



**SCOTTISH
QUALITY CROPS**

NEWS UPDATES

February 2024

SQC appoints a new Board Chair

Your SQC Board of Directors met recently for their annual AGM and first Board meeting of 2024. Fife arable farmer, John Hutcheson, has been appointed the new Chair of the Board alongside new Vice Chair Mark McCallum.

With John taking on the independent role of SQC Chair, we will shortly be welcoming a new SAOS representative to the SQC Board of Directors and further details on this will follow.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Chair, Andrew Moir, farmer and industry stalwart, who has steered the board for the last eight years. SQC has greatly valued Andrew's expertise and insights from working across the industry with NFUS, the Voluntary Initiative and other related posts, as well as his ground-up perspective as an arable farmer.

We would also like to congratulate Andrew on being awarded this year's Ed Rainy Brown Award from SAOS in recognition of his many years of co-operation and collaboration within the agricultural industry. It's very well deserved, and we wish him all the very best for the next chapter. Andrew has kindly written an article reflecting on his time as SQC Chair which we thought you'd enjoy and we have shared it with you here.

We will shortly be issuing another newsletter with an introduction from our new Chair, John Hutcheson. And, it will also include details and launch of a new document from SQC – the SQC Member Value Statement.

As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact FIA whose details are below, or email me at:

Teresa.dougall@scottishqualitycrops.co.uk



Teresa Dougall,
SQC Managing Director

Lets see the SQC logo on every whisky bottle

Arable farmer Andrew Moir reflects on his time as Chair of assurance body, Scottish Quality Crops (SQC), as he hands over the baton after eight years.

"A favourite saying of mine is that "time passes quickly when you are having fun" and I think all in the farming industry can relate to this because, with time, you tend to forget the difficult days and recall the positives – or at least that's my coping mechanism!

I can't quite believe that it's nine years ago that Douglas Morrison suggested I succeed him as Chair of Scotland's assurance body for crops, SQC. It was obviously a familiar organisation to me, but what I hadn't appreciated was that Douglas, as it transpired, had been doing all the Company Secretary/CEO/and Chair tasks at the same time as running his own business.

This was not a sustainable model, and, to my relief, a part-time Managing Director was appointed just prior to me starting in the Chair role. The 'part-time' aspect did give me some concern initially, but that reticence was soon to evaporate when the job went to Alistair Ewan, a highly

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competent, recently retired, MD with East of Scotland Growers.

Alistair's and my first mission, in early 2016, was to refresh the governance and strategy. Following an away day facilitated by SAOS, we focused on four key objectives which have been at the core of the board's focus since: building awareness of the SQC brand, supply chain leadership, managing big data and strategic alliances.

The cereal growing landscape has been reshaped in many ways over this time, and not just because of the weather. We've had to navigate losing free-flowing market access to the European Union; reduced chemistry; a growing zest for carbon, soil and farming more with the environment; and a greater need for traceability and, importantly, setting our cereals apart from the rest of the world.

It is with pride that, as I hand over the reins to John Hutcheson, a well-kent and experienced farmer and SQC board director, that we've strengthened these objectives set at the start, even if I didn't fulfil my own holy grail.

A long-held ambition of mine is seeing an SQC label on a bottle of whisky – I have not achieved that vision before I step down which disappoints me intensely, but I firmly believe that this is not far away now, as increasing demand from customers for provenance and the Scottish brand is now front and centre.

What has been achieved during my tenure, I heartily hope, however, will pave the way to Scotch Whisky produced solely with (quality assured) Scottish grains.

This last year, we have established a Scottish Crops Supply Chain Hub with representatives from across the sector to ensure our standards are relevant and necessary, and which is proving a valuable resource to anticipate market opportunities as well as challenges for our members.



Andrew Moir, former Chair of SQC

Millers and distillers have approached us to discuss taking the SQC brand and all it stands for to retail packaging, and SQC is regarded as a credible voice in industry debate.

The principal activity of SQC is the management of an effective and efficient assurance scheme for quality combinable crops, as well as promoting to both trade and consumer the benefits of the scheme. SQC is operated with a very low-cost business model – just one part-time employed, the Managing Director – and with a clear, singular focus on Scottish combinable crop growers.

With a board representing the interests of the whole supply chain, SQC has a long history of operating a successful Quality Assurance Scheme and this has been strengthened, over the years, by adopting a sensible pragmatic approach to assurance. This has given me a strong base on which to drive effectual management and governance of SQC to allow growers to effectively market their crops.

SQC changed from a company to a cooperative in 2020 ensuring that all assets were under stakeholder control. When Alistair retired in 2022, Teresa Dougall took the helm, and she has brought a wealth of customer-focused experience as well as a freshness and enthusiasm from which we are now reaping the rewards.

Her first significant task was to appoint a new certification body, Food Integrity Assurance (FIA). The tender process for a new certification body gave Teresa a unique insight and hands-on tiller experience giving her an in-depth knowledge of the business and how it runs.

The move to FIA has given our farmer members the security of knowing that, with SAOS as the parent to FIA, SQC's purpose would be retained for and within the industry.

I sometimes have growers articulating that they do not get proper recognition from the industry and indeed the general public for the work they do.

I can understand that as a farmer myself, and I always counter that by stating the benefits of a farm audit and membership of SQC.

It proves not only food safety assurance to our customers but strong environmental credentials with the completion of an IPM (Integrated Pest Management) plan and biodiversity audit, which, like it or not, is the way markets are moving.

Change, as in every walk of life, is inevitable and we either embrace it or see our businesses plateau and decline, and SQC is no different. Being a stakeholder owned co-op is our strength and, through this, we can continue to evolve a strong and fit-for-purpose scheme with the focus firmly on achieving the best possible result for Scottish growers.



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