



## **Changes to the Red Tractor Farm Assurance schemes- FAQs**

# FAQs

## 1. What is changing?

A. We are bringing the core Red Tractor farm schemes much more closely in line across the six sectors; Beef & Lamb (ABM), Dairy (ADF), Fresh Produce (AP), Combinable Crops & Sugar Beet (ACCS), Pigs (ABP), Poultry (ACP).

## 2. Why have we done this?

A. All the schemes developed separately during the 1990s and there are differences in terminology, layout and content. The aim of the project is to bring them in line with one another.

## 3. What are the benefits?

A. The review of the standards addresses and brings in line these differences but retains the technical details appropriate to every commodity sector.

This will mean:

- Consistency between all the standards underpinning the Red Tractor logo
- Simplicity and efficiency for mixed enterprise producers.

## 4. What has been achieved?

A. We now have:

- A transparent joined-up approach to common issues such as food safety , traceability , animal health and welfare, and environmental protection
- Clarity of the shared values across all sector schemes
- Consistent rules and procedures as appropriate for all sectors
- A set of common core standards that apply across sectors
- The flexibility to add different levels of detail necessary to each sector

## 5. When will the new standards be implemented?

A. From 1st April 2010

## 6. Will the standards look different?

A. Yes. Current sector standards have different layouts with different terminology. Presentation will change to follow a common format even where the actual technical requirements of the standards do not change.

- The familiar scheme names will also change to 'Red Tractor Farm Assurance' followed by the name of the production sector.
- For the first time this will demonstrate that all the schemes come from the same AFS family.
- It will also make clear the link between farm assurance and consumer promotion of products through the Red Tractor logo.

## 7. Why now?

A. Promotion of assured food to consumers using the Red Tractor is getting an ever increasing profile and it's essential that we can be confident that all sectors standards include the same core values.

- The new standards coincide with our normal periodic review to take account of changes in the law, scientific evidence and market drivers.

## 8. What are the main changes?

A. Most obvious will be changes of presentation and layout.

- There will be changes to wording and terminology so that we have consistency in every sector.
- There will be a common way of highlighting the most important standards (most sectors have done this in the past but using different terms).
- Some standards, where appropriate, have been amended to iron out inconsistencies in the way issues are dealt with in different sectors.
- Standards have also been updated through the normal review process to consider, for example, changes to the law.
- We have provided significant additional helpful information for producers in the Appendices. All existing Appendices have been reviewed and updated and some new ones have been added. These, together with the standards, provide a detailed compendium of information for farmers.

## 9. How will the most important standards be highlighted?

A. All standards are important and must be complied with at all times. Some standards however are identified as '**Key**' standards (using the letter K next to the standard). Failure to comply with these could have a serious impact on food safety, animal welfare or environmental protection and therefore could result in certificates being suspended with immediate effect.

## 10. So what about the other standards?

A. Other standards must also be complied with at all times. If non-conformance is recorded by the farm assessor, the certificate will not, in most cases, be suspended provided it is corrected within the specified timeframe (see Q13).

## 11. What are 'Recommendations'?

A. In addition to standards, there are a small number of 'recommendations'. These have been used in the past by some of the sectors as a way of gradually introducing new requirements. These are assessed similarly to standards, however, if a producer does not comply with a 'recommendation' it will not affect certification. Producers should be aware that recommendations often become upgraded to standards at a later date. Recommendations are highlighted using the letter R next them.

## 12. What does non-conformance mean?

A. A non-conformance is when the assessor finds a standard is not being met. This is noted in a non-conformance report which is left with the farmer at the end of the assessment.

For "Key" standards the non-conformance can be graded either as "minor" or "major".

- A 'minor non-conformance' is when the assessor will see that the producer is aware of the requirements of the 'Key' standard and has attempted to comply with it, and has done so for the most part but with some small gaps.
- A 'Major' non-conformance will be recorded when there is a significant problem or complete disregard and no attempt has been made to comply with the standard.

Examples of major / minor: Storage of pesticides

Minor – no warning sign is displayed (28 days to correct)

Major – pesticides are found to be leaking and flowing into the drain or onto animal feed. (Immediate suspension – serious impact on food safety and environmental protection)

### **13. What are the specified timeframes for dealing with these non-conformances?**

**A.** Normally non-conformances should be dealt with within 28 days from the date of the assessment, although there will be provisions for this to be either shorter or longer depending on the specific circumstances. For example an extended period may be granted for significant construction work provided food safety or animal welfare is not put at undue risk in the intervening period. The Certification Body will consider the facts and make the decisions on a case by case basis in accordance with guidelines provided by the Red Tractor Scheme.

### **14. Have any of the timeframes for dealing with non-conformances changed?**

**A.** Yes. All farmers will now have to deal with non-conformances within exactly the same timeframes. This means a change for the Red Tractor dairy, poultry, pigs and crops farmers.

### **15. What changes have come because of inconsistencies between sector standards?**

**A.** The most important change has been around storage and use of pesticides. This is already tightly controlled in the crops and fresh produce sectors as usage of pesticides is normally part of the crop production process. The livestock sectors to date have not focused on this area as pesticide usage on livestock farms was not considered a significant part of the animal production system. In light of current legal requirements and proposed new regulations from the EU, we have included some additional measures in the livestock sectors. These include:

- Recommended annual self checks of sprayers (NB – sprayer checks are likely to be covered by legislation in future)
- Spraying records (as required by current legislation)
- Necessary certificates of competence for spraying (as required by current legislation)
- Standards for safe storage and disposal of chemicals – to be more consistent across all sectors

### **16. Are there any changes to the rules for dairy beef?**

**A.** Yes. To address the anomalies arising from the age-restrictions of the current arrangements and to simplify the verification arrangements at markets and abattoirs, the current ADF (NDFAS) dairy-beef arrangement is being phased out to be replaced with a requirement for all producers to have an integrated dairy and beef scheme assessment (unless beef assurance is already in place with another certification provider). As such, all cattle on a dairy farm will be included in the scope of the assessment and they will receive a beef certificate that will allow all cattle from a dairy farm, irrespective of age or breed, to be marketed as eligible for RT beef assuming residency requirements have been met. In the devolved regions, the relevant regional beef scheme shall apply. The exact operational details of this arrangement will be notified to producers via their milk purchaser and appointed Certification Body.

### **17. How will members know if a standard has changed?**

**A.** The Standards Manual for every sector will highlight to members whether standards are new or revised. In addition the sector newsletters, which will be sent to all members by the beginning of February, with their new Standards Manuals will summarise the changes for members so they know what they have to do differently to continue to meet the requirements of the scheme from 1 April 2010 onwards.

### **18. Are there any changes in time allowances for non-compliances?**

**A.** The time to rectify non-conformances will be consistent across all sectors, and this will normally be within 28 days of the assessment. For the beef and lamb and produce sectors this is unchanged but for the dairy, pigs, crops and chicken sectors the time allowed was longer and so they have been reduced to 28 days.

### **19. Where can I find more information?**

**A.** Go to [www.redtractor.org.uk/standards](http://www.redtractor.org.uk/standards)

## **20. How often will farms be assessed?**

**A.** Farms are assessed regularly. In most product sectors this means annually, but in those enterprises where livestock will generally be grazing for parts of the year – beef, lamb and dairy - we have a slightly longer interval between routine assessments. A visit at least every 18 months allows the assessors to see the operation of the farm in different seasons.

Applicable now to all sectors, this routine programme will be supplemented with some random spot checks. The farmer is advised that although his next routine assessment is not due for some months, he might be subject to a spot check at any time.

## **21. How often will mixed enterprise farms be assessed?**

**A.** If the mixture of enterprises includes some that require annual assessments and others with assessments every 18 months, Certification Bodies will plan their programmes to ensure that the appropriate assessment frequencies are maintained.

# OTHER RED TRACTOR TOPICS

## 1. Why is there a flag in the Red Tractor logo?

A. First and foremost the Red Tractor logo is about the high standards of production verified by the assurance inspections. The flag also provides an important indication of the origin of the food. It symbolises where the food was farmed, processed & packed.

## 2. Why is this necessary?

A. The signals gained from our research were that consumers were interested in the provenance of their food. Not only how it was produced, but also where it was produced. Whilst the legislation on origin labelling remains inconsistent and confused, the Red Tractor logo provides clarity.

## 3. How do you know the logo only appears on the correct products?

A. The Red Tractor logo can only be used to label ingredients from farmers, growers and food processors that have been inspected and certified to the standards. To make sure this happens, we only allow the use of the Red Tractor logo under licence.

- Our licensing applies to anyone in the food supply chain who puts the Red Tractor logo on a food product. This could be a salad grower who has their own packing operation on the farm, or a meat business that receives fresh, farm-assured meat from its suppliers for cutting and packing.
- In signing our licence agreement, packers undertake to only put the Red Tractor logo on products eligible to carry it. They also agree to some auditing that helps us to validate that they are using the logo appropriately. They must keep records of incoming raw materials and production batches to allow full traceability back to the farms of origin. They must also agree that AFS can visit their premises to examine these records and check their systems.
- Using this right of access, AFS manages a comprehensive inspection programme to underpin the integrity of the Red Tractor logo. This work is done for us by NSF-CMI Certification, SAI Global and the Scottish Agricultural College, all of which have particular skills in different industry sectors. In the interests of efficiency these three audit bodies are asked to combine, where possible, our Red Tractor traceability audits with other work they do at the same facility. When assigning Red Tractor audits we select the certification body that will be best able to combine its inspection with other work on the same site.