



## PRESS RELEASE

### Red Tractor asks farmers to help shape future standards

The UK's leading farm assurance body, Red Tractor, is urging farmers to engage in a consultation on how its farm standards should evolve.

A consultation opened today with proposals put forward on how the standards should look across the scheme's six sectors: beef and lamb, poultry, pigs, dairy, fresh produce and combinable crops and sugar beet.

Red Tractor is seeking input from across the industry before finalising its proposition of what the schemes standards will be from November 2021.

The proposals have been developed over 12 months. At every step of the process, representatives from across the food chain – farming organisations, farmers, vets, processors and retailers – have been fully involved in drawing up the amendments.

Together they have studied consumer trends, reviewed the latest science and evidence, as well as benchmarked the scheme against competitors and industry best practice. The three-stage process of committee, consultation and consensus, adheres to gold standard recommendations of the British Standards Institute.

CEO Jim Moseley said: "We are a proven world leader in food chain assurance, but we cannot rest on our laurels.

"Red Tractor is recognised as a symbol of British food quality but to maintain this, our standards must continue to evolve with the times, to ensure they address changes in legislation, industry practice and reflect the emerging issues on shoppers' minds.

"At a time of ever-increasing scrutiny, preserving the public's trust in UK agriculture and the Red Tractor logo has never been more important.

"These proposals strive to strike a delicate balance which protects and promotes our members, reassures consumers and customers, while acknowledges the implications of the challenges that the industry faces with future trade deals and the agricultural transition plan."



The proposed amendments tabled by Red Tractor are primarily about streamlining, legislative compliance and responding to change. These include simplifying some of the requirements for farmers to drive greater understanding and compliance, and rationalising standards which are common across multiple sectors, providing improved clarity for both farmers and their assessors.

Red Tractor has also listened to British consumers and the recommendations made in a review of the scheme by Dr Jonathan Birnie in 2019, which identified limitations in the current standards around animal and worker welfare and environmental protection.

Examples of proposed changes in these areas include:

**Animal Welfare:** Having welfare outcomes linked to standards. This includes housing structure and cleanliness and making it absolutely clear what is and isn't acceptable when handling animals.

**Worker Welfare:** The Red Tractor strapline *Farmed With Care* includes care for the people on members' farms. UK agriculture's health and safety record is poor and farming is identified as an at-risk sector for labour exploitation. Building worker welfare into the standards ensure members are taking sensible steps to protect the safety and wellbeing of workers on farm.

**Environmental Protection:** The inclusion of the Farming Rules for Water, which are already legislation and aim to reduce soil erosion and nutrient run-off. The requirements have been adapted from the legal requirements to ensure they are meaningful and can be easily assessed.

The full list of proposed changes, supplementary documents on why Red Tractor has reached these decisions and on how to respond to the consultation can be found on the Red Tractor review hub at <https://assurance.redtractor.org.uk/>. The full consultation can be accessed at <https://redtractor.citizenspace.com>.

A short video explaining why Red Tractor needs input from the industry has also been created [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ik3ZECCDyb8&feature=em-share\\_video\\_user](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ik3ZECCDyb8&feature=em-share_video_user)

In addition to reviewing its standards, Red Tractor is also asking members and stakeholders for their views on what matters to them and their business.

Mr Moseley added: "Farmers have been an intrinsic part of the process in drawing up the proposed new standards, but now it is over to the membership and stakeholders to have their say.

"Red Tractor was created to become a symbol of trust, safety and responsible production. Twenty years on, our purpose remains the same and we are absolutely delivering on it.



“Millions of shoppers look for the Tractor when they are buying food and drink. And consumer trust has never been higher, making us the most trusted food marque in the UK.”

The consultation and review closes on 5 March 2021.

## **Proposed amendments to standards by sector**

### **Dairy**

#### **Animal husbandry**

Under the proposals from November 2021, tethering as a management practice would no longer be permitted. Husbandry procedures have also been separated into a standalone section for ease of navigation and to highlight the importance of this area.

#### **Animal medicines**

The change in standards would encompass wider coverage of the medicines used by dairy farmers in the annual review, rather than just antibiotics as it is currently. The consultation is asking for views on requiring the antibiotic collated data to be uploaded to an industry medicine hub in the future to help demonstrate that Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA) Targets Taskforce objectives are met.

#### **Animal welfare**

Welfare outcomes have been linked to standards. This includes housing structure and cleanliness. Red Tractor requirements around handling could be strengthened to make clear what is and isn't acceptable under the proposals.

### **Beef & lamb**

#### **Animal husbandry**

Under the proposals from November 2021, tethering as a management practice would no longer be permitted. Husbandry procedures have also been separated into a standalone section for ease of navigation and to highlight the importance of this area.

#### **Animal medicines**

Health planning could be strengthened to give members an insight into any issues at farm in a timely manner. Farmers would be asked to annually collate their total antibiotic use on the farm so that meaningful reviews can take place with their vet to reduce antibiotic use where appropriate. The consultation is asking for views on requiring the antibiotic collated data to be uploaded to an industry medicine hub in the future to help demonstrate that RUMA Targets Taskforce objectives are met. A proposed new standard is for at least one person who is responsible for administering medicines to have undertaken training and hold a certificate of attendance or competence.

#### **Animal health and welfare**



A requirement to be part of a disease eradication programme for Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) would be upgraded from a recommendation to a full standard in 2023. Red Tractor requirements around handling could be strengthened to make clear what is and isn't acceptable under the proposals.

## Pigs

### Statutory requirements

Red Tractor's new pig standards would mirror Defra's revised Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Pigs which covers requirements around tail docking, enrichment, accommodation and record keeping.

### Animal medicines

Red Tractor pig producers have made huge strides in recording antibiotic use in their herds, and the 2021 changes being proposed include developing the future Pig Health and Welfare Pathway and the next set of RUMA's Targets Taskforce targets for antimicrobial stewardship. The standards would support the pig sector as a whole to meet some of the objectives set out by these initiatives. There is a new draft standard requiring training in medicines and antimicrobial resistance, aligned to requirements in other Red Tractor farm schemes. A new standard requiring persistent high users of antibiotics to implement an antibiotic reduction plan has also been proposed.

### Animal welfare

The way producers move and handle pigs is crucial for both welfare and the industry's reputation. A new standard being consulted on would require all persons involved with pigs to undergo an online training course in handling provided by the AHDB. Additionally, Red Tractor's requirements around handling could also be strengthened to make it clear what is and isn't acceptable, under the proposals.

### Biosecurity

New standards have been drafted aimed at minimising the risk of disease spread between and within farms. Deadstock collection would have to be done at the perimeter of the farm and members would be required to sign up to the industry's Significant Diseases Charter, which aims to ensure rapid communication of disease outbreaks.

## Poultry

### Animal welfare

Across all poultry species, each crop would require the light intensity to be measured and recorded at bird-eye level to confirm that farms are meeting the standards. Lighting for ducks would be phased on and off over a 30-minute dawn-dusk period and there is a new recommendation for windows in all buildings which house ducks. It is proposed that only slower growing breeds can be used for free range chicken production to ensure that breeds are suitable for the method of production.



### **Biosecurity**

Standards are being revised and simplified to help with consistency and ease of auditing. Requirements have been grouped – for example site access for people, site access for vehicles, hand cleanliness and footwear.

### **Compliance and consistency**

Members will notice that all chicken enterprises are now grouped together, including the new enhanced welfare module. This would ensure that core requirements are standardised across all enterprises and species.

## **Fresh produce**

### **Structure**

Members will see a new framework to the standards. There will be 10 core sections which apply to all farms, five operational area-based modules (assessed only where relevant) and two crop-specific modules. There has also been a reworking of the produce handling and packhouse packing section to allow this to cover rig-based packing operations and streamline assessment where a valid BRC certificate is held.

### **Risk management**

Existing standards have been reviewed to take into account site risk assessments and post-harvest water management. Additions have been made to reflect new growing techniques and non-traditional cropping systems such as vertical farms and hydroponics.

### **Legal compliance**

There would be new standards for the management of nitrate concentration in crops where legal parameters apply and two new standards to cover post-harvest treatments in the post-CIPC era.

### **Food safety**

Several new standards are proposed to further strengthen food safety. They include daily start-up checks for harvest teams and two new standards concerning recirculation and re-use of post-harvest water.

## **Combinable crops and sugar beet**

### **Risk Assessment**

This would appear as a new section on the standards but brings together a number of existing requirements into one area for clarity.

### **Irrigation**

A number of revisions have been proposed, all with the aim of providing clarity on what is required where a member is irrigating crops.

### **Environment**



Some changes to the storage of plant protection products have been outlined based on best practice.

**ENDS**

### **Notes to Editors**

Red Tractor is the UK's largest food standards scheme, covering animal welfare, food safety, traceability and environmental protection.

Working with experts in the relevant fields, the programme ensures that families across Britain have access to safe, quality food that has been grown and reared in the UK to rigorous, certified farming standards.

Research conducted by YouGov has found that Red Tractor is the UK's most trusted food assurance scheme, with almost three-quarter of shoppers who are aware of the organisation citing it as an independent source they can trust. Seven out of ten primary shoppers state they are positively influenced by the Red Tractor on-pack, and nearly 45 per cent say they would trade up from a cheaper product to one which bears the logo.

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