

USDA REVIEW OF CANADA: U.S. – CANADA EQUIVALENCY AGREEMENT

DATES OF ONSITE REVIEW:

- Canada: October 23 – 27, 2017
- Thailand: May 7 – 12, 2018

REVIEW TEAM:

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INTRODUCTION

On June 17, 2009, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) established an equivalency arrangement with Canada. The arrangement allows for agricultural products produced and handled in conformity with the Canadian Organic Products Regulations, subject to the terms of the arrangement (January 20, 2012 revision), to be sold, labeled or represented in the United States as organically produced, including by display of the USDA organic seal as well as the Canadian organic seal. On October 23 – 27, 2017 and May 7 – 12, 2018 the USDA-AMS National Organic Program (NOP) conducted an onsite review of Canada's organic certification program in Canada and Thailand, respectively. This report is an account of those activities and observations of the review.

I. REVIEW OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the review were the following:

1. To verify that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Conformity Verification Bodies, and accredited certification bodies are carrying out the requirements of the Organic Products Regulations (2009), including the Canadian Organic Standards.
2. To verify CFIA's, its Conformity Verification Bodies', and accredited certification

3. bodies' continuing adherence with the provisions of the U.S. – Canada Equivalency Arrangement.
4. To verify the implementation of actions taken by CFIA in response to USDA AMS-NOP's 2013 onsite peer review.

II. REVIEW SCOPE

The scope of the review included activities related to the following:

1. CFIA's assessment and oversight of its designated Conformity Verification Bodies
2. CFIA's accreditation and oversight of certification bodies accredited under the Canada Organic Regime (COR)
3. The Conformity Verification Bodies' accreditation and oversight of certification bodies accredited to ISO 17065
4. CFIA's investigation of, including enforcement actions taken against, violations of the terms of the U.S. – Canada Equivalency Arrangement by certified operations or certification bodies.
5. Certification and oversight of domestic and foreign operations certified under the COR, including operations verified to be meeting the terms of the U.S. – Canada Equivalency Arrangement.

III. LEGAL BASIS FOR THE REVIEW

The January 2009 U.S. – Canada Equivalency Arrangement (USCOEA) provides for representatives of USDA, following advance notice, to conduct onsite evaluations to verify whether CFIA's certifying agents are carrying out the requirements of Canada's organic certification program, including visits to agent facilities and to product facilities and farms that agents have certified. On August 22, 2017, AMS-NOP informed CFIA of its intent to conduct onsite reviews of Canada's organic certification program both in and outside of Canada as part of the ongoing requirements of the USCOEA. Equivalency arrangements are provided for pursuant to USDA organic regulations at 7 CFR 205.500(c)(1).

The following regulations, standards, and criteria were considered in the review:

- Provisions of the 2009 U.S. – Canada Equivalency Arrangement
- Organic Products Regulations (2009)
- Canadian Organic Standards
- ISO/IEC 17011:2004
- ISO/IEC 17065:2012
- USDA-AMS NOP 2013 Peer Review Report

PROTOCOL

The review was accomplished in five parts in Canada and Thailand: a review of CFIA's organic program known as the Canada Organic Regime (COR); a review of two CFIA-designated conformity verification bodies (CVB); a review of certification and oversight activities of two certification bodies (CB) accredited by CFIA under COR; an observation of a witness audit of a CVB witness audit conducted by a CFIA auditor; and observations of three witness audits conducted by the two CVBs. In selecting the CVBs, CBs, and organic operations for the witness audits, the AMS-NOP review team worked with CFIA staff to select both domestic and foreign CVBs, CBs, and organic operations certified under COR and verified to have met the terms of the U.S. – Canada Equivalency Arrangement.

At the CFIA head office in Ottawa, an opening meeting was conducted with CFIA representatives. The AMS-NOP review team reviewed all phases of CFIA's CVB designation and certification body accreditation processes, including CVB surveillance scheduling and procedures; process for managing complaints under the COR; import/export oversight measures; COR standards development, maintenance and interpretation; and chemical residue sampling and testing program. The review team also conducted a sample review of CVB assessment records maintained electronically by CFIA.

The AMS-NOP review team conducted the onsite review of one CVB at the CVB's office in Canada. The review of the second CVB, whose head office is located in the U.S., was conducted in Thailand with the CVB's representative. The CVB's records were maintained electronically and accessible remotely. The AMS-NOP review team reviewed each CVB's policies and process for monitoring and assessing certification bodies under the COR, including complaint/residue testing investigation and handling process; internal audit and management review policies and processes; and personnel training and evaluation policies. The review team conducted a sample review of CB assessment records maintained by each CVB.

The AMS-NOP review team conducted onsite reviews of two CBs at each CB's office, which were located in Canada and Thailand respectively. The review team reviewed each CB's policies and procedures for certification under the COR, including each CB's process for verifying an operation's compliance with the terms of the U.S. – Canada Equivalency Arrangement; complaint/residue testing investigation and handling process; internal audit and management review policies and processes; and personnel training and evaluation policies. The review team conducted a sample review of certification; complaint investigation; sample collection/residue testing; and staff training files. The review team also verified the CBs' implementation of the CFIA's response to AMS-NOP's 2013 onsite review observations.

In Canada, the AMS-NOP review team also observed a CFIA auditor conduct a witness audit of the Canadian CVB's witness audit of an annual inspection of a handling operation. The review team additionally observed the same CVB conduct a witness audit of an annual onsite inspection of a crops operation. In Thailand, the AMS-NOP review team observed the second CVB conduct witness audits of a handler/processor annual inspection and a crops grower group annual inspection.

The AMS-NOP review team was accompanied by representatives of CFIA throughout the audit in Canada. A closing meeting of the onsite audit in Canada was conducted with CFIA officials and the Canadian CVB representative at the CFIA office in Saskatoon on October 27, 2017. A closing meeting of the onsite audit in Thailand was conducted with CFIA officials via teleconference on June 6, 2018.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF CFIA AND COR

The CFIA is the regulatory agency responsible for delivering Canada's federal food safety, animal health and plant health regulatory programs. CFIA administers the Organic Products Regulations, 2009 under the authority of the Canada Agricultural Products Act. The regulations require agricultural products to be certified to the Canadian Organic Standards (or to the terms of equivalency arrangements) if the products are represented as organic when imported into Canada, or interprovincially traded, or display the Canada organic logo. As of January 15, 2019, the Organic Product Regulations have been consolidated into the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations, which require any food, seed, or animal feed that is labelled organic to be regulated by CFIA and certified under the Canadian Organic Standards.

The COR is Canada's organic certification system, which is comprised of six elements: regulations; standards; administration (i.e. designation of CVBs); accreditation of certification bodies; certification of products; and monitoring and enforcement. Under the COR, agriculture products must comply with the Canadian Organic Standards (COS). The COS comprises of two documents – CAN/CGSB 32.310 Organic Production Systems, General Principle and Management Standards and CAN/CGSB 32.311 Organic Production Systems, Permitted Substances Lists. The standards are developed and reviewed by the Committee on Organic Agriculture, a volunteer committee of experts in organic agriculture who represent the public and private sector stakeholders. The development and review process is managed by the Canadian General Standards Board, a federal government organization that provides standards development services. The standards are updated every five years. The COS was last updated in 2015 and amended in March 2018.

The CFIA is the competent authority responsible for designating and auditing CVBs to assess and monitor certification bodies; accrediting CBs to certify organic products; and overseeing, monitoring, and enforcing the requirements of the COR. The Canada Organic Regime team is comprised of experts within the Food Import and Export Division of the Food Import/Export and Consumer Protection Directorate. The team is responsible for implementing the COR and the roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. The COR team that is part of the Food Import and Export Division is responsible for overseeing the implementation and the enforcement of the 3rd party delivery system, maintenance of the organic equivalency arrangements, complaints managements, the follow up on the chemical residues and the day to day work related to the maintenance of the COR. The COR team is comprised of one National Manager, one Lead Auditor, one Policy and Programs Specialist, one Policy and Program Analyst, and the colleagues from the Consumer Protection and Market Fairness Division. The interpretation of the Organic Products Regulations as it relates to organic labelling and claims as well as the maintenance and the interpretation of the Canadian Organic Standard is within the responsibilities of the CFIA Consumer Protection and Market Fairness Division.

The COR-related complaints are managed by the COR team. Complaints against certification bodies are referred to the appropriate CVB for further investigation and resolution. Complaints against operators with certified products are referred to the appropriate CB for investigation via their CVB. Complaints regarding organic products at the retail level are forwarded to the CFIA inspectorate.

In order to become a designated CVB, an entity must apply to and undergo an on-site audit by CFIA. CVBs must meet both the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011 and additional CFIA requirements outlined in the COR Operating Manual. CVBs enter into a five-year agreement with CFIA to assess and recommend CBs for accreditation. CVBs are also responsible for the monitoring of the CFIA-accredited CBs through onsite audits. CFIA conducts on-site assessments of its CVBs in the first, third, and fifth years. In the second and fourth years, the surveillance assessment consists of a document review. A witness audit of the CVB is conducted every year, and the fifth year is the re-assessment year. CFIA may conduct unscheduled assessments or visits as a result of valid complaints against the CVB. At the time of the audit, there were three designated CVBs – two in Canada and one international CVB with physical office in the U.S.

An entity seeking to become a CFIA-accredited CB to certify agricultural products and organic product packaging and labeling under the COR must apply to a designated CVB. Accreditation applicants undergo a document review and onsite assessment conducted by the CVB to verify compliance with the COR requirements, which includes conformity with the requirements of ISO/IEC 17065. CFIA makes the decision to grant the CB accreditation based on the

recommendation and information provided by the CVB. Accreditation is granted for five years. At the time of the audit, there were thirty-six accredited CBs, eighteen of which offer certification services in Canada.

An operation seeking certification of its products or packaging and labeling activity under the COR applies to a CFIA-accredited CB. The CB conducts an initial onsite inspection to verify the operation's compliance with the COS and COR requirements, and grants certification of the product or packaging and labeling activity if the operation is determined to be compliant. Verification of whether the product meets the terms of the U.S. – Canada Equivalency Arrangement is also conducted by the CB upon request of the operation. Once certified, the certification of the product remains valid unless suspended or cancelled by the CB. In order to continue certification, an operation must submit its intent to maintain certification to the CB and undergo an onsite inspection annually. In addition to annual inspections, operations may be subjected to unannounced inspections and sampling and testing. CBs are required to conduct unannounced inspections representing 3% of primary producers (minimum one) and 5% of other operators (minimum one) to which it grants certificates for products under the Canada Organic Regime. CBs may conduct sampling and testing when there is reason to suspect that the organic product has come into contact with a prohibited substance, method or ingredient in the production and handling of the product. At the time of the audit, CFIA reported that there were a total number of 5,393 COR-certified operations (5,063 domestic, 330 international) in 2016.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS REVIEW OBSERVATIONS AND VERIFICATION OF CFIA RESPONSES

AMS-NOP's previous onsite audit conducted in June 2013 resulted in eight observations. In response to the findings, CFIA submitted responses to USDA-AMS NOP on October 30, 2013. AMS-NOP's 2017 - 2018 onsite review verified the implementation of CFIA's responses.

A previous observation labeled as "Cleared," indicates that the responses are determined to be implemented and effective. A previous observation labeled as "Outstanding" indicates that either the auditors could not verify implementation of the response or that records reviewed and audit observations did not demonstrate that the responses were implemented. The following are the results of the verification:

OBSERVATION 1 – Accepted. Certification Body 1: During discussion with the certification body (CB) and in review of communication between the CB and a certified operation (CO), it was found that the CB does not accept attestations from NOP operators that are compliant with the NOP Policy Memo, PM 10-3, in order to demonstrate compliance with the USCOEA, specifically if the attestation is provided by a party other than the operation’s certifier (i.e. by the producer). The CB only accepts USCOEA compliance documents from a certifier. In review of a particular situation with the CB’s client, the CB prohibited the client from using sugar from Peru that was certified by an NOP-accredited certifier in Guatemala because the attestation was not provided by the certifier directly. It was noted that the sugar operation and certifier in Guatemala are unilingual Spanish-speaking operations, making obtaining an attestation difficult for the CB and its operator.

CFIA/COR Response:

Certification Body 1 has clarified what is required as an attestation of COR equivalency for NOP-certified products with its clients, verification officers and staff. Form ORG_36 has been updated to reflect the requirements for attestations of equivalency to COR. ORG_36_Canada-US equivalence has been amended to require an attestation only from a supplier, and not the supplier’s certification body. An “Equivalency Fact Sheet” has been prepared for distribution to the CB’s clients, applicants and verification officers. Equivalency requirements shall be reviewed with verification officers (at training sessions planned for October 31 and November 4, 2013) and with staff (meeting planned for September 30, 2013).

AMS-NOP Verification:

The auditors’ review of CFIA’s website found that information posted by CFIA regarding the USCOEA included the following appropriate information: “The attestation statement may be included on the organic certificate, transaction certificate, bill of lading, purchase order, or any other affirmative attestation. The operator may provide this attestation, or may request that a certifier do so.” However, the auditors’ interviews with certification staff at the Canada and Thailand CBs found that CBs were not accepting attestation statements provided by operators. The Canada CB staff stated that for product imported to Canada under the USCOEA, either an official statement from the certifier of the product or an organic certificate with the compliance statement would be required for the Canada CB to allow its certified operation to use the imported product. Thailand CB staff stated that a certifier-issued organic certificate, transaction certificate, or confirmation letter that includes the attestation statement would be acceptable, but not an attestation provided by the operator.

CFIA/COR Team Response:

The NOP Policy Memo dated January 27, 2012 was sent to all the CFIA accredited CBs and discussed at both the CVB annual meeting in November 2018 and at the CB Working Group on January 10, 2019. The Memo is publically available on the CFIA web site at:

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/requirements-and-guidance/organic-products/equivalence-arrangements/uscoea-overview/eng/1328068925158/1328069012553>

With the SFCR in place the CFIA has initiated the process of incorporating the organic import requirements of Part 13 of the SFCR into the CFIA's Automated Import Reference System (AIRS);

- Any person who imports organic products must be able to present at any time, including at the time of import a valid organic certificate when requested.
- The organic certificate must be issued by a certification body that is accredited by the CFIA, or by an accredited certification body recognized under an existing organic equivalency agreement between Canada and a foreign country.
- The imported organic product must be certified as organic, in accordance with the arrangement, by an entity that is accredited by that foreign state.

This process will eliminate the need for the operators to provide an attestation confirming that the product is "certified in compliance with the terms of the US-Canada organic equivalency arrangement" and the issue with the CFIA accredited CBs requesting an attestation issued only by the NOP accredited CBs.

OBSERVATION 2 – Cleared. Certification Body 1: During the office visit at the CB the certification process was discussed, along with the inspector selection process. The CB indicated that inspectors are allowed to inspect at the same operation for only 3 years in a row, after which a new inspector would be selected. At the first certified operation visited, however, it was found that the same inspector has visited the operation for the previous four years of organic certification and was also selected for the current – and fifth – year in 2013, which is not in line with the CB's own policies for inspector selection.

CFIA/COR Response:

Certification Body 1 is in a process of developing an internal process which will identify the verification officer (VO) who has done the previous three inspections for any of its clients. This will enable the CB's Compliance Evaluators to assign VOs in accordance with section 2.2 of ORG-SWI 10.1.1. This report will be issued in February 2014 when assignments are established. Target completion date is October 31, 2013.

AMS-NOP Verification:

The auditors' review of the two CB's inspector selection policies and observations during the witness audits indicated that all inspectors were conducting inspections in accordance with their CB's policies for inspector selection.

OBSERVATION 3 – Cleared. Certification Body 1: During a visit to the second certified operation, it was found some seed used to plant crops had seed tags showing certification by an NOP-certifier, and also displayed the USDA organic seal. There was no certificate on file for the seed, and no attestation for the incoming product. It was found that this was not caught by the inspector at the previous year’s inspection (to which the purchase of this seed applied).

CFIA/COR Response:

Although verification officers have been trained on requirements under equivalency arrangements, and Certification Body 1 staff has been trained to review files for equivalency requirements when requested by a client, the CB’s farm system plan (ORG_FAR_04 and ORG_FAR_03) and seed listing (ORG_FAR_06) do not explicitly mention equivalency or the requirement for an attestation. This requirement will be included in the verification officers training planned for October 31 and November 4, 2013. The CB’s farm forms (ORG_FAR_04; ORG_FAR_03; and ORG_FAR_06) will be updated to reflect the requirement for a certificate and attestation for NOP-certified seed. The issue of equivalency and attestations for seed will be included in the “Equivalency Fact Sheet” to be prepared by the CB for distribution to its clients. Target completion date is November 4, 2013.

AMS-NOP Verification:

During the witness audits, the auditors observed that inspectors verified whether certificates were on-file and attestation statements were available for all incoming products.

OBSERVATION 4 – Cleared. Certification Body 1: During review of certificates for clients certified to the USCOEA, it was found that the CB does not include the specified and required statement on the organic certificate, per COO’s Directive 09-01 amended June 18, 2010.

CFIA/COR Response:

The CB’s certificates (for farms, livestock and processors) have been amended to use the correct statement “certified to the terms of the US-Canada organic equivalency arrangement” according to Directive 09-01 as of September 27, 2013. The three certificates (farm, livestock and processor) have been changed in the CB’s database to use the correct statement. A copy of the new certificate is attached.

AMS-NOP Verification:

The auditors’ sample review of organic certificates issued by the two CBs indicated that the certificates included the statement specified and required by CFIA Directive 09-01.

OBSERVATION 5 – Cleared. Certification Body 2: In reviewing a file for a certified operation, it was found that the CB’s inspector cited an issue on the operator’s inspection report specific to the USCOEA that was not also identified on the inspection exit interview. Per the CB, this is out of compliance with their policies – all issues on the inspection report must be reflected on the exit interview. This discrepancy was not caught by the CB’s review staff or certification decision-maker.

CFIA/COR Response:

Specific instructions were given to all verification officers and certification officers with regards to issues found during inspection. All issues related to the standard being inspected must be indicated on the exit interview and report. A reminder regarding non-compliances that need to be listed in the 2 documents: exit interview and inspection report has been sent out. Training for both certification officers and verification officers is planned for December 2013. A copy of the applicable sections of the training is attached.

AMS-NOP Verification:

The auditors’ sample review of inspection reports of the two CBs and observations during the witness audits indicated that the CBs inspectors recorded issues identified in the inspection report on exit interview forms.

OBSERVATION 6 – Cleared. Certification Body 2: The specific USCOEA issue referenced in Observation 5 above was that the inspector required in the inspection report that a certificate be on file for incoming NOP-certified ingredients, which is not in line with NOP PM 10-3. This memo specifies that the attestation may be issued an organic certificate, a transaction certificate, bill of lading or any other affirmative attestation. As noted in Observation 5, there was no mention of the issue in the exit interview; further, the inspection report did not have any additional details on the topic – such as whether an attestation statement in another form was available.

CFIA/COR Response:

The CFIA accredited CBs are not expected to be in line with the NOP Policy Memos. The CBs should follow the CFIA requirements and directives. The COO suggests that this observation is revised to reflect this comment. The Certification Body 2 certification officers and verification officers were reminded of this issue during the training sessions that took place on June 14, 2013, and June 20, 2013.

AMS-NOP Verification:

The auditors’ sample review of certification files indicated that both CBs were following CFIA requirements and directives.

OBSERVATION 7 – Accepted. Certified Operation: The processor repackages pasta products into packaging for the US market that are listed on the certificate as “certified to the terms of the US-Canada Organic Equivalency Arrangement,” though product is not always sold to the US. Packages display the USDA organic seal and an ingredient statement compliant with the NOP labeling requirements; however, the “certified organic by...” required statement was not properly displayed. Additionally, the CB’s logo was displayed more prominently (on the same panel in a larger size) than the USDA organic logo. COO Directive 10-5 for “Labeling of organic products under the Canada Organic Regime,” under section 3.0 and “Labeling Requirements related to import/export arrangements” states, “Organic products shall meet the labeling requirements of the importing country; that is, the country where it is marketed and sold.” The Directive is noted at the top as “Intended for: CFIA designated CVBs, CFIA accredited CBs, and all operations under the COR.” It was found that neither issue was caught by the inspector or the certifier.

CFIA/COR Response:

The client has been informed that his labels used for sales in the USA are non-compliant and needed to be corrected. The client sent all labels bearing the USDA logo for verification on September 24, 2013. The CB’s label approval manager has reviewed all labels and informed the client on all necessary changes on September 30, 2013. The Certification Body 2 label verification approval document has been amended in July 2013 to include the specific requirements for the countries with which Canada has an equivalency arrangement. A reminder was sent to the verification officers and certification officers in regards to the equivalency arrangement on October 2, 2013. A copy of the CB’s label approval form is attached.

AMS-NOP Verification:

The auditors’ sample review of labels approved by the Thailand CB found that the labels did not comply with NOP requirements in the following manner: (1) labels on four tea products displayed “Certified by “ instead of “Certified Organic by”; (2) the displayed statement was not placed below the information identifying the handler of the product on the labels of the four tea products and two additional rice products. Additionally, the auditors’ interviews with the representative of the Thailand CB’s CVB indicated that the CVB was not verifying during its onsite assessment whether the CB reviews and appropriately approves labeling on product exported under the USCOEA for compliance with NOP labeling requirements.

CFIA/COR Response:

CFIA covered USDA labeling under the USCOEA during a CB Working Group Call in June 2019 and at a CVB face to face meeting in November 2018. In 2018 and 2019, as part of CFIA’s office and witness audits, the CFIA confirmed that the CBs review and approve all the labels. The US labelling requirements are publicly available on the CFIA web site at: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/general-food-requirements-and-guidance/organic-products/equivalence-arrangements/uscoea-overview/eng/1328068925158/1328069012553>.

OBSERVATION 8 – Cleared. Certified Operation: At the processor, audit trail documents were reviewed for two randomly selected production runs of product qualifying for the USCOEA certification. It was found that a certificate for organic cheese and butter, which is used in an Alfredo sauce labeled with the USDA Organic seal that is certified under the USCOEA, did not contain the required certification statement for USCOEA products/ingredients, per COO Directive 09-01 amended June 18, 2010. Under this Directive, “Products imported or exported under the terms of this arrangement must be accompanied by documents which would have the following attestation added to the product by the Certification body verified the product: certified to the terms of the US-Canada Organic equivalence arrangement.” The certificate from the CB for the supplier of cheese and butter stated only, “Equivalency Arrangement Etats-Unis-Canada.” As these are dairy products, which have a restrictive critical variance under the terms of the USCOEA, being used in a product labeled with the USDA organic seal and certified for sale to the US under the USCOEA, incoming ingredient documents must properly demonstrate compliance, per COO’s own Directive. It was found that the inspector did not catch this issue at the processor’s most recent inspection conducted prior to the peer review.

CFIA/COR Response:

A reminder was sent to the Certification Body 2 staff in regard to the equivalency arrangement on September 20, 2013. A copy of the CB’s Internal Note is attached.

AMS-NOP Verification:

The auditors’ sample review of certification files indicated that the certification files included documentation with the appropriate attestation statement. During the witness audits, the auditors observed that inspectors were verifying whether an operation’s documentation included the appropriate attestation statement.

SUMMARY OF REVIEW OBSERVATIONS

The 2017 - 2018 onsite review identified the following observations:

OBSERVATION 1 – Accepted. ISO 17011 7.2.1.c states, “The accreditation body shall require a duly authorized representative of the applicant CAB to make a formal application that includes the following: a clearly defined, requested, scope of accreditation;” *The auditors review of CFIA agreement letters issued to the two CVBs and one CVB’s CB accreditation recommendation letter to CFIA found that the letters do not refer to specific scopes (i.e. crops, livestock, processing, etc.) for accreditation. Additionally, the auditor’s interviews with CVB staff and review of both CVBs’ application forms from found that the CVBs are not consistent with each other in the types of scopes CB applicants may apply for.*

CFIA/COR response:

The CFIA has amended the CVB recommendation letter template. The amended template includes detailed information on both the accreditation and the geographical scope.

OBSERVATION 2 – Accepted. ISO 17011 8.2.1.b – c states, “The accreditation body shall make publicly available information about the current status of the accreditations that it has granted to CABs ... The information shall include the following: dates of granting accreditation and expiry dates, as applicable; scopes of accreditation, condensed and/or in full. If only condensed scopes are provided, information shall be given on how to obtain full scopes.” *The auditors’ review of information publicly available on CFIA’s website found that CFIA only posts a list of approved CVBs and CBs, which does not include all the information required by ISO 17011 8.2.1.b - c.*

CFIA/COR response:

The accreditation status of each CB is publicly available on the CFIA website at: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/general-food-requirements-and-guidance/organic-products/certification-bodies/in-canada/eng/1327861534754/1327861629954>. The accreditation status provides information such as the CB’s accreditation number, name of the CVB, effective and expiration date of accreditation, accreditation scope and geographical scope.

OBSERVATION 3 – Accepted. ISO 17011 7.8.6 e - h states, “The information provided to the accreditation decision-maker(s) shall include the following, as a minimum: proposed scope of accreditation that was assessed; the assessment report; information on the resolution of all nonconformities;” *The auditors’ review of CFIA’s CB accreditation process found that CFIA does not always require CVBs to provide CFIA with the information required by ISO 17011 7.8.6 e - h for CFIA to make its accreditation decision. Interviews with CFIA staff indicated that the information may be requested from the CVB on a case-by-case basis.*

CFIA/COR response:

In March 2018, the CFIA revised the COR Operating Manual V14 and published the amended V15 of the COR Operating Manual. The NOP observation was addressed by clause B.2.3.5,

which requires the CVB to send to the CFIA the recommendation decision in writing and provide to the CFIA a copy of the CVB evaluation report on the applicant CB and any other relevant information to support the accreditation recommendation. This requirement remains unchanged in the current V16 dated January 15, 2019 Copy of the manual can be found on the CFIA website at: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/general-food-requirements-and-guidance/organic-products/operating-manual/eng/1389199079075/1544800597955?chap=4#s16c4>

OBSERVATION 4 – Accepted. ISO 17011 4.2.1 states, “The structure and operation of an accreditation body shall be such as to give confidence in its accreditations.” *The auditors’ review of the Thailand CB’s list of certified operations submitted to its CVB prior to its assessment of the CB found that the submission did not meet CFIA’s requirements. CFIA requires CVB’s to request from its CB prior to conducting an on-site assessment updated information that includes a complete list of operations certified to the terms of Canada’s organic equivalence arrangements, including name, address and phone number of the certified entity, the scope of certification and their locations. If provided through a directory on the internet, it is acceptable to provide the URL to the directory instead. The list (i.e. URL to website list) the CB provided its CVB with included a list of COR-certified operations. However, the list did not identify which operations were certified to the terms of the USCOEA. Additionally, the list incorrectly included operations with an “in-conversion” status.*

CFIA/COR response:

This NOP observation triggered a nonconformity that was issued to the CVB by the CFIA. The CVB was given 30 days to address the NC and to provide a corrective action plan to the CFIA for review.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of CFIA’s response to any finding noted as “Accepted” will be verified by USDA AMS NOP during its next onsite review of Canada’s organic certification program.