Canadian Quality Milk – History and Benefits
December 8, 2005

1. Background and History – Why did DFC develop CQM?

Today's consumers of dairy products want to know that the food they eat is safe and wholesome. In response to growing consumer concern, Dairy Farmers of Canada developed the Canadian Quality Milk Program (CQM), an on-farm food safety program for dairy producers.

Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC) realized that food safety programs were being extended to the farm in other commodities, as well as in other countries, and DFC believed that it was simply a matter of time before customers began demanding on-farm food safety programs of dairy producers. If producers waited for the market to start making demands, they would run the risk of retailers and processors defining the requirements and potentially pushing programs that were not practical on the farm and onerous for producer to implement.

In July 1997, the DFC delegates decided to be proactive and be prepared, and they approved the concept of creating a national on-farm food safety program. DFC began developing the CQM program, ensuring that producers were involved throughout the process and provided input to ensure the program was practical on farm. The CQM program was and is led by producers for producers.

Now, if a customer starts to be more concerned about food safety, dairy producers have a program ready to go. Other countries have experienced a proliferation of on-farm food safety programs from different customers and producers are required to implement several programs and are subjected to multiple audits. DFC developed a national CQM program to protect producers from multiple programs and the time and costs associated with implementing them.

Dairy producers recognize that consumers have a choice and producers need to be proactive to maintain and improve their products' image. The CQM program gives producers the ability to prove how they are producing their products because they have procedures and records in place.

DFC is one of many agricultural organizations that are implementing on-farm food safety programs. Canadian organizations are developing their programs using the same baseline through the Canadian On-Farm Food Safety program.

2. What is the CQM Program?

The CQM program is an on-farm food safety program designed to help producers prevent, monitor and reduce food safety risks on their farms.

The CQM program is based on the principles of HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points), which is a science-based, preventative approach to food safety that focuses on preventing and minimizing the risk of food safety hazards. The CQM program is recognized by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency as being technically sound and based on science. Producers on the program strive to improve milk and meat safety on their farms by:

- Keeping permanent records to monitor critical control points;
- Following best management practices related to milk and meat safety;
- Developing standard operating procedures to identify tasks and responsibilities; and
- Developing corrective action plans to ensure that family and staff know what to do if something goes wrong.

Dairy producers on the CQM program closely monitor the following key areas of milk and meat safety:

- Milking treated animals (prevention of residues in milk)
- Effective cooling and storage of milk
- Shipping animals (prevention of residues and physical hazards in meat)
- Use of livestock medicines and chemicals
- Rigorous sanitation of milking equipment
- Assessment of wash water for microbiological parameters

Producers also implement best management practices in other areas such as manure management, feeding, animal identification, medicine and chemical storage, milking, and staff training.

Producers on the CQM program:

- Say what they do;
- Do what they say;
- Prove they do it; and,
- Improve it, if necessary**.**

The CQM program is designed to help producers improve the management of their farms.

3. What is the mission of CQM? What is the CQM philosophy?

The CQM program promotes the consistent application of best management practices to continuously improve management of food safety issues on dairy farms.

The nature of the dairy industry has changed. Milk and dairy products are no longer the only source of calcium. Consumers have choices in the marketplace, such as calcium

fortified orange juice, soy beverage, rice beverages, potato beverages, and meal replacement shakes. As a result, producers need to start thinking beyond their own farm gate and to the entire industry. Their success will depend on the attitudes of every producer in the dairy industry. On-farm food safety programs are also being implemented across other commodities (e.g. beef, pork, chicken, etc); therefore, food safety becomes a Canadian system and an industry-wide issue.

As an industry, one of the benefits of implementing the CQM program is being able to demonstrate to consumers that producers are doing the best job they can to produce a safe and high quality product. Consumers have choices, so producers have to make sure that they can compete.

4. What are the benefits or incentives for producers to implement CQM?

The CQM program has many benefits for the dairy industry as a whole, but individual dairy producers also benefit from implementing the program. CQM helps producers:

- Enhance their ability to control and prevent food safety hazards related to milk and meat;
- Improve safety of milk and meat;
- Increase staff's awareness and understanding of food safety risks;
- Improve communication and consistency between family and staff;
- Ensure everyone understands procedures and implements them consistently;
- Increase profitability through decreased product losses (e.g. monitoring the temperature of the bulk tank after every milking may catch a temperature problem and save a tank of milk);
- Demonstrate due diligence;
- Assure Canadian and international consumers' confidence in Canadian dairy products and meat.

Producers that have embraced the CQM program have stated further benefits such as:

- Peace of mind. Staff understand how important they are and they are better prepared to handle any major problems that may occur when the producer is absent.
- Improved management. Producers state they would not run their farms without CQM now.
- Identifying problems before they become regulatory. For example, hot water problems, milk cooling problems, and the identification of treated animals.
- Being prepared and pro-active.

Producers also state that the program is easy once producers get in the habit of keeping records. Many producers have already implemented most of the best management practices and to be fully compliant with the CQM program, they simply have to start writing down what they have been doing. The record keeping helps producers gain more

control and they can use the records to help them make other decisions on the farm (e.g. culling animals).

5. Producer Success Stories

See Success Stories Document.

6. Registration System

The Canadian Quality Milk (CQM) program has two parts: the Producer Manual and the Registration System. The Producer Manual describes the best management practices that producers implement on farm, and the Registration System describes how Dairy Farmers of Canada and provincial organizations manage the CQM program.

The Registration System outlines how the CQM program can provide fair, consistent, effective and efficient registration services to dairy producers in Canada. The registration system describes the roles of Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC), provincial associations and validators, and how they work together to assess producers' compliance with CQM and recognize their achievements.

Once producers have implemented the CQM program on their farms, they can apply to become registered with the program. Producers who are registered with CQM have effectively implemented CQM on their farms, demonstrated through a validation that they comply with the requirements, and made a commitment to maintain the program.

After a producer applies for registration, the provincial association sends a validator to the farm to assess the farm's compliance with the CQM requirements. Validators use a checklist similar to the questionnaire in the CQM workbook, and they review records, observe practices on the farm and interview personnel. Upon successful completion of the validation, the provincial association issues a farm-specific registration number and sends a CQM certificate to the farm. Registered producers then continue to maintain the program and keep records and they are validated every year to ensure they still meet requirements.

Registration with the CQM program does not indicate or imply the registration of products or guarantee the safety of any products.

Implementation of the CQM program will positively affect the entire Canadian dairy industry, and producers choosing to take the next step and become registered will be able to demonstrate their compliance with food safety requirements.

DFC is committed to maintaining and managing the CQM program effectively and efficiently to ensure dairy producers have a credible program that is consistently implemented across the country and is beneficial to all dairy producers.