



IMPROVING COUNCIL

# OPERATIONS

# INTEGRATING

## EFFORTS WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS

As a federal agency under the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, Council is an active member of the Agriculture and Agri-food Portfolio Coordination Working Group. The Working Group's other members are the Department of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (AAFC), the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Farm Credit Corporation, the Canadian Wheat Board, the Canadian Grain Commission and the Canadian Dairy Commission. During 1999, the Group developed a portfolio reporting calendar, agreed on a joint list of issues for environmental scanning, discussed Ministerial priorities across the portfolio and provided advice to the Minister on trade policy issues. The Council Chairperson also meets periodically with the other portfolio agency heads.

Council is one of 22 federal government departments and agencies that belong to Team Canada Inc. (TCI). TCI is a unique "virtual" trade agency that co-ordinates the export development programs and services of its members, and provides a single window of service to Canadian exporters. Council is represented on the TCI Management Board and on the Deputy Ministerial Committee on International Business Development which gives broad strategic direction to TCI. During 1999, TCI further enhanced its very popular web site <http://exportsource.gc.ca>, produced an excellent step-by-step guide to exporting and generally improved the coordination of programs and services among its members. Council's Export Awareness Mission to Asia was promoted as a Team Canada Inc. event.

In addition to these formal co-ordination mechanisms, Council has active contact with a wide range of federal and provincial government partners.

Of course, the Council Chairperson and staff are in contact with Agriculture and Agri-food Canada almost daily, especially with the Minister's office, the Deputy Minister's office, Market and Industry Services Branch, Policy Branch, Corporate Services Branch and Communications Branch. The Council Executive Director also attends the AAFC's weekly "Heads Up" Committee meeting.

The Minister met in February with Council and in April visited with Council staff for a briefing on Council business and issues for

these supply-managed sectors. He also had a presentation on the Council's young Website and the Council's new (and first) Annual Review.

Assistant Deputy Minister Andrew Graham, Corporate Services Branch, met with the Council members in April to provide an overview of the Minister's and the Department's priorities for the coming year. In November, Mr. Gordon Richardson of the Market and

Industry Services Branch presented to the Council members the Department's export marketing development strategy.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) is another important government partner. DFAIT is responsible for trade policy and administering import quotas for poultry and eggs. Council is a member of DFAIT's Chicken and Turkey Tariff Quota Advisory Committee.



Minister Vanclief visits the NFPC, here with Chairperson Cynthia Currie and last year's Annual Review, just hot off the press.

# IMPLEMENTING

## THE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

*“The National Farm Products Council? Never heard of it. What does it do, anyway?”*

In 1997, the Council’s first communications officer in many years was facing a challenge. This was a typical response even from within the supply managed sectors and some government agriculture circles!

So, 1997-1998 saw a whirlwind of first-time projects, laying a foundation of work well begun: print material, a Website, corporate identity design, structured outreach through speaking engagements and media interviews, media tracking, publicity support for Council initiatives.

The most important, though, was no doubt the Communications Plan. It set out how the Council would make itself better known for what it was, but also set down ideas on what the Council could be.

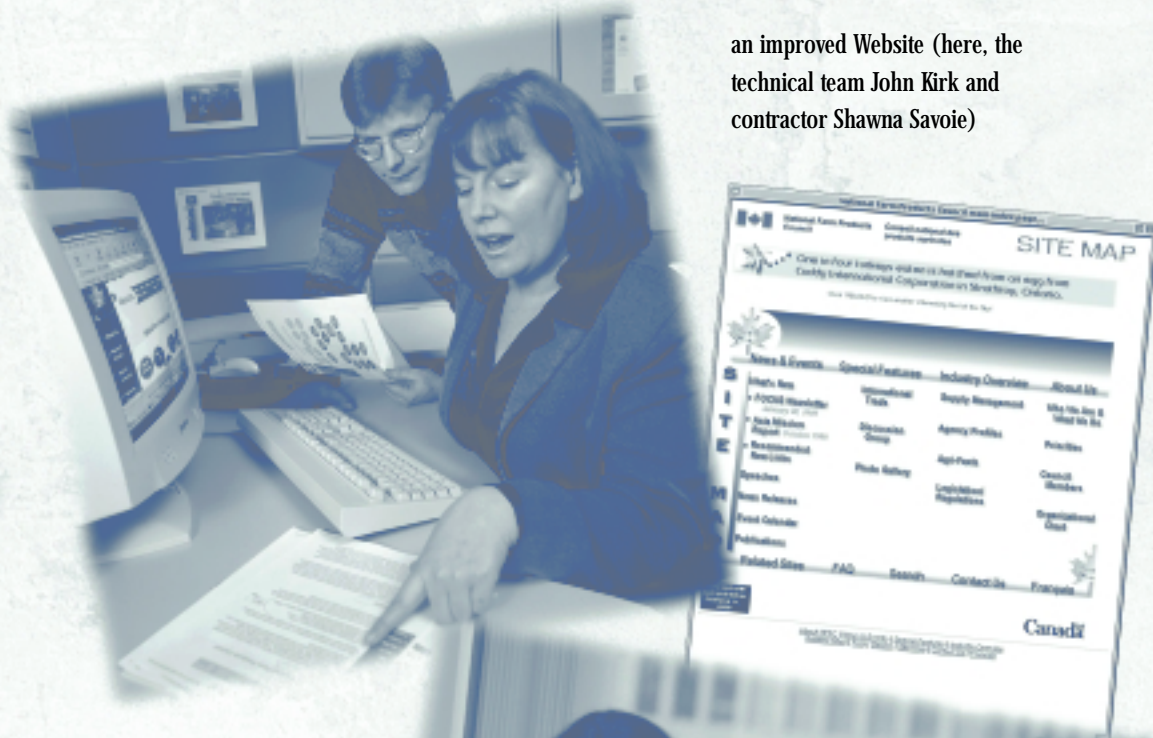
1999 saw continued implementation of the communications plan. The first in this series of Annual Reviews came out in March. Communications work supported the Poultry Meat Export Awareness Mission to Asia and spread the word in the industry. Better use was made of the Website, with an improving architecture, and new sections on international trade and Council complaints guidelines. Council consolidated better connections of outreach and information- sharing with other government departments, with industry associations, and with the commodity agencies at national and provincial levels.

At the end of 1999, the Council may not have won “top-of-mind recall”, but it was starting to win a little different reaction:

*“That was useful information. I didn’t know the Council did all that...”*

Some communications outreach in 1999:

an improved Website (here, the technical team John Kirk and contractor Shawna Savoie)



publications (here, Secretary Lisette Walthier and Communications Advisor Elizabeth Gammell with the Report on the Poultry Meat Export Awareness Mission to Asia)



the biweekly Focus newsletter

# COUNCIL OPERATIONS: MORE IMPROVEMENTS

## **AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS MARKETING ACT (APMA)**

The Council's mandate under the APMA goes beyond the supply-managed poultry and egg commodity sectors. The Council shares responsibility for this with the Policy Branch of AAFC.

A commodity association (in a province, for example) may levy producers and use that money for such purposes as research, product development and consumer education, but it must be authorized to do so. The federal government has constitutional authority over such marketings on product moving between provinces or in export trade. A provincial government has authority over marketings within that province.

The APMA allows the federal government to delegate some of its authority over interprovincial or export trade to a province's commodity agency or commission. This generally happens when a province creates or amends its own provisions for marketings of a commodity in the province. It makes sense for the one body to administer



NFPC staff (r. to l.) Jurgen Schiffer, John Kirk and Liz Leckie discuss work on an improved poultry statistics data base.

Special policy advisor Dick Robinson and Executive Director Rory McAlpine and the status review.



Administrative staff (l. to r.) Louise Séguin, Carola McWade and Lise Leduc go over budget plans.

complementary provincial and federal powers. With an APMA delegation order, the provincial body can act as agent to administer the federal authority.

More than eighty boards and commissions across Canada use the APMA.

Council's job is to act as liaison with provincial boards and commissions who wish to apply for a delegation order or to process orders and regulations made under the APMA. Council provides them information and guidance, and steers their submissions through the regulatory process.

In 1999, the Council worked on 3 applications for delegation orders, which required Cabinet approval, and 6 requests for orders and regulations made pursuant to the Act.

### IMPROVED DATA BASE

Another project for 1999 was a renewed poultry statistics database project. In November, NFPC reached agreement with CBHEMA and AAFC (Policy Branch and Market and Industry Services Branch) to redevelop together the query programs for chicken, turkey and stewing hen statistics. The program will allow users to build custom queries for various data series, time periods and geographic areas. The system will use AAFC's Poultry Statistics Databases as its source of information. CBHEMA hired a consultant to improve efficiency and utility, plus ensure Y2K compliance. The resulting software will also be Internet-ready, should Council decide to offer this service to the sector via the NFPC website.

### REVIEWING COUNCIL STATUS

The Council is unique among federal agencies in that it has independent status under the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, yet receives its funding from Parliament via the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food's Votes. In September 1999, a special policy advisor was seconded from Agriculture and Agri-food Canada to the Council to head a review of Council's status and identify the pros and cons of continuing this arrangement. Work is expected to continue on this review until March 2000.

### STAFFING ACTIONS

In 1999, three vacancies were filled on a permanent basis: the Analyst for Statistics and Special Projects, the Communications Officer, and the Assistant to the Chairperson and Executive Director. One job swap and one secondment to AAFC were also underway, so that Council staff could gain additional expertise in policy development and information to bring back to Council. A recruit from a private sector technical college was filling a term position to assist in website development.

### UNIVERSAL CLASSIFICATION STANDARD

Following Treasury Board's plan to have all government jobs classified according to the Universal Classification Standard, Council rewrote all job descriptions in the UCS format, and submitted them to the Department for evaluation according to the new standard. Preliminary results are expected by February 2000, with final conversion scheduled for March 31, 2000.

### E-FILING

A working group of staff was established to review the electronic filing system on the local area network within the Council. The objective is to develop a standard naming protocol for all shared files and to establish policies and procedures for all NFPC staff. The group was to present its recommendations in a report in January 2000.

### TRAINING

The Council is committed to providing training and development opportunities for its employees. All employees are annually given the opportunity to identify courses to improve work skills and are also asked to identify areas of interest leading to personal and career development. Employees then work with managers to pursue these goals through various educational opportunities. A special training plan and budget has been established.

Most courses in 1999 focused on informatics, a recognition that these skills need to be constantly upgraded in today's workplace. As an overall development opportunity, Council organised a one day career planning workshop in May 1999, for all employees.

### BUDGET PLANNING

Council staff implemented a new format for internal budget reporting to senior management and continue to work closely with financial planning officers at AAFC to ensure that financial resources are managed properly.