

Systems Approach to Nursery Certification
4-26-11 Conference Calls - Summary of Discussion

5/26/11

On the Call: Gray Haun, Carol Holko, Ruth Welliver, Mike Colvin, Gary McAninch, Dan Kenny, Collin Wamsley, Stephen Schmidt, Aurelio Posadas, Ken Rauscher

Aurelio indicated that Carl Schulze had provided an overview of the work of the Audit Based Certification (ABC) Committee at the Eastern and Southern Plant Board meetings. EPB and SPB members indicated that there was not a lot of discussion after the presentation. Carol and Ruth indicated that they felt that the presentation represented a whole lot of new information for some members and that we need to streamline the details, perhaps into a fact sheet. Everyone seemed to agree that a brief description of what we are trying to accomplish would be good as we visit with NPB members and other stakeholders.

The workgroup had a fairly extensive discussion about the audit based/systems approach as a whole. Questions arose as to the relative importance of this initiative, potential effectiveness, possible costs of an audit based system for certification, level of understanding of the subject by plant board members and industry, etc. Generally the discussion indicates that there is a need to improve our current certification system and communication of our efforts. This improvement/change may take on various shapes and forms as we address needs into the future. While everyone would like to see a new system operate at the same or less cost, the reality is that will mean an investment of time and expense – Ruth “ a new way may not be cheaper, but the current process is not getting any cheaper”. Gray indicated that improvement may be expensive, and that we need to identify available resources and focus on investing them in the best way. Mike C. indicated that he believes the industry in California is looking for a process that would allow for a better response to new pests. Aurelio suggested that the California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers (CANGC) is working on a similar approach to ours, developing BMP’s and providing outreach to members – so our initiative is relevant and in line with industry efforts. Gray indicated that he felt compliance agreements would be a significant part of improvement process. Most agreed, but some expressed concerns that compliance agreements be appropriate and monitored. There was a good deal of conversation regarding this subject, taking up a large share of the call. Members are clearly passionate about this subject and feel there is a need for change, and that there is a massive amount of details and issues to be addressed. Again, members concluded that we really need a fact sheet to help all stakeholders focus on the details and provide an indication of our direction. The discussion also seems to indicate the need for a face to face meeting of the workgroup which would allow members to once again concentrate on issues and possible solutions.

Ken referenced the HRI/George Washington Univ. Report – USNCP Evaluation. Most indicated that they had not had time to review the rather large report as they only had received it a few days before. Gray referenced the “Potential Benefits” chart on page 22 as a possible source of guidance as we consider not necessarily USNCP, but the details of an audit based/systems approach for certification.

Gray asked the group about the need to further explore the feasibility of ABC /Systems Approaches. Are we ready to move forward? Again, some discussion about the size of the undertaking, benefits, etc. Gray felt that it is time to move forward, especially with gathering more input from the industry. He shared that we had requested representation from the ANLA to provide input and perhaps serve on committees. So far response has been a bit slow. Carol indicated that since this is potentially a very broad initiative, we should begin with certain segments of the industry and move forward in a stepwise manner. Dan K. indicated concern about the level of agreement and understanding by the industry and the regulators. Again, this seems to point to a need for outreach and education.

USDA White Paper comments – Ken indicated that he had received some feedback from workgroup members on the draft comments. Thanks for those, and a request for any additional thoughts.

NPB White Paper – Not a lot of comments, but just sent to workgroup members the day before the call. Ken requested comments by Friday, May 6th. Initial thoughts – the white paper may be a good summary of our position, it may be too detailed for our use in providing quick facts and gathering stakeholder comments.

Gray requested that we choose a new name for this initiative from the several that were suggested on the 3-16 call. The group agreed that the name Systems Approach to Nursery Certification (SANC) would be a good choice.

Since we did not get to the discussion regarding subcommittees, it was agreed that we would get together on another call on Friday, May 6th at 3:00 PM EDT.

Ken