

THE CHICKEN FARMER

Volume 10, Issue 1, January 2008

Published by Chicken Farmers of Canada

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WTO: Not If, but When

In the last article about the WTO negotiations, *Chicken Farmer* asked the question, “deal or no deal?” At the time, it was unclear whether there would be political involvement in the negotiations by the end of the year – which may have meant some kind of deal in December – or not. Well, there was no agreement in December.

Instead, the option chosen by Ambassador Falconer, Chair of Agriculture Negotiations, and accepted by the WTO membership, was to continue with technical discussions to gradually head towards a modalities agreement.

Since the beginning of September, when negotiations resumed in Geneva after the summer break, there has been steady participation by all key players from both developed and developing countries. At various points in time during these past three months, both Falconer and Pascal Lamy (the WTO General Director) have acknowledged that such a level of activity has not been seen since the early stages of the Doha Round.

There appears to be a shift from, *if* there is a deal to, *when* there is a deal. This means a more step-by-step approach by Falconer, who seems to prefer that the technical talks continue in an orderly fashion, rather than forcing a drastic all-or-nothing decision by Members.

It was not, though, entirely up to Falconer on how the talks would proceed. WTO Members may have simply decided that they have spent enough time talking and pushed for a decisive ministerial gathering.

One possible turning point was a series of highly anticipated discussions on sensitive products for developed countries and special products for developing ones. Given the increased commitment to resolve the technical and detail issues, it simply became natural to keep the schedule open and meet as often and for as long as necessary to get the job done.

Given this perspective change, the end of December lost its deadline appeal and it seemed appropriate for countries to continue the negotiations into 2008. Falconer is no longer required to quickly produce a draft modalities text and



Members no longer have to ratify it before the beginning of the presidential electoral year in the United States (2008).

The process, as it has been ticking along since September, will simply continue into January 2008, with no firm deadline in sight.

While this may be the case, enough issues persist to make the final outcome unclear. There are several benchmarks to meet in 2008. The first is the annual World Economic Forum in Davos (Switzerland). As has been the practice in the past, a mini-ministerial meeting among key trade and agriculture ministers will likely be organized around that event. This meeting will likely give Falconer additional insight into the current grey areas where countries can find points of convergence which will help him in drafting the modalities text. It is expected, though, that he will table his text just after the Davos mini-ministerial meeting.

The month of February may become, in this new context, a very busy one, as the second benchmark is March 2008, when the final two American presidential candidates (Democrat and Republican) are determined. It is now believed that once those two

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For a weekly update on the WTO trade negotiations, visit the CFC website
@ www.chicken.ca
and click on the Geneva Watch button

To Test or Not to Test

The United States Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) made the surprise announcement on November 9th that new import requirements on Canadian meat exports were going to be put in place. The U.S. then rescinded the order on November 29th and resumed normal border measures and meat inspections immediately.

During the three-week period of heightened testing frequency and hold procedures, there were some delays reported but none that were seriously detrimental to supplier-client relations.

The new U.S. border testing regime was looking for cases of *Salmonella*, *Listeria* and *E. coli* in Canadian raw ground beef and veal, raw beef and veal trim, ready-to-eat meats (including poultry) and pasteurized egg products.

"Shipments will be held until testing is complete and products are confirmed negative for these pathogens. In addition, Canadian meat and poultry products will receive increased levels of re-inspection by FSIS to confirm they are eligible to enter commerce when presented at the U.S. border.

FSIS will also immediately begin an audit of the Canadian food safety system."

Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz issued the following statement on November 9th, the day the new test and hold measures were announced:

"I have every confidence in the strength and quality of Canada's food safety, and I have strongly stated our Government's disappointment with United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) decision to temporarily hold and test Canadian beef, pork, and poultry exports to the U.S. We believe that the scope of these measures is not justified nor do they reflect established protocols."

Over the weeks that followed, industry and governments monitored the situation closely while working together behind the scenes to resolve the issues that led to the snap change in border rules.

The Canadian Poultry and Egg Processors Council provided CFC with regular updates on the process while working to ensure that everything was running smoothly. They held calls daily with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to resolve the Canadian side of the situation.

Minister Ritz issued the following on the November 29th decision to reduce inspections back to normal levels:


"The Government of Canada is pleased that the United States Department of Agriculture is returning to standard testing levels for Canadian beef, pork and poultry products. Thanks to the cooperation between the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and USDA officials, our American counterparts have confirmed that special testing measures are no longer necessary.

It's encouraging to see that our working relationship continues to be founded on science-based assessments and that this has resulted in a quick resolution of the situation."



The FSIS explained that information that came to light during a trace-back of a massive U.S. (the Topps company) ground beef recall led back to a Canadian beef packer, Rancher's Beef. The FSIS indicated that the increased testing and border controls can be linked back to that particular plant, now closed, but that the food safety system audit would have a larger scope due to overall testing concerns.

"These measures are being taken to further ensure the equivalency of the system already in place. We continue to work together with our food safety partners both domestically and internationally to ensure imported meat and poultry products are produced under systems at least equivalent to those in the United States."

Minister Ritz said it best when he said, "Canadians and consumers around the world have a great deal of confidence in the safety and quality of the Canadian food supply. The Government of Canada is committed to protecting and strengthening our world-class food safety system as global markets continue to evolve." 



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names become known, it will be easier for the current U.S. Administration to seek Congress support on a possible deal. For that to happen, though, there has to be a modalities text on the table. The U.S. Administration could seek bi-partisan support from the Democrats and the Republicans to get a TPA (trade promotion authority) for the President to sign a deal. This window is only open between March and June next year. If nothing is done before the summer, then the summer break and the autumn U.S. elections may push the deal until the beginning of 2009.

The point is that no matter how long it takes, given the current level of commitment and involvement by key players in negotiations it seems almost sure that there will be a modalities agreement in agriculture and a Doha deal sometime in the future.

Chicken Farmer is a monthly publication.
With the rapid developments in WTO negotiations,
we encourage our readers to keep up to date by visiting the
www.farmsandfood.ca website.

Information Sessions About Protecting Birds From Disease

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is teaming up with provincial governments to deliver information sessions aimed at helping small flock and pet bird owners prevent and detect disease in their birds.

The first three sessions will be held in February in Guelph, Ont., Truro, N.S. and Abbotsford, B.C. The sessions will be open to the general public. All small flock and pet bird owners and enthusiasts are encouraged to attend.



“These sessions will be an excellent opportunity for bird owners to learn more about bird diseases such as avian influenza and exotic Newcastle disease,” says Dr. Jim Clark, National Manager of the CFIA’s Avian Influenza Working Group. “We want small flock owners in Canada to know that we are here to help them protect their birds from disease.”

Among the topics on the agenda will be biosecurity — or the measures that can be taken to prevent the introduction and spread of disease among animals. Practical information will be


provided on the simple steps small flock owners can take to keep their birds healthy. For example, there will be demonstrations on how to effectively clean and disinfect bird cages and other equipment using common household cleaning products and disinfectants.

The sessions will also feature presentations on spotting the signs of disease in birds, and how governments respond to outbreaks of bird diseases.

“The disease response presentation will provide clarity on how these situations are handled,” says Dr. Clark. “The recent avian influenza response in Saskatchewan is a good example of how small flocks in the vicinity of an avian-influenza infected farm are often not depopulated unless there is a confirmed presence of the virus in the birds. All incidents are assessed on a case-by-case basis.”

In addition to the presentations, kiosks will be set up for various subjects and government and industry representatives will be on hand to answer questions related to bird diseases, disease response and biosecurity.

The CFIA is planning additional sessions later in 2008 and 2009.

For more information about the sessions, call the CFIA at 1-800-442-2342 or visit their website at www.inspection.gc.ca. 

We’ve Come to Take you Away... to the Fun Farm

One of our main target audiences for promotion and education related activities is children, who represent the next generation of consumers. With so many circulating myths and urban legends regarding our industry, students are susceptible to believing what they may hear. In response, CFC has furthered the growth of the student online component of the www.chicken.ca website to include older children.

This new addition provides students, teachers and parents with an accurate picture of the chicken industry in an effort to dispel myths and misconceptions.

The site also responds to questions where food comes from and helps viewers better understand our commitment to animal care, food safety and nutrition.




The site is fun, educational, and provides students with the information they need to make more informed decisions about the food they eat. The site is available in both English and French and will be promoted throughout 2008 in schools and educational magazines.

Another audience for the site is teachers who can make a difference in the perceptions that students have about so many things. The “Teacher’s Corner” portion of the site was developed by teachers and is based on school curricula used across the country. It includes nine lesson plans, a student information sheet on chicken, a teacher information sheet on chicken and a link to the kid’s video that shows the chicken industry from gate to plate.

Some of the other activities that can be found in the Fun Farm:

1. “Build a Barn” and “Be a Chicken Farmer” which will educate visitors on what it takes to be a good chicken farmer.
2. “Design a Tee”, a contest where children can win t-shirts for their whole class by designing their own t-shirt, which will be updated every month with new designs, sayings and colours to encourage competition.
3. “Puzzled”; “Matching Mania”; and, “Chicken Mix-A-Lot” are three new interactive games that develop one or more skills such as rhythm, melody, memory, logic and problem solving.
4. Last but not least we’ve included “Chicken Greetings”. These greetings are so entertaining that many visitors to the CFC site, including adults, will start sending them to friends and family. There are 30 greeting cards to choose from, some of which are animated, and include everything from birthday cards to Thanksgiving, Easter, Christmas and so much more. One of the birthday cards even includes a chicken dressed like James Brown dancing to funky music.

The site has games and puzzles to tempt all ages so visit the Fun Farm by clicking on the CFC website at www.chicken.ca and the button on the left to join the fun! 

Join the Celebration of “Ag Day in Canada”

Wednesday, January 23, 2008 will be the first-ever “Ag Day in Canada”.

According to the Farm Credit Corporation (FCC), the hosts and creators of Ag Day in Canada:

“On January 23rd, we’ll gather in communities across Canada to recognize the people who live and breathe agriculture and make it one of the country’s most vital and vibrant industries. We’ll talk with industry leaders about the future and forecasts for the coming year. We’ll take some time to appreciate and celebrate Canadian agriculture and all it means to this country.”


Unique learning events will be held across Canada, in close to 100 communities where FCC has offices. Industry leaders will talk about the future and forecasts for the coming year and explore issues that will help you make decisions that affect your bottom line.

“Through Ag Day in Canada, we are not only celebrating our vibrant agriculture industry, but we are also providing producers with relevant information to help them plan ahead and seize opportunities for the upcoming production year,” said Lane Stockbrugger, Manager of AgriSuccess at Farm Credit Canada.

Topics that will be covered:

- Learn new information, including an agriculture economic forecast that will help you navigate the future landscape of Canadian agriculture.
- Hear from your peers – 8,000 producers across Canada have weighed in on the important issues and opportunities in agriculture as part of FCC’s Vision Panel.
- Look at alternative fuels – how they’ve changed the outlook of agriculture and the potential impact on cropping decisions.
- Farmland values across Canada are on the rise – find out why in a regional overview.
- Learn how to attract and retain good employees in a tight labour market.
- Investigate farm safety and how farmers can further protect their families and employees.
- Explore successful grain marketing practices to improve knowledge and increase the profitability of one’s operation.
- Find out about new crop varieties for eastern and western Canada that offer more disease resistance and higher yields.

“In addition to lending, Farm Credit Canada provides information and learning opportunities for producers across the country, and Ag Day in Canada is no different. The production information provided at more than 85 events across Canada will be useful, timely and powerful for everyone there,” said Stockbrugger.

Visit the Ag Day in Canada website (www.agDayinCanada.ca) for more information or to find the location nearest you or contact your local FCC office at 1-800-387-3232. 

IN BRIEF

CFC Appears before House and Senate Agriculture Committees

On November 29th, the SM-5 (national dairy, poultry and egg producers) appeared before the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry for their study on rural poverty. Appearing on behalf of the SM-5 were: Laurent Souigny (CEMA); Gyslain Loyer (CHEP); Jacques Laforge (DFC); Wayne Kroeker (CTMA) and Mike Dungate (CFC). There, the SM-5 illustrated that the dairy, poultry and egg sectors are vibrant, strong industries that contribute greatly to the social and economic fabric of rural Canada. Representatives also reinforced that the maintenance of the Canadian supply management system is key to ensuring that farmers remain a viable part of the rural economy.

On December 3rd, the SM-5 also appeared before the House of Commons Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food during a review of *Growing Forward*, the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Agreement in Principle on agriculture policy. *Growing Forward* has emerged from the first Agriculture Policy Framework under the previous Liberal government. The SM-5 was represented by: Harold Froese (CEMA); Errol Halkai (CHEP); Jacques Laforge (DFC); Mark Davies (CTMA) and David Fuller (CFC).

The committee wanted to hear the SM-5’s perspective on how the framework was developing. Representatives present raised various issues with the committee, such as compensation gaps relating to animal disease disasters, the revised Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization program, and a separate pillar for a national farmed animal health strategy. The SM-5 also acknowledged its appreciation that supply management is now being recognized as a Business Risk Management program within the current framework.

New Face at CFC

After a very long search CFC has hired Caroline Wilson as On-Farm Food Safety Coordinator. A graduate of Laval University with a Masters of Science and fully bilingual, Caroline has recently relocated from Quebec City to Ottawa and began working on December 3rd. She is part of Steve Leech’s team and can be reached either at 613-566-5901 or cwilson@chicken.ca.

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