

April 3, 2003

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Dear Canada-U.S. Consultative Committee on Agriculture:

The Provincial State Advisory Group (PSAG) met in Montreal April 2, 2003. One of the items on the work plan for several years has been Seed Lab Certification. In preparation for the meeting, U.S. state officials reviewed the Canadian "Technical Reference" on official recognition of Foreign Seed Testing Laboratories.

The U.S. has a quality system-based accreditation for seed testing through an accredited seed analyst program, and are now taking steps to establish a quality system-based approach to seed laboratory accreditation. The U.S. seed industry and government officials are in the final stages of developing the framework that will set up the program for a nationwide seed lab accreditation program.

The development of the framework has been a cooperative effort involving the Association of Official Seed Analysts (AOSA), the Society of Commercial Seed Technologists (SCST), the US Department of Agriculture - Agriculture Marketing Service (USDA-AMS), the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA), the Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies (AOSCA) and the Association of American Seed Control Officials (AASCO). The framework will be sent to the seed organizations for individual membership review in April 2003 and the framework should be completed by the end of the year. The U.S. should then have an internationally recognized program by 2004.

The Technical Reference document in Section 8.0 states that "the CFIA will continue to study the possibility of recognizing systems, other than an ISO 25 (or its successor ISO 17025) - based quality management system,...". The U.S. system will be structured as an ISO system, although it will not be an ISO program. This will include proficiency testing, process manuals, documentation and auditing. One distinction in the U.S. program will be that the auditors will be

third-party reviewers from USDA-AMS. This new double-tiered program should meet any technical requirements for testing and labeling of seed destined for Canada.

We request that the CCA obtain a ruling from CFIA that recognizes this new system as soon as it is in place. We appreciate the work of the CCA in resolving trade issues and look forward to adding seed lab certification to the list of resolved issues.

Sincerely,

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