

## **Common Questions and Comments - CQM**

### **January 2006**

The Canadian Quality Milk (CQM) program has sparked various questions and comments from producers across the country regarding the program and its benefits. Here is a list of some common questions and comments and some suggested responses.

1. I have been producing good quality milk for 30 years. Why should I implement the CQM program?

The CQM program is designed to help you improve the management of your farm. The program may help you reduce the risk of having a quality problem in the future that will tarnish your excellent record. Furthermore, with such a great record, you may already be practicing most of the CQM requirements, in which case, implementing the program will require minimal effort.

2. Milk in Canada is highly regulated and tested. Why do we need the CQM program?

Provincial dairy regulations form the prerequisites for the CQM program and are a very important element for food safety. However, an inspector cannot be on your farm every day and we cannot test for everything. Some tests only catch problems once they have already occurred and some tests are done frequently but not on every load of milk.

The CQM program is designed to help you monitor important food safety hazards every day to prevent problems from occurring and catch problems before they become regulatory. CQM is a management program that should help you improve your operation and it is complimentary to regulations.

3. Why should I implement the CQM program if my neighbor is not?

By implementing CQM, you will realize the benefits the CQM program can bring to your farm and to the entire industry. Producers on the program have claimed that they would not consider running their farm without it now.

Consumers have choices and you want them to choose milk. The CQM record keeping enables you to prove that you are managing your farm according to a science-based system. If your neighbor has not implemented CQM, you should encourage him/her to start, as the industry is only as strong as its weakest link.

Retailers and processors are implementing HACCP and they are beginning to exert pressure on their suppliers to implement food safety programs. They may require you to have a food safety program in the future. If you are pro-active and implement CQM now, you will be prepared. You will be ready while your neighbor scrambles to meet a deadline.

## Dairy Farmers of Canada - Canadian Quality Milk Program

4. I do not like being told what to do and how to run my farm.

The CQM program is designed to help you improve your management and increase your profitability. It is a tool to help you manage food safety concerns, and you can tailor it to fit your farm and your preferences. For example, you do not have to use the CQM treatment record provided in the Workbook; you can use a journal or computer program to record treatments, as long as you record the required elements.

5. Government is pushing on-farm food safety programs on producers.

The federal government has recognized the benefit of on-farm food safety programs and has made food safety a priority; therefore, they have made money available to assist you in getting organized so that you are prepared if the marketplace demands it. Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC) took advantage of the government funding, so that you would not have to pay for the development of the program. Many provincial organizations have received funding from provincial governments to implement CQM as well.

Producers, not the federal government, made the decision to apply for funding and move the CQM program forward. In July 1997, the delegates at Dairy Farmers of Canada's Annual General Meeting agreed to move forward with developing the CQM program.

6. Why did DFC develop CQM before the market demanded it?

DFC developed the CQM program prior to market demand to ensure that producers were involved throughout the process and provided input to ensure the program was practical. If DFC had waited for the market to demand it, they would have run the risk of retailers and processors defining the requirements and potentially pushing programs that were not practical on the farm.

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 the CQM program to try to protect producers from multiple programs and the costs associated with implementing them.

Producers also recognized the funding opportunity and chose to develop the program while government funding was available. If DFC had waited, the government funding may not have been available and producers may have had to pay for the entire development cost.

DFC's timing also allowed the program to be thoroughly tested on farm and it has given producers time to implement the program in their own time. It is easier and cheaper to implement a program slowly rather than quickly. Being proactive is easier than being reactive.

7. I will only implement the program if I am paid a premium for it. If consumers want it, they can pay for it.

## Dairy Farmers of Canada - Canadian Quality Milk Program

The CQM program is not expensive to implement, it usually only takes some time. Many producers have found that the benefits, such as peace of mind and improved management, far outweigh the effort to implement. Some producers have had a direct financial benefit through saving tanks of milk by catching a temperature problem early. If the program is designed to help you, why wouldn't you implement it as soon as possible?

Consumers expect food safety. They do not consider food safety to be an additional quality that they should have to pay for.

8. The CQM program is too time consuming and expensive. I do not have the time.

The program takes about a day to set up initially and then it only requires minutes each day to keep the records. The benefits of improved staff training and management should far outweigh the time. Furthermore, you do not have to implement all requirements at once. Since you have the advantage of time (i.e. market is not demanding CQM yet), you have the luxury of implementing the program at your own pace. You can start with one record or one BMP at a time. It is your choice.

9. Dairy producers are being inundated with too many programs and paperwork. I need a secretary!

Try CQM for 3 months. You should find that the paperwork is easy once you get the program set up and get used to the regular records. CQM was designed to be practical for producers.

You produce food. You have a great responsibility to ensure that the milk and beef leaving your farm is safe. Consumers will not be sympathetic if you tell them that you do not have 5 minutes a day to record treatments to ensure that you do not ship milk or animals with residues.

10. I am the only person who milks or treats animals on this farm; therefore, I do not need Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). If I cannot milk, my neighbor milks my cows and he knows what to do.

SOPs give you a reference point, which allows you to easily evaluate what you can improve when you have a problem. Some producers are surprised to learn that their milkers are not milking the same. Writing your SOPs with your neighbor might be a good exercise to ensure that you follow the same steps. In the event that you and your neighbor are not able to milk your animals, your SOPs will be handy for a relief milker. SOPs provide peace of mind.

11. I see no value in implementing that requirement on my farm (e.g. milking equipment sanitation record).

Do not throw out the whole program because of one element. You can implement everything else except that element until you want to be validated. OR, try that one element for three months and then decide if you really do not like it or need it. You can only judge something once you have tried it.