



Red Tractor Farm Assurance Crops and Sugar Beet Scheme

Audit/Assessment process

All the members of the Scheme are inspected annually to ensure that they are compliant with the standards. The assessors work for certification bodies – specialist organisations commissioned by Red Tractor assurance to provide an inspection and certification service to farmers and other businesses. We insist that inspectors are properly trained and that all the certification bodies we use are fully accredited to do the job.

Red Tractor has elected to design its schemes around the international standard for product certification EN45011 (ISO Guide 65). This standard requires the certification bodies who inspect farms against our requirements to have the right expertise, operate impartially and be consistent. The certification bodies are regularly assessed and accredited against EN45011 by a national body, the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS).

Producers must comply with **all** the scheme standards to gain or retain their certificates of assurance. The assessor uses a checklist (see attachment) as an aide memoire and verifies compliance with every single standard at each annual assessment. Producers are required to provide the assessor with full access to all relevant parts of the farm, key members of staff and all relevant records/documents so that the assessment can be carried out. Producers are not permitted to unreasonably delay routine assessments. Any undue delay in allowing access results in suspension or withdrawal of certification. If the assessor cannot complete the assessment in full certification cannot be maintained, which may result in suspension of certification.

The assessor looks for objective evidence of compliance (as specified in the Assessor Guidance Notes accompanying the standards) and the assessment will normally take about 3- 4 hours (depending upon the size of the business). Confirmation of compliance may in some instances be undertaken via physical inspection and examination of farm facilities and equipment (e.g. pesticide store, grain store, spraying equipment etc). In other instances the assessor will undertake a detailed and in depth review of a sample of appropriate records to confirm compliance. For example, in order to verify compliance with Standard EI 1.2 the assessor is required to:-

“Check and record whether any crops have been produced on any land that had one of the specified statuses and has been converted to crop production in the previous 12 months”.

In the instance above, the assessor will therefore look at the cropping in the base period Jan 2008; compare with current cropping area and note whether any land that had a high biodiversity value, high carbon stock or was peatland has been converted to arable land and used to produce cereals or sugar beet. If any conversion has been undertaken he will then look at the grain passports/ storage records/haulage tickets etc., to verify that the total amount of crops supplied to the biofuels/bioliquids market did not include the volume produced on the converted land.

Some businesses pass the assessment with flying colours. In other cases the assessor might find some points on which the standards are not met, and these will have to be put right. If the shortcomings identified are of a minor nature and they can be put right relatively quickly, the producer concerned will not lose certification immediately but is given 28 days to rectify the issues. In each case the producer is required to provide specific objective evidence of compliance (e.g. copies of appropriate documentation, such as certificates/receipts or photographs etc). In some instances the assessor may insist upon a revisit to verify rectification. If the non conformances are not rectified within the specified time period the producer will be ‘suspended’ from the



scheme and unable to market his crops as 'assured'. If non conformances are not corrected in a reasonable time then the certificate can be withdrawn completely.