

BEEF TRACEABILITY PROJECT

ATQ
Agri-Traçabilité Québec
ISO 9001-2008 Certified

FROM ABATTOIR TO RETAILER: FINDINGS & OBSERVATIONS

The traceability system in Québec, the implementation and management of which is handled by Agri-Traçabilité Québec (ATQ), supports the tracking of movement for cattle, sheep and cervids from the farm of origin to the abattoir. This system does not cover the subsequent links in the supply chain, i.e., from the abattoir to the retailer. Currently, in Québec, there are no regulations that set requirements with regard to the traceability of meat. However, the *Loi sur les produits alimentaires* (Food Products Act) requires that an operator must be able to carry out an effective recall of its produce. In this context, several businesses have put in place, on a voluntary basis, systems that allow for a better tracking of their production as well as their operations.

OBJECTIVES

With the goal of evaluating the feasibility of a traceability system for the production channel for bovine meats, ATQ has implemented the **Beef Traceability Pilot Project: from abattoir to retailer-Phase II.** This project was carried out over a period of 11 months and ended on January 31, 2014. This second phase targeted the development and testing of a traceability system using harmonized information between each link of the supply chain (from the abattoir to the retailer) of bovine meat. The system had to be able to respond to the necessities of a food recall and adapt to the reality of food enterprises. Based on an "upstream-downstream" approach, the system had as its goal to evaluate the exchange of a certain amount of information between each segment of the supply chain as well as the preservation of these types of information at the level of each enterprise.

> IN ORDER TO ADAPT TO THE REALITIES OF THE FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY AND TO RESPOND TO THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF THIS MARKET, THE PRINCIPLES FOR BOVINE MEAT TRACEABILITY WERE BASED ON A MODEL APPLICABLE AT THE LEVEL OF THE ENTERPRISE.

FIELD TRIALS

In order to adapt to the realities of the food processing industry and to respond to the specific needs of this market, the principles for bovine meat traceability were based on a model applicable at the level of the enterprise. Within the project's framework, 24 businesses shared their expertise and 8 opened their doors to carry out trials in the field.

The objective targeted by these trials was to test the various available technical solutions and to determine if these could be adapted to the systems already in place within the participating enterprises. These systems were evaluated in real situations in order to measure their effectiveness with regard to the identification of bovine meat products and the tracking between the abattoir and the retailer. The proposed solutions could be achieved using simple paper records all the way up to a complete solution integrating various operational processes within the business.

PROJECT STEPS

DEFINITION OF A TRACEABILITY MODEL › SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS › SELECTION OF TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS › FIELD TRIALS › RECALL SIMULATIONS

FINDINGS & OBSERVATIONS

The trials in the field carried out at the participating enterprises revealed the diversity of systems in use within the different activity sectors and allowed for the establishment of findings with regard to the operational needs of these businesses in dealing with the proposed tools. The activities carried out within the pilot project highlighted the following findings and observations:

- **There is an absence of a traceability standard with regard to the format as well as the type of information found on product labels;**
- **There is a need to implement traceability by lots based on an "upstream-downstream" system;**
- **There exists several effective traceability solutions that are adapted to the realities of the businesses;**
- **There are benefits to the automation of processes (computerization);**
- **There is a need to provide support to businesses in the selection and implementation of a traceability solution;**
- **There is a need for collaboration and a shared will to implement a traceability system at the level of each enterprise.**

It can be stated, based on the simulated recalls carried out with 5 enterprises, that when used properly the solutions allow for an improved effectiveness with regard to recalls by increasing the availability of information while reducing the size of lots and ensuring that the quantities of produce being tracked can actually be traced.

A BOVINE MEAT TRACEABILITY SYSTEM, FROM FARM TO FORK, REPRESENTS A MAJOR PROJECT THAT REQUIRES THE INVOLVEMENT OF MANY INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS.

SUMMARY

The field trials carried out in the different bovine meat production sectors demonstrate that the implementation of a traceability system at the supply chain level is definitively a feasible initiative.

A bovine meat traceability system, *from farm to fork*, represents a major project that requires the involvement of many industry stakeholders.

In summary, if the enterprises in the bovine meat supply chain commit to pursuing the necessary undertakings for a traceability system, the next step consists of determining a common labeling standard in order to provide uniformity to the information collected and shared amongst the various links in the chain. In addition, although there are several technical solutions allowing for an integrated traceability system to be offered to businesses, the implementation of such a system can represent a significant challenge due to a lack of resources or adequate knowledge at the enterprise level. In the light of this finding, it seems clear that if the implementation of a traceability system would be eventually put in place as a commercial or governmental requirement for the different sectors of bovine meat production, providing support to businesses in the selection and implementation of a solution would be necessary in order to assist them in overcoming these challenges.

BOVINE MEAT SUPPLY CHAIN: STANDARDIZE THE EXCHANGE, FOLLOW-UP AND SAFEKEEPING OF INFORMATION IN A CONSISTENT FASHION AMONG THE VARIOUS LINKS THAT MAKE UP THE SUPPLY CHAIN.

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Fonds de développement de la transformation alimentaire

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