



SCOTTISH
QUALITY CROPS

NEWS UPDATES

January 2026

SQC FULL STANDARDS REVIEW

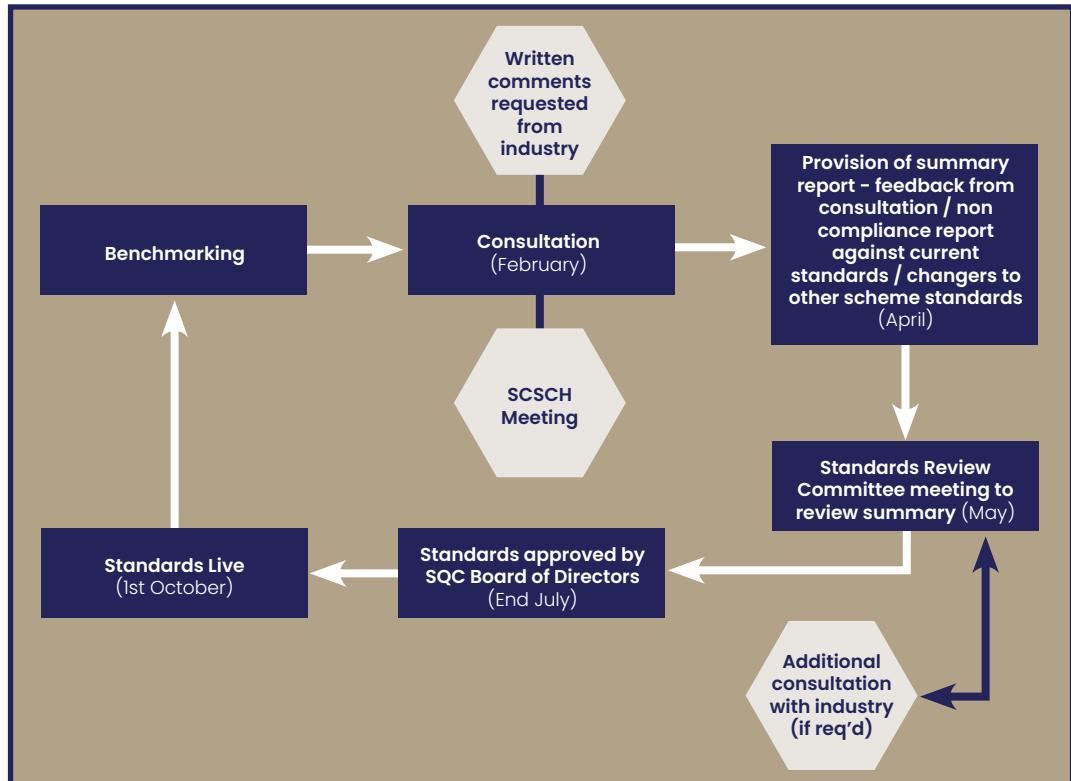
As the new year gets underway, we wanted to keep you, our SQC assured growers, informed of progress and invite your engagement on our standards review.

During 2025 we explained that we would be undertaking a full review of the SQC Standards commencing in October 2025.

Consultation work is now well underway, with a series of meetings already held in early January with supply chain stakeholders, and further activity is planned in the coming weeks (see overleaf).

As growers, we would like to assure you that we are working hard to decrease the audit burden. The Standards review is not about 'adding to the Standards' but about a 'full run through' of each to check they are relevant and required, easy to follow and, crucially, are still a requirement for our main markets and for access to these markets for our growers. We are also cross-checking each Standard against policy and legislation to minimise duplication.

Where Standards can be removed, merged or simplified they will be. Should any perceived gaps in the Standards be



identified from within the supply chain during the consultation, this will trigger additional engagement and consultation within SQC and the industry – with yourselves as part of that – to ensure that any substantive changes are fully justified.

And, remember that our members are represented on both the SQC Board and Standards Setting Committee by active growers. Your SQC Chair and Vice Chair plus two representatives from NFUS are all arable farmers.

It is always a priority for us to get the perspective of growers which is why, as part of the initial consultation, we met with representatives from NFUS who will be assisting us in gathering feedback from SQC assured growers. At the end of this newsletter there is also an invitation for you to have your individual say and we look forward to your feedback.

How it works

All this work is aligned to our annual Standards review process which is displayed in the flowchart

above. The timescales may be subject to change dependent on the level of amendments required.

Changes to the Standards can be seen as:

• **Minor** – e.g. changes to wording

• **Substantive** – e.g. any changes to the Standards which may result in changes to the process undertaken by the Certification Body or by changes to the audit which may impact farmers.

The date of the publication of new Standards will be determined by the level of change required and therefore any additional consultation work which may have to be factored in. We must also bear in mind that as an accredited scheme, UKAS must be informed of any changes within our Standards and if they are substantive, they will review the scheme to ensure it still meets their accreditation requirements. Therefore, it is our hope that the new Standards will be introduced in either October 2026 or October 2027.

The following work is being undertaken as part of the full review:

December 2025	Internal review of SQC current Standards undertaken, providing an internal measure of benchmarking and justification for each Standard to ensure it remains relevant, fit for purpose and required.
January 2026	We have just completed a first round of engagement with our SQC Co-op partners and key stakeholders as below. These involved one-to-one meetings fully explaining why this work is being undertaken and the process involved. They have now been invited to complete a 'justification document' to state which of the SQC Standards are relevant and required for their specific area of the sector / supply chain e.g. malting, milling etc. Furthermore, they have been invited to provide feedback on any perceived gaps in the current Standards.
January 2026	Communication with our SQC assured growers via this enews and through NFUS, inviting feedback and views on the current Standards
Mid-January to 13 February 2026	Provision and collation of feedback.
26 February 2026	Meeting organised of the Scottish Crops Supply Chain Hub who will be presented with the initial engagement findings and asked for their views.
Mid-March 2026	Meeting being organised of the SQC Standards Setting Committee. This will be the first meeting to ascertain findings from the consultation and to agree on next steps and timescales.

We have already met with the following stakeholders:

- **UKAS** – United Kingdom Accreditation Service – to ensure our review process meets the requirements for them and to identify additional consultation which will be required
- **AIC** – Agricultural Industries Confederation – to ensure alignment and ongoing earned recognition to reduce duplication of standards across Schemes e.g. TASCC
- **SWA** – Scotch Whisky Association
- **MAGB** – Maltsters Association of Great Britain
- **UKFM** – UK Flour Millers
- **QMS** – Quality Meat Scotland – given that we currently work with the same Certification Body, FIA, it is good practice to engage and ensure joint audits can be carried out as effectively as possible
- **Red Tractor** – Red Tractor is also undertaking a review of their Crop (and sugar beet) Standards. In line with the Farm Assurance Review and recommendations, SQC wants to ensure we continue speaking with other schemes to ensure we remain aligned where appropriate'
- **AHDB** – Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board – as a Levy Board for crops in Scotland, we are working with them to allow for full representation.
- **British Beer and Pub Association**
- **British Oat and Barley Millers Association** (Food and Drink Federation)
- **NFU Scotland**

So, how can you engage in this consultation? We are inviting all assured growers to provide comment on the Standards and Scheme and ask that this be emailed direct to myself at **teresa.dougall@scottishqualitycrops.co.uk** by close of play on Friday 13 February.

Following the meetings of the Scottish Crop Supply Chain Hub and SQC Standards Setting Committee, we will be coming back to everyone with their findings and next steps. Again, rest assured, everyone will have the opportunity to engage and be kept informed of progress.

Please get in touch if you have any queries or have feedback on the current standards or suggested changes that would better support your business.

We look forward to hearing from you.



**Teresa Dougall,
SQC Managing Director**



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FIA Contact Details

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

Website: sqcrops.co.uk (where you will find an enquiry form) or foodintegrityassurance.co.uk