



Red Tractor Assurance

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Fresh produce growers issued with additional farm assurance water guidance

Red Tractor Assurance has issued additional guidance to help members of its fresh produce scheme meet a requirement to test water used in crop production.

The requirement to test against a water matrix was introduced as part of a review of the fresh produce scheme and farms have been assessed against the revised standard since last October.

Growers are required to test water in response to a risk assessment and in line with the water matrix.

Red Tractor has made amendments to the existing matrix, which is required under standard IG.b, which further clarifies what is required and ensures it is easier for growers to interpret.

Fresh produce technical manager Vicky Smith said: "Testing water used in crop production helps to ensure the safety of food produced on farm.

"The water matrix we have created is detailed but acts as a simple reference tool for growers which helps them determine what that means in terms of sampling.

"It also tells growers how frequently they must sample, which depends on what the source of the water is and which crops it is being applied to."

Water testing helps reduce the risk of a food safety issue, the cost of which could be enormous in terms of both the financial implications and the reputation of British food.

One of the most high-profile food scares in recent times was an outbreak of *E. coli* in German beansprouts.

It took more than eight weeks to find the cause of the contamination, with Spanish cucumbers originally being blamed.

Fepex, Spain's fruit and vegetable export body, said at the peak of the scare it was costing the industry £175m per week and scores of EU countries banned imports of the cucumbers, even though it was eventually proven that they were perfectly safe.

To further support growers, Red Tractor have produced a practical guide for how to take a water sample. The revised water matrix and the updated supporting materials can be found on the [Red Tractor Assurance website](#).

ENDS

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