

United States Department of Agriculture and Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Regulatory Partnership

The regulatory partnership between the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) establishes a new forum for enhanced regulatory cooperation as highlighted under the Canada – U.S. Regulatory Cooperation Council’s (RCC) *Joint Forward Plan* released in August 2014. In meeting the key elements of the RCC Joint Forward Plan, CFIA and USDA have:

- Established high-level partnership governance between the organizations’ senior officials, which is supported by a technical level working group to review and track progress against medium- and longer-term regulatory alignment opportunities.
- Implemented a bi-national work planning process that includes annual review of work plans to consider stakeholder input and provide for updates to senior officials on progress on regulatory cooperation initiatives.
- Incorporated regular stakeholder engagement to inform senior officials on regulatory alignment opportunities and provide input on future work.

The scope of work under this partnership will be guided by the RCC *Joint Forward Plan* areas of commitments and will be determined through discussions between the CFIA, USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), and their stakeholders to improve regulatory alignment. The regulatory partnership will focus on areas where regulated parties, consumers, and/or regulators can realize benefits without sacrificing outcomes related to plant health, animal health and food safety (meat and poultry). This effort is not intended to replace established consultation processes in relation to rule making or regulatory decision making.

Governance Structure

USDA and CFIA have established a senior level committee, co-chaired by the Vice-President, Policy and Programs of the CFIA and the Deputy Chief of Staff of the USDA, or their designees, to review progress on annual work plans and cooperative activities, and to discuss medium and longer-term regulatory alignment opportunities in the areas of animal health, plant health and food safety (meat and poultry). To support this work:

- The Co-Chairs serve as an oversight body that provides overall regulatory direction, identifies collaborative opportunities, and reviews progress of the technical working groups’ work plans and provides functional direction to those responsible for advancing them;
- The committee will convene biannual meetings that will be led by the Co-Chairs of the senior level committee with other participants selected as appropriate according to agenda needs;

- The Co-chairs will establish opportunities for stakeholders to meet at a bi-national level with senior officials to provide input on medium term opportunities and longer-term direction as well as at technical working group level to provide input and comments on annual work plans and other priorities.
- The committee has established technical level working groups for plant health, animal health and food safety (meat and poultry) to develop annual work plans that address medium and longer-term regulatory alignment opportunities based on departmental input and stakeholder insight;

Work Plans

USDA and CFIA will identify work plan priorities informed by a number of factors focusing on the costs and benefits directed at the public/consumers, industry, and the regulators. Work plans may include, but are not limited to:

- Increasing cooperation, and understanding between USDA and CFIA with respect to each other's regulatory processes, policies, programs and assessments;
- Exchanging information to support regulatory cooperation on plant health, animal health and food safety (meat and poultry), standards, and risk management, including adopting, when desirable and where possible, consistent regulatory practices and approaches; and
- Identifying strategies for overcoming regulatory, administrative and other barriers to greater cooperation and alignment, and taking appropriate actions.

Work plans will be reviewed annually and will be posted on the Canada and U.S. RCC websites at www.trade.gov/rcc and www.inspection.gc.ca.

Stakeholder Engagement

USDA and CFIA will invite a wide range of stakeholders, including regulated parties, consumers, and industry groups, to an annual RCC Co-Chair meeting/stakeholder event to provide bi-national information to the senior level committee regarding industry and consumer trends and the potential implications to help inform cooperative activities going forward.

Stakeholders will be asked to provide information pertaining to:

- Trends with specific reference to where they feel adjustments to regulatory systems and overall direction may be required.
- New technology or innovations in the sector that would serve to initiate early agency discussion on how to approach these in the future.
- Issues that are seen as near-term priorities and costs associated with misalignment or the opportunity to assist in priority setting activities.

CFIA and USDA technical working groups will also regularly engage with stakeholders through joint conference calls or webinars to identify new areas of opportunity and to inform annual work planning, as well as to outline progress over the previous work term. Technical working groups will plan separate stakeholder outreach sessions for animal health, plant health, and food safety (meat and poultry) stakeholders.

The agencies will utilize, but are not limited to, the following stakeholder events: public meetings and hearings, stakeholder dialogues with industry and consumer groups, and the annual RCC stakeholder/Co-Chair meeting.