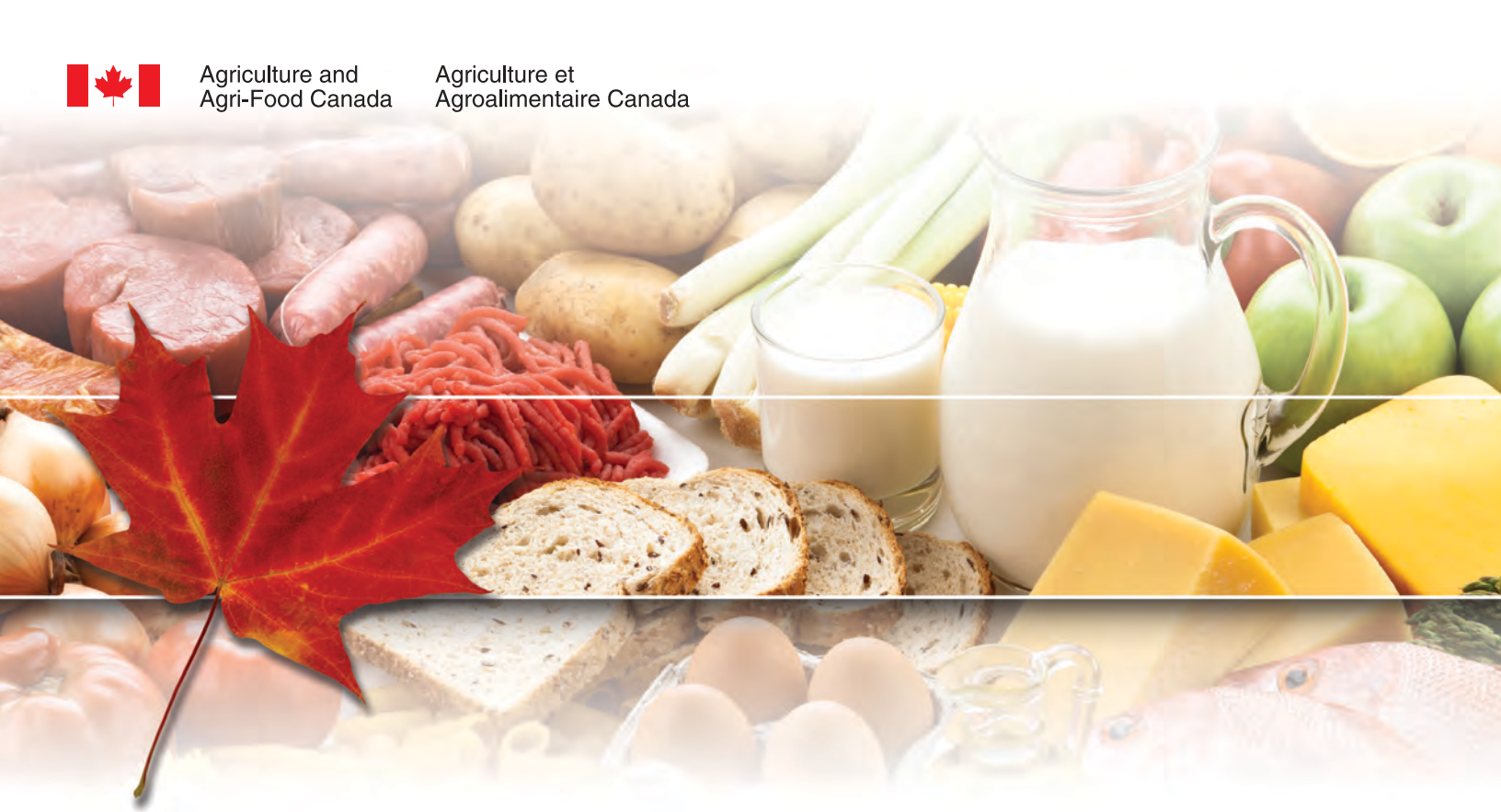




Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et
Agroalimentaire Canada



2012-2013 **Annual Report**

Agri-Subcommittee on Food Safety
For Period Ending March 31, 2013

Canada 

Agri-Subcommittee on Food Safety - Annual report Canada

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Message from the Co-Chairs

As co-chairs of the Agri-Subcommittee on Food Safety (ASFS), we are pleased to present its third annual report, for the fiscal year 2012-13.

In this fiscal year, three meetings were held, in April and October 2012 and in February 2013. Our observation, as the ASFS has matured over the past three years, is that the Subcommittee has become an increasingly valuable forum for discussion about food safety issues for industry and government, leading to greater understanding of the challenges and successes for federal and industry partners. In addition to the exchange of information between government and industry representatives, cooperation among industry sectors also advances progress in food safety.

Food safety infrastructure – public and private governance and financial, technical and human resources necessary to ensure the safety of the food supply – was a major topic at the ASFS this year. We saw the passage in November 2012 of the *Safe Food for Canadians Act*, which strengthens and modernizes the legislative basis for food safety in Canada. The ASFS had been kept apprised of developments in this legislation, as well as the status of implementation of the U.S. *Food Safety Modernization Act*. Senior officials from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and from Health Canada (HC) consulted with the ASFS on their plans for change in the areas of food safety regulation and inspection modernization efforts. ASFS members are following the progress of these initiatives with interest and will continue to be consulted. Finally, topics of traceability and private sector assurance standards were new on the agenda and expanded our exploration of food safety infrastructure.

We have appreciated the ongoing participation of the Chief Food Safety Officer (CFSO) for Canada in our meetings. This year, Dr. Brian Evans became a Special Advisor to the President of the CFIA and introduced his successor, Dr. Martine Dubuc, to the ASFS.

Subsequently, Dr. Evans retired from the CFIA. We would like to thank him, on behalf of the ASFS, for his exemplary work during his distinguished career with the CFIA, and we look forward to working with Dr. Dubuc in her new role as CFSO.

As the ASFS enters its fourth year of operation, we will continue our productive dialogue on joint government and industry food safety priorities. All of us are partners in ensuring safe food for Canadians.

Dennis Laycraft, ASFS Industry co-chair
Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association

Anna Romano, ASFS Government co-chair
Acting Director-General, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

SECTION I

Introduction: the Agri-Subcommittee on Food Safety (ASFS)

History

The ASFS was formed following a meeting of Value Chain Roundtable (VCRT) Chairs with senior government officials in November 2009, in response to the recognition that food safety is a cross-cutting issue that would benefit from a forum for dialogue among industry and government representatives. The Subcommittee held its first meeting in June 2010.

Governance and Communication

The ASFS is composed of industry and federal government representatives, and is co-chaired by one government member and one industry member. Industry members are from the Beef, Pork, Food Processing, Grains, Horticulture, Organics, Pulses, Seafood and Special Crops VCRTs, as well as the Poultry, Dairy, Dairy Processing, Retail and Food Service sectors, and the Canadian Supply Chain Food Safety Coalition. Government members are from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Health Canada (HC) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). The ASFS terms of reference and membership principles are attached as appendix 1 and 2, respectively. Membership as of March 31, 2013 is attached as appendix 3.

The ASFS website can be found at www.ats-sea.agr.gc.ca/rt-tr/sa-eng.htm. The website includes information on ASFS membership, provides records of decision from its meetings, and makes the terms of reference available to the general public. Planning and coordination of the Subcommittee's operations is supported by the VCRT Secretariat, with additional resources coming from the Strategic Policy Branch, AAFC.

Raison d'être

The ASFS provides a forum for dialogue among government and industry partners from input suppliers to final marketers. The Subcommittee also provides a bridge to the industry value chain roundtables and other industry fora to promote broader communication concerning joint government and industry food safety priorities. AAFC, CFIA, HC and PHAC retain decision-making authority and responsibilities.

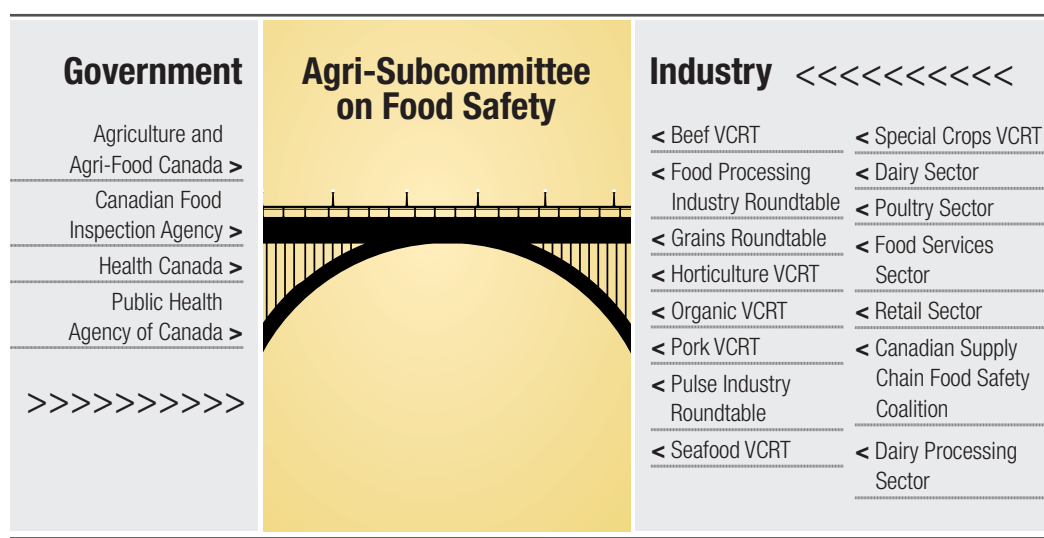
Specifically, the ASFS works toward the following goals:

1. Contribute to the development and implementation of food safety policies and standards (set by either government or industry) that reflect current food safety knowledge and best practices.
2. Consider the application of principles for stronger food safety systems and governance across the Canadian food safety system.

SECTION I

Introduction: the Agri-Subcommittee on Food Safety (ASFS)

3. Provide a forum for government and industry dialogue on their respective responses and joint actions to improve the food safety system.
4. Consider ways to strengthen the government and industry partnership on consumer food safety education through further engagement of the industry roundtables and other appropriate groups.
5. Consider opportunities to strengthen food safety performance reporting in Canada using data from multiple available sources and identifying potential additional data sources in order to stimulate continuous improvement.
6. Analyze the implementation of agreed-upon actions and ensure results are reported regularly to the value chain roundtables and other industry fora, as well as to appropriate fora within HC, CFIA, PHAC and AAFC. (See appendix 1 for details.)



Working Groups

Performance Measurement and Reporting Working Group (PMRWG)

The Performance Measurement and Reporting Working Group (PMRWG) was formed following the presentation by Rory McAlpine of a position paper on food safety performance reporting in Canada. The PMRWG met four times – in June, September, October and December 2011. These meetings were successful in highlighting the complexities and

SECTION I

Introduction: the Agri-Subcommittee on Food Safety (ASFS)

scope of this issue, as well as in bringing forth to members ongoing government work in this area (in particular, federal-provincial-territorial work on enhanced surveillance.) As a result, during the 2013-14 work plan process, it was decided that the work of the PMRWG and the work plan goal 5, above, could be achieved by members directly inputting into existing government initiatives via ASFS meetings.

Work Plan Working Group (WPWG)

The WPWG is responsible for drafting the annual work plan and for planning the agendas of each face-to-face meeting of the ASFS. The WPWG is composed of both industry and government members. Current participants are Albert Chambers, Brian Read, Réjean Bouchard and Rory McAlpine for industry, and Anatole Papadopoulos, Susan Read, Dawn Lumley-Myllari, Mariellen Chisholm, Anna Romano, Catrina Hendrickx and Sylvie Millette LeDuc for government.

SECTION II

2012-13 Accomplishments

In its third year of operation, 2012-13, the Subcommittee met three times, in addition to regular teleconferences of its Work Plan Working Group (WPWG). The Subcommittee continued to use its meetings to exchange information on members' respective roles and responsibilities; gain knowledge of food safety initiatives; learn about emerging issues and threats to the food safety system; and examine opportunities to enhance Canada's food safety system. Regular updates from the federal co-chair were sent between meetings to complete some action items and send information relevant to the Subcommittee.

This report highlights the ASFS accomplishments made between April 2012 and March 2013 in the following thematic areas:

- Consumer Food Safety Education
- Food Safety Hazards and Surveillance
- Food Safety Infrastructure

Consumer Food Safety Education

Consumer food safety education is an important aspect of food safety because it gives consumers the tools they need to handle and prepare food safely. Consumers have an important role to play in keeping food safe, as cases of foodborne illness can result from unsafe practices at home. Consumer food safety education is critical during a food recall or foodborne illness outbreak, to inform Canadians, especially those at higher risk, of actions they can take to avoid foodborne illness.

Highlights

Federal co-chair Anna Romano reported on her participation as a member of the Board of the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education (the Partnership) and discussed the financial and in-kind support provided by AAFC, HC, CFIA and PHAC, as well as industry contributors, to the Partnership. AAFC provided an analyst to work on the Partnership's Website Committee. This committee is tasked by the Partnership's Board with leading the initiative to revamp the Partnership's website and to explore adding elements of social media. A reworked website will likely be launched in June 2013. These changes are aimed at expanding the reach of the Partnership's messaging and broadening its influence on consumers' food safety behaviours.

At the April meeting, PHAC reported on its baseline study on consumer food safety behaviour and knowledge. The study was conducted by the Partnership, the Ontario government, and PHAC. Results from this study have been submitted to a peer-reviewed food safety journal. The study will be shared with ASFS members once it is published.

SECTION II

2012-2013 Accomplishments

Outcomes

A list of financial and in-kind support to the Partnership was provided to members through the December 2012 *Update from the Federal Co-chair*.

It is anticipated that the final document on the baseline study on consumer food safety behaviour and knowledge will support consideration by the ASFS of feasible and evidence-based next steps on consumer food safety education.

Food Safety Hazards and Surveillance

In addition to such well-known food safety hazards as *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and *Listeria monocytogenes*, industry and government remain vigilant with regard to emerging food safety hazards such as anti-microbial resistance, chemical contaminants and deliberate tampering of food. Each meeting of the ASFS includes a roundtable that allows members to report on current and emerging food safety hazards. In addition, the subcommittee hears presentations on specific hazards and on surveillance efforts.

Highlights

Officials from the CFIA demonstrated the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's iRisk tool, which can provide a relative ranking of different food and hazard combinations based on their health risk impact. This can assist government in prioritizing risks and determining the best use of scarce resources with regard to food safety hazards.

Members' roundtables included information on industry and government work on food safety hazards such as *Salmonella*, *Listeria*, mycotoxins, allergens, *E.coli*, and anti-microbial resistance.

In addition, industry members presented on their food safety systems and on how their sectors have adapted to the 2011 Health Canada *Listeria* policy.

In 2009, the federal-provincial-territorial agriculture ministers developed three priorities for food safety (enhanced surveillance, pathogen reduction in meat and poultry, and development of a Canadian meat hygiene standard). Presentations were made on progress toward pathogen reduction in meat and poultry and on meat hygiene pilot projects.

Presentations were also made with regard to the control of *E. coli* in meat, with a focus on the widespread recall in 2012 of beef contaminated with *E. coli*.

John Lynch of the CFIA presented on the issue of food defence, which includes intentional contamination of the food supply.

SECTION II

2012-2013 Accomplishments

Outcomes

These topics prompted sharing of information on best practices for the control of *Listeria* in ready-to-eat meat by the Pork Roundtable with the Dairy sector, on the reduction of the incidence of *Salmonella* in beef through the removal of lymph nodes by the Beef Roundtable, and on food defence by the Dairy Processing sector.

Food Safety Infrastructure

At the April meeting, a fruitful discussion led by Albert Chambers was held on the elements of food safety infrastructure in the context of the presentation of a food safety infrastructure issues template.

Food safety infrastructure was defined as the public and private governance, financial and human resources necessary to ensure the safety of the food supply. Over the year, this subject encompassed food safety initiatives by government, industry and other bodies, including food safety legislation and regulation in Canada and the U.S., academic work on food safety, modernized inspection, private assurance schemes such as the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), and the international standard-setting body, the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

Highlights

Members were kept well informed on the progress of the *Safe Food for Canadians Act*, and the plan for its implementation. Plans for modernized regulation and inspection were outlined by the CFIA. Health Canada also discussed legislative changes to the *Food and Drug Act* that enable modernization of its regulatory framework.

Members were also kept up to date on the implementation of the *Food Safety Modernization Act* in the U.S., and the progress of the exercise to compare Canada's food safety system with that of the U.S.

Samuel Godefroy, a vice-chair of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, and John Lynch, chair of the Canadian delegation, reported on the progress made at the Commission's meeting in July 2012. The Codex Alimentarius Commission was established in 1963 by the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to develop international food standards to protect consumer health and to facilitate fair trading practices in foods.

Dr. Jan Sargeant of the University of Guelph presented on the food safety infrastructure and research activities taking place there, from research at the molecular level to animal populations and human ones, and how the research is used to inform policy decisions.

SECTION II

2012-2013 Accomplishments

At the February 2013 meeting, government and industry presented on private food safety assurance systems and regulatory oversight. The discussion included the policy issues that underpin the roles of industry and government with regard to private standards; the role of government in supporting voluntary food safety private standards through Growing Forward 2; the importance of collaboration between government and industry to ensure that the untapped value in the investments made in private systems is utilized; and the experience of industry with private standards, from a retailer and a supplier point of view.

Outcomes

The food safety infrastructure issues template was circulated by industry members to their sectors for validation. The Grains sector used the template to focus its work on a survey of sector preparedness for which it has received funding.

It was agreed that the agriculture portfolio will look into opportunities for broader engagement on the integration of public and private sector assurance systems.

SECTION III

ASFS Work Plan for 2013-2014

This section outlines specific priorities for the upcoming year organized by themes and discusses the future direction for the ASFS.

Specific Priorities for 2013-2014

The Subcommittee will focus on the following priority areas/themes for the upcoming year:

- Food safety legislation and regulation
- Canada – U.S. food safety system alignment
- Food safety hazards
- Food safety infrastructure
- Progress on government and industry food safety initiatives
- Consumer food safety education
- Performance measurement and reporting

Future Direction of the ASFS

The continued dialogue between government and industry remains of prime importance as the ASFS enters its fourth year of operation. The Work Plan Working Group maintains its role of setting the direction for the work plan and for each agenda for the meetings that are planned for 2013-14. The periodic updates from the federal co-chair act both to share information and to complete certain action items arising from past meetings.

Industry has taken a larger role in meetings, a direction that the ASFS hopes to maintain and expand in the coming year.

SECTION IV

Conclusion

The ASFS continues to be an important venue for the exchange of views, information, and consultation among federal policy makers, regulators, and the agri-food sector. Members determine its value through their participation as partners in food safety while representing the needs of the various sectors and organizations. This past year has shown a positive trend of more industry participation, including sharing of information by industry. Updates from the federal co-chair have been found useful to inform and to solicit views from members, as well as to complete action items arising from meetings.

The importance of the Subcommittee as a focus for consultation is evident from the many occasions on which senior government officials have been invited to present on changes being proposed and to hear the views of industry representatives.

While no food safety system can assure zero risk, industry and government must work together to maximize their ability to react quickly when problems are identified. ASFS members are clearly engaged and committed to continuous progress in food safety in Canada, working together and learning from each other in a context of trust and collaboration.

SECTION V

APPENDIX 1

Agri-Subcommittee on Food Safety: Terms of Reference

Preface

Beginning in 2003, sector-specific roundtables that involve participation from across the value chain were established to build a strengthened industry-government partnership, in order to gain recognition for world-leading Canadian capabilities and to secure maximum benefits from federal agricultural policy frameworks such as Growing Forward.

The nine existing value chain roundtables (beef, pork, grains innovation, organic, horticulture, special crops, pulses, fish and seafood, and food processing) maintain active mandates. One cross-cutting element that has become evident in the work of all roundtables is food safety, particularly as the food safety policy and regulatory landscape and food safety risks are evolving rapidly in Canada and internationally. When the co-chairs of all of the roundtables met at the All Chairs Meeting in November 2009, a subcommittee of the Roundtables to focus on food safety was proposed.

Recent food safety and zoonotic disease events, such as *E. coli*, *Salmonella* and *Listeria*, have highlighted the need for industry and government to enhance efforts to manage food safety risks. The Agri-Subcommittee on Food Safety will help facilitate dialogue between government and industry in response to emerging food safety events. For example, the Subcommittee can provide a forum for government and industry dialogue on their respective responses and joint actions in response to the 2008 listeriosis outbreak, particularly regarding the recommendations of the Weatherill report.

Rationale

Food safety is an area of shared jurisdiction and responsibility among governments, industry and consumers. Each has important roles to play and collaboration among all partners is key to the success of the overall food safety system. The collective challenge for all partners is to build better risk-based food safety systems that are grounded in prevention and continuous improvement.

While there is a recognized need for engagement with all stakeholders, including consumers, the Subcommittee is designed to promote dialogue between industry and government, given their primary responsibility for food safety. This forum is complemented by other food safety stakeholder engagement mechanisms, such as the Health Canada Food Expert Advisory Committee, which includes broader researcher, consumer, public health and industry representation.

Mandate

The purpose of ASFS is to provide a forum for dialogue among government and industry partners from input suppliers to final marketers. The ASFS will provide a bridge to the

SECTION V

APPENDIX 1: Continued

industry value chain roundtables and other industry fora to promote broader communication concerning joint government and industry food safety priorities. AAFC, Health Canada (HC), CFIA and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) always retain decision-making authority and responsibilities.

Specifically, the ASFS will work to:

1. Contribute to the development and implementation of food safety policies and standards (set by either government or industry) that reflect current food safety knowledge and best practices.
2. Consider the application of principles for stronger food safety systems and governance across the Canadian food safety system.
3. Provide a forum for government and industry dialogue on their respective responses and joint actions to improve the food safety system.
4. Consider ways to strengthen the government and industry partnership on consumer food safety education through further engagement of the industry roundtables or other appropriate groups.
5. Consider opportunities to strengthen food safety performance reporting in Canada using data from multiple available sources and identifying potential additional data sources in order to stimulate continuous improvement.
6. Analyze the implementation of agreed-upon actions and ensure results are reported regularly to the value chain roundtables and other industry fora, as well as to appropriate fora within HC, CFIA, PHAC and AAFC.

Membership

The Subcommittee will be co-chaired by one senior executive from the federal government and one from industry. The work of the co-chairs and overall operations of the Subcommittee will be supported by AAFC.

Initially, industry will have up to 12 members, (one from each of the nine existing roundtables and one from each of three additional organizations if required), with one member from each government organization: AAFC, HC, CFIA, PHAC (at the Director level or higher) occupying the remaining seats, for an initial total of up to 16 members on the Subcommittee.

Continuity in membership is vital to assuring the success of the Subcommittee. Every effort will be made by members to ensure their ongoing, active participation in the operations.

SECTION V

APPENDIX 1: Continued

Membership Considerations

The Subcommittee is a government and industry forum for dialogue on food safety issues. Each value chain roundtable will identify one official representative. Industry membership will reflect the broadest possible range of perspectives from across the various roundtables and value chain (e.g. input suppliers, producers, processors, further processors, traders/marketers, retail and food service interests).

CFIA, AAFC, HC and PHAC will be represented, although the Subcommittee may want to consider if and when to invite any other federal departments or agencies, and provincial/territorial governments on a permanent or ad hoc basis. A limited number of federal employees whose duties are of relevance to the mandate of the Subcommittee may sit as observers.

From time to time, members will assess whether composition is enabling the roundtable to benefit from the full range of perspectives and expertise it requires in order to fulfill its mandate.

The ASFS can nominate additional members from sectors or organizations not represented at the roundtables if they so wish and guests can be invited as appropriate. Decisions with respect to the operation of the Subcommittee will be made by consensus.

Confidentiality

To be productive, dialogue must be as frank and open as possible. Statements by individual members are assumed to represent their personal views unless identified as positions of the organization they represent. Members agree that unless otherwise indicated (e.g. organizational commitments to agreed-upon action items), individual statements should not be construed or represented to others as an official position of any organization.

Building Agreement

Collaborative research and analysis will, as required, assist the Subcommittee in building a shared understanding of issues and opportunities.

Reporting

The Subcommittee's success will depend, in part, on the shared commitment of all of its members to delivering on agreed-upon actions and results. Members agree to hold each other mutually accountable for the achievement of results. Individual members will report to the Subcommittee as a whole on the status of agreed-upon actions. In addition, it is expected that the Subcommittee will provide periodic updates to the federal roundtables as well as to appropriate fora within HC, CFIA, PHAC and AAFC.

SECTION V

APPENDIX 1: Continued

Frequency / Duration

The Subcommittee is expected to be an ongoing forum for government and industry dialogue and collaborative action. In the first year of operation, the Subcommittee may need to meet at least four times. As it evolves, less frequent meetings may be required.

Costs

AAFC will cover up to 50% of reasonable and appropriate travel and accommodation costs (as determined by relevant Treasury Board policies and directives) that are directly related to a member's participation in a Subcommittee meeting, the expenses of the meeting and research as required.

Secretariat

Planning and coordination of the Subcommittee's operations will be supported by the VCRT secretariat, AAFC.

SECTION V

APPENDIX 2

Agri-Subcommittee on Food Safety: Membership Principles, Process and Criteria

Membership Principles

1. The ASFS will seek members with expertise or experience related to its mandate.
2. Industry membership should reflect the broadest possible range of perspectives from across the various agri-food sectors and value chains.
3. Additional members should represent sectors or organizations not currently represented on the Subcommittee.
4. To ensure continuity in membership, members will commit to a two-year term with the possibility of extension.
5. If a member misses three consecutive meetings of the ASFS, he or she will be asked to step down and the sector will be asked to propose a replacement.
6. In order to facilitate the mandate of the ASFS, membership will be limited to a maximum of 20 individuals.

Process and Criteria

- Industry members shall be nominated by their value chain roundtable or sector organization, and should meet the following criteria:
 - demonstrated knowledge and commitment to food safety
 - demonstrated ability to represent the entire supply chain of their sector
 - demonstrated knowledge of the federal food safety system
 - demonstrated ability to act as a liaison between the sector and the ASFS
 - demonstrated ability to work with government and industry members toward a common goal
- Federal members shall be nominated by their respective Deputy Heads and shall meet the following criteria:
 - demonstrated knowledge and commitment to food safety
 - demonstrated knowledge of food safety policy issues
 - demonstrated ability to represent the federal government
 - demonstrated ability to work with government and industry members toward a common goal

SECTION V

APPENDIX 2: Continued

- Nominees will demonstrate how they meet the criteria for membership by providing a biography that includes evidence of the relevant experience and expertise required.
- Final decisions on membership shall be made by the federal and industry co-chairs.
- The industry co-chair shall be chosen by the Subcommittee as a whole.
- The federal co-chair shall be chosen by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.
- In addition to meeting the criteria for industry members and federal members respectively, the industry co-chair and federal co-chair shall meet the following additional criterion:
 - demonstrated ability to facilitate discussion and action among government and industry members representing diverse views and interests.

SECTION V

APPENDIX 3

Members of the Agri-Subcommittee on Food Safety as of March 31, 2013

Names	Organization
Co-Chairs	
Dennis Laycraft (Industry Co-Chair)	Canadian Cattlemen's Association
Anna Romano (Government Co-Chair)	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Industry Members	
Albert Chambers	Canadian Supply Chain Food Safety Coalition
Beth McMahon [Organics]	Canadian Organic Growers
Brian Read [Beef]	XL Foods/Canada Meat Council
Chris Kyte/George Paterson [Food Processing]	Food Processors of Canada
Fred Andersen [Grains]	Viterra
Heather Gale [Horticulture]	Canadian Horticultural Council
Jackie Crichton [Dairy Processing]	Dairy Processors Association of Canada
Patrick McGuinness [Seafood]	Fisheries Council of Canada
Pierre Petelle [Special Crops]	CropLife Inc.
Rick Phillips/Réjean Bouchard [Dairy]	Dairy Farmers of Canada
Rob Wreyford [Poultry]	Cargill Ltd.
Rob Freeman [Food Services]	McDonald's Restaurants of Canada Ltd.
Rory McAlpine [Pork]	Maple Leaf Foods Inc.
Sherry Casey [Retail Sector]	Loblaw Companies Ltd.
Tanya Der [Pulses]	Pulse Canada
Federal Members	
Mariellen Chisholm	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Samuel Godefroy	Health Canada
Susan Read	Public Health Agency of Canada
Theresa Iuliano	Canadian Food Inspection Agency