Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC)

Report on Welfare implications of Farm Assurance October 2014
The Red Tractor scheme welcomed the fact that FAWC’s report generally supports a position that assurance schemes have a positive influence on farm animal welfare. It recognised that Red Tractor had made good progress in co-ordinating inspections for different farm enterprises, with other schemes and with regulatory inspections. And we welcomed the suggestion that trade buyers should use farm assurance as the basis for livestock products however marketed (fresh or frozen, recipe dishes, food service, public procurement etc.).

We also made a positive response to many of the recommendations in so far as they were directed at scheme operators.

- The new ‘Made with Red Tractor ..’ logo will allow assured ingredients to be highlighted on consumer labels even in products such as pies or recipe dishes where that ingredient is a relatively small proportion of the whole dish.
- Red Tractor has provided transparent scheme data and trends in its Annual Review for the past 3 years and has a commitment to continue to publish this information and will seek to expand it where this is practicable.
- Most importantly, Red Tractor adopted welfare outcome measures in both the pigs and dairy sector during 2013 and some measures, including indicators from observations in the abattoir, have been in place for broiler chickens for even longer.
- We pointed out that to ensure the competence and consistency of scheme assessors Red Tractor had voluntarily elected some 20 years ago to require Certification Bodies to be accredited by UKAS to the standard ISO17065
- Also that the skills and training of stockpersons had always been recognised as central to good welfare on farms. Systems have been enhanced over the years including the ground breaking poultry passport system.

We were a little surprised by the Committee’s recommendation that there might be an opportunity for new tiers of standards and for better consumer communications. Our perspective is that the UK market is well served by a wide spectrum of welfare options of which Red Tractor assured is just one, albeit representing the major volume in the fresh food market. We would also say that there has been and continues to be significant consumer communication on the topic. Indeed we would say that whilst the report’s grasp of the technical issues around farm animal welfare was reasonably strong, the analysis of the commercial drivers, both the demand side and the supply side, was rather less so.

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