



Red Tractor Farm Assurance Crops and Sugar Beet Scheme: ~ Explanation of main features of scheme operation ~

Background

The Red Tractor Crops and Sugar Beet Scheme is one of the schemes operated as an industry self-regulatory initiative owned by Assured Food Standards. AFS operates independently and on a not-for profit basis.

The crops and sugar beet standards have been developed over the years to address new legislative requirements, scientific evidence relating to food safety, industry best practice, and consumer concerns.

The primary objectives of the scheme are:

1. Food safety
2. Environmental protection
3. Traceability

Although the scheme is voluntary, farm assurance is a pre-requisite for the majority of users of UK crops and there is coverage of over 85% of traded crops, by over 16,000 members across England and Wales under the Red Tractor Crops and Sugar Beet Scheme.

Every member is inspected each year against the standards with an on farm audit of farm premises and records. These on farm inspections are carried out by independent certified bodies¹. All new members are required to undergo this independent audit before being able to market crops as assured². The audits and certification is to EN 45011 and the certified bodies carrying out the inspections are required to have UKAS accreditation.

The Standards

The current scheme is the version dated October 2011 and can be found on the [Red Tractor website](#)

The scheme standards are in addition to all existing statutory requirements and members are required to comply with all legislation relevant to the scope of the scheme at all times.

Any false or misleading statement made on the application form, during assessments or in any other communication may lead to suspension or withdrawal of certification³. Members are also required to notify their certification body of any prosecution brought or likely to be brought against them with respect to any issues covered within the standards⁴.

Scope of the scheme

The Red Tractor Crops and Sugar Beet Scheme is available for farmers and growers within the United Kingdom and is through a voluntary membership. Members pay a

¹ Red Tractor Farm Assurance, Crops and Sugar Beet Scheme standards p5

² Red Tractor Farm Assurance, Crops and Sugar Beet Scheme standards p5

³ Red Tractor Farm Assurance, Crops and Sugar Beet Standards p6

⁴ Red Tractor Farm Assurance, Crops and Sugar Beet Standards p10



fee based on their farm holding area. The vast majority of members are within England and Wales.

All growers who are part of the Red Tractor Crops and Sugar Beet Scheme are identifiable through their assurance number. Assurance status can be found through the online member checker database, through the documents kept on farm and by the grain passport with the members identifying sticker.

Verification and auditing

The Red Tractor Crops and Sugar Beet Scheme is operated to EN45011. The certification bodies are regularly assessed and accredited by the national body, United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS).

Farm/member audits for the Red Tractor Crops and Sugar Beet Scheme are currently carried out by three certifying bodies

1. NSF-CMi Certification
2. SAI Global
3. Product Authentication International (PAI) Food Standards

Assessors training

Assessors are required to meet qualifying criteria drawn up by the Red Tractor Crops and Sugar Beet Scheme sector board and are required to be fully trained for the purpose of assessing the Red Tractor schemes in addition to meeting the rigorous additional in-house training for all EN45011 inspectors

- Initial training includes: Two day NPTC course including a dummy assessment; shadow experience assessor for two full audits; carry out two audits with an experience assessor. Following sign off they will then carry out two or three audits before another shadow audit.
- Ongoing training is carried out by the certifying bodies, with AFS staff or other experts in attendance at some of the training sessions. There is an annual training session which includes any updates or revisions of the standards.

Standards audits

Every farmer member of the assurance schemes is required to undergo a full inspection of both farm facilities and buildings and relevant records every year.

For new members the inspection is carried out before the first harvest under the scheme and passports stickers are not issued until full compliance is demonstrated by audit.

Integrity checks

In addition to training and audit quality required of the certifying bodies and assessors the integrity of the standards are also independently monitored.

- Spot checks are carried out on around 2% of members each year
- There is a method of reporting for any delivery point rejections and these are investigated and followed up by the appropriate certification bodies
- Post audit questionnaires are available for completion by members each year following the annual audit.
- Non conformances reported by certification bodies are also monitored by the Crops and Sugar Beet sector board to ensure consistency of inspection across the CBs and to identify any ambiguity or problems.



Traceability

The schemes have been developed specifically by UK industry to fit the structure of the UK agricultural industry, where around 90% of crops produced are stored on farm.

Farm storage records are required to be kept as part of the traceability requirements for the assurance scheme.

Members cannot market assured and non-assured grain from the same holding.

On loading of their grain or oilseed crops farmers are required to fill in a post-harvest declaration form to detail specifics about each load. A copy of these records is retained on farm and a copy is carried with the load, where it is received by the first intake point.

The post-harvest declaration form

A post-harvest declaration form is sent with each load delivered from farm. This is commonly known as a 'grain passport' document.

The form provides details of each load of grain including variety, name and address of producer, vehicle registration and trailer number. Farmers are also required to record the destination point on the form and keep relevant records on farm.

The post-harvest declaration form is a document that is modified on a regular basis, by agreement with the professional organisations within the supply chain. Such modifications are made to reflect differing needs of different supply chains. Standard statements and declarations are included each year without change, although the total passport may change in appearance.

The RED declaration, (section 8 on the Jan 2011 passport) will remain as a mandatory inclusion on the grain passport for any future iterations of the post-harvest declaration form in line with approval period under the Renewable Energy Directive Article 18 (4).

Section 8 Renewable Energy Directive (confirmation to be completed by grower/store keeper)

This load has been grown on land which meets the requirements of the Renewable Energy Directive Sustainability Criteria

Signed:..... Date.....

Producers are required to sign the grain passport statement to indicate compliance with the provisions on land use sustainability where applicable.

Membership identification sticker

A completed post-harvest declaration form is in itself insufficient to demonstrate assured status. To be recognised as originating from an assured holding it must be completed by inclusion of the relevant valid membership sticker.

This sticker shows the unique membership number, scope and membership expiry date.



These assurance stickers relate to the current assurance status of the farm and are only issued on renewal of annual membership to cover that annual assurance year. If a member is suspended for failing to meet the scheme standards at audit then the assurance status changes to 'suspended' and this is notified by the online member checker database.

Online member checker database

AFS operate an online member checker which is used by traders and processors to identify the assurance certification status of red tractor scheme members. This can also be accessed at any time. A tracker service is also available to a subscriber which provides an alert system for use by the supply chain to identify immediately of any change to assurance status.

The database tracker and member checker are the definitive means of confirming assurance status and membership details at any given point.

The online member checker database system and tracker also identifies the compliance status for biofuel or bioliquid markets of Red Tractor Crops and Sugar Beet Scheme participants and this information is accessible to the supply chain.

Scheme compliance and membership status

Producers must comply with all the standards to gain or retain their certificates of assurance. Failure to renew or lapse of registration results in withdrawal of certification status. This is recorded immediately in the online member checker.

Where there are points identified within the annual audit on which the standards are not met there are two procedures:

1. **Minor non-compliance:** If the points identified are of a minor nature and they can be put right relatively quickly, the producer concerned will not lose certification, members are allowed a rectification period of 28 days before his certification status changes to 'suspended'. (Common example is not having a copy of a required regulation booklet available at the audit)
2. **Major non-compliance:** Where the points identified are significant, or are a major non-compliance the farm assurance certificate will be suspended until the business has rectified them. If the identified issues are not corrected in a reasonable time then the certificate can be withdrawn completely.