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Red Tractor Assurance secures new five-year biofuels authorisation for combinable crops and sugar beet

The biofuels market for Red Tractor assured crops has been secured today with the news that the European Commission will continue to recognise the scheme under the Renewable Energy Directive.

Since 2012 compliance with Red Tractor standards has demonstrated the sustainability of British crops entering the European biofuels supply chain.

That assurance expired in August but the European Commission granted two short-term extensions to allow UK crops to continue to be eligible for the biofuels market while final checks were carried out ahead of a full re-authorisation.

This new recognition will run until 2023, regardless of any negotiations or new policy structures which are formed as part of the UK's exit from the European Union.

"I'm delighted that we have now got our full five-year renewal," said Red Tractor chief executive Jim Moseley.

"It's taken a huge amount of technical work to get to this stage but we now have that confirmation from the European Commission.

"What this means for farmers is that for the next five years they have free market access to the biofuel market and there is no additional cost or assessment required for Red Tractor assured farms."

Red Tractor has 16,500 members within its combinable crops and sugar beet scheme who are able to continue to sell in to the biofuels as a result of the announcement.

Defra statistics show that there are about 70,000 hectares of crops grown annually for the biofuels market.

In advance of this deadline Red Tractor applied for continued recognition in the spring of 2017, however the Commission was unable to complete the approval process in time.

As a result Red Tractor was granted two extensions to ensure all crops could continue to be traded unhindered until full registration was confirmed.

A small change has been made to the Red Tractor standards which will only affect UK growers who have converted land to arable for the production of biofuels in the past 10 years.

A communication containing full details of the change has been sent to growers and will also be updated in the scheme's standards online.