

**POLICY INTEGRATION:  
FOOD INSPECTION REFORMS IN CANADA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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## **1. Introduction**

Food safety refers to the potential risks to human health associated with the consumption of domestic and foreign food products. It is a key domain of public health, and failure to adequately address this issue can result in food-borne illnesses, long-term disabilities, and even deaths. Due to a series of crises concerning human food and animal feed, food safety has become a major concern for consumers, industries, and governments all over the world. In order to promote better co-ordination and improved efficiency in services, many countries have launched comprehensive reforms of their food safety policy programs over the past decade. The present paper takes an in depth look at the reforms of the food inspection systems in Canada and the European Union (EU).

In addressing this theme, this article examines Canadian and EU reforms along two different dimensions. Horizontally, food safety can be described as a crosscutting issue that involves different policy sectors such as health, agriculture, fisheries, industry and trade. Food inspection systems may, therefore, be organized under different ministerial departments, and this article discusses the horizontal organization of the food inspection systems. Along the vertical dimension, both Canada and the EU can be depicted as multi-level entities. Canada's federal state consists of ten provinces and three territories. Although the 1867 Constitution Act sets out the distribution of powers between federal and provincial governments, the delineation between these levels in terms of responsibilities are unclear to many. The EU has 25 member states after the latest enlargement in 2004. It contains a complex mixture of intergovernmental and supranational features, and the balance between national and shared EU competencies is a constant source of dispute amongst European leaders. Decisional authority over food safety policies may be located at different levels of the administrative hierarchy, and the recent reforms of Canadian and EU food inspection systems will, therefore, also be examined in relation to the complex relationship between sub-national, regional, national, and international levels of governance.

The horizontal and vertical dimensions of policy co-ordination are related, and the challenges of confining policy issues to a single sector horizontally tend to increase when the number of vertical levels increases. For instance, growing internationalization has contributed to the blurring of many of the traditional divisions between domestic policy issues and sectors. As the world becomes more interconnected, the challenge of co-ordinating crosscutting policy issues has received increased attention. This challenge has often been referred to in terms of “policy integration”. The academic discourse on policy integration has to a large extent progressed with reference to environmental policy-making and the need for effective integration of environmental concerns across different policy sectors (see Collier 1994; Lenschow 1997; 1999; 2002; Liberatore 1997). However, it is a highly ambiguous concept that has been employed to describe a variety of phenomena and processes. In this article, policy integration refers to a manner of organizing public policies with the purpose of producing co-ordinated actions across different policy sectors and levels of government (Ugland and Veggeland 2005a). Based on this, the central research challenge will here be to illustrate *how* this concept has played out differently in Canada and the EU in the area of food inspection, as well as to gain a deeper understanding of *why* these differences have occurred.

This article is organized as follows. In section two, a theoretical framework for how policy integration can be conceptualized and analyzed will be presented. Section three and four describe the horizontal and vertical aspects of the food inspection systems in Canada and the EU respectively. Different patterns of food safety policy integration will be illustrated here. These differences are discussed in section five, while section six concludes.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This comparative study draws on a wide variety of empirical sources. In addition to published and unpublished documents, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants in Canada and the EU. The informants included government officials, as well as representatives of international organizations.

## **2. Food Safety Policy Integration**

Policy integration has become a fashionable concept among policy-makers at national and international levels over the past two decades, and both Canada and the EU have adopted food safety policy integration as central objectives. Canada's integrated approach to food safety shall ensure collaboration among participants from all sectors and jurisdictions in order to protect the health of the consumers (Canada 2004). The same objective is specified in the EU General Food Law from 2002 (European Communities 2002). Although commitments to food safety policy integration have been firmly established, this article takes a closer look at how these objectives have played out in practice in Canadian and EU contexts.

The notion of food safety policy integration can be defined and analysed in terms of consistency, interdependence, and structural connectedness (Ugland and Veggeland 2005a). Policy consistency deals with the coupling of normative and behavioural structures, and the question is whether the various policy activities are coherent from the point of view of a specific objective. Policy interdependence refers to the causal relationships, and the questions are whether the various policy components are inter-linked, as well as whether they can be regarded as causally linked with the official objectives. Structural connectedness is based on the idea that policy is made within a context of a network of actors and institutions. To what degree and in which manner these are related in terms of information, responsibility, and authority structures are relevant questions here (March 1999; Ugland 2003). Based on this, food safety policies are integrated to the extent that they are coherent and inter-linked with the objective of ensuring safe food and protecting public health, and inasmuch as this objective penetrates all relevant policy sectors and all levels of government. An integrated approach to food safety implies that the health of the population is paramount.

Policy integration requires co-ordination, and food safety policy integration can be achieved through different approaches. In his groundbreaking article from 1980, Arild

Underdal makes the distinction between indirect and direct approaches (Underdal 1980). One way to achieve integration across different policy sectors and levels is to formulate clear policy goals and guidelines to be followed by all government agencies involved. However, this direct approach is dependent upon the often unrealistic assumption that sufficiently precise integrating goals and guidelines can be formulated and agreed upon. The “precautionary principle” may potentially serve as a guiding principle in the processes of food safety policy integration; however, there is much uncertainty attached to the implications of this principle, and questions have been raised concerning its significance in practical policy-making (Majone 2002). The direct approach to policy integration can be complemented by more indirect approaches. One such indirect approach can be referred to as the “institutional strategy” (Underdal 1980, 167). This strategy includes redefining the domains of existing institutions, changing decision-making procedures, redistributing resources or formal authority between institutions, as well as creating new institutions. The common aspect of these measures is that they seek to achieve policy integration through the reorganization of the institutional structure in order to better reflect the policy perspective desired. This article focuses on the institutional changes and reforms that have been undertaken in Canada and the EU over the past two decades in order to achieve an integrated approach to food safety.

Underdal (1980) presents two theoretical assumptions on how policy integration can be achieved through institutional reforms. These assumptions will be presented as a basis for our empirical analyses. First, the chances of effective horizontal integration of policy issues across sectors are assumed to increase when authority is transferred from what is referred to as “narrow” sector agencies to ones with broader perspectives. Food inspection reforms that bring sector interests related to agriculture, fisheries, and industry to the forefront are problematic from a policy integration perspective; thus, we therefore expect that health agencies with broader perspectives have become more central in the process of integrating food safety policy objectives across different sectors. The argument here is that crosscutting policy issues like food inspection first must be integrated around the health objectives before this issue can be effectively integrated across different policy sectors (Ugland and

Veggeland 2005a). Secondly, it is assumed that effective vertical integration of crosscutting issues like food inspection can be facilitated by moving issues “upwards” to higher levels of government in order to achieve better coordination across all levels. Based on this, we expect that the federal level in Canada and the EU-level will play a more central role in the area of food inspection.

The next two sections take a closer look at the reforms of the Canadian and EU food inspection systems. Section five will then discuss to what extent these reforms have facilitated the development of a more consistent, interdependent, and structurally connected system of food safety regulation and inspection across different policy sectors and across different levels of government.

### **3. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)**

Food inspection has been characterized as a problem area in Canadian politics since the early 1970s. Along the horizontal dimension, food inspection programs were located in four different federal departments; Health Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Department of Fisheries and Ocean, and Industry Canada. Vertically, all levels of government were involved. Provincial/territorial governments in Canada had jurisdiction over public health matters, and they controlled food safety activities within their borders and were responsible for the inspection of provincially-registered food establishments and packing plants. The federal government’s involvement in food safety was, to a large extent, connected to the issue of trade; i.e. regulating and inspecting food establishments and packing plants that trade both inter-provincially and internationally. In addition to this, municipal governments were involved in the inspection of retail facilities where food was purchased.

Motivated by economic considerations and the need to reduce public expenditures, a task force on government Program Review was established by the Progressive Conservative

government in September 1984. It was chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Erik Nielsen, and it had two main objectives: better service to the public and improved management of government programs. The Nielsen task force concluded in 1985 that the services performed in relation to food inspection, in some cases, were overlapping. In response to these problems, the task force recommended the development of a single integrated food inspection agency under Health Canada (Canada 1986). The creation of a single food inspection agency was seen as an effective response to the inefficiencies, or the lack of coordination and accountability that had been identified through the analyses of the food inspection system. However, this proposal was not met with widespread support, and the question of departmental mandates and reporting structure appeared to hinder the implementation of such an agency in the short term.

Instead, in 1986 the government directed the ministers of Health Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Fisheries and Ocean Canada, and Industry Canada to pursue a more integrated approach to federal and provincial food safety policies. Health Canada was assigned the role of key actor and coordinator in this process. For this purpose, the cabinet decided to establish an Interdepartmental Committee on Food Regulation (ICFR) that would be chaired by the Deputy Health Minister. The Deputy Ministers from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Fisheries and Ocean Canada, and Industry Canada were included as members of this group. This solution was based on the acknowledgment that different departments and levels of government had valid responsibilities in relation to the crosscutting issue of food safety and inspection.

Despite the efforts of the ICFR to improve the coordination of Canadian food inspection activities amongst the federal departments and with the provinces and municipalities, the Auditor General concluded in 1994 that the mandate of the ICFR remained unfulfilled (Canada 1994). The Auditor General identified long-standing problems with the food inspection system. It was concluded that inspection coverage was unclear, that targets for inspection frequency were not being met, and that the ICFR had not achieved its assigned task of promoting innovation and efficiency in food inspection. Although all involved

departments and the ICFR were said to have been individually and collectively responsible for these deficiencies, the Auditor General report was particularly critical towards the roles of the ICFR and Health Canada.

The need to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the food inspection system was given substantial attention in the federal government's Program Review initiative of 1994. This was followed up in 1995 when the Office of Food Inspection Services (OFIS) was set up in order to study different options for improving the Canadian food inspection system. After wide scale consultation with stakeholders on appropriate organizational forms, the federal Finance Minister announced in the 1996 budget speech that all federally-mandated food inspection and animal and plant health services would be consolidated into a single food inspection agency. This announcement was made under the headline of: "A Focused, More Affordable Government" (Canada 1996: 9). According to the Finance Minister, the new food inspection agency would: "...consolidate the activities currently spread around several federal departments. This in turn will allow us to offer a new partnership with the provinces, which would lead to a more efficient, joint food inspection system" (Canada 1996, 9). The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) began its operations in April 1997. Although food inspection still is a shared responsibility in Canada, the establishment of the CFIA implied that the federal level and sector interests related to agriculture became more central along the vertical and horizontal dimensions respectively.

Horizontally, the establishment of the CFIA implied that the administrative responsibility for food inspection became more concentrated. The creation of this specialized agency brought together inspection and related services that had been previously provided by four different federal departments. An alternative organizational option that was considered by the OFIS prior to the establishment of the CFIA was to strengthen the Interdepartmental Committee on Food Regulation (ICFR) that was chaired by the Deputy Health Minister (Canada 1995). However, there was little support for this option, and the CFIA replaced this larger government structure. Despite this, the CFIA retains important working relations with several federal departments, the two most important being Agriculture and Agri-Food

Canada and Health Canada. The CFIA is accountable to Parliament through the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, while the Minister of Health is responsible for establishing policies and standards relating to the safety and nutritional quality of food sold in Canada, as well as assessing the effectiveness of the CFIA's activities related to food safety. Food safety therefore remains a shared responsibility in Canada, with a more pronounced separation between policy and enforcement functions (Prince 2000).

This dual relationship with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Health Canada is clearly reflected in CFIA's mission statement: "Our Mission: Safe food, Market access and Consumer protection" (CFIA 1998). In fulfilling these missions, the CFIA set out to reconcile the core health objectives of Health Canada, as well as important trade objectives usually associated with the activities of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Facilitating trade in food, animals, and plants, and their products was clearly identified as one of three key objectives in the first Annual Report presented by the CFIA (CFIA 1998). It had from the start been decided that the CFIA should benefit from the close relationship between the AAFC and the food industry, and the wide scale consultation with the food industry on the establishment of the CFIA was motivated by the need to secure industry's support for greater use of user fees in order to recover inspection costs (Skogstad 1998). This strong emphasis on trade objectives may also provide further understandings of the vertical developments.

Canadian food inspection responsibilities are shared between municipalities, provinces, and the federal level. It is estimated that there are about 77 pieces of legislation governing food inspection amongst the three levels of governments (Moore and Skogstad 1998). Although the CFIA is a federal institution, the establishment of this agency had broad support amongst the provinces (CFIS 1997). The CFIA is mandated to work closely with municipal and provincial/territorial governments in order to develop a more integrated food inspection system. Under section 20 of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act, the CFIA has the authority to enter into agreements with provincial governments for the provision of services or for the carrying out of activities within the responsibility of the agency. Many

agreements with provinces have been signed over the years in order to eliminate overlap and duplication.

The process of improving the cooperation and coordination of food safety initiatives across all levels of governance has a long history in Canada. The process picked up speed in 1994 when the federal, provincial, and territorial agricultural ministers endorsed a Blueprint for the Canadian Food Inspection System (CFIS). This document outlined a vision of an integrated food inspection system. The benefits of this new system were summarized as the streamlining of inspection delivery, enhanced market performance and competitiveness, reduction of trade barriers and regulatory pressures on the industry, facilitation of the harmonization process, and an inspection system with the capacity to be flexible, responsive, and timely (CFIS 1995). The Blueprint was subsequently supported by the federal, provincial, and territorial health ministers, and a Canadian Food Inspection System Implementation Group (CFISIG) was set up to implement the measure proposed in the Blueprint.

The CFIS was originally set up to rationalize services by eliminating gaps, overlaps, and duplication between different levels of government. However, as Skogstad and Moore (1998) emphasize, this focus seemed to change after the near victory of Quebec separatists in the October 1995 referendum. This event brought the goals of national unity and renewed federalism to the forefront. Instead of allocating different services to different levels of government, federal-provincial partnerships “where neither government is the senior partner” became priority (Skogstad and Moore 1998, 128). Prime Minister Jean Cr tien referred directly to this new partnership model in the area of food safety:

“Now I know the idea of a national food inspection system does not exactly get your heart beating faster. True, it won't be the magic solution to national unity. It may not be glamorous, but it can be a modest part and a good example of the much larger job of modernizing federalism.

The provincial Ministers of Agriculture recently expressed an interest in proceeding with a national food inspection system”.<sup>2</sup>

Along the vertical dimension, the CFIS is built on a partnership model, where various levels of government co-operate and coordinate their actions. However, even if the CFIA is only one among several partners in the CFIS, the CFIA has a very central role. The CFIS Secretariat is made up of one representative from CFIA and one from Health Canada. Further, the CFIA co-chairs the CFISIG. This central position must be seen in relation to the fact that the CFIA not only is responsible for negotiating federal-provincial agreements, but also involved, either alone or as a part of larger delegations, in negotiating international food inspection agreements. Growing internationalization and increased emphasis on trade objectives have, therefore, contributed to strengthening the role of the federal level of food inspection. The CFIA was seen as a way of strengthening the national profile: “The role of government is absolutely critical to food inspection in terms of food safety and also in terms of the Canada-approved, Canada-certified, Canada-inspected product for trade purposes” (Doering 1996). In order to achieve this, the CFIA participates and represents Canada in a number of international agreements and arrangements. For instance, the CFIA lead Canada’s participation in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) committees. Concerning the relationship with the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the CFIA co-leads Canada’s participation with Health Canada. Although the federal level has become more central due to growing internationalization, successful partnerships between federal, provincial and municipal services have been formed in Canada in order to develop an integrated food safety and inspection system.

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<sup>2</sup> Former Prime Minister Jean Cr tien, Speech at the Luncheon hosted by the Ottawa-Carleton Economic Development Corporation and Le Regroupement des gens d'affaires, June 18, 1996 ([http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=pmarchive&Sub=Speeches&Doc=speeches1996061813\\_e.htm](http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&Page=pmarchive&Sub=Speeches&Doc=speeches1996061813_e.htm)).

#### **4. The EU Food and Veterinary Office (FVO)**

The first EU Food Directive, which was concerned with colours in foodstuffs, was adopted by the Council of Ministers in 1962 (O'Rourke 1998). Until the 1980's, EU food law was developed in a piecemeal fashion, and the result was an inconsistent and fragmented framework for food regulation and control characterized by different national traditions of member states as well as by the different policy areas (trade, industry, agriculture, etc.) to which they were linked (Ugland and Veggeland 2005a). Furthermore, the member states retained much of the competence for food legislation in general and for food control in particular.

Following a number of court cases, of which the Cassis de Dijon case from 1978 is the most famous, the EU attempted to reorient its approach to food law during the mid 1980s (Joerges and Neyer 1997). This reorientation was linked to the completion of the internal market (Egan 2001). According to the new approach, the essential requirement of promoting and protecting public health was to be central. In connection with the re-orientation of EU food law and the completion of the internal market, new Directives were adopted on additives, labelling, hygiene, and official controls (O'Rourke 1998). The two most important directives regarding food and veterinary controls were Council Directive 89/397/EEC of 14 June 1989 on the official control of foodstuffs and Council Directive 89/662/EEC of 11 December 1989 concerning veterinary checks in intra-Community trade with a view to the completion of the internal market. These directives regulated food and veterinary control and inspection in member states, involved a harmonization of national controls, and arranged for coordinated inspection programs at the Community level. Furthermore, the completion of the internal market involved a removal of veterinary border controls between EU member states, and a strengthening of such control towards third countries. This meant that it was of even greater importance to ensure that EU-wide rules and standards for food production were followed within the internal market.

The internal market objective of facilitating trade by removing trade barriers created “spill-over” effects and “pushed” the EU to speed up the work on harmonizing national food safety policies and inspection systems. Furthermore, a strengthening of the food inspection functions at the EU-level was needed. This illustrates the dual objective of trade facilitation and health protection inherent in the EU’s food regulation and control. The ambition to establish a new and more integrated food safety policy framework was clearly expressed within the EU in connection with the single market initiative. Despite this, the responsibility for managing food safety and public health policies remained dispersed across several different administrative units in the Commission, the most important being DG III (Industry), DG V (Social Affairs) and DG VI (Agriculture) (Ugland and Veggeland 2005b).

In 1991 the Office of Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspection and Control (OVPIC) was created within the Directorate-General (DG) for Agriculture in the European Commission. OVPIC was set up by combining an existing small veterinary inspection service, which had been created in the mid 1980’s, with a secondary legislation unit (Chambers 1999, 103; Kelemen 2004, 134). OVPIC gained considerable inspection powers and it was empowered to conduct inspections of food production and processing facilities in a range of areas. In addition, the EU enacted legislation giving the Commission the responsibility to evaluate member states’ general systems of food safety control. However, a limited number of staff and resources (approximately 10-15 inspectors in the period 1990-1994) significantly restricted the scope of its activities (Kelemen 2004, 136). In fact, it was estimated that 100 inspectors were necessary to carry out the tasks assigned to OVPIC at that time (Chambers 1999, 104). Thus, the Office was not able to cover all areas that fell within its mandate and was forced to confine itself to meat safety.

The Commission was not satisfied with the performance of OVPIC, mainly because of the problems inherent in attracting sufficient resources and staffing. Thus, with the aim of strengthening the EU’s food inspection service, the Commission put forward a proposal to

the Council on transforming OVPIC into an independent European agency with its own source of funding (Kelemen 2004, 136). However, the Council did not follow up on the proposal, and it seemed difficult to bring food safety regulation and control to the top of the EU agenda. This situation changed dramatically in March 1996 when the British government announced a probable link between Mad Cow Disease (BSE) and human health (Vos 2000). This announcement was followed by a massive critique, particularly directed towards the U.K. government and the European Commission's handling of the BSE problem since the mid-1980s (European Parliament 1997). The BSE crisis triggered several reforms of the EU's food safety regulation in general and in the food inspection system in particular.

In terms of the horizontal dimension, the OVPIC was in 1997 reformed into a new unit, the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO). The FVO was then transferred from DG Agriculture to DG XXIV and physically moved to new locations in Ireland. DG XXIV was subsequently renamed DG Consumer Policy and Consumer Health Protection (today: DG SANCO or DG Health and Consumer Protection); however, the secondary legislation unit, which was linked to OVPIC, remained in DG Agriculture. The main mission of the FVO is through its evaluations, to promote effective control systems in the food safety and quality, veterinary and plant health sectors; to check on compliance with the requirements of EU food safety and quality, veterinary, and plant health legislation within the European Union and in third countries exporting to the EU; to contribute to the development of EU policy in the food safety and quality, veterinary, and plant health sectors; and to inform stakeholders of the outcome of evaluations (FVO 2005).

In the aftermath of the BSE crisis, several other reforms were implemented that contributed to the strengthening of DG SANCO; thus, contributing to horizontal specialization of food safety regulation within the Commission. Among these were the transferring of the responsibility for food and veterinary committees, including the reformed scientific committees dealing with risk assessments, from DG VI and DG III to DG SANCO. A newly established Public Health Protection Unit was also placed under the responsibility of

the same DG. Personnel from DG VI and DG V were transferred to DG SANCO, which subsequently more than doubled its number of employees. Accordingly, the changes resulted in DG SANCO occupying a much more prominent position than it had before in terms of profile, staff, and financial resources. The food inspection service in particular was strengthened. The FVO received 35 new inspectors as a direct result of the report from the European Parliament on the maladministration in the implementation of Community law in relation to BSE (European Parliament 1997; European Commission 1997a). As of 2000, the FVO employed 92 inspectors and conducted hundreds of inspections annually (Kelemen 2004: 140). Since 1997, the FVO has grown significantly in size and has steadily expanded the scope of its activities and responsibilities (Consumer Voice 2002).

In 2002 a new agency, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), was established outside of the Commission structure. The EFSA has taken over the functions of the scientific committees and provides scientific advice through risk assessments and communication of existing and emerging risks. EFSA can be seen as a response to the need for separating scientific advice from regulatory activity. The risk assessments provide risk managers (i.e. European Commission, European Parliament, and Council) with a sound scientific basis for defining policy driven legislative or regulatory measures required to ensure a high level of consumer protection with regards to food safety (EFSA 2005). However, it is important to emphasise that national authorities continue to do risk assessments in many cases.

The BSE crisis, more than anything else, brought public health to the forefront of food inspection inasmuch as the crisis undermined the legitimacy of the old food safety regulation and inspection system that was linked to agriculture. The moving of the FVO from DG Agriculture to DG SANCO implies that food inspection functions are now linked more clearly to the health objectives that they are meant to fulfil. Thus, food inspection now takes place within a health-oriented organizational framework.

Vertically, DG SANCO is responsible for managing the food inspection service of the EU, as well as for coordinating national food inspection programs. The inspection service checks on member state compliance with EU requirements of food safety and quality and veterinary and plant health legislation. The EU has also decided that food legislation, to a larger extent, should be issued as regulations instead of directives, in order to avoid the problems of transposition of EU rules into national law (European Commission 1997b; 2000). For instance, both the new food law of the EU, which was adopted in 2002, and the European Commission's proposal on official feed and food controls from 2003, which was adopted in April 2004, were issued as regulations (European Commission 2003; European Communities 2002; 2004). As a result of these developments, national governments have less room for manoeuvre with regard to how EU rules should be implemented and enforced. In the mid-1990s the Commission introduced formal audit procedures in order to allow an assessment of the control systems operated by the national competent national authorities. Today, it is the FVO that is responsible for evaluating member states' general systems of food inspection and control. The new approach to food safety also implies that closer and more coherent inspections will be performed vertically all along the food chain: "from farm to fork" (European Communities 2002; 2004). The EU level now plays a more significant role in terms of food regulation and control as a result of these changes. Moreover, the establishment of EFSA signifies a step in the same direction. The agency has obtained more or less exclusive responsibility for performing risk assessments for the EU institutions.

The member states have less discretionary powers than before in terms of how their national food inspections and food safety systems are organized. These powers will be even further reduced when the new Regulation on official feed and food controls comes into effect on 1 January 2006 (European Communities 2004). This Regulation specifically focuses on enforcement measures and particularly on the imposition of sanctions at the national and Community level with regard to serious offences or negligence in following EU rules. It also contains new tools for the Commission to enforce the implementation of Community feed and food law by the Member States. This proposal fits well with the

process of Europeanization of food inspection that has been taking place since the early 1990's, resulting both in more competence being placed in the hands of the European Commission as well as an expansion of the coordinating and monitoring capacity and responsibility of the FVO. Despite this process of Europeanization, food safety continues to be a multi-level regulatory activity and co-operative arrangements between the European Commission and national administrations are still important in the area of food inspection. These co-operative arrangements are crucial for the establishment of an integrated food inspection system across levels.

## **5. Towards a More Integrated Food Inspection Systems in Canada and the EU?**

Food safety policies are integrated to the extent that they are coherent and inter-linked with the objective of ensuring safe food and protecting public health, and inasmuch as this objective penetrates all relevant policy sectors and all levels of government. To what extent are the food inspection systems in Canada and the EU positioned in relation to this objective?

Although the establishment of the CFIA implied that the responsibility of food inspection became more concentrated horizontally, as the delivery of all federal food, animal, and plant health inspection programs became consolidated in one specialized agency, the CFIA is problematic from a policy integration perspective where the health of the population is paramount. The mission of the CFIA contains a complex mix of health objectives and trade objectives related to the promotion of increased competitiveness and growth of the domestic food sector. Although the linkages between these objectives are obvious, i.e. safe food is good for business and trade, this double mission constitutes an important source of inconsistency in the federal approach to food safety and inspection. Activities undertaken to facilitate market access for Canadian producers are not always linked with the overriding health objective. In terms of structural connectedness, although Health Canada has retained the responsibility for establishing policies and standards in the area of food safety, these

tasks cannot be seen in complete isolation from the activities of the CFIA. The often blurred distinction between policy and operations is important here, as standard setting and enforcement activities often are related. After HC's inspection responsibilities and food inspectors were transferred to CFIA, HC sets policies and standards in isolation from the practical field related to the inspection activities. This separation of policy and operational responsibilities can be problematic. As one informant put it; "Food inspection was the knowledge base for the food safety regulators, and HC is now, to an increasing degree, setting policy standards without knowing exactly what the risks are and whether they will be complied with".

In terms of horizontal integration, the Canadian food inspection system is loosely integrated around the overriding food safety objective of protecting the health of the population. In the absence of any major domestic food safety crisis, the establishment of the CFIA was significantly motivated by trade considerations and sector interests related to agriculture. This may explain the sources of inconsistencies that were observed in the mission statement and the key objectives adopted by the CFIA, as well as why it was decided that the agency should report to Parliament through the Minister of Agriculture.

The situation was different in Europe. The European Commission's proposals on establishing a food inspection agency outside the Commission structure and creating a DG (DG SANCO) based on "pure" consumer health objectives were primarily triggered by the breakdown of the old system, which had both caused and failed to respond appropriately to the BSE crisis. The major crisis in food safety created opportunities for the Commission to implement comprehensive reforms, and to attract more resources and staff to the food inspection service. The crisis also made some of the reforms more or less imperative, i.e. moving responsibility for food inspections away from DG Agriculture. This shift in priorities is reflected in the speech to the European Parliament by the then President of the Commission, Jacques Santer, on February 18th 1997 in response to the European Parliament's report on BSE (European Commission 1997b):

*Did the Commission put the market before public health? With the benefit of what we know today, the attitude adopted at the time is open to criticism. But it must also be admitted that the question was not put then in such straightforward terms: the market or health... It is my belief that the time has come to put health to the fore in Europe”*

As a direct response to the BSE crisis, sources of inconsistencies in European food safety and inspection systems were eliminated. Responsibilities were transferred away from sector interests related to agriculture, fisheries, and industry, and the approach to food safety and inspection became more coherent, causally linked, and structurally coordinated around the health objective. This reorientation constitutes a sound basis for the project of integrating food safety objectives across all relevant policy sectors (Ugland and Veggeland 2005a). In Canada, the potential inconsistencies between health and trade considerations described in this article may, on the other hand, impede the attainment of the goal of integrating food safety objectives across different policy sectors.

Although the federal level has become more significant in ensuring safe food due to the growing internationalization and the need to present a coherent image externally, the Canadian inspection system is based on a successful partnership across levels. The provinces have recognized the legitimacy of the federal government’s role in food inspection, and a partnership model, where the federal level, represented by the CFIA as the central coordinator, has emerged.

The same trend can be identified in Europe. Since the 1980’s there has been an ongoing process, leading to strengthened and more comprehensive food safety and inspection authorities at the EU level. Further, legislative power regarding food safety measures has been delegated from the member states thus contributing to moving decision-making processes to the EU-level. However, despite the fact that more resources, personnel and regulative responsibility have been allocated to the EU level, co-operative arrangements between national and EU administrations have also been established. The FVO and national

inspection agencies work together in monitoring and enforcing EU rules. These co-operative arrangements have resulted in a new type of governance structures that crosscut levels of government and traditional hierarchies. All in all, both the Canadian and EU food inspection systems seem today well positioned in relation to the objective of establishing a consistent, interdependent, and structural connected approach to food safety and inspection across levels.

## **6. Conclusion**

Both Canadian and EU food safety policies are based on what is referred to as integrated approaches. This article took a closer look at *how* these concepts and objectives had played out in the area of food inspection. The analyses of the food inspection reforms in Canada and the EU reflect important similarities, as well as differences. Food inspection has become more horizontally specialized in both entities, but from a policy integration perspective, the process reflects some significant differences. In Canada, sector interests related to agriculture has become more central through the establishment of the CFIA, which reports to Parliament through the Minister of Agriculture. In the EU, food inspection responsibilities have systematically been transferred away from agriculture to the health and consumer protection sector. In order to understand these differences, the importance of context has been highlighted. In Canada, a focus on federal deficit reduction and economic objectives led to the establishment of an increasingly commercial and market oriented food inspection system. What has happened in the EU is therefore more in line with the policy integration framework where administrative authorities and responsibilities over food inspection have been transferred from “narrow” sector agencies that promote market objectives related to trade in agricultural products, to one, which reflects the crosscutting, and broader health objectives that they are meant to fulfil. These reforms were motivated by a major crisis in food safety (BSE) with clear links to public health, and they were pushed forward by the European Parliament and the European Commission, who had

shared interests in increasing and strengthening the competence of the EU institutions in this area.

Along the vertical dimension, the Canadian and EU reforms go in the same direction. We find that the challenges of the global economy that confronts this issue (international food trade and food crisis) have been important motivating factors for the creation of a more integrated and coordinated food inspection system through the development of stronger policy and program coordination capacities at the centre (federal level in Canada and at the EU level).

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