

ADVISORY SERVICES FOR FOODS OF PLANT ORIGIN PROCESSORS

Infosheet

AUGUST 2010

INTRODUCTION

The Foods of Plant Origin (FPO) Program within the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) provides food safety guidance to non-federally registered foods of plant origin food processors in Ontario.

Food safety guidance is delivered by the Risk Identification and Management (RIM) Unit staff located in Brighton, Midhurst, Vineland and Guelph. Contact information can be found on the next page.

A number of tools are used by the RIM Unit to help FPO clients identify and manage food safety risks.

ADVISORY SERVICES

- **Environmental monitoring** — To introduce foods of plant origin plants to environmental monitoring as a tool to verify the effectiveness of their cleaning and sanitizing programs, staff conduct ATP bioluminescence and microbial environmental swabbing at volunteer plants. While the number of no-cost swabbing sessions for each facility is limited, after seeing the benefits of such a program, facilities often initiate their own swabbing programs.
 - **Food Safety Assessments** — To help identify strengths and weaknesses of a plant's operating procedures and facilities, staff perform food safety assessments (gap analysis) during on-site visits to individual facilities.
 - **Mitigation approaches** — In response to observations during on-site visits and to e-mail and telephone inquiries, staff suggest approaches to mitigate food safety concerns.
 - **Good Manufacturing Practices** — To support producers and processors who are pursuing formal food safety programs (e.g. Good Manufacturing Practices or GMPs), staff conduct GMP writing workshops, review GMP programs and offer constructive suggestions — however, staff do not prepare individual plant programs.
- **Assistance in addressing non-compliance** — Product samples tested under the ministry's Food Safety Monitoring Program are sometimes found to be non-compliant with Health Canada guidelines/standards. When this occurs, staff assist the producer/processor in finding and correcting the underlying problem.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

- **Presentations** — Staff make presentations on food safety topics at foods of plant origin commodity group and other meetings.
- **Infosheets** — One or two-page infosheets contain technical information covering a range of food safety issues for a variety of foods of plant origin commodities.
- **Guidebooks** — Detailed commodity-specific guidebooks describe GMPs that should be followed to ensure the production of safe food.
 - Guidebooks for minimally processed fruit and vegetables, maple syrup, and apple cider are available in print and on the OMAFRA website: www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/fs_food_plant.htm
 - The *Sprouted Seeds Good Manufacturing Practices Guidebook* is available in print format.
 - A cleaning and sanitation guidebook outlines proper cleaning and sanitizing procedures for all foods of plant origin processing facilities. It is available in print and on the OMAFRA website: www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/fruitveg/sanitation_guide/

- **Articles** — Staff produce food safety-related articles for commodity group newsletters and other publications.
- **Business Information Bundles** — Information on production methods, technology, regulatory requirements and business and marketing options for maple syrup and honey producers is provided in Business Information Bundles (BIBs):
www.ontario.ca/maple
www.ontario.ca/honey
- **Annual Seminar** — An industry-wide seminar on a topic relevant to all FPO commodity processors is held annually, usually in the Greater Toronto Area. Recent topics have included *Cleaning and Sanitation* and *Controlling Listeria*. Smaller, commodity-specific, seminars/workshops are held in various locations across the province throughout the year.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Periodically, Ontario foods of plant origin producers/processors are asked to participate in research studies designed by the ministry. These studies assist producers/processors in identifying food safety risks, as well as in assessing implementation of measures to manage these risks. Recent examples include studies assessing the effectiveness of cleaning and sanitation practices and the microbial quality of wash water at minimally processed produce operations.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

All non-federally registered Ontario foods of plant origin food processors are invited to take advantage of the services offered by OMAFRA's Foods of Plant Origin Program. For more information regarding educational resources or seminars, presentations for your group or individualized advisory services, please contact:

John Henderson
 Risk Management Specialist
Telephone: 1-613-475-5175
E-mail: john.henderson@ontario.ca

Bengt Schumacher
 Risk Management Specialist
Telephone: 1-705-725-7295
E-mail: bengt.schumacher@ontario.ca

Peter vanWeerden
 Risk Management Specialist
Telephone: 1-905-562-1671
E-mail: peter.vanweerden@ontario.ca

Paul Bailey
 Risk Identification and Management Coordinator
Telephone: 1-519-826-4380
E-mail: paul.bailey1@ontario.ca

Dr. Robert Blenkinsop
 Food Scientist - Horticulture
Telephone: 1-519-826-4535
E-mail: robert.blenkinsop@ontario.ca

For more information:
Telephone: 1-877-424-1300
E-mail: fpo.omafra@ontario.ca

www.ontario.ca/omafra