

Close Connections

New CSI programming will help create higher value seed opportunities.

By Heidi Dancho

THE CANADIAN SEED Institute's unique role and connection to the seed industry is creating opportunities for improved seed programs. Working with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, there are value-added initiatives in contract registration and exports.

"We have been able to commit resources to maintain the seed industry programs; develop updated technical manuals for approved conditioners, bulk storage facilities, and authorized importers; be involved in industry training; and create new programs in response to seed industry needs," says Jim McCullagh, Executive Director of CSI. "Both the OECD export program and the U.S. authorized exporter program, which permit simplified seed exports, have resulted in significant cost savings to the participants."


In addition to ensuring programs are efficient, CSI also ensures they support the value of certified seed. Programs like the Canadian Grain Commission's Canadian Identity Preserved Recognition System and food safety systems require the appropriate paperwork, documentation, and confidence that certified seed use provides throughout the entire value chain.

"Because CSI is non-government and managed by a Board representing trade, growers, analysts, and RSEs (Registered Seed Establishment), they are much closer to the establishments and have an added flexibility that we don't have in government," says Michael Scheffel, acting National Manager of the Seed Section at CFIA. "Rather than us telling them, the industry decided what they had to do to meet the appropriate standards." The CSI technical working groups, which have seed industry leaders as participants, have created three technical manuals which have become a universal reference tool used by CSI assessors, government, and industry alike.

The creation of third-party monitoring systems like CSI has also permitted CFIA to consider program revisions such as an expansion of contract registration. CFIA is currently conducting an on-line consultation about the modernization of the seed regulatory framework. One part of this involves making the current contract variety registration system more flexible. "Companies could use a third-party (such as CSI) for contract registration oversight to ensure varietal segregation through the value chain," says Scheffel. This would involve an annual audit, with the level of audit and price directly correlated with the level of risk of co-mingling. "Since CFIA doesn't have the sufficient resources to currently do this oversight, many varieties aren't allowed contract registration. This would give companies another option."

The Seed Alliance and CFIA will also be also exploring an industry-led licensed sampler program. "Through a consultative process with industry, we will be working to develop the best way of providing the necessary information, training,

and monitoring for an internationally recognized seed sampler licensing program," says Scheffel. Currently, getting a CFIA inspector out to each location to do the training and observation takes a long time. Scheffel envisions a program with on-line training and background information, and initial inspections, training, and audits conducted by a CSI assessor.

According to McCullagh, the Seed Alliance is working on securing funding for new programs such as the sampling program and other initiatives that will support the value chain of seed. 

CSI is currently scheduling technical training workshops at various upcoming industry meetings. Call Ken Stoner at (306) 862-2081 if you are interested in attending a workshop near you.



PROGRAMS OPERATED UNDER THE CSI'S CENTRE FOR SYSTEMS INTEGRATION INCLUDE:

Organic Certification:

- USDA National Organic Program
- European Union Regulation 2092/91

Food Safety Certification and Consulting:

- HACCP Registration
- Post-Farm Food Safety Modules
- Canadian Identity Preserved Recognition System
- Six Sigma Implementation
- ISO Registration



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PROGRAMS OPERATED UNDER THE CSI INCLUDE:

- Approved Conditioner
- Authorized Importer
- Authorized Exporter
- Bulk Storage Facility
- CFIA Phytosanitary Certification Program for Seed
- Integrated Seed Quality Management System
- Seed Testing Laboratory Accreditation