



SCOTTISH QUALITY CROPS

SQC News Updates – 05 December 2022 - Issue 4

Welcome to the fourth edition of our news update – which we started back in May. This time we have an update from our new Certification Body, FIA, some news on an exciting new project around the future of fertilisers and an update from RSABI whom we joined as a supporter member. In addition, you'll find some key news on other work which we are undertaking on your behalf. 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

From us at SQC – we wish you all the best for the festive season and look forward to working with you in 2023.

Regards

Teresa Dougall, SQC Managing Director

Message from our Certification Body, FIA

FIA commenced their assessment and certification services in support of Scottish Quality Crops on 01 October, having conducted comprehensive training to over 22 assessors many of whom will be familiar to you and who are now conducting assessments against the SQC 2022 standards.

More than 100 assessments have been conducted to date - many of which have been provided as a joint combination with other schemes (such as Quality Meat Scotland Cattle & Sheep Scheme) to minimise the assessment burden on SQC members.

FIA will be monitoring assessment performance via our unique assessor monitoring program to ensure all assessments are delivered in a competent and consistent manner to support the integrity of the SQC Brand. Any challenges facing assessors will be discussed via a newly formed Assessor Consultation Group to ensure SQC have a full appreciation of the assessment process and identify opportunities for this process to be enhanced - in particular the introduction of technology to reduce the burden on members whilst enhancing the value of data provided to SQC and its members.

SQC renewals are now underway with the process being managed under contract by FIA. We are aware that a recent technical issue connected to the collection of Direct Debit (DD) mandates has created a delay in processing this payment type. If you do pay by DD, you will have recently

received communication that, unless you have decided to pay by another means, your DD will be re-presented on 05 December for the fee noted in your renewal notice. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused and should you have any questions the FIA Team will be happy to assist.

2023 will be upon us soon and the whole FIA Team wish you all the very best for the festive season and the New Year.

FIA can be contacted on:

Telephone: 0131 609 0558 Email: info@foodassurance.co.uk

Website: <https://www.sqcrops.co.uk/> (where you will find an enquiry form) or
<https://foodintegrityassurance.co.uk/>

New project looks at fertiliser for the future

Farmers often feel like they are squeezed from all sides, and SQC are working on your behalf to ease the pressure. On the inputs side, fertiliser is still expensive, and with no end in sight for the war in Ukraine, it looks like this will be the new normal for a while. On the market side there is more and more talk of sustainability credentials. So, what can be done to relieve the pressure?

We are delighted to announce our involvement in a new project, working with NFUS, the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA), SAOS, and SAC Consulting, to look at the issue of organic manures on land used to grow malting barley.

Work will be carried out with distillers to identify and understand their views, and some of the barriers, to farmers using different types of organic manures. Work will then be done to see how, or if, these barriers can be overcome. There are potential benefits from both a climate and business point of view to reducing bagged fertiliser, and the project will try and quantify what they are.

Getting to Net Zero will not be easy, and the whole supply chain will need to work together to figure out how. The project is being funded by the Scotch Whisky Association and the Scotland Food & Drink Partnership. It has just kicked off and will be completed by summer 2023.

SQC will sit on the project board along with SWA and NFU Scotland, giving the project oversight from right across the supply chain. The SQC standards can give assurance to the supply chain, and we hope this project's findings will feed into our standards, to ease the pressure for our farmer members.

SQC Website – we're almost there!

So, further to earlier news on this – the website is just about there! We've added some new 'tools' to help you navigate the process of the SQC crop assurance scheme.

Once complete, you'll find the following:

- New link to all SQC documents, making it much easier to find what you are looking for – including Scheme Standards and farm documents to help when preparing for your assessment
- A separate header containing all information on the Renewable Energy Directive (RED II)
- A new section for SQC news and news updates – where we also hope to start adding blogs
- A section on RSABI containing updates, key info, contact details and a link to their website
- And, further to feedback from yourselves, we are currently working to provide 'technical guidance' to the SQC standards. E.g. many have asked "what are Mass Balance Sheets and why do we need them?". So, we're working to produce simple explanations and the Mass Balance Sheets info will also contain worked examples – to show you how to fill them in

So, please do familiarise yourself with it and if you have any suggestions on improvements, we would love to hear from you.

To view the new look website, click [here](#).

SQC on social media

And, we are now live on Twitter! To help share what we are doing, we have set up a new Twitter page. Go on, give it a 'like' and a 'share' - @ScotQualCrops or click [here](#) for instant access.

New SQC strategy hub – working on your behalf

Work is now underway to produce the Terms of Reference for the new Scottish Crop Supply Chain Strategy Hub. This will be an industry / supply chain / expertise and technical hub who will act as a sounding board for SQC – and to enable ongoing review and benchmarking of our Standards (away from the traditional annual review). This should also ensure greater transparency within our processes (especially around the setting of standards) for members, stakeholders and partners. It is hoped that the group will be formed in January.

Co-ops – working together across the industry

Did you know that SQC became a Co-operative in December 2020? And, SQC are also a member of SAOS who were established in 1905 to strengthen the profitability and effectiveness of

Scotland's farming and rural businesses through co-operation. SAOS are classed as Scotland's experts on farmer co-ops and food industry collaboration, providing a range of specialist information, development and consultative services. As part of this, I recently attended a 2 day course focussed on Co-op Management in Practice.

In addition, for you, our growers, this structure can bring the following benefits including:

- SQC is a cooperative formed of farming and associated industry partners. The current members are NFUS, SAOS, Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC), Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), Scotch Whisky Association (SWA), Maltsters Association of Great Britain (MAGB) and the Association of British Millers. This gives us access to fantastic experience and expertise and all are represented on the SQC Board of Directors.
- Our new Certification Body, FIA, was established by SAOS to provide independent certification and verification services to support the Scottish food sector. Their aim is to work more closely with scheme owners and producers on quality assurance. FIA were set up by the industry, for the industry, leading to greater collaboration and co-operation.
- Co-ops are based on self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, honesty, integrity, social responsibility and care for the community (in which they work). So, we are working to help you!

New SQC Assessor Consultation Group – it's good to talk

And, not only are we looking for greater co-operation and collaboration with partners but we are looking to increase engagement with the assessors who are out on farm undertaking the assessments on our behalf. The group are due to meet for the first time on 7 December and I will attend all meetings to provide updates on the work of SQC, gathering info on what more SQC and FIA can do to enable more effective assessments and to generally discuss what is 'happening out there on the ground'.

And, other industry news.....

- **NRoSO – change of contracted supplier update**

SQC and Red Tractor met with the Voluntary Initiative (VI) to discuss the potential implications (and issues) around the change in contracted supplier for the NRoSO training course. The VI have produced a four page document which covers questions on membership, payments, training points, data sharing and your annual training event. Click [here](#) to access the document. We await word back from the VI on a few key areas and I will keep you informed as discussions progress.

- **Digital Grain Passports (DGP)**

SQC attended the AHDB Cereals Liaison Group meeting on 17 November in London where discussions continued on the proposed DGP project. No decision on the future of the project was reached.

Further to this, the AHDB team have been taking into account the questions asked and feedback provided, and are preparing for the AHDB Cereals and Oilseeds sector council meeting on 9 December. An industry proposal on next steps will be provided thereafter.

- **Meeting with Food Standards Scotland**

SQC and QMS met with FSS to discuss development of a proposed agreement around earned recognition (which would hopefully remove some of the duplication between the SQC / FSS assessments or, at a minimum, reduce the number of assessments required to be undertaken by FSS – for those who have SQC certification). Further info will be made available as we progress

Finally – an update from RSABI.....

RSABI, the charity which supports people in Scottish agriculture, is delighted to welcome Scottish Quality Crops as a corporate member of its Supporters' Scheme, helping them to deliver vital services to people in need.

This year RSABI is celebrating its 125th anniversary, having been set up in 1897 to mark Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. At its first AGM the funds available allowed 16 "pensioners" to be elected, each receiving £20 per year.

These days, RSABI helps many hundreds of farmers, crofters, farm workers and others involved in the industry every year, with support ranging from financial and emotional to practical help and includes Help for Heating grants and counselling grants.

RSABI Supporters' Scheme is key in helping the charity to deliver this support, and for the 125th anniversary the charity is aiming to attract 125 new businesses and individuals. You can sign up from as little as £2 per month as an individual or £150 a year as a business, making a huge difference to people in the industry who need support. To find out more go to <https://rsabi.org.uk/Our-Supporter-Scheme>

RSABI has recently launched its winter 2022 #KeepTalking campaign – encouraging farmers and crofters to reconnect with friends, neighbours, relatives and others who might feel isolated and to get together during the winter months.

Perthshire farmer and comedian, Jim Smith, is once again fronting the campaign, with auctioneers from across the country also on board. As part #KeepTalking, auction markets across the country are taking part in Carols at the Marts, with local volunteers sought to help run the initiative. You can find out more here: <https://rsabi.org.uk/KeepTalking-campaign>.

RSABI's Freephone Helpline – 0808 1234 555 – is open 24 hours, every day of the year and a confidential webchat service is also available 24 hours at www.rsabi.org.uk.

