

# **The UK Farm Assurance Review – Monitoring Report 2**

## Table of Contents

Foreword by the Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner .....	3
Section 1. Executive Summary .....	5
Section 2. Background to the UK Farm Assurance Review (UKFAR) and its Recommendations	8
2.1 A Summary of the UKFAR Process .....	8
2.2 Main Themes Emerging from the UKFAR .....	10
2.3 Principal Organisations Assigned Tasks in the UKFAR Recommendations .....	11
Section 3. Monitoring and Reporting - Phase 2 of the UKFAR .....	13
3.1 The Rationale for the Monitoring and Reporting Phase .....	13
3.2 Maintaining Independence from the Sponsoring Bodies .....	13
3.3 Scope of the Monitoring and Reporting Phase .....	14
3.4 Timetable for the Monitoring and Reporting Phase .....	14
Section 4. Monitoring and Reporting Methodology .....	15
4.1 Initial Discussions with the Principal Organisations .....	15
4.2 Constructing the Monitoring Survey Template .....	15
4.3 The Monitoring Survey Period .....	16
4.4 Analysis of the Monitoring Survey Responses .....	16
4.5 Lessons Learned from the First Monitoring Exercise .....	18
Section 5. Results of the Monitoring Exercise - Round 2 .....	18
5.1 Developments Since the Publication of the First UKFAR Monitoring Report .....	18
5.2 Key Areas of Progress .....	19
5.3 Summary Assessment of Progress and Engagement with the Monitoring Exercise .....	82
Section 6. Next Steps .....	91
6.1 Disseminating the Results of the Monitoring Exercise to the Wider Industry .....	91
Annex 1: The Characteristics of Good Farm Assurance .....	92
Annex 2: The 56 UKFAR Recommendations Summary Table .....	93
Annex 4: Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner Biography .....	96
Annex 5: Operating and Independence Principles for the Monitoring and Reporting Phase .....	97
Annex 6: List of Organisational Participants in the Monitoring Exercise – Rounds 1 and 2 .....	98
Annex 8: Supplementary Questions and Responses by Respondent Group .....	151
Annex 9: List of Abbreviations .....	167
Annex 10: Acknowledgments .....	169

## Foreword by the Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner

This is the second, and final, UK Farm Assurance Review (UKFAR) Monitoring Report. It builds upon the first Monitoring Report, issued in October 2025, to set out the progress being made by participating organisations to implement the UKFAR's recommendations.

An important aim of the monitoring exercise was to ensure that momentum was maintained in improving the farm assurance system over the first year following the publication, in January 2025 of the UKFAR report. Participation in this exercise was voluntary and has not been consistent in all cases. However, the fact that 33 organisations have made contributions to this second report is a sign that there is still a commitment, in time, to change the nature and delivery of farm assurance and to reaffirm the position of the farming community as a key element of the farm assurance system.

This report contains the comments we received from the participating organisations, largely as they were submitted. This continued to be the most effective way to demonstrate the actions they were taking. It also provides an indication of their progress relative to others in the system. As in the first Monitoring Report, not all of the recommendations have been met with full approval, but we have, again, included the comments where this is the case, in the interests of transparency.

We have retained much of the text from the first Monitoring Report that provided background information on the establishment of the UKFAR, the processes it followed and its recommendations (Sections 2.1 and 2.2). This was simply for ease of access to this information for those new to the monitoring exercise. In addition, the categorisation of responding organisations for this Report (see Section 2.3) has remained the same, for consistency with the first Monitoring Report.

Whilst the rationale for the monitoring and reporting exercise (Section 3.1) and the statement of independence for this exercise (Section 3.2) have remained the same, the scope of the second monitoring round (Section 3.3) its timetable (Section 3.4) and the methodology for the monitoring and reporting exercise (Section 4) have been updated, as required.

**It is important to recognise that this report does not aim to repeat submitted information provided in the first Monitoring Report, but to provide an update on progress made since the first monitoring survey. This report should therefore be read alongside the first Monitoring Report to gain a full understanding of the work that has been conducted against each UKFAR recommendation.**

The UKFAR appears to have acted as a catalyst for change across the farm assurance system, though it is clear that farm assurance schemes remain at different stages in their adoption of the UKFAR recommendations. The work of some schemes, in particular those in the devolved nations and the progress reported in the Red Tractor (RT) action plan, is welcome. Certain industry regulators also stand out as having taken the principles of the UKFAR on board and the main farming organisations are also pressing ahead to see that the UKFAR has a lasting effect.

There is, however, room for improvement in the way in which UK governments see the role of farm assurance as a contributor to the development of the industry. Dialogue between the assurance schemes and their respective governments in the devolved nations is taking place, but the picture with DEFRA is less clear. There was also the promise, earlier in the UKFAR, of greater coordination between the UK governments to take account of the system in their policy making and to reduce duplication of effort, but this has yet to see the light of day.

There are also two key topics that remain to be resolved. The first is the way in which farm assurance should operate for the crops sector so that farmers can see benefits from the assurance system and so that there is a more transparent approach to the use of their products beyond the farm gate. At the moment, there remains a strong view in this sector that there is not a level playing field for UK farmers when competing with imported products and that their efforts through the assurance system get lost further along the supply chain. Research being undertaken by the AHDB, and how it aligns with the work of the RT Combinable Crops and Sugar Beet Sector Board and its Technical Advisory Committee may only start the process of addressing this issue and priority should be given to making further progress on this important recommendation.

The second topic concerns establishing an agreement about environmental measures for farming outside the farm assurance system. At present, there remains a vacuum on this issue which is being filled in a piecemeal manner through a variety of other organisations in the agri-food sector. Whilst it may be tempting for some farm assurance schemes to jump back into this debate the UKFAR recommendation was clear that they should not.

This is a topic on which the main farming representative organisations, working with regulators and governments, must ensure that account is taken of the devolved nature of environmental legislation and emerging legislative requirements; their connection to balanced and appropriate demands for performance reporting by farm businesses; and their relationship with other parts of the agri-food system. As noted in this report, the AHDB has discussed this issue with key stakeholders. Those discussions have demonstrated support for an approach that uses existing structures, rather than a new body, and it expects to see progress on this matter in the next 6-12 months. This topic must remain an urgent priority for industry representatives, so that greater clarity, and coordination, can be provided on what is expected from farm businesses and how on-farm environmental improvements and reporting of performance are to be fairly resourced.

When the UKFAR report was published we noted that the system should be better than we found it. This report continues to demonstrate progress with many of the UKFAR recommendations, though the way in which they are being implemented is subject to variation across the assurance system. It will be for assurance scheme members to determine whether these changes will have real impact on the ground when it comes to the conduct of farm audits, their engagements with industry regulatory bodies and their relationships with other organisations in the agri-food supply chain. It will also be important for the farming community, and representative farming organisations, to use the UKFAR as a means to hold assurance schemes to the commitments they have made to enact the principles established by the Review.

Despite this progress, there remains more work to be done. A number of participants pointed to activities that will come to fruition later in 2026, or even into next year where they require external approval or further rounds of consultation. Many of these issues are important aspects of the UKFAR recommendations and it is to be hoped that, when in place, there will be further improvements to the way in which the assurance scheme operates to the benefit of the farming industry.

I should like to thank everyone participating in the second monitoring exercise for the time and effort they have put in to addressing the UKFAR recommendations, for contributing to this report and for the work they are undertaking, and plan to undertake in the future, to help improve the UK's farm assurance system.

Dr David Llewellyn  
Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner, UK Farm Assurance Review  
April 2026

## Section 1. Executive Summary

The Report of the UK Farm Assurance Review (UKFAR) was published in late January 2025. It made 9 strategic recommendations and 56 operational recommendations expanding on the topics covered by the strategic recommendations. Each of the 56 recommendations was supported by a clear rationale and each contained a proposed deadline for delivery and a description of who should take responsibility for action.

With its wide range of recommendations, a complex operating environment and other priorities facing the farming industry, there was a risk that improvements to the farm assurance system might not be given further attention.

To mitigate against this risk, the UKFAR sponsoring bodies agreed a further phase of work to monitor the actions of those organisations assigned tasks in the UKFAR recommendations and to produce two reports on progress, broadly aligned with the 6 and 12 month reporting timescales for most of the recommendations set out in the UKFAR Report. The monitoring of actions was to include the Review's sponsoring bodies, each of which had been assigned actions in the list of recommendations.

The time taken by the sponsoring bodies to consider and consult on the UKFAR Report meant that this phase of work began in mid-March 2025 with the appointment of the Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner. The appointment of Promar International in a continuing role as the UKFAR secretariat followed later that month. This enabled the initial monitoring tasks to commence in early April 2025 with a series of online meetings with participating organisations.

A total of 51 organisations (including, in some cases, members of organisational committees) were involved in the initial discussions about the UKFAR monitoring and reporting phase. These included the farm assurance schemes included in the UKFAR report, all 4 UK governments, several government agencies, a range of farming and food representative organisations, 7 of the 8 major UK supermarket retailers and a selection of food processing companies drawn from those that had participated in the UKFAR research.

Each organisation was invited to take part in an evidence gathering survey during the summer of 2025. In total, 40 responses to the call for evidence were eventually received, including some written submissions, not employing the survey instrument. The survey results were analysed in September and at the same time, the background elements of the Monitoring Report were assembled. The completed analysis of the survey results was incorporated in the first Monitoring Report published in early October 2025.

The same survey instrument was used for the second Monitoring Report. However, some of the supplementary questions aimed at the first Monitoring Report were removed and 2 questions were added. These sought specific information on the changes to farm assurance that would impact directly on farming businesses (eg simplified audit processes or avoidance of audit duplication) and on future plans for farm assurance improvements over the coming year. Further details of the survey approach are set out in Section 4.2 of this report.

The survey instrument was tailored to recommendations relevant to the named organisation(s) so that they did not receive recommendations to which they were not expected to respond. A total of 12 templates were constructed for the second Monitoring Report, covering, for example, each of the farm assurance schemes, government departments and regulatory agencies, retailers and processors, organisations, such as the AHDB and each of the national farming unions. Each recommendation response also invited participants to indicate, on a 5-point scale, their compliance at that stage with the recommendation.

It should be noted that, at this point of the monitoring exercise, the responses sought from participating organisations were focussed on actions required for the 12 month implementation timescales, though responses for actions with shorter and longer timescales were also invited and received.

An important aim of the monitoring exercise was to ensure that momentum was maintained in improving the farm assurance system over the first year following the publication of the UKFAR report. Participation in this exercise was voluntary, and has not been consistent in all cases. However, the fact that 33 organisations have made contributions to this second report is a sign that there is still a commitment, in time, to change the nature and delivery of farm assurance and to reaffirm the position of the farming community as a key element of the farm assurance system.

It is important to recognise that this report does not aim to repeat submitted information provided in the first Monitoring Report, but to provide an update on progress made since the first monitoring survey. This report should therefore be read alongside the first Monitoring Report to gain a full understanding of the work that has been conducted against each UKFAR recommendation.

The UKFAR appears to have acted as a catalyst for change across the farm assurance system, though it is clear that farm assurance schemes remain at different stages in their adoption of the UKFAR recommendations. The work of some schemes, in particular those in the devolved nations and the progress reported in the Red Tractor (RT) action plan, is welcome. Certain industry regulators also stand out as having taken the principles of the UKFAR on board and the main farming organisations are also pressing ahead to see that the UKFAR has a lasting effect.

Other areas of the report point to slower progress, such as in the case of addressing issues identified by the crops sector and the vexed question of how on-farm environmental measures can be systematically implemented, and fairly resourced, if data from them is to be used by other parts of the agri-food system. Both topics are being investigated and it is hoped that further progress will be made, in consultation with the farming industry, during the course of 2026.

Furthermore, there is variation in the way in which UK governments have responded to the UKFAR report. Farm assurance schemes in the devolved nations report that they generally have constructive dialogue with their respective governments, though not all of these governments have been prepared to engage in the monitoring exercise. The same applies to DEFRA, which, though responding briefly to this round of monitoring, has not, as yet, fully addressed the prospect of better coordination of farm assurance across the UK governments or in terms of its own policy agenda. Its response, to date, has been underwhelming.

When the UKFAR report was published we noted that the system should be better than we found it. As will be seen in the detailed survey results, a number of respondents have made clear that their systems are such that certain recommendations are not needed and that they are satisfied that they are working, at least to the spirit, of the UKFAR report. Other respondents pointed to work in progress on certain recommendations that is taking further time because of the need for industry consultation, the completion of a research programme or the process of accreditation through UKAS.

There is a balance to be struck. Delays in implementation are likely to cause frustration to the farming community that wants to see positive changes made to the way in which farm assurance operates. On the one hand, there is a need for respondents to maintain pace with addressing these recommendations, and, on the other, for the farming community to understand that some changes do take time to put in place if they are subject to scrutiny by external bodies or need a wider view to be gathered before action is taken. That said, there are two instances arising from this round of survey responses, where delays in taking action are not supportable.

The first involves instances where farm assurance schemes believe that they are unable to act because the recommendation is the responsibility of a Certification Body (CB). We made clear in the UKFAR report that farm assurance schemes appoint CBs to act on their behalf in the conduct of audits, and it is the schemes that bear the responsibility for setting the terms under which CBs must operate. It is, in relevant cases, the scheme's name that is featured on assured products, not that of the CB, and for that reason, ultimate responsibility for the assurance of that product, and for ensuring that the farm assurance system operates in the best interests of all stakeholders, must rest with the scheme. It is therefore important for schemes to ensure that they are working with their CBs to implement changes that accord with the UKFAR recommendations.

The second instance involves the avoidance of action by relying on other bodies to get the ball rolling on addressing a recommendation. Whilst it might be the case that a certain organisation has been

identified to take a lead role, it is perfectly legitimate, and might even be expected, for others involved in addressing a recommendation to help initiate discussions or prompt the lead organisation to get work under way. It is not enough to sit back and wait for a call to come, especially if the subject at hand is clearly causing a problem to the farming community and action is urgently required.

Notwithstanding the above points, those farm assurance schemes that are serious about making the UKFAR recommended changes are continuing to embed the work on which they reported in the first monitoring round and are continuing to take action to improve their approach to the delivery of their scheme. Again, farm assurance schemes have different priorities and are operating at different paces, often as a result of resource constraints, but the best are demonstrating a willingness listen to their members, take on board the UKFAR recommendations and make changes to their operations that fit with their scheme.

Each of the UKFAR Strategic Recommendations included a series of operational recommendations intended to guide the actions or identified organisations to comply with the recommendations. In this report, examples of the actions taken, and where they have not been taken, provide an indication of the state of progress with the implementation schedule. It is recognised that not all actions will be captured in this way but that it will simply summarise the state of play.

Further details of reported progress to date can be found in the survey responses in Section 5.1 and a summary of some of the key areas appears in Section 5.3.

There remains a lot to be done to ensure that the work of the UKFAR is not overtaken by other events, of which there are many presently affecting the farming industry. To this end, the UKFAR sponsoring bodies may wish to consider a method to continue to have oversight of further developments with farm assurance schemes and those of others involved in the farm assurance system.

It is important to put on record that the organisations commissioning the monitoring exercise, the NFUs and the AHDB, have not had any editorial input to this report, and that their submissions to the exercise have been treated in the same way as others. In this way, the report has remained independent of the commissioning bodies.

It should also be noted that the monitoring exercise has been based on self-assessments by responding organisations and that their submissions, including their indication of the status of their work on the recommendations, form the basis of this report.

The UKFAR charted a path to help improve the farm assurance system but, ultimately, it will be for farm assurance scheme members, and others, to determine whether the changes reported to date will have real impact on the ground when it comes to the conduct of farm audits, their engagements with industry regulatory bodies and their relationships with other organisations in the agri-food supply chain.

It is hoped that the progress shown in this report, and that planned for the year ahead, indicates a willingness of many of the respondent organisations to continue to improve the system as a whole, and to enable the farming industry, in due course, to benefit from the changes being made.

## **Section 2. Background to the UK Farm Assurance Review (UKFAR) and its Recommendations**

### **2.1 A Summary of the UKFAR Process**

In early 2024, the National Farming Unions (NFU, NFUS, NFU Cymru and UFU (together the NFUs)) and the AHDB agreed that a comprehensive review should be undertaken to address growing concerns within the farming industry about the nature, purpose and operation of the UK farm assurance system.

A Commission was appointed to undertake the Review which considered extensive industry surveys, interviews, case studies and available literature, together with comparative analyses of international farming and food assurance schemes.

This was the first such review of the system in the 40 years or so since UK farm assurance schemes were introduced in the 1980s and 1990s. Direct engagement with all parts of the UK food supply chain ensured that a wide variety of views about farm assurance were considered.

Amongst other evidence the Review received 3,616 farmer survey responses, heard from 162 other supply chain respondents. It employed the results of an analysis of online discussion forum content to provide an indication of how farmer sentiment towards farm assurance had changed in the period from 2019 to 2024. A detailed literature review on key aspects of farm assurance was carried out and case studies were presented on how other countries (Ireland, the Netherlands, Argentina and Thailand) went about the process of farm assurance - and what any transferable lessons for the UK might be.

The Review also explored some of the issues behind the discontent with the farm assurance system that had emerged from the evidence submitted to the Commission. These ranged from the wider political and policy environment for farming, to the sense that the original purpose of farm assurance had been diverted to the needs of other agents in the food supply chain, and from bureaucracy associated with certain farm assurance schemes - to the impact of the “make or break” nature of assurance in some farming sectors on farmer mental health and wellbeing.

It was evident that farm assurance schemes, of which 12 were considered in detail by the Review, had different levels and methods of engagement with their farming communities. They also have differing governance structures supporting that engagement and varying levels of trust between the schemes and their farmer members. The issue of trust was a particular concern to farming businesses where membership of a scheme was an essential route to market, or where it was felt that the scheme was not supporting farming businesses, nor offering them the market differentiation, or price premium, they had originally expected.

Similar views emerged from others in the supply chain, who expressed concern that some farm assurance schemes were not meeting their expectations, in terms of delivering their external reporting obligations or ensuring that the audit process met their internal requirements for consumer confidence in their products.

That said, it was also evident that the relationship between farming members and their farm assurance schemes, was better in some cases, than in others. The Commission referred directly to the Red Tractor (RT) scheme, the largest in the UK farm assurance system and the subject of much, often negative, attention in the evidence it received. Other schemes, particularly, those operating in the devolved nations, were better supported by farmer respondents. Some of the factors behind these varying responses were explored during the Review and were featured in its report.

The Commission was expected to consider the farm assurance system through the lens of the “value delivery to primary producers but not ignoring the needs of onward businesses and end consumers”<sup>1</sup> It was clear from the evidence that there were significantly different views, across the food supply chain, and by farming sector, about who should determine the standards associated with assurance schemes and how those standards should provide value to farm businesses. There were concerns from some farming sectors about the standards associated with imported food products, how these were controlled and how the market operated to ensure a level playing field between imported food and UK produce.

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<sup>1</sup> UK Farm Assurance Review Terms of Reference, April 2024

There were also major concerns about the overlap between farm assurance and regulatory compliance, growing demands for information being placed on farm businesses with no clear reward structure and an overall view that the system was subject to “mission creep”.

In all of this, it was also clear that farm assurance had inconsistently featured in the farming policy environment across the UK nations and had largely been left to the market to address. This was despite the fact that the assurance system could be of benefit to future policy development or could be better employed to generate “earned recognition” (ER) by governments and their regulatory agencies.

The Commission concluded that farm assurance was a necessary and important component of the food production landscape, principally because it should provide reassurance to consumers that the food they purchase is produced to consistent and high standards. However, the many complexities and concerns expressed in the evidence the UKFAR received, meant that it also concluded that farm assurance had to be improved.

Although the system was generally supported **in principle**, there was much that was not right **in practice**, from addressing the frustrations expressed by the farming community to better informing consumers about what farm assurance is, what it delivers and how it works. It was also expected that there would be a continuing debate about the power dynamics within the farm assurance system; how it can deliver necessary information to meet the needs of a wide variety of stakeholders, whilst also reducing the burden on farm businesses; how it can be more consistently applied; and how there could be a shift in the view of farmers that farm assurance is being “done to them” rather than “delivered with them”.

The Report of the UKFAR was published in late January 2025. It made 9 strategic recommendations and 56 operational recommendations expanding on the topics covered by the strategic recommendations. Each of the subsets of the 56 recommendations was supported by a clear rationale, and each contained a proposed deadline for delivery and a description of who should take responsibility for action.

It was recognised that the delivery timetable in many cases would be challenging, but the Commission felt it important to maintain momentum to improve the farm assurance system, given that a period of around 16 months had elapsed since farm assurance had been highlighted in the debate about the introduction by Red Tractor (RT) of the Greener Farms Commitment. There had also been longer term concerns about “mission creep” within the system. At the same time, it was clear that decision-making structures within some farm assurance schemes might require a small degree of leeway in the implementation timetable to ensure that proper consultation on changes had taken place. These factors are discussed later in this report.

It should be noted that Red Tractor, in this second review, made a detailed submission covering many of the areas that they had been tasked with to act upon. This detailed submission in its entirety is included in this report as Annex 7. Additional details are also provided in Annex 9. Some of the key points to note on progress made by RT over the second monitoring period are as follows:

#### **A comprehensive reset of farm-facing standards development and simplification**

RT has introduced a new Policy for Standards Development that ensures there is a rationale for every standard that is understood by every supply chain stakeholder. Using that policy, it has committed to undertake line by line reviews of every standard in every sector it represents, which will include removing redundant and duplicate standards.

#### **Smarter, simpler and more efficient audits**

Progress has already been made, and will continue to be made, in simplifying and reducing audit duplication by improvements to the Red Tractor portal. Improvements include a “tell us once” model through, for example, the uploading of photographic evidence. Audit frequency is under review using a risk profiling model.

#### **Clearer, more transparent and more farmer-focused communications**

RT has delivered a complete overhaul of its communications strategy. It has reported that farmers now receive clearer explanations of decisions, access to more direct engagement opportunities and

significantly increased transparency about its governance and standards development processes. It adds that farmer feedback with regard to this approach has been positive.

### **A clear plan for continued delivery**

The RT 2026/27 Business Plan's first objective is "to ensure the sentiment and aims of the UKFAR are delivered for farmers and growers". This will ensure that delivery of the UKFAR is not a standalone exercise, but the foundation of future direction for RT as an organisation.

### **A commitment to ongoing collaboration**

In the original UKFAR report, the importance of collaboration across farm assurance schemes, retailers, processors, farming unions and government was emphasised. As a whole supply chain assurance scheme, collaboration is fundamental to RT delivering its purpose. RT has taken steps to work more openly and constructively with all these partners, notably other farm assurance schemes.

## **2.2 Main Themes Emerging from the UKFAR**

Based on the evidence considered by the Commission the UKFAR Report identified, and explored in depth, 11 key themes. These were:

1. Issues with the audit process and its impact
2. The role of technology
3. The voice of farmers within farm assurance
4. Who should pay for farm assurance?
5. How can farm assurance be improved?
6. Duplication of schemes and earned recognition
7. The environmental challenge
8. Collaboration between farm assurance schemes
9. Farm assurance and positioning the UK agri-food sector
10. A need for better supply chain communication
11. Farm assurance training and development

The 9 strategic recommendations made by the Commission built on these key themes. Eight of the strategic recommendations covered the farm assurance system in general, while the ninth considered the implementation by the Red Tractor scheme of the earlier recommendations of the Campbell Tickell report on the scheme's governance<sup>2</sup>.

The Commission also identified several common characteristics where farm assurance was working, or was perceived to be working, well. These features are set out in more detail in Annex 1 and were used to frame the Review's recommendations.

In turn, each characteristic will also have a bearing on the way in which the Commission's recommendations are implemented, and how the success of that implementation can, in due course, be assessed. In summary, these characteristics are deemed to be as follows:

1. Strong leadership - clarity of purpose
2. Regular review
3. Transparency (of operation and standards development)
4. Collaboration (between different players within the food system)
5. A focus on delivering value to participants
6. Consistency and continuity
7. A clear, transparent and proportionate approach to enforcement
8. Healthy competition

It was anticipated that the adoption of the Commission's recommendations would be necessary across the food supply chain, to ensure the better operation of the food assurance system, and to address the perception of unfairness within the system felt by some in the farming industry. The requirement for an improved system was shared by most respondents across the industry, so long as it ultimately brought

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<sup>2</sup> Campbell Tickell, Red Tractor Independent Governance Review, 2024

value to all stakeholders, and that it helped deal with the loss of trust that had been developing for some time between some farm assurance schemes and their constituencies.

The UKFAR strategic recommendations were as follows:

1. On-farm audits must be reduced, simplified and delivered more consistently
2. There must be a transformational step forward in embracing technology and managing data to deliver more effective farm assurance with greater added value for all
3. Farm assurance schemes need to reset and/or restate their decision-making structures to establish farmers as the driving voice in standards development
4. A new industry-led initiative must set out the future environmental ambitions for farm assurance, establishing this as an area of competitive advantage for UK farming
5. The inclusion of regulatory requirements within farm assurance standards and audits should be conditional on government and regulators agreeing a form of “earned recognition”
6. There must be greater coordination in the way in which farm assurance operates across the UK nations
7. Farm assurance schemes must better position the UK farming industry in world food markets and in competition with imported food
8. All farm assurance schemes must review, and, where necessary, improve their methods of communication with the farming industry
9. The Red Tractor (RT) scheme must complete the implementation of the recommendations in the Campbell Tickell report

The 56 operational recommendations are contained in Section 5 of this report, together with a table, at Annex 2, taken from the Commission’s Report, that sets out each of the recommendations, their target date for implementation and the organisations that were identified as being responsible for their delivery.

### **2.3 Principal Organisations Assigned Tasks in the UKFAR Recommendations**

In formulating its operational recommendations, the Commission sought to ensure that they would be implemented in a timely manner. To achieve this, it was necessary to identify the organisation(s) that were best placed to take the necessary actions where they had wider impact, or where actions needed to be taken within their own operations.

The Commission’s consultation process revealed the complexity of the farm assurance system, operated as it is by various schemes, each with their own approach to audits via their selected certification bodies. In addition, the varying relationships between those schemes, industry regulators and each of the UK governments; the role of processors and retailers in the system; the role of the ownership body for the Red Tractor scheme; and the overarching requirements for accreditation of farm assurance scheme providers, meant that it was necessary to name, in some cases, groups of organisations from which action was required.

The following list is intended to assist with the identification of constituent members of these groups:

1. NFUs - principally the NFU, NFUS, NFU Cymru and the UFU, but recognising that other union organisations exist, but were not involved as sponsoring bodies of the Review, such as the FUW and BFU
2. Farm Assurance Schemes - principally the 12 schemes considered in detail during the Review, but also those “add on” schemes operated by food processors and retailers where the recommendation was relevant to them, for example in removing duplication between assurance requirements
3. Industry regulators - principally the FSA, Environment Agency (EA), Natural England, Trading Standards and their equivalent bodies in the devolved nations
4. Farming support organisations - principally the Farming Community Network (FCN), Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI), Royal Scottish Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RSABI) and Rural Support, but not to the exclusion of other relevant organisations and agencies
5. The DEFRA Data Group - Food Data Transparency Partnership
6. New scheme developers - organisations working on technologies that might assist with the improvement of the farm assurance system

7. Government Ministries/Departments and relevant agencies - the principal farming and food Ministries of the 4 nations of the UK, together with (where relevant) their respective regulatory bodies
8. Food chain businesses/industry representatives - businesses beyond the farm gate, including food processors and major retailers, within the UK food system
9. Combinable Crops Sector representatives and their customer base - organisations involved in this sector, such as the Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC), UK Flour Millers Association, relevant committees and other representative groups, such as those within the AHDB, NFUs and relevant farm assurance schemes such as RT and Scottish Quality Crops (SQC)
10. RT Ownership Organisations – the NFU, NFUS, UFU, AHDB, Dairy UK and the British Retail Consortium (BRC)

As they were grouped in this way, it was expected that the constituent members would work together (with others as necessary) on recommendations requiring greater coordination to ensure that a “joined up” approach was taken to the relevant action plan.

In other instances, such as those involving single bodies, for example the AHDB, the recommendations may have related to action required by that body or a coordinating/leadership role assigned to that organisation. In the latter cases, it might be expected that the coordination of a response would take time to implement, and this has been considered in the reports of progress to date.

Certain organisations that were not named in the recommendations, such as, for example, the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS), the national accreditation body for the UK, might impact on the implementation timetable for actions required by, in this instance, farm assurance schemes. This is because UKAS has the role of assessing “against nationally and internationally agreed standards, organisations that provide conformity assessment services such as certification, testing, inspection, calibration and verification”<sup>3</sup> and may therefore be involved in approving changes to standards or methods used in the farm assurance system.

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<sup>3</sup> UKAS website, accessed 25 September 2025

## **Section 3. Monitoring and Reporting - Phase 2 of the UKFAR**

### **3.1 The Rationale for the Monitoring and Reporting Phase**

With many recommendations, a complex operating environment and other priorities facing the farming industry, there was a risk that the UKFAR Report would not be given further attention and that its recommendations might not be enacted. To mitigate against this risk, the sponsoring bodies agreed that a further phase of work was required to monitor the actions of those organisations assigned tasks in the UKFAR recommendations and to produce two reports on progress, broadly aligned with the 6 and 12 month reporting timescales for most of the recommendations set out in the UKFAR Report. The monitoring of actions was to include the Review's sponsoring bodies, each of which had been assigned actions in the list of recommendations.

Importantly, the sponsoring bodies took the view that it would be important to feed back to the wider farming industry, and to other organisations impacted by or using the farm assurance system, on progress being made with the implementation of the UKFAR recommendations. Although initially reporting to the sponsoring bodies, the Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner was asked to then publish the reports so that they could be considered by industry and farm assurance stakeholders.

The reports were expected to be produced on a "comply or explain" principle. This approach is well established in the world of corporate governance, where organisations are expected to provide an explanation of how they have met reporting requirements, in this case, the actions set out in the UKFAR recommendations, or to explain why they have not complied. The approach allows for a degree of flexibility to highlight external factors impacting on progress, whilst maintaining accountability for actions using transparent and publicly available reporting.

It is recognised that in this type of exercise relies, in turn, on the quality and transparency of responses to the monitoring of progress and the engagement of those to whom actions have been allocated. Furthermore, in this instance, any engagement in the UKFAR process is not mandatory, but has relied upon the willingness of organisations to participate with the aim of improving the farm assurance system. In the world of corporate governance, it is expected that investors should hold companies accountable, if they do not consistently comply with expectations placed upon them. In this instance, the wider industry will be able to take a view about the progress made against the UKFAR recommendations and the seriousness with which they are being taken by organisations that might be expected to play a significant role in improving the farm assurance landscape.

The time taken by the sponsoring bodies to consider and consult on the UKFAR Report meant that this phase of work began in mid-March 2025 with the agreement of Terms of Reference (see Annex 3) and the appointment of the Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner (see the Biography at Annex 4). The appointment of Promar International in a continuing role as the UKFAR secretariat followed later in the month and enabled the initial monitoring tasks to commence in early April 2025.

### **3.2 Maintaining Independence from the Sponsoring Bodies**

The UKFAR Commissioners took early steps to agree with the sponsoring bodies a statement of principles that would ensure their independence of operation and reporting. This enabled the Commissioners to openly investigate the farm assurance system and the role of various organisations within it, to gather evidence from a wide variety of stakeholders and to report "without fear or favour" on the conclusions drawn from that evidence.

For this phase of the UKFAR, the statement of principles was updated and agreed between the Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner and the sponsoring bodies. This was a particularly important step, not least because the sponsoring bodies had actions listed against them in the UKFAR recommendations. Transparent monitoring and reporting on their progress was therefore required in just the same way as other organisations identified in the Review's Report. The Statement can be found in Annex 5.

The Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner met, periodically, with the sponsoring bodies' Farm Assurance Review Leadership Group (FARLG) during this phase of the UKFAR to update the group on progress and to encourage members of the group to participate fully in the monitoring exercise.

### **3.3 Scope of the Monitoring and Reporting Phase**

The monitoring exercise focussed on obtaining reports on progress from the principal organisations named in the UKFAR recommendations.

A total of 51 organisations (including, in some cases, members of organisational committees) were involved in the initial discussions about the UKFAR Phase 2. These included the farm assurance schemes included in the UKFAR report, all 4 UK governments, several government agencies, a range of farming and food representative organisations, 7 of the 8 major supermarket retailers and a selection of food processing companies drawn from those that had participated in the UKFAR research.

The monitoring survey instrument for the second monitoring round was sent to a total of 56 organisations. This list again included several organisations that had not taken part in the initial discussions (usually because they had failed to respond to initial enquiries) but were likely to have a part to play in the implementation of the UKFAR recommendations by falling into one of the groups identified in the assessment of principal organisations described earlier in this report.

As reported in the first Monitoring Round, one major supermarket retailer decided, early on, not to take part in the UKFAR research and hence was not involved in the monitoring phase. One organisation involved in the Red Tractor Ownership Body also did not participate, opting out of further communication on the basis that the UKFAR was not a priority for them.

Another major supermarket retailer, though having earlier committed to participation in the exercise, decided at the point of the first Monitoring Round not to respond to the monitoring survey, because it did not agree with some of the recommendations in the UKFAR Report.

### **3.4 Timetable for the Monitoring and Reporting Phase**

The second monitoring exercise began in early February 2026. This provided time for the participating organisations to take on board the recommendations with a 12 month implementation period arising from the UKFAR report (which was published in late January 2025) and the role they were expected to play in their implementation.

Information about the survey and reporting period for the second monitoring exercise was circulated to participating organisations in November 2025, and again in January 2026, to ensure that it could be considered in workload planning. No objections to the proposed survey and reporting period were received.

The monitoring template was assembled in January 2026, so that it was ready for circulation to the survey cohort on 2 February 2026. Completion reminders were sent during the survey period, which ended on 6th March 2026. Towards the end of this period, it again proved necessary to undertake selected follow-up telephone calls/emails to gather responses from several participating organisations.

The survey results were analysed in mid-March. At the same time, the background elements of the Monitoring Report were assembled. The completed analysis of the survey results was incorporated into the Monitoring Report in late March.

The Monitoring Report was submitted to the sponsoring bodies in mid-April. Given the independent nature of the Phase 2 exercise, no changes were made to the text of the Report by the sponsoring bodies.

## **Section 4. Monitoring and Reporting Methodology**

### **4.1 Initial Discussions with the Principal Organisations**

In the late spring/early summer of 2025, a series of online introductory discussions had been conducted by the Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner with the organisations identified in the UKFAR recommendations. These took the form of semi-structured interviews intended to explain the role and purpose of the Monitoring and Reporting Phase and to obtain early-stage responses on the views of the organisations towards the UKFAR recommendations and their potential for implementation.

The response to the initial discussions was generally positive, though varied depending on the type of organisation and their role within the farm assurance system. More negative, or at least cautious, feedback, particularly about the role of the farming industry in taking a more prominent role in setting farm assurance standards, was received from some major supermarket retailers. These points were discussed and the way in which the UKFAR Commissioners had reached their decisions was explained.

At that stage, all of the participants in the initial discussions agreed to take part in the monitoring exercise. Importantly, the need was stressed for respondents to focus on actions taken by their organisation to comply with the recommendations, rather than providing statements of intent. Notwithstanding this request, respondents were also encouraged to report any external factors that had led to a delay in action being taken.

Each of the discussions, held on MS Teams, was recorded and a summary transcript of the meeting was provided using MS Copilot. Each summary was shared with the interviewee to ensure that it accurately represented the contents of the discussion.

### **4.2 Constructing the Monitoring Survey Template**

To construct the original survey instrument the 56 operational UKFAR recommendations were broken down into sub-sections assigned to each of the groups of participating organisations identified earlier in this report, or to individual organisations where this was required for certain recommendations.

The same survey instrument was used for the second Monitoring Report. However, some of the supplementary questions used in the first Monitoring Report were removed and 2 questions were added. These sought specific information on the changes to farm assurance that would impact directly on farming businesses (eg simplified audit processes or avoidance of audit duplication) and on future plans for farm assurance improvements over the coming year.

As in the first Monitoring Round, the survey instrument was tailored to recommendations relevant to the named organisation(s) so that they did not receive recommendations to which they were not expected to respond. Twelve templates were assembled in this way, to cover, for example, each of the farm assurance schemes, government departments and regulatory agencies, retailers and processors, organisations such as the AHDB and each of the national farming unions.

Each template contained an introductory note reminding participants of the initial discussions, explaining the approach to be taken to the completion of the survey and setting out the deadline for completion. Participants were also reminded that, as had been covered in the initial discussions and employed in the first Monitoring Report, the results of the survey would be used to compile the second monitoring report.

As the purpose of the survey was to elicit information on actions that had been taken, each recommendation in each of the templates was followed by a question asking respondents to indicate which of 5 statements best described their current compliance with the recommendation.

Two further scale ratings were again, added later to the original five. The first was for organisations that had not provided a rating but had provided a narrative comment in their response and the second was for organisations that had simply not responded to the survey question. The full scale was therefore:

1. Already compliant
2. Imminently compliant
3. Compliant in the future, but missed the deadline
4. Will not be compliant, but have made different changes
5. Will not be compliant and do not plan to make any changes
6. No rating provided with the narrative comments
7. No response

Category 4 was included once more, because it was evident from the initial discussions and first Monitoring Round that some respondents were already working on improvements to their farm assurance scheme that differed from, but were related to, the theme of the UKFAR recommendation.

Respondents were asked to provide an explanatory note with further information about the steps they had taken to address the recommendation or, alternatively, why they were not addressing the recommendation at that point or had no plans to do so.

Each template was structured so that recommendations with earlier deadlines appeared first and were ordered in the way that they had appeared in the UKFAR Report, for ease of reference back to the original text. Recommendations for the relevant respondent, but with a later reporting deadline, were also included so that answers could be provided if the organisation had acted well in advance of the recommended deadline.

The monitoring survey templates were translated into an online survey format using a JISC<sup>4</sup> survey. This allowed respondents in almost all cases to partially answer the survey and to return to complete their response at a later date. The first Monitoring Round had highlighted a small number of technical issues with the JISC survey software that meant that responses could not be saved in this way. The second Monitoring Round therefore provided an opportunity for a respondent encountering such difficulties to be sent an MS Word version of the template for completion.

### **4.3 The Monitoring Survey Period**

Apart from email reminders, there was limited contact between the Monitoring and Reporting team and participating organisations during the survey period, to enable the organisations to have time to deal with their response to the survey. There were, however, a handful of instances where further clarification was sought by survey participants. These were picked up by the team and discussions were held with the respective parties to resolve the issue.

The team remained supportive of efforts made by some groups of organisations, such as the farm assurance schemes, to meet to discuss several of the recommendations where coordination between schemes was required. The Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner attended one such meeting, in October 2025, to act as an observer and to assist in the clarification of the Commission's expectations in relation to the relevant recommendations. A second meeting of the group was held in January 2026.

### **4.4 Analysis of the Monitoring Survey Responses**

We received 30 online responses via JISC, with the NFU and AHDB providing additional text along with their survey feedback. We also received written evidence from the RSPCA, Red Tractor and LMCNI instead of a JISC response, making a total of 33 submissions to this monitoring round.

The UK Flour Millers Association reported that it felt that it had not seen enough change in the farm assurance system to make any further comments/observations.

British Sugar, the FUW and the EA replied to say that they would not be providing a response.

This meant that there were a further 19 organisations from which we did not receive a response to the survey request.

As noted earlier, the UKFAR Report contained an indication of the organisations that were expected to act, together with a timescale for their implementation, for each of the 56 operational recommendations.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.jisc.ac.uk>

In some cases, group references were used to indicate those expected to act (for example, Farm Assurance Schemes).

The responses to the second monitoring survey were similarly grouped for analysis, though it was possible for other survey respondents to comment on recommendations where action from them had not been directly required.

It should also be noted that, at this stage of the monitoring exercise, the responses sought from participating organisations were focussed on actions required on the 12 month implementation timescale. However, as it was evident from the first Monitoring Report that actions against the 3 and 6-month recommendations was also required in some instances, the opportunity was provided for respondents to provide an update on progress made since the first monitoring survey in September 2025.

**It is therefore important to recognise that this report does not aim to repeat information provided in the first Monitoring Report, but to provide an update on progress made since the first monitoring survey. This report should therefore be read alongside the first Monitoring Report to gain a full understanding of the work that has been conducted against each UKFAR recommendation.**

The submissions were again analysed by responses to the rating scale for each of the 56 operational recommendations, indicating the organisation's position with regard to each recommendation. These are presented in the Section 5 in the form of tables, for ease of reference.

The narrative statements were then analysed to identify comments pertaining to the recommendation and to highlight areas where progress had been made, as well as those where there may have been external issues impacting on the implementation of the recommendation. The extent of the commentary was determined by the survey responses, and it will be seen that some are more detailed than others. The supplementary questions/responses added to each survey template are summarised in Annex 7.

A broader discussion of the survey responses and their indications of progress to implement the recommendations is provided later in this report.

#### **4.5 Lessons Learned from the First Monitoring Exercise**

The use of a rating scale to ascertain a general indication of progress in implementing each recommendation proved useful and has been repeated for the second Monitoring Round. The varying nature of the narrative statements provided by survey respondents in the first Monitoring Round made analysis more difficult, especially where it was not clear whether action had been taken or organisations were still relying on statements of intent.

Further clarification of the requirements for the second Monitoring Round was therefore provided to stress the need for respondents to provide statements of action taken to implement the recommendation.

Further encouragement to use the survey instrument, and not simply to provide a written response, was also provided for the second Monitoring Round. Despite this, some organisations still decided to make a written submission instead of using the survey instrument. Whilst these submissions were welcome, it meant that further work was required to analyse the submissions, and the rating scale entries were inevitably missing.

In some instances, it also proved difficult, once again, to obtain responses to the survey in accordance with the submission deadline. Several attempts were made to deal with this issue before the deadline and organisations that had not responded in time, were contacted afterwards to encourage them to submit.

This yielded some positive results but delayed later stages of the Monitoring Round. It is recognised that this has remained a voluntary initiative and that organisations must be willing and able to participate, but it is also important that progress is maintained across the complex landscape for farm assurance so that the overall system is eventually improved.

## Section 5. Results of the Monitoring Exercise - Round 2

### 5.1 Developments Since the Publication of the First UKFAR Monitoring Report

The first UKFAR Monitoring Report was published in October 2025. The report contained a summary of some of the press coverage of the publication of the original UKFAR report, in January 2025, together with the responses of a number of organisations to that report and their updates later in the year.

The first Monitoring Report was also the subject of media coverage, focussed in part on the relative lack of retailer engagement in the first monitoring round<sup>5</sup>, but also on the progress made by a number of organisations in addressing the UKFAR recommendations<sup>6</sup>.

In early October, it was reported that the Livestock and Meat Commission in Northern Ireland had completed a strategic review of its Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBLFQAS). It was noted that the Commission had taken the opportunity to review and simplify the scheme in light of the UK Farm Assurance Review, with a process to consider standards commencing in early 2026 and a “re-evaluation of the various farm assurance schemes operating within the UK” to ensure that the NIBLFQAS complements the standards of other schemes<sup>7</sup>.

In December 2025, there was a focus on changes to the Red Tractor Pigs Scheme, with the introduction of the Enhanced Welfare Outdoor Bred and Free-Range modules, both aimed at communicating higher welfare standards to consumers, but putting Red Tractor in direct competition with the RSPCA Assured scheme. It was reported that this change had been requested by the pig sector as a means to avoid duplication and that “it fits perfectly with our challenge from the UKFAR to reduce the number of audits for farmers”<sup>8</sup>.

At the same time, an overhaul of the Red Tractor poultry scheme was also reported. It was noted that it was “overly administrative” in the face of sector challenges and that the standards needed to be refreshed to “capitalise on...the integration and data driven nature of the industry” and the audit protocol updated to reflect the balance of biosecurity risks and time elapsed between audit visits<sup>9</sup>.

Early December also saw the announcement by Red Tractor of a wide-ranging review of its standards to remove unnecessary audit requirements and improve the conduct of assessments. The publication of priority areas for each of its six sector boards was expected to be the first stage of a full review of standards planned for 2026<sup>10</sup> and the implementation of improvements following UKAS approval in 2027. In the meantime, it has been reported that Red Tractor sector boards have been asked to consider the implications of future environmental measures, arising from a DEFRA review of agricultural pollution regulations, and the potential role that the scheme might take in its response. The reported aim would be to assist industry coordination and help reduce audit duplication<sup>11</sup>

Each sector board consulted on priorities for their sector early in 2026, and Red Tractor has set overarching objectives to remove superfluous standards and audit points, review the assessment cycle, make use of third-party data and provide a clearer rationale for standards. Red Tractor has also committed to deliver operational improvements, such as assessor training and improved use of technology and communications<sup>12</sup>.

We are aware that the majority of the farm assurance schemes have met to consider the UKFAR recommendation concerning the development of a loose “federation” of schemes” to help reduce

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, ‘Retail body snubs farm assurance monitoring review’, Farmers Weekly, 18 November 2025

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, ‘New report marks progress against key Farm Assurance Review recommendations’, NFU website, 27 October 2025

<sup>7</sup> ‘LMC reviews NI farm quality assurance strategy’, Agriland, 7 October 2025

<sup>8</sup> Chair of the Red Tractor Pigs Sector quoted in ‘Red Tractor introduces Enhanced Welfare module for pigs’, PigWorld, 1 December 2025

<sup>9</sup> ‘Red Tractor poultry scheme faces call for major overhaul’, Poultry World, 2 December 2025

<sup>10</sup> ‘Red Tractor announces major review of farm standards’, Farmers Weekly, 8 December 2025

<sup>11</sup> ‘Red Tractor considered role in future environment regulations’, Farmers Weekly, 3 March 2026

<sup>12</sup> ‘Improving farm assessments and standards’, Red Tractor website, 8 December 2025

duplication and share best practice. The first of these meetings, in the autumn of 2025, was attended by the Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner to observe the discussion, and a further meeting was held early in 2026. It is hoped that this dialogue will continue to help schemes jointly address the UKFAR recommendations where this will be of assistance to them, and to the benefit of the farming community.

Prompted by the UKFAR, the Oxford Farming Conference in January 2026 included a session, hosted by Map of Ag, on the use of data to reduce audit duplication and shorten audit duration. Speakers pointed to improvements to the Red Tractor members’ portal to make it easier and more efficient to use, and to help reduce time spent on audit visits.

A collaboration between Red Tractor and Tesco provided one example of the reduction of audit duplication for dairy farms. The session called for greater alignment between farm assurance schemes, a point also noted in the UKFAR report, as well as greater collaboration between farmers, certification bodies, retailers and policy makers in the development of the farm assurance system<sup>13</sup>.

Improvements to the Red Tractor portal have been reported elsewhere<sup>14</sup>, noting that the system can now take live geostamped photographs that reduce the need for manually recording tasks on paper, and embedded links to third party templates to assist in reducing the time needed for audit preparation. Further developments are planned to integrate Red Tractor requirements into farm systems created by third-party software providers.

These, and other reports, demonstrate that there remains a willingness across much of the farm assurance landscape, to address the issues identified in the UKFAR and to deliver change in the farm assurance system.

The following section identifies where those changes are taking place and the overall progress being made, to date, against the UKFAR recommendations. It will also identify where progress is lacking, or has not yet been reported to us, so that readers of this report can judge where there are remaining gaps in taking the UKFAR process on board.

## 5.2 Key Areas of Progress

**Strategic Recommendation 1: On-farm audits must be reduced, simplified and delivered more consistently.**

**Recommendation 1.01: Clarity about purpose (page 87 of the original UKFAR report)**

The purpose and scope of farm assurance must be clarified and reset, based on the good practice statement set out in this report. Agreement should be sought from bodies across the food supply chain on this restatement so that there is a clear understanding of the need for, and objectives of, a high-quality UK farm assurance system.

Action: NFUs and the AHDB to lead

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
AHDB		X					
NFU		X					

A paper restating the purpose and scope of farm assurance is expected to be published by AHDB and NFU imminently. It is planned to include a table suggesting an appropriate scope for foundational and enhanced assurance, and the different types of benefit/value that assurance can potentially deliver. The

<sup>13</sup> ‘Tech push aims to cut farm assurance paperwork and audit burden’, FarmingUK website, 30 January 2026.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Red Tractor upgrades member portal to help streamline assessments’, PigWorld, 19 February 2026.

table will include examples of how schemes currently demonstrate each type of benefit. It is hoped that schemes will then take the opportunity to express their own purpose and scope in a similar format.

*“The NFU has worked closely and in depth with AHDB to discuss the importance of clarifying purpose, value and scope. We jointly hosted two round tables in 2025, which .... helped shaped NFU thinking and positioning around this subject. On the surface, this appears to be a straightforward exercise, but we have found that getting scope, purpose and value well defined by scheme is a critical pre-requisite to the success of a number of FAR recommendations, including but not limited to:*

- *Data*
- *Avoiding mission creep*
- *Environmental standards*
- *Regulatory use of farm assurance*

*In our deliberations with AHDB, we have regularly come to the phrase – “many roads lead back to purpose, value and scope” and how schemes govern this. As such, NFU sees this area as a key legacy of the UKFAR, which NFU will continue to work on and lobby assurance schemes to bring transparency to this fundamental piece of governance.*

*In our joint publication with AHDB, NFU has set out some high-level concepts on purpose, scope and value, but success is dependent on schemes to embrace this, be transparent and demonstrate good governance...*

*Different assurance schemes are there to deliver different things to a consumer audience and back to scheme members. We have found there to be a number of variables that need to be considered in defining purpose, scope and value, including:*

- *Baseline/foundation scheme vs premium*
- *Geographical coverage eg UK vs specific home nations*
- *Sector and sub-sector scope*
- *Food safety vs environment vs welfare vs sustainability*

*Working with our representatives on the various Red Tractor sector boards, it has been realised that as schemes look to expand away from a core of food safety it becomes difficult to have a “one size fits all” approach across multiple sectors. This links specifically to our ongoing work with Red Tractor and NFU’s role as a member of the ownership body.*

*For what we describe as “pseudo-mandatory” schemes ie schemes that farmers are practically obliged to join to access the market, NFU considers it to be vital that purpose, scope and value is highly transparent and well governed. Where this isn’t the case, the NFU fears that schemes risk amplifying the imbalance of power in supply chains on top of the existing oligopsony (few buyers, many sellers)”.*

#### **Recommendation 1.02: Revising Standards - focusing only on what is necessary (page 87)**

There is an urgent need to remove or reduce the complexity of existing standards. Each farm assurance scheme must undertake a deep dive of existing standards to provide a publicly available plan setting out which, in due course, will be removed, replaced or improved.

Each scheme must, thereafter, report publicly on the rationale for keeping or removing a standard, be that, for example, added value or due diligence delivered. Each new standard introduced to a scheme must have a publicly identified sponsor/sponsors to provide greater transparency on the catalyst for its inclusion.

This work will provide the basis for applicable UKAS scheme reviews, which we recognise take place on a longer cycle, but will enable time to be provided for improved communication with the farming industry on the steps to standards simplification being pursued by farm assurance schemes.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>		X					
<b>SQC</b>			X				
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>				X			
<b>WLBP</b>				X			
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>	X						
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

In December 2025, **SQC** commenced a full review of its standards to ensure they are relevant, fit for purpose and required by the supply chain. This involved:

- Stage 1 - an internal production and checking of a justification exercise - looking at each standard and ascertaining its justification and why it was required, ie HACCP requirement; legislation; benchmarking; food safety; traceability; worker protection; training and professional competence; environmental protection. It also recorded all non-compliances applied over the last 3 scheme years for each standard, to show whether they had achieved a rise or fall and therefore, where additional guidance could be provided to growers to assist in achieving the standard and its requirements
- In January 2026, there were c15 meetings held with SQC, Co-op members, and others within the supply chain to explain the process and to engage/consult with them as follows:
  - (a) to share the internally produced justification document - asking them to record which standards are specifically relevant to their area of the supply chain (under distilling/milling/brewing /malting/feed/oats/merchants/energy/ growers. SQC also recorded which standards were specific to the European Commission Renewable Energy Directive/SAI Platform/Mutual Recognition
  - (b) to obtain feedback on any perceived gaps within the standards

The updated document was then to be reviewed (in late February) by the Scottish Crops Supply Chain Hub before discussion with the SQC Standards Setting Committee, in March. At that stage, next steps will be identified and timelines allocated. Should any substantive changes be required (ie any change which will affect the process undertaken by the Certification Body/or what is required by the assured grower) the SQC scheme will be subject to an additional review by UKAS and additional consultation will be required to justify any changes to be made.

SQC noted that if no substantive changes are required, it is hoped that the full standards review will be complete and published for the new scheme year on 1st October 2026. If substantive changes are required, SQC will undertake additional consultation with the supply chain and growers/be subject to a UKAS review. This will delay any publication - possibly until October 2027.

It is also the intention of SQC to openly publish this document via their website – and for this to be updated every 6 months. Columns are provided for the recording of queries on any specific standard (to ensure nothing is missed) and the document will be used to monitor change requests / changes made and ensure transparency/justification for standards on an ongoing basis.

The **BEIC** is the inter-professional organisation of 11 trade associations, which cover all aspects of the egg industry – breeding, hatching, rearing, laying, packing, egg processing and marketing. British Lion Standards are UKAS approved. The BEIC is in constant communication with all stakeholders in the scheme. Public statements are believed not to be necessary as the industry is already involved in the scheme and represented at the BEIC Council and all stages of the standard setting process.

It does not believe that publicly issuing standards is suitable for the scheme and risks exposure to the wider industry. Standards are reviewed via a formal governance process that is approved by the BEIC Council. Reviews happen at regular intervals and feedback is gathered via the formal process in place, in particular the Lion Standards Technical Committee. This meets once a quarter.

**QMS**, as discussed in their autumn response, embedded a new process for reviewing standards in 2022 which has led to reductions in number of standards for the beef and sheep sectors, and now the pig sector, by around 15%.

**WLBP**, following the first round of feedback, stated they will start considering reviewing their standards towards the latter end of 2026.

**GLOBAL GAP** reported that it demonstrates its commitment to public consultation through a transparent, structured, and stakeholder-driven process for developing and updating its standards and add-ons. This process includes open calls for feedback, publication of draft documents, and engagement with industry, producers, and NGOs.

As previously stated, the **Soil Association** have revisited standards to reduce complexity and now apply a series of tests (filters) to any proposed new standard. This ensures that only those that have a clear purpose are candidates for the standards development process. They constantly review any changes to baseline organic and horizontal legislation and remove any Soil Association Standards that are covered by these requirements.

All **SEDEX** standard changes under SMETA are consulted on with all of the membership, and no standard is introduced that goes beyond the core remit to monitor practises against the ILO conventions. Any changes agreed via this consultative process are subsequently published for public review.

Through a revision process, **LEAF** continually seeks to simplify the structure and clarity of the standard's requirements. In version 17, this includes consolidating similar requirements, clearly identifying the verification criteria, and providing a short purpose statement for each control point. Information with regard to the development of each standard version is publicly available on the LEAF website, including the Standard Setting Procedure, Terms of Reference, and overarching objectives for each revision. Once completed, a public synopsis of the consultation is also published, together with a summary of any changes.

**Recommendation 1.03: Right of Appeal (page 88)**

There must be recourse for farm businesses to refer an audit outcome to an independent arbitrator, outside the farm assurance scheme, who is capable of making binding decisions, in instances where that outcome could restrict market access (for example in the dairy sector).

Each farm assurance scheme must publicly restate its approach to having a transparent complaints and appeals procedure that takes account of the need for external arbitration. Unless non-compliance relates to an issue of food safety, or some other serious breach of standards, it should not result in immediate suspension of market access. Each farm assurance scheme must also publicly restate the timescales within which an appeal process will be completed.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>	X						
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>			X				

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>WLBP</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>Soil Association</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>LMC NI</b>						<b>X</b>	
<b>SEDEX</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>LEAF</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>BEIC</b>	<b>X</b>						

**OF&G** commented that every UKAS certified organisation has to be compliant anyway.

This year, **SQC** has simplified the right to appeal process within its newly designed website, ensuring everyone can access all related guidance and documentation in one place.

The **Lion Code of Practice** has clear and transparent dispute mechanism procedures. These are believed to be well understood by subscribers, and in turn, by their producers.

The **QMS** certification body has an appeals panel and separately, on membership rules, it also has an appeals panel.

**GLOBAL GAP** noted that it is compliant against this recommendation via its integrity programme and complaint procedure through its certification body.

The **Soil Association** believes that these types of issues are for the Certification Body, UKAS and Defra (as the “Competent Authority” for baseline legal requirements in the organic standards). It understands that the complaints procedure operated by the Certification Body complies with this recommendation.

**SMETA** audits have a transparent dispute process to which auditors are required to respond. If resolution is not achieved, escalation is available to any member, via the **SEDEX** grievance process, and this escalation is well used. Complaints are also accepted against auditors for wider conduct/implementation issues, and there is a formal grievance process to deal with them.

**LEAF** allows farm businesses a 30-day period to correct any non-conformance issued. Appeals against audit and certification outcomes are handled first by the relevant certification body's own procedures (as required by their accreditation), and if not satisfactorily resolved can be escalated to LEAF. Appeals and complaints concerning the certification system currently fall under the governance of the LEAF Marque Board, however this will be supplemented by a committee of independent members, outside the assurance system.

At present **NIBLFQAS** focusses on the three key pillars of food safety, animal welfare and care for the environment. Its risk management procedures take into consideration 6 non-compliances with these fundamental standards and the degree of non-conformance will determine what the sanctions, if necessary, are.

NIBLFQAS has a detailed set of rules which will also be fully reviewed during its standards review process. These rules are very clear in terms of the timeframes that must be adhered to for certification within the scheme. An appeals procedure has been in place for many years which provides NIBLFQAS applicants/participants the opportunity to appeal any decision in relation to certification, suspension, refusal etc.

In these cases, the contracted Certification Body advises the applicant/participant of the right of appeal and provides details of the Appeal Procedure by written notice. The appeal panel is independent and consists of an Independent Chairman (legal) and individuals with appropriate expertise appointed by Scheme Owners in consultation with the Independent Chairman. The LMCI does not attend the appeal hearing but provides administrative support. The timescales associated with this process are detailed within the NIBLFQAS rules and by written notice to the appellant.

As with the last **RSPCA** update, the work that was planned for completion in September last year has now finished. It has shared the output with members and partners. The new sanctions & investigations process is now live. The appeals process has also been improved.

**Recommendation 1.04: Proportionate sanctions (page 88)**

Each farm assurance scheme must revisit the sanctions imposed for non-compliance to ensure that they are proportionate and do not unduly impact upon the viability of a farming business. To this end, standards should continue to be graded, but schemes must work together to ensure that there is greater consistency between their standards, grading and any sanctions imposed for non-compliance.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>				X			
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>			X				
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>	X						
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

The **Lion Code of Practice** already has clear and transparent sanctions for non-conformance. The scheme is specific to the egg sector and therefore any cross-assurance scheme comparisons are not relevant, albeit they do meet informally to discuss and learn from each other with regard to best practice in this area. It noted that sanctions are well understood by its subscribers, and in turn, by its producers.

Several schemes are benchmarked to **GLOBAL GAP** standards.

The **Soil Association** has a detailed catalogue of sanctions agreed by Organic Control Bodies and Defra (it is a requirement of the baseline legislation). There is a similar catalogue of sanctions for Soil Association Higher Standards - this is kept under review.

**SEDEX** does not apply sanctions for non-compliance, any level of non-compliance is treated as actionable and there is no certification which can be failed. SEDEX always encourages responsible supply chain management practises amongst its members.

Due to **LEAF's** environmental focus, in comparison to food safety and related GAP standards the LEAF Marque does not currently use grading for non-conformances. LEAF Marque uses 'core' control points, N/A criteria, and Advanced (non-mandatory) control points recognising best practice, to support a proportionate approach. Farm businesses are permitted a 30-day period to correct any non-conformances (against core control points) before suspension of the certificate takes place. A further 30-day extension is possible with approval from LEAF Marque.

**Recommendation 1.05: Risk based, coordinated inspection (page 88)**

Each farm assurance scheme must adopt a risk-based approach to audit visits, based on previous audit outcomes, so that the timing of visits, and their content, can be adjusted to enable more focussed audits to be undertaken, possibly over a longer period between visits where this is permissible under the accreditation arrangements pertaining to the scheme. The risk assessment must be clearly communicated to the farm business so that it is aware of the timescales and areas of focus that will form the basis of future audit visits. Prior to a farm audit, the certification body must continue, as currently expected, to contact the farmer to set out an audit plan on how the process will work and offer the opportunity for the farmer to ask questions or raise any concerns.

However, this should, henceforth, be conducted as a supportive contact, to reduce the stress associated with an audit. It should also be a mechanism by which advice about the audit process can be offered on a non-prejudicial basis. If an auditor is unable to conduct their audit in accordance with the timing in the agreed audit plan, they must set out their reasons for not complying with this requirement and provide a written statement to this effect to the farmer.

If the farmer does not agree that the time taken for the audit was compliant with the audit plan, through no fault of their own, the farm assurance scheme must review the matter to ensure that the auditor's work is being conducted as effectively and efficiently as possible and inform the farmer of the outcome of its review.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>			X				
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>		X					
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>			X				
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>	X						
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

**OF&G** feel this will be difficult due to different timescales in the scheme (eg beef and lamb at 18-months and crops at 12-months, making a joint inspection impossible).

In addition to information recorded in the autumn feedback, the **SQC** Board has approved a review of the SQC bandings and renewals process. This will also look at audit frequency, based on risk management. This was only approved in mid-February 2026 and given the level of consultation which will be required with growers and the supply chain, will be taken at a pace to ensure full engagement. It is hoped to have change - if it is identified as required and accepted - in place by October 2027.

**British Lion** audits are risk based with those demonstrating good audit performance benefiting from longer timeframes between audits. Each audit is preceded by a letter that clearly identifies what is required from each visit and the time that the visit will take. As previously set out, sanctions for non-compliance are understood and will in some cases result in more frequent audit visits.

**QMS** stated that as they approach their Certification Body tender period, they have undertaken a review of how they could address this matter in practice, discussing it in detail with both the beef and sheep

industry Leadership Groups. This would involve moving to a risk-based assessment schedule, similar to that in place for the pigs scheme. At the time of response, QMS is awaiting final feedback from UKAS and final sign off from the QMS board.

Initial discussions took place during winter of 2025 between **WLBP** and **UKAS** to explain its intention to consider the potential opportunity of integrating surveillance assessments, as part of the assessment cycle.

Further discussions have taken place between assurance schemes across the UK in order to see whether this type of proposal could be consistently applied across similar national schemes and that it could align with the principles of their framework agreement. There was a consensus that there is a need to approach UKAS on a collective basis to secure support for this change in approach.

**GLOBAL GAP** demonstrates its risk-based approach through a combination of tailored audit methodologies, country-specific risk assessments, and targeted, science-based control points in its standards. Resources are focussed on areas of higher risk, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all, 100% inspection of every requirement.

The **Soil Association** stated that risk-based inspections are mandated by the baseline organic legislation. Management of inspectors and inspections is a matter for the Certification Body, UKAS and Defra.

**SEDEX** noted that its sophisticated risk assessment tools allow for audits to be conducted according to risk. With regard to timing, SMETA audits are conducted according to set criteria determined centrally (ie in relation to the number of workers at the site). In exceptional circumstances, there might be arrangements made to extend the audit with advance notice - this is usually only where there is excessive travel time between parts of the audit.

Elements of this recommendation are already implemented in the **LEAF Marque** in a number of ways. Examples of this were reported as:

- After their initial creation, policies and management plans required by the standard are subject to annual review and updates. The requirement to have a third-party with sufficient expertise reviewing the landscape and nature documentation does not apply until the 5th year of those documents being in place
- Additional audits for extension to certificate scope are also subject to risk assessment, which includes the business' conformance history
- Additional assessments by Certification Bodies are restricted to only where there is complaint/reason for suspicion of non-conformance, which may include previous non-conformance history
- The accreditation requirements for LEAF Marque prevent variable certification audit/assessment frequencies being applied depending on previous conformance outcomes
- LEAF Marque's approved Certification Bodies are required to provide a transparent calculation of fees, including where based on audit timings. Farmers are able to raise complaints directly with their Certification Body and with LEAF Marque with regard to audit timing if they feel audits are not conducted effectively. The staff of Certification Bodies (auditors, but also other key roles) are required to be trained in details of LEAF Marque relevant to their role, enabling them to support farmers with their queries and preparation for audits (within the parameters of their accredited status)

The concept of risk-based inspections as detailed in the UKFAR was recently addressed by the **NIBLFQAS Industry Board** during the review of the NIBLFQAS Strategic Plan 2025-2028. Although this is a mechanism to reduce audit burden, the feedback from the farming representatives was that they do not believe this is the correct way to achieve this, at the present time. It was agreed that the 18-month inspection cycle with 5% spot checks works well. There was also discussion around the challenges from both the farmer perspective and from an NIBLFQAS resource perspective, particularly around communications, external perception of categorising farms as high/low risk and IT investment required.

It is important to note that the NIBLFQAS Industry Board fully supports the aim to reduce audit burden however, the concept of risk-based inspections is not a high priority mechanism to deliver that. There is a need to continue to manage risk, but not necessarily through changing the quantity or frequency of inspections. The outcome is that this is not a strategic priority for NIBLFQAS at this time.

The **RSPCA** has been “socialising” its plans for its new non-conformance categorisation and risk profile with members and supply chain partners. This has been well received. To ensure they “land” this new process effectively, both internally and externally, the RSPCA has extended its timescales for delivery. While training and pilot design has commenced, it is now planning to commence the pilot of this framework in Q2 2026.

**Recommendation 1.06: Learning lessons: using experience to support members (page 89)**

Whilst recognising the nature of audit requirements, farm assurance schemes must establish processes to make the lessons learned from audit visits available to their membership in an anonymised form, so that best practice, and the means to develop that practice, can be shared across the scheme. This should recognise the role that farm assurance plays in helping to maintain and improve standards across the farming industry and auditors should be tasked with the requirement to identify best practice to feed into these processes.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 9 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>					X		
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>			X				
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>			X				
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

**SQC** has implemented all actions, as identified in its last feedback report. In addition, the standards justification document (used as part of the standards review process) will assist in identifying standards where SQC can assist growers further to meet the requirements/identify standards that are causing issues for farmers (eg in November/December 2025 it implemented a derogation to Standard 4.01 to assist growers - where possible - who only had temporary storage facilities).

However, the exercise identified that not all growers were aware of the requirements of this standard. Additional training and instruction was given to assessors and this is now being passed on during each audit.

**BEIC**, as previously mentioned, highlighted that its technical committee meets quarterly and discusses lessons learned at every meeting. Lion subscribers will then take those messages out to their respective producers.

**QMS** has increased engagement with assessors through the delivery of assessor training days, which also brings in key regional stakeholders, to ensure strong engagement between members, their representatives and assessors.

**GLOBAL GAP** referred to an impact driven approach, sharing of metrics. Publicly available reports on their Integrity Program are available on its website.

**Soil Association** standards are accompanied by comprehensive guidance on compliance which contains considerable detail of what constitutes “best practice”. In addition to this, Soil Association Certification and the Soil Association Charity have comprehensive approaches to supporting producers that meet and exceed the intention of this recommendation.

**SEDEX** felt this was an interesting idea but were not clear how to integrate it with other audit improvement protocols. It was regarded as a potentially useful addition, but it would have to investigate its practicality at the scale at which it they operate.

**LEAF** guidance documents and training incorporate examples of best practice, including auditor/certification body feedback, and examples from the network of LEAF Demonstration Farms, and farms participating in projects on which LEAF has collaborated. Feedback, queries and statistics on non-conformance against specified requirements are also used. This is to inform producer guidance, standard development, and auditor training.

**LMC** employs a Farm Liaison Officer (FLO) who provides an advisory role to NIBLFQAS applicants and participants pre- and post-inspection, as well as any NIBLFQAS related queries. The FLO also provides dedicated “clinics” in livestock markets every month across each county. This provides a face-to-face point of contact for NIBLFQAS. The FLO provides feedback to the team on queries/issues so that they can be discussed during standards reviews and with the Certification Body.

**Recommendation 1.07: Working in tandem: collaboration and cooperation between schemes (page 89)**

Additional work is required to secure collaboration and cooperation between farm assurance schemes to allow for multiple scheme audits to be conducted at the same time, reduce duplication and encourage “earned recognition” between schemes, with the aim of reducing the time required from farm businesses in preparing for, and participating in, their audits. In due course, there must be a common scale of standards (or at least a “read across” between scheme standards) - with minimum standards and additional requirements related to customer requirements, only where they are strictly necessary to obtain particular or specialist market access.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes, led by the AHDB

Timescale: 9 -12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>					X		
<b>SQC</b>		X					
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>		X					
<b>RSPCA</b>					X		
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>			X				
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>					X		
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>AHDB</b>				X			
<b>BEIC</b>				X			

**OF&G** felt that this will not be achieved until the whole system changes.

**BEIC** noted, as earlier, that each farm assurance scheme is very different and that this recommendation therefore looks difficult to achieve.

**QMS** mentioned that not all schemes cover multiple scopes and access to data between competing businesses and therefore, this may result in GDPR issues. Similarly, compliance with standards may vary between sectors. The scheme standard is the “point of difference” expected by buyers. QMS’s Certification Body, the FIA, are proactive collaborators seeking audit efficiencies where possible. Over 50% of SQC members are also members of other QMS Schemes assessed by FIA, reducing the audit burden and cost. They also work with RT Certification Bodies to ensure members of RT Dairy and QMS C&S standards can co-ordinate assessment on the same day, where possible. There are, however, some occasions where specialist markets require additional evidence of compliance for specialist market standards.

**GLOBAL GAP** aims to reduce duplication by means of its benchmarking programme.

The **Soil Association** is working through the emerging Farm Assurance Forum to deliver on the intention of this recommendation. It also has a long history of encouraging earned recognition between schemes and by regulators.

**SEDEX** noted that it will not be interoperable with any of the other schemes because it is primarily a social standard.

**LEAF** requires complementary “baseline” farm assurance to be in place, and the assurance system is geared toward the 2 audits happening during the same visit. This is to provide efficiencies for the farmer and for the Certification Body/auditor when using the same evidence to draw conclusions according to the respective requirements. LEAF Marque has open communication and works alongside the most prevalent “baseline” farm assurance standards, to further document and recognise requirements with a high degree of similarity and reduce audit burden by confirming to farmers where the same evidence is suitable for both standards.

**AHDB** (as explained in the published response to the UKFAR report in April 2025), does not believe that it is the appropriate organisation to facilitate collaboration and co-operation between schemes. This recommendation was discussed at the first farm assurance scheme (FAS) roundtable that the AHDB and NFU convened in May 2025. Those present confirmed that they would prefer to progress such activity themselves. As such, AHDB is pleased that the new FAS Forum has met twice and believes that it clearly has potential to facilitate collaboration and cooperation between schemes.

**Recommendation 1.08: Joint training for inspectors (page 89)**

Farm assurance schemes must revisit their induction and training programmes for both new and existing auditors, to create and publish a common “framework” that is mandatory for all scheme auditors to follow, to address the simplified assurance structure sought in this report.

There must be a renewed focus on training to develop interpersonal skills amongst the audit community to better understand and improve communication and relationships between the audit process and the farm business. To this end, farm assurance schemes should engage with The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture (TIAH) to capture and recognise the completion of continuing professional development of farm assurance auditors and for TIAH to help signpost farm assurance schemes, and their auditors, to appropriate training providers. Farm assurance schemes must publish data on auditor training and completion on an annual basis.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes, working with TIAH

Timescale: 9 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>					X		
<b>SQC</b>	X						

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>				X			
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>					X		
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>	X						
<b>LEAF</b>				X			
<b>TIAH</b>					X		
<b>BEIC</b>				X			

**TIAH** understands that assurance schemes work with Certification Bodies (CBs) to carry out assessments on their behalf. As part of their contract, each CB is required to have enough qualified staff to complete the necessary work. These staff may be directly employed by the CB or engaged as individual subcontractors. TIAH has not yet been introduced to the CBs but remains willing to engage to meet the terms of this recommendation.

The **BEIC** utilises a firm of independent auditors. Training programmes are undertaken regularly - at least annually. Feedback on auditor performance is provided by scheme members through multiple routes, most notably its Technical Committee that meets quarterly.

**QMS** has contracted the services of an ISO IEC 17065 accredited Certification Body. There are specific QMS criteria which stipulate expectation of assessor/auditor competency and training. In addition, under the CB's accreditation, which is independently assessed annually by UKAS, there is a requirement to demonstrate auditor/assessor competency, training and ongoing CPD. This is an agreement with the CB (FIA) requiring it to evidence, annually, its contractual requirements to UKAS. It would add additional burden to QMS and its CB if another layer of auditor validation was required – which conflicts with the UKAS requirement.

That said, the QMS CB (FIA) operates a unique programme to monitor and manage assessor performance and consistency across a set of key performance indicators. This commercial benefit was one of the reasons QMS chose the FIA. Sharing data more widely on this programme would potentially undermine FIA's USP/IP.

Making it mandatory to use TIAH would also undermine the point of difference that allows for choice when scheme owners are selecting an appropriate and proactive CB. Having an exclusive requirement could also undermine the work being done by other organisations in support of scheme owners (eg BCVS, BASIS, NPTC, LANTRA).

**GLOBAL GAP** stated that information about learning and development programmes is available to CB auditors. This is embedded in the scheme rules for new and existing CB auditors.

The **Soil Association** believes that this is the responsibility of the Certification Body and UKAS.

**SEDEX** has a universal social auditor training certification framework, but it is not interoperable with non-social audit schemes.

Auditor competence, including communication of the intended impacts and requirements of the **LEAF** Marque Standard, is required for LEAF Marque approved certification bodies to include in its auditor training and monitoring. This is supported by mandatory training provided by LEAF Marque for scheme managers and in-house trainers (at which auditor attendance is also welcomed).

### Recommendation 1.09: Transparency between schemes and regulators (page 90)

Farm assurance schemes must instigate a training programme/awareness raising exercise with farming industry regulators to better explain the purpose and scope of good practice farm assurance, and to help improve understanding of the respective roles of farm assurance versus regulatory requirements.

Ideally, this process should be coordinated between the farm assurance schemes, though it is recognised that it will need to take account of the devolved nature of certain regulators and the schemes most relevant to their respective territories. This exercise must be repeated on a routine basis (we recommend once every two years) to ensure that the exchange of information is up to date. Account must also be taken of the regulatory review being undertaken by DEFRA to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of its regulatory landscape.

Each year, under each farm assurance scheme, auditors should come together alongside key stakeholders to walk through mock inspections to improve two-way dialogue and learning. We are aware this happens under QMS/SQC schemes and strongly encourage all farm assurance schemes to adopt such an approach.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes and industry regulators

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>					X		
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>				X			
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>			X				
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>			X				
<b>LEAF</b>				X			
<b>BEIC</b>	X						
<b>Natural Resources Wales</b>						X	
<b>FSA</b>	X						
<b>Welsh Government</b>						X	

**OF&G** feel there is not enough time to achieve this and KPI's on schemes are too high.

**SQC** is currently organising a “mock assessment” to which they will invite key stakeholder organisations and government agencies to provide transparency on the methods used during a SQC audit. Afterwards it will invite feedback from those who attended to ensure that delivery of a “mock assessment programme” every 2 years provides the level of detail that is required.

**BEIC** is in regular contact with farming industry regulators on numerous topics and the British Lion Scheme is well understood by all relevant bodies and stakeholders, particularly within DEFRA.

**QMS** works with FIA who already conduct “mock assessments” with other bodies in attendance - NFUS, SSPCA and RSABI. QMS also works closely with other bodies to communicate QA updates and key challenges seen on farm.

Although **WLBP** continues to pursue greater recognition with regulators and government, it continues to feel that there is lack of a priority within agencies to progress and implement agreements where possible.

**GLOBAL GAP** scheme owner representatives are members of GLOBAC and EA. Two-way dialogue takes place between scheme owners and regulators with regards to technical topics (eg food safety issues).

The **Soil Association** is open to any proposals in this area but felt that implementation would largely be the responsibility of the Certification Body.

**SEDEX** will take the lead from the Farm Assurance Forum as to whether this suggestion could be relevant its work.

As a scheme with international membership (over 50 countries), **LEAF** has producers under the supervision of many and varied regulatory bodies. This makes the engagement described in this recommendation challenging. Within the UK, LEAF & LEAF Marque have good lines of communication with UK government departments, regulators and other bodies - whose environmental agendas are supported through LEAF Marque audits and the other activities of LEAF.

The **Welsh Government** has close interaction and collaborative working with key stakeholders such as Welsh Lamb and Beef Producers who administer the FAWL scheme.

**NRW** has a long-standing relationship with FAWL, with regular meetings and have provided training for assessors. It would welcome the opportunity to develop similar engagement with other farm assurance schemes that operate in Wales.

As reported previously, the **FSA** considers that it is compliant with this recommendation. In addition to the activities reported previously, since September 2025, it has also undertaken the following activities in support of this recommendation:

- Arranged, through National Agriculture Panel of the FSA (NAP), for training to be provided by Red Tractor (RT) to Local Authority (LA) officers. The training covered details about the RT scheme and how it operates. It also provided an opportunity for LA officers to ask questions. The training was attended by over 180 LA officers. This training was recorded, and a link to the training shared with all LAs, as well as colleagues in DAERA and FSA Dairy Hygiene Inspectors (DHIs). The recording has been viewed 115 times to date
- Facilitated a meeting between NAP and RT where a pilot was agreed which enables LAs to find out further details about why a member has been withdrawn from an RTA scheme. This will enable LAs to make intelligence led and risk-based decisions as to when they undertake an official control of withdrawn members
- Facilitated NAP providing RT with LA officer details to ensure that every feed authority has an officer that can access the RT online membership checker, enabling LAs to have up to date membership details for businesses in their area
- Delivered a Feed Delivery Day in Wales for lead feed officers, at which WLBP also presented. This covered how those premises awarded Earned Recognition (ER) impact on the LA inspection frequency, the circumstances where ER is removed and the role of the Approved Assurance scheme(s) (AAS)
- Delivered an animal feed themed session to the FSA Welsh Food Advisory Committee. This provided an overview of the feed delivery model in Wales, feed policy and the delivery of Official Controls in Wales with insight from industry, LAs and the FSA
- Liaised with NAP about reporting non-compliant members of any AAS where ER has been removed and developed a new form for this information to be provided. The amended form, which is anticipated to be implemented in spring 2026, includes the option for reporting officer details to be provided to the AAS to encourage better communication between them
- Worked with NAP to provide guidance to LA officers on accessing RTA data to support ER. This covers use of the RTA online portal, referrals for non-compliance and the online industry checker
- Reviewed scheme standards within scope of the MoUs for AIC and RTA. This ensured that the “legislative mapping” aligns scheme standards with relevant regulatory requirements. A similar exercise is planned for schemes in Wales and NI. The FSA has discussed the outcomes of this

with RTA as part of their Sector Strategies consultation to ensure that any changes to the standards will continue to reflect regulatory requirements

The FSA is also planning a training day with RTA specifically for FSA DHIs to improve understanding of how both RTA and DHIs operate.

**Recommendation 1.10: Addressing the impact of audit on farmer wellbeing (page 90)**

We were told about the pressure placed on some farmers by participation in farm assurance schemes, and of the impact on their level of stress and mental health. We are also aware of the wide variety of farms undergoing schemes audits, and the fact that farming is an industry where there are reported to be high levels of neurodiversity.

There is a need for auditors to be aware of these factors and to be able to take them into account in their auditing approach. As a result, farm assurance schemes must pay particular attention to audit style and approach in their auditor training programmes. Training and support are available on mental health awareness from, for example, FCN, RABI, RSABI and Rural Support and we encourage farm assurance schemes to engage proactively with these charities and support mechanisms.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes and relevant farming support organisations

Timescale: 9 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>					X		
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>	X						
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>					X		
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>			X				
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>	X						
<b>EA</b>						X	
<b>RSABI</b>	X						
<b>RABI</b>						X	

Staff involved in the farm assurance schemes in Scotland continue to be actively taking part in mental health first aid training with **RSABI** and to have a constructive working relationship with the organisation.

The **BEIC** noted that auditor training covers these areas.

**QMS** has paid for mental health first aid training for FIA assessors, delivered by RSABI. As part of the Farm Assurance Forum, it has also discussed commissioning research to understand in more detail the mental health burden faced from assurance. It is hoped this will be taking place later in 2026.

**WLBP** noted that further training during 2026 will be rolled out for all assessors and certification staff to refresh and upskill their knowledge about stress, mental health and wellbeing awareness.

According to **GLOBAL GAP** rules, CB auditors are subject to auditor training and auditor behaviour and soft skills are incorporated into rules for CB auditor training.

The **Soil Association** noted that this is the responsibility of the Certification Body and UKAS.

The revision process for the **LEAF Marque** standard places an ongoing emphasis on the readability of the standard, accessibility for those with neurodiversity, and, as a global standard, non-English speaking farmers are strongly considered.

Aside from the language and terminology used, the LEAF Marque standard also emphasises where different forms of evidence can be presented. It flags those requirements where a documentary record must exist, but also where evidence can be gathered through auditor observation, and through discussion with farmers and their staff. These different ways of evidencing conformance are emphasised through the training provided for CBs and auditors. LEAF Marque also invests in various formats of support materials for farmers - including written documents, videos, animations and webinars.

During its 2022 standards review, **LMC** provided details in the **NIBLFQAS** Record Book of the “Rural Support” and “Farm in Mind” charities to provide easy access to contact numbers for support. LMC operates the NIBLFQAS helpline (Monday-Friday 9am -5pm) to support farmers through the inspection and certification process. All staff in the CB have also had training on mental health awareness. This is something that will continue. Agriculture remains the most dangerous profession that anyone can follow in the UK and Ireland. For that reason, LMC is a founding member of the Farm Safety Partnership (FSP) aiming to secure the highest possible health and safety standards on farms. Following the 2022 review of NIBLFQAS Standards, LMC implemented a number of key safety-related practices at the heart of the management standards expected of cattle and sheep farmers. This will continue to be considered during the standards review in 2026. In addition, LMC has used its presence at the Balmoral Show over many years to communicate a clear health and safety message to farmers. This promotional activity has had a strong focus on the need to keep young children living on farms safe at all times.

**Recommendation 1.11: Promoting consistency in inspections (page 91)**

Where possible, there must be greater consistency in the appointment of an auditor to a particular farm business, to enable a better understanding of that business to be generated in the audit process. It is recognised that this will be subject to accreditation requirements and that a term of appointment may be necessary, but that term should be sufficient to enable an auditor to get to know the farm they are auditing.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>			X				
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>				X			
<b>RSPCA</b>	X						
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>					X		
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

**BEIC** stated that this already happens within its outsourced and independent audit function. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the relationship described above must be limited to a specific term where possible.

Currently **QMS** requests that assessors can assess the same site 3 years in a row (some areas are harder to comply with this). The key challenge is the need to adhere to accreditation (ISO IEC 17065) requirements with only 3 assessments conducted by the same assessor. If there were changes to the accreditation requirement, then a more supportive relationship could be cultivated, however the integrity of the QMS Schemes does rely on impartiality. This may be compromised should an assessor become over familiar with a site/member. FIA does offer to change assessors at the member's request (where feasible) to ensure that a constructive assessment environment can be created.

**GLOBAL GAP** noted that it has scheme rules on auditor training and the maintenance of competency. It also noted its Integrity Program and calibration sessions.

The **Soil Association** took the view that this is the responsibility of the CB in consultation with UKAS and DEFRA, but that its approach meets the intention of this recommendation.

As part of **SMETA** integrity assurance, **SEDEX** does not permit the same auditor to be assigned repeatedly to the same site.

**LEAF Marque** does not mandate a maximum consecutive number of audits that can be completed by the same auditor. As the majority of LEAF Marque audits are completed during the same visit as a baseline farm assurance audit, it is possible for auditors to build familiarity, with the underlying accreditation requirement. The assessment must, though, remain impartial (including guarding against overfamiliarity which may impact the rigour of an audit).

#### **Recommendation 1.12: Inspection as a career path (page 91)**

Farm assurance schemes must collaborate to secure and improve the pipeline of experienced and trained farm auditors. This may require greater engagement of farm assurance schemes with external bodies (such as colleges and universities), and publication of how this is done, to raise awareness of farm assurance as a potential role of interest (even if part time) to the next generation of farmers. It could involve work experience placements, student projects on farm assurance and discussions with course tutors on the latest developments in farm assurance and how they can be built into educational curricula.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>				X			
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>				X			
<b>WLBP</b>					X		
<b>Soil Association</b>					X		
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>			X				
<b>LEAF</b>				X			
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

**OF&G** mentioned that auditing is now a profession. It can, however, attract younger, less experienced assessors who can work quickly, can take exams - but at times lack empathy, knowledge of the farming industry and experience.

Whilst no new actions have commenced since the last round of feedback, **SQC** reiterated that it is the responsibility of the CB to appoint assessors. It felt that the scheme must provide guidance on requirements - aligned to UKAS accreditation and that the UKFAR could work to promote the importance of CBs and the importance of the relationship between the scheme owner and the CB. SQC appreciated that each has their own responsibilities and some conflicts of interest can arise, but the relationship should be seen as a partnership. CBs must be given credit for the work they do and the role they play in the assurance sector. This could then be aligned to the better promotion of auditing as a career path.

**QMS** noted that the FIA currently has a pathway for trainee assessors to work their way up. It is not the scheme owner that appoints the assessor/auditor. FIA has actively engaged with SRUC and LANTRA to investigate opportunities to create a route to entry for future assessors, making it a definitive career path with supportive qualifications. FIA is also investigating an assessor Apprenticeship Scheme to complement the full-time assessor model it operates in conjunction with sub-contracted resources. This would provide a longer route to assessing to ensure all relevant technical and soft skills are addressed prior to qualification. Professionalisation of the assessor career is a core priority of FIA. However, professionalism of this degree will command fees/salary to support it, and all schemes/members will need to be conscious of this when setting memberships fees in future.

For **GLOBAL GAP**, relevant meetings take place between scheme with other schemes and universities, so as to gain knowledge that is relevant to the training of auditors.

The **Soil Association** believes it is not in a position to leverage this change, but would work with the Farm Assurance Forum, if others are able to lead on this recommendation,

**SEDEX** is very interested in this recommendation, but as yet, does not have a plan for implementation. Its 52 audit firms do undertake this sort of activity, but not centrally.

**LEAF** carries out extensive engagement work with colleges and other education settings, raising awareness with young people on the role of more sustainable farming in a variety of potential agricultural industry careers, including auditing. A collaboration between LEAF and LANTRA will lead the development of curriculum content and training approaches, drawing on LEAF's practical expertise in sustainable farming. Together, the organisations will design and test learning resources that give new entrants, and those already working in the sector, the skills required across real-world farming systems.

### **Recommendation 1.13: Risk-based inspection (page 91)**

There must be a reduction in the frequency of farm assurance audits for those farm businesses that are consistently compliant, building upon the risk-based audit approach that we recommended, and which should be adopted by farm assurance schemes. Farm assurance schemes must also consider having a focus on topics while auditors are on site, which, alongside the greater use of technology to deal with remaining audit requirements that can be reviewed before the farm visit, could release more time for the auditor to assess more aspects of farming practice rather than assembled paperwork.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 2 years

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>			X				
<b>SQC</b>				X			
<b>QMS</b>				X			
<b>Red Tractor</b>						X	
<b>RSPCA</b>				X			
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Agri Audit</b>							<b>X</b>
<b>LMC NI</b>						<b>X</b>	
<b>SEDEX</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>LEAF</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>BEIC</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>EA</b>						<b>X</b>	

**BEIC** already has risk-based inspection criteria through British Lion Standards.

**QMS** is reviewing what they are able to undertake in this area, as part of their current CB tender. It has developed, in collaboration with the Sheep Industry Leadership Group and the Beef industry Leadership Group, a risk-based model that it is currently discussing with UKAS to see if it could be accepted as part of the scheme's delivery.

**GLOBAL GAP** and its portfolio of solutions follow a risk-based approach. A concept of operational items within the audit scope and criteria has been introduced. Procedures and training for auditors are in place for the competent and efficient use of technology, and the option of hybrid audits. The concept of better use of audit time on site and reducing audit frequency remains under review.

The **Soil Association** noted that this approach already applies to organic certification.

**LEAF Marque** already has existing technology in place to enable this approach. However, in the revised normative documents accompanying Version 17 of the LEAF Marque Standard, an increased emphasis and structure is in place for review of documentary evidence, prior to the on-site part of an audit. This makes use of the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review platform or other means for farmers to share documents with their auditor in advance. This has the potential for the auditor and farmer to spend a greater proportion of the onsite part of the audit completing the site tour and observation of agronomy and environmental management.

**Strategic Recommendation 2: There must be a transformational step forward in embracing technology and managing data to deliver more effective farm assurance with greater added value for all.**

**Recommendation 2.01: "Tell Us Once": making good use of data (page 92)**

Farm assurance scheme auditors must be mandated to review their scheme's online portal prior to their audit visit and to conduct a "tell us once" review of the documentation placed on the portal by the farm business. This is to enable the audit visit to focus more on any essential missing documentation and a review of farming practice during the audit visit. Farm assurance scheme auditors must be required to provide written evidence that the pre-visit portal/repository review has been conducted.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>SQC</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>QMS</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>Red Tractor</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>RSPCA</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>WLBP</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>Soil Association</b>	<b>X</b>						

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>AgriAudit</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>	X						
<b>LEAF</b>				X			
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

**OF&G** felt that all certification body reviewers should be qualified auditors – which is potentially not always the case.

**SQC** continues to work closely with their CB (FIA) to develop the audit portal which was launched in Spring 2025 - for delivery of the 2025 SQC grain passport. There has been mixed reaction to the portal - with some wishing it to go further (to allow for uploading of data pre audit) and others asking why this is necessary. SQC will continue to work with the NFU Scotland to ensure that all growers remain fully engaged and involved. **SQC** is currently undertaking a “Mission 100” project to ensure all growers are at least signed up to the portal by May 2026.

Each **British Lion** audit is preceded by a letter that clearly identifies what is required from each visit, the time that the visit will take - and what is expected from that visit. Audit activities are undertaken by an independent audit company, that provides this information and any other documentation that is required to make the visit as efficient as possible for scheme members.

**QMS** is working with its CB, to consider member feedback on the most appropriate way to achieve this. The CB has recently rolled out a member portal to one of its other schemes, which has duplicate QMS members. This has been useful to review how the approach works and what the challenges may be.

**WLBP** completed an internal trial during 2025 providing members with an option to complete pre assessment uploads of data/evidence of compliance prior to their assessment. During a 4-month period, WLBP concluded that the sheep and beef members who wished to provide information in advance of an assessment were in the minority, with the majority confirming their preference to provide information during the assessment (with the assessor).

Many farmers were aware that this functionality existed and the option was available to them. Separately, WLBP has in 2025/26 developed an app that farmers will be able to use to complete the animal health improvement cycle and biosecurity element for the Sustainable Farming Scheme with their vet. The main advantage is that Welsh Government will recognise the system. The automated system from WLBP completed submissions of completed stages of the Animal Health Improvement Cycle (AHIC) to WG by WLBP members under their permission and control, with no data submission, just confirmation that tasks have been completed.

Confirmation from the WLBP system provides farmers with assurance of completion, as well as eliminating the need for inspection (AHIC and Biosecurity element of UA12 SFS Universal Layer) if farmers are subjected to a Rural Payments Wales farm inspection.

WLBP believes that such a system, if embraced by farmers and vets in Wales, will provide an opportunity for the industry to hold data on production and animal health metrics. This will help the industry improve production, as well as provide critical data and evidence in order to obtain further advanced support through optional and collaborative tiers of the SFS.

**GLOBAL GAP** allows off-site and on-site audits, if requested by the producer.

The **Soil Association** believes this is a matter for their CB. Its understanding is that their approach complies with this action.

**SEDEX** does not currently require documents to be uploaded on the platform by auditees.

**LEAF Marque** requires completion of the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review (LSFR), an online self-assessment questionnaire. This also provides a document management tool, including sharing of

documents with auditors. The revised LEAF Marque normative documents accompanying V17 of the standard have provisions for auditors to complete all or part of the required documentary review prior to an on-site visit. Farmers and auditors are not obliged to do this. However, auditors must evidence that it has been completed before the end of the audit.

There was no update to the previous **RSPCA** survey response. However, it commented that this is still in its strategic plan and it will update members and partners on plans for further progress.

**Recommendation 2.02: Data ownership: the need for resolution (page 92)**

Any outstanding issues surrounding the ownership, holding and use/sharing of data required by farm assurance schemes, following the UKFAR and streamlining of current standards recommended must be clarified, in conjunction with farming industry bodies. The results need to be communicated to the farming industry as soon as practicable. It is recognised that certain farming data may be seen as valuable by assurance scheme members, but it is essential that value creation by a farming business is not conflated with the use of anonymised data that can help direct improvements in farming assurance and farming systems. This distinction needs to be “written in” to an industry compact about data ownership, custodianship and use that will be vital if the longer-term benefits arising from the wider use of technology in farm assurance systems are to be realised.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes, NFUs and the AHDB

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>			X				
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>				X			
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>			X				
<b>AgriAudit</b>						X	
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>					X		
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>NFU</b>				X			
<b>NFU Scotland</b>	X						
<b>NFU Wales</b>				X			
<b>UFU</b>			X				
<b>AHDB</b>			X				
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

The **BEIC** does not have any issues with this recommendation. Any data collected is provided by its scheme members following discussion and agreement in its governance forums. All data is anonymised before it is used, typically in reporting and informing regulatory policy matters.

**QMS** is clear that members retain ownership of their data and have appropriate data sharing agreements in place where required.

Private policy and data access rules are documented on the **GLOBAL GAP** website.

The **Soil Association** is participating in the Farm Assurance Forum and will collaborate on any agreements/best practice on data. It notes that it cannot leverage any 'industry compact' but will work with the Forum on this topic.

**LEAF Marque** is certified to the Farm Data Principles Standard and sets out its handling and use of data clearly in its scheme rules. This includes that individual farm business' data will not be shared with any third parties, other than their CB for the purpose of an effective audit, or relevant enforcement bodies in case of legal breaches. Any access to individual farm business data is only permitted where there is a separate agreement in place between another party and the farm business (outside of the LEAF Marque scheme rules provisions). Otherwise, farm business data is only shared in an anonymised, aggregated manner for the further benefit of the farm assurance system and LEAF Marque impact reporting.

Following on from stakeholder engagements **AHDB** has been part of a project looking at the issues across the area of data governance. The idea of a "Community of Practice" (CoP) for data governance across agriculture seems a reasonable option for addressing some of the requests it has heard. A proposal for a cross-industry CoP on data governance is being drafted by AHDB, before being shared more widely with key industry stakeholders (assuming the proposal is approved by the AHDB Leadership Team). The AHDB is also part of a four-party consortium which recently won the Defra FIG (Food Infrastructure and Governance) tender, which gives another valuable opportunity to input on data governance, and the particular concerns and challenges the industry has around this topic.

The **NFU** and **NFU Cymru** noted that the data demands of assurance schemes are heavily linked to the purpose, value and scope of the underlying scheme. Until this is addressed at the scheme level, this topic is likely to remain in a holding pattern. In their previous responses they highlighted their involvement in a number of policy and industry-led initiatives on data, which is a "busy space". Power imbalances in the supply chain are driving and combining with asymmetry of data and information in the supply chain, causing a market failure. This subject is much larger than the world of farm assurance. In that context, levy bodies are well placed to tackle this issue and to provide a space for collaboration on this topic. The NFU and NFU Cymru are supportive of the approach the AHDB is taking in the Farm Data Exchange proof of concept. NFU Cymru is also involved in ongoing conversations with Welsh agricultural stakeholders and Welsh Government about the role and value of data.

**NFU Scotland** noted that farm data is not an area in which they are directly involved. However, it has established a set of farm data principles that includes the importance of farmers retaining ownership of data. It has been engaging in conversations with other devolved organisations around data use and the potential for a co-op model for data. It is aware that this conversation needs more time to develop but feel that progress is being made and welcome the higher profile the topic of farm data now has.

The **Ulster Farmers Union** reported that data ownership and use remain a complex issue that extends beyond the remit of individual farm assurance schemes. The increasing use of technology and data within agriculture offers opportunities to improve both farm performance and assurance delivery, but farmers must have confidence that their data is being used appropriately. The UFU believes that greater clarity is required on:

- data ownership
- custodianship
- how anonymised data may be used for sector improvement

Farm businesses must retain ownership of the data generated on their farms. At the same time, anonymised data may provide important insights to support improvements in farm assurance systems and wider supply chains.

Progress on this issue requires further collaboration between farming organisations, assurance schemes, processors and government bodies. The UFU supports wider industry initiatives aimed at improving data governance and transparency in agriculture.

**LMC** has always had clear data protection policies in place where NIBLFQAS participants data is concerned. Following the introduction of GDPR in 2018, LMC undertook a legal review of data protection policies and developed a detailed Privacy Notice for NIBLFQAS applicants and participants.

This clearly outlines what data is collected, how it is used, processed, stored and shared with. It is reviewed regularly. The application form to join NIBLFQAS also outlines these data responsibilities. Any changes are communicated via LMC publications and text messaging. Any data collected as part of separate schemes is not used for or by NIBLFQAS.

The **RSPCA's** new data and impact team is progressing well with its data strategy. A member research project will also feed into this, as will its technology roadmap.

### Recommendation 2.03: Creating a data co-op (page 93)

Farm assurance schemes, working together, should support the feasibility work into a data co-op, building on activities already started by Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd (SAOS), whereby data could be shared across the private and public sector, to reduce duplication and improve efficiency. However, through a co-operative mechanism, farmers should retain control of the commercially sensitive data, manage consent and protect any commercial value associated with it. Consideration must also be given to replicating the approach seen in Wales, for the development of data hubs that can be used to pull data sources together to provide guidance and resources for the farming industry and inform the development of farming practices and policies.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>					X		
<b>SQC</b>			X				
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>						X	
<b>RSPCA</b>				X			
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>					X		
<b>Agri Audit</b>							X
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>	X						
<b>LEAF</b>						X	
<b>AHDB</b>			X				
<b>BEIC</b>					X		

**AHDB** commented that the Farm Data Exchange proof of concept project completed the "technical build" phase at the end of January 2026. Some final project elements were due to be completed during February 2026, as well as the business plan for what might come next. Discussions continue on whether or not this concept should be taken forward to address some of the challenges encompassed in this recommendation and AHDB's future role. Depending on the outcomes of those decisions, this approach may offer a decentralised cross-industry solution to data sharing, which supports farm assurance schemes need for activity data, as well as many other use-cases, but not threaten any commercial operators/data holders. This approach should make it easy for a "collect once, use many times approach" controlled by the data owner to optimise value.

Since September 2025, **SQC** continues to engage with SAOS, NFU Scotland and QMS to discuss a farmers data co-op and actively await an update and next steps. SQC agrees with the principles as noted in this action and is willing to work with key partners and stakeholders in its development.

Discussions involving **BEIC** have taken place in informal sessions across farm assurance schemes, but due to the sheer complexity of each organisation, and as there are clear differences in purpose,

approach and information requirements, it feels unlikely that there is a solution that would suit the very specific egg sector nature of the British Lion Scheme.

**QMS** is working with NFUS and SQC on a proof-of-concept project to design a data co-op platform (to be delivered by SAOS). It is also liaising with the AHDB on the wider data co-op project it is delivering to ensure UK alignment.

**GLOBAL GAP** commented that this is not feasible for its scheme due to international data privacy laws.

**LEAF Marque** remains open to contributing to feasibility work on a data co-operative system, where its existing data management systems and principles allow (including the interoperability of its own systems with other platforms, and where there is a demonstrable benefit to significant numbers of farm businesses).

### Recommendation 2.04: Supporting farmers in a digital world (page 93)

Farm assurance schemes must publish information about the training programmes they have put in place to help improve farmer take-up of current technologies used within their scheme. They must also ensure that future system developments include relevant training for end users at cost to the scheme, not to the farm business.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>			X				
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>					X		
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>	X						
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>Agri audit</b>							X
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>	X						
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

Further to comments made in the last round of feedback, **SQC** stressed that it is difficult to enhance technology and provide training, without incurring additional costs. SQC is a stakeholder co-op with income generated solely via grower renewals. It has no other business interests or income streams and receives no external funding. Advances in technology are expensive. In order to freeze renewals at 2025 rates, SQC cut other areas of expected project expenditure to ensure that the cost of its Industry Checker did not impact growers. It also introduced an Affiliate Membership fee meaning that those using the Industry Checker had to pay for the service - rather than it being paid for by the grower. The industry needs to look more widely at who pays for assurance and the expected improvements to delivery.

The **BEIC** stated that, at present, all users utilise their systems in full. As and when the scheme changes IT systems or introduces new technologies, groups of relevant stakeholders will be invited to participate to feed into that change and in user acceptance training. On release, training programmes will always be put in place for all end users.

**QMS** has engaged with training providers to signpost this need, but this is not something for which QMS currently has a requirement, because it does not have a high level of technology within its schemes. If it were to increase technology use, it would include knowledge transfer within its communications strategy to members.

**GLOBAL GAP** provides training and development through its Academy, offering online and on-site courses, workshops, and a Registered Trainer programme to enhance food safety and sustainability. Training covers Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA) standards, including soil, water, and pest management, using expert-led, practical, and multilingual formats to support compliance. GLOBAL GAP also assists producers, through modernised, IT-driven certification systems like the new Certifier OS platform, which enables digital audits, mobile-friendly data management, and real-time, online certificate validation. It facilitates digital adoption via tools like the Impact-Driven Approach to Sustainability (IDA) add-on, allowing farmers to record, track and analyse data digitally, enhancing efficiency and market access.

The **Soil Association** stated again that this is a matter for the CB. It provides regular events and training for scheme members.

There is a wide range of training freely available to all **SEDEX** members, much of which concerns technical use of its platform.

Written and video guidance is available for all **LEAF Marque** farm businesses on the use of its current technologies (primarily the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review). In addition, there is a dedicated email inbox and team who support farm businesses with its use.

**Recommendation 2.05: Future possibilities: harnessing collective expertise (page 93)**

The farming industry should seek to facilitate a regular “hackathon” – inviting subject matter experts and institutions to help gather relevant businesses/academics to address the question of the longer-term use of technology in farm assurance. The literature review for this report shows that the topic of technology is often raised as a solution, but there has been little collaboration and focus on building solutions that will help reduce the burden of assurance on farming businesses, whilst satisfying the information needs of those who rely upon farm assurance for wider business or regulatory purposes.

Action: NFUs, the AHDB and the DEFRA Data Group, working with Agri-Tech E and/or the UK Agri-Tech Centre and participating Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>DEFRA Data Group</b>				X			
<b>AHDB</b>			X				

The **DEFRA Data Group** has seen no evidence of this to date.

The **AHDB** noted from the first FAR Monitoring Report that, "Both Agri-Tech E and the UK Agri-Tech Centre are willing to assist with the implementation of this recommendation, when there is further clarity around the demand for, and timing of, such events". While it does not view this recommendation as an urgent priority, it remains ready to support industry Hackathon events, with clear and actionable use-cases from across the industry.

**Recommendation 2.06: “Tell Us Once”: collecting and storing data (page 94)**

Farm assurance schemes must ensure that they have a portal or similar data repository which can be used by scheme members to host information required during their audit visit. The format of that data should be flexible (for example, data provided from farm management systems, relevant images, scanned copies of certificates etc).

This is to better provide for data collection during the audit cycle, rather than during the period immediately before the audit visit. Information provided via a portal/repository should be a mandatory element of data collection and, to this end, farm businesses must be positively incentivised by farm assurance schemes to use these basic technologies as part of the audit process. Furthermore, farm assurance schemes must publish annually the take-up of their respective portal/repository by scheme members, so that a record of progress towards universal use of such systems is publicly available.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>		X					
<b>OF&amp;G</b>			X				
<b>SQC</b>		X					
<b>QMS</b>			X				
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>			X				
<b>WLBP</b>			X				
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>Agri Audit</b>							X
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>	X						
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>			X				

The **BEIC** is considering how it can improve the collection of data required during the audit process. Nevertheless, the timescales proposed in the review are seen as being unrealistic, given the time and resources available and the likely complexity of any solution.

**QMS** is working with FIA on this topic, with plans to introduce this approach to the pig sector in the first instance. **SQC**, another FIA customer, has recently launched a portal for its members and QMS is using this as a test bed to understand what is needed to make a QMS portal a success.

The **GLOBAL GAP** scheme makes use of some digital platforms for storing audit related data. It is in the process of improving this user experience to allow more easy storage and retrieval of the related data for use.

**SEDEX** has a data platform that hosts self-reported data points for repeat access by buyer members and auditors.

**LEAF Marque** has invested significantly in the development of its LEAF Sustainable Farming Review (LSFR) platform - an online farmer self-assessment against the principles of Integrated Farm Management. This underpins the LEAF Marque, in a way that aligns closely with the standard, allowing farmers to upload evidence and share this with their auditor. The platform encourages and facilitates farmers to do this throughout the year - supporting demonstration of their strategies and continuous improvement. Use of the LSFR is a requirement for LEAF Marque certification, resulting in 100% uptake.

In addition to its previous survey response, a **RSPCA** member research project will support it in understanding data and member portal requirements. The RSPCA technology roadmap also incorporates a review of the member portal to understand how it can improve this for members (eg documentation upload, as just one example).

## Recommendation 2.07: Alternative approaches (page 94)

The Association of Independent Meat Suppliers (AIMS) VetaVerse scheme, along with other schemes under development using new technological approaches, should be explored further, with support from others, to provide a strong focus on their governance structures, data ownership and funding models.

Whilst not an immediate replacement for accredited farm assurance schemes, as they currently stand, technology-based approaches, such as that proposed by AIMS, may have the longer-term potential to disrupt current methods of farm assurance in the livestock sector, and could also bring non-assured livestock products into farm assurance scope. Like similar initiatives, it will need to move from concept to coordinated application, with the support of other actors in the food supply chain, the government and the wider farming industry.

Action: New scheme developers to work with the AHDB to support the development and delivery of novel approaches to farm assurance

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Agri Audit							X
AIMS		X					
AHDB	X						

The **AHDB** is financially contributing to the Proof of Concept of the AIMS Vetasure system, which is now underway. It anticipates the Proof of Concept, due to be completed in April, will provide lesson learning and synergy with the AHDB Farm Data Exchange project.

**AIMS** reported progress since September 2025 on this recommendation as follows:

- It has officially commenced **Pilot Phase 1** of the Vetasure (previously referred to as VetaVerse) initiative. This phase consists of a comprehensive feasibility study designed to map how the Vetasure digital verification layer operates at critical touch points across the livestock supply chain. To ensure the study is robust and objective, AIMS is working closely with AHDB and has appointed an independent consultant to lead the technical and economic evaluation
- **Supply Chain Engagement:** AIMS has undertaken a significant engagement exercise with a cross-section of the industry, including primary producer groups, processors and retailers. The goal has been to stress-test the Vetasure concept against real-world pain points, such as data duplication, manual record-keeping errors and the lack of real-time assurance visibility
- **Governance & Data Ownership (in progress):** AIMS is currently investigating decentralised governance models. Its focus is on ensuring that while the system provides transparency to the supply chain, the farmer remains the data sovereign owner. Legal and technical frameworks for data permissions are a core component of the current feasibility study
- **Funding Models (under investigation):** AIMS is evaluating several sustainable funding structures. The objective is to move away from a farmer-pays dominated model toward a value-exchange model, where the costs of the digital infrastructure are shared by those in the supply chain who benefit from the real-time data and reduced risk
- **Impact on Farmer Experience:** The primary objective of the Vetasure pilot is to prove that automated assurance can (drastically) improve the farmer's daily life. By capturing data natively at the point of veterinary intervention or movement, the system could eliminate the audit preparation window that currently plagues livestock producers. Feedback from initial farmer focus groups suggests that the Vetasure approach could bridge the gap for non-assured farmers, by providing a lower-friction, high-integrity route into recognised assurance standards
- **Future Roadmap:** by the end of Q1 2026: Completion of Phase 1 and publication of the Vetasure Feasibility Report. Q2 2026: Move into Phase 2 (Technical Beta), involving platform development and live data integration tests between selected farms and participating processors

**Recommendation 2.08: Keep it live: reviewing standards (page 94)**

As new approaches to farm inspections are created, either because of emerging legislation or other regulatory requirements, a dynamic approach to implementing related exemptions in current farm assurance systems must be taken.

One example might be the impact of Vet Attestation and how this might be applied, or used as an equivalent method, to help reduce audit requirements in some farming sectors. We expect current farm assurance schemes to use data on a “tell us once” principle to avoid duplication of effort by farm businesses and to deliver greater efficiency in farm assurance processes.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>		<b>X</b>					
<b>OF&amp;G</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>SQC</b>		<b>X</b>					
<b>QMS</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>RSPCA</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>WLBP</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>Soil Association</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>Agri Audit</b>							<b>X</b>
<b>LMC NI</b>						<b>X</b>	
<b>SEDEX</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>LEAF</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>BEIC</b>	<b>X</b>						

Since last September, **SQC** has revisited the approach with Food Standards Scotland to seek equivalence for SQC and minimise FSS inspections for growers who have SQC assurance status. It has now been speaking with FSS for over 3 years to progress this matter. SQC believes that the onus for avoiding duplication/improving efficiencies must be shared (eg SQC wishes to gain equivalence via FSS, but it is not seen as a priority when resources and finance are low. Consideration should be given as to how the industry can help alleviate this issue - not just focus on who is responsible for it.

Another example would be its work to maintain recognition under the European Commission's Renewable Energy Directive (RED). Currently, RED II Implementing Regulations (IRs) are employed as part of the SQC Standards Audit. However, when the IRs change SQC must similarly make changes to Standards. Over the last 3 years SQC has strived to do this - to provide ongoing access for Scottish growers to the EU renewables market. However, UKAS (the National Accreditation Body for the UK) is no longer recognised by the EC as a NAB (as we are no longer a member state). IR 11(1) of the RED requires scheme accreditation via a NAB within a member state.

Despite the SQC scheme being accredited and recognised by the European Accreditation Body, it does not meet IR 11(1) because UKAS is not a member state NAB. SQC asks for additional support to avoid duplication and reduce the burden to Scottish crop growers to ensure that they maintain market access. Sometimes, as in this case, the issues are not created by the assurance scheme and cannot be solved by them alone.

**BEIC** stated that, where possible within UKAS accreditation, standards are regularly reviewed and updated to take account of legislation changes, new technological developments, etc.

**QMS** already meets this requirement as part of its standards review process.

**GLOBAL GAP** includes processes to handle exemptions, based on formal review and approval by technical experts. Audit checklists are being designed to be more customised and only offer audit questions relevant to the auditee.

The **Soil Association** believes this is largely the responsibility of the CB but will work with the Farm Assurance Forum on any initiatives to reduce audit burden. It actively seeks to reduce duplication or the setting of reporting requirements that can be demonstrated through other means - both regulatory and voluntary where these are sufficiently credible.

**SEDEX** constantly review standards in relation to legislation, for example due diligence legislation.

**LEAF Marque** is keen to explore where there are opportunities to reduce audit burden on producers through the use of emerging technologies provided that these technologies are fit for that purpose, and accessible for the wide range of regions, systems and farming business models in the LEAF Marque system. LEAF has previously taken part in two Horizon 2020 funded projects on Earth Observation and its use in various aspects of agricultural monitoring and continues to collaborate with various technology companies.

**Recommendation 2.09: Investing in technology (page 95)**

The intended outcome from the above recommendations is to deliver a technology and data driven environment, within the medium term, which is embedded within all farm assurance schemes and where farm business take-up is greatly improved.

However, it is recognised that technological developments are moving at a fast pace and farm assurance schemes will need to maintain, at their cost, a comprehensive strategy for innovation and investment in this element of their work. The aim should be for farm assurance schemes to work together, using the results of the proposed “Hackathons”, to develop real time, mobile (i.e. farm friendly), data collection systems on which a rolling assurance system could be based.

Research by *Zhou et al* on Intelligent Food Assurance Systems (IFAS) shows that food assurance/food transparency/food waste and sustainability and business value can benefit from collaboration and improved data use. The technology for some aspects of this approach, enabling real time data collection for example, is already employed on many farms, but a greater coordination of effort, and engagement with the farming community, will be required to deliver a shift in farm assurance towards these methods and to enable aggregated data to be better used for best practice identification and feedback to farm businesses.

Action: The AHDB to coordinate with Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 2 years

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>AHDB</b>				<b>X</b>			

The **AHDB** takes the view that the extent to which assurance schemes adopt new technology is up to them. However, the **AHDB** is taking a strategic approach (through Farm Data Exchange and Food Infrastructure and Governance projects) to develop a facilitatory ecosystem. This will enable a range of stakeholders to make better use of technology, should they choose to do so. It is worth noting that there is no panacea for the whole industry. The appropriateness of technological solutions varies a great deal from sector to sector, and across different farming systems.

**Strategic Recommendation 3: Farm assurance schemes need to reset and/or restate their decision-making structures to establish farmers as the driving voice in standards development.**

### Recommendation 3.01: Creating and amending standards (page 96)

We recognise that farm assurance schemes have different ways in which they engage with the farming community, but it is essential that farmers are involved in the process of creating or amending farm assurance standards.

Initially, each farm assurance scheme must publish the way in which it achieves this objective, so that the routes for farmers to make their views known are clear. In the longer term, farm assurance schemes must collaborate to set out an agreed framework for the way in which consultation with the farming industry, beyond scheme board members, for example, is conducted.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>				X			
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>	X						
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>	X						
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

As part of the **SQC** full standards review - and in addition to information provided in the last round of feedback – it has undertaken additional engagement with all SQC assured growers to request their feedback on the standards and to provide detail around any concerns they have. The communication went out to over 3,000 assured growers. Only 2 growers responded directly to highlight concerns of which SQC was already aware (whilst thanking it for the opportunity to engage). However, SQC has held several meetings with NFUS and extended the deadline for feedback from regional combinable crop committees to ensure that it can incorporate all information received in its next steps. This additional engagement will be built into the process for future reviews.

The internal justification document will ensure transparency and justification for all standards and any proposed changes. Finally, in line with some of the questions SQC received - since consultation on the standards began – it is looking to produce a simple Q&A document outlining questions received and providing greater clarity around them. This will be a “working” and live document available online - meaning that it can add to it at any given time and updates will be provided to all growers via the regular e-newsletter.

As the inter-professional organisation of 11 trade associations, covering all aspects of the egg industry – breeding, hatching, rearing, laying, packing, egg processing and marketing, **BEIC** noted that all areas of the industry, including egg producers, packers, hatcheries, pullet rearers, etc are involved in the standard setting process.

**QMS** did not have an update to its previous survey response. It includes full consultation with scheme members as part of the standards review process, as well as with members representative organisations, and QMS Industry Leadership Groups.

Anybody can propose an amendment to **Soil Association** standards. Producers can also put their view through the Organic Producer Board. The baseline legal requirements are set following the usual process. This is the responsibility of DEFRA and the EU Commission (in N Ireland)."

All **SEDEX** members are consulted on and are welcome to contribute to any standard process update.

**LEAF Marque** publishes the terms of reference for any standard, including its intended impacts, standard development procedure, governance structures, and public consultation information. During public consultations, as well as public webinars, multiple methods are available to farm businesses to provide input, via written submissions, short or long form templates, as well as verbal contributions.

Following the publication of the UKFAR the **NIBLFQAS** Industry Board and Standard Setting Committee approved a revised methodology to review standards. This methodology is not intended to change the role of assurance, but to try to improve the standards review process, whilst continuing to improve standards on farm and provide assurances to the supply chain and consumer. This process was due to commence in February 2026, with an aim to implement it on farm in 2027. The methodology will focus on assessing if the standard adds value to the supply chain, is fit for purpose, is auditable and how it can be better evidenced.

Where possible standards will be removed or streamlined, with the aim of reducing complexity, any changes made will be fully communicated with farmer participants in the scheme. All areas of the industry are represented on the NIBLFQAS Industry Board and Standard Setting Committee. Any proposed changes will be consulted on with industry stakeholders throughout the process. As part of the standards review process, **LMC** will endeavour to adopt the "tell us once" approach, with the aim of reducing audit burden and paperwork on farm.

### **Recommendation 3.02: Appointments to sector boards (page 96)**

It is also essential that the process for appointing farmers to sector boards (or similar) as representatives of their sector are transparent and that those acting in this capacity are clear that they must engage with the wider farming community, to act as a representative voice for that community.

The process for appointment should be independent of the scheme's senior executive team so that those selected are able to appropriately challenge that team on the operation and development of the farm assurance scheme(s). Furthermore, there must be a clear role description for farmer appointments which sets out their obligations to act as a representative for the relevant industry sector and in the wider interests of the farming industry.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>			X				
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>	X						
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>					X		
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>					X		

Sector boards are not relevant to the **BEIC** and British Lion Standards. Each organisation that is a member of the BEIC has processes for identifying who will represent them at the BEIC Council. The BEIC Council has AGM's and governance procedures to ratify appointments.

Appointments to standards setting bodies are made by the **QMS** board, who themselves are appointed by the Scottish Cabinet Secretary.

**GLOBAL GAP** producers can join the different technical working groups.

**Soil Association** appointments to the standards board are in line with ISEAL Codes<sup>15</sup>. The independent Chair of Standards Board leads the selection process.

**SEDEX** does not have a process for appointing farmers to its board as they are not solely a farm assurance scheme.

**LEAF Marque** does not operate specific sector boards. There is farmer representation with the recommended mandate on the LEAF Marque Board, and LEAF Marque's Technical Advisory Committee, which is chaired by a farmer, as well as having strong farmer representation amongst its members.

### Recommendation 3.03: Board structures in farm assurance schemes (page 97)

All farm assurance schemes must review their structures and board composition to ensure that their skills mix is balanced and equitable across the food supply chain. They should use the Campbell Tickell report as a guide to ensuring that their governance arrangements deliver best governance practice.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>			X				
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>	X						
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>					X		
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

When directors are elected onto the **SQC** Board, they complete a questionnaire to identify their understanding of SQC or aspects of SQC on which they require further direction. The Board is surveyed every 3 years to monitor its progress and/or related training requirements. SQC also annually undertakes a review of its conflict of interest register/professional register (which indicates areas of specialism, eg financial, marketing etc).

The **QMS** board structure is set out in the QMS Statutory Instrument, with more than 50% of board members legally having to be levy payers. A skills matrix is used as part of the board member recruitment process, and regular board appraisals are undertaken. The standard setting body is appointed by the QMS board and contains a balanced representation of the species or sector to which

<sup>15</sup> <https://isealalliance.org/about/who-we-are>

the body relates. Previous reviews led to independent farming members being appointed, alongside farmer representative organisations.

The **BEIC** Council and the governance structure that sits underneath it, is regularly reviewed and contains appropriate individuals from across the egg sector.

**GLOBAL GAP** representation on the technical working group is balanced by different industry groups, (eg producers, retailers).

The **Soil Association's** standards governance process follows ISEAL Codes (as noted earlier). The Independent Chair is responsible for ensuring that all relevant interests are represented.

**SEDEX** does not have a process for appointing farmers to its board because it is not solely a farm assurance scheme.

**LEAF Marque's** board structure and composition is regularly reviewed and updated, with continuing priorities of representation across the food supply chain, a broad mix of skills and optimal governance practices.

**Recommendation 3.04: Balancing scheme demands (page 97)**

The statement of good practice for farm assurance as set out in the UKFAR, must be revisited periodically by farm assurance schemes, to ensure that the demands placed on various parts of the food supply chain represented in the farm assurance scheme remain balanced. It also requires that additional farm assurance costs arising from new or enhanced standards are shared across the food chain on an equitable basis. We suggest an annual review of this nature, with published outcomes, would provide the necessary assurance that such an assessment has been conducted and the results enacted.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: To be reviewed annually

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>OF&amp;G</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>SQC</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>QMS</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>RSPCA</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>WLBP</b>						<b>X</b>	
<b>Soil Association</b>						<b>X</b>	
<b>LMC NI</b>						<b>X</b>	
<b>SEDEX</b>						<b>X</b>	
<b>LEAF</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>BEIC</b>						<b>X</b>	

This element is a core part of the **QMS** standards development process, whereby it assesses the cost to implement any standards.

The **GLOBAL GAP** scheme is in contact with relevant experts and stakeholders with regard to good agricultural practices. Periodic revisions are in place. In terms of the costs involved, it cannot be determined yet how this is shared across the food chain.

**LEAF** is committed to ongoing review of its membership and assurance costs for LEAF Marque, seeking equitable distribution of costs across farms of different scales and the supply chain.

### Recommendation 3.05: Using impact assessments (page 97)

The publication of an impact assessment for either the creation or removal of a farm standard must become a matter of course for each farm assurance scheme. In this way, the origin and rationale behind the standard/removal of the standard, and the way in which the farming industry has been consulted about this change can be publicly reported. This will help improve communication and levels of trust between the relevant scheme and its members.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>	X						
<b>SQC</b>		X					
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>				X			
<b>WLBP</b>				X			
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>				X			
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>				X			

**SQC** has produced a standards justification document /impact assessment - to identify the reasoning behind standards; to identify any proposed changes to standards and the justification for this. This assessment has also been incorporated fully into the annual standards review process. In addition, an annual report will record all meetings held/consultation exercises and communications work undertaken as part of the annual standards review. This document will be available to all via the SQC website.

The **BEIC**, via its governance structures and the involvement of the egg sector in setting standards ensures, the impact of each proposal is discussed and understood. Impact assessments can be undertaken where necessary, but in the majority of cases are not relevant and would add little value to internal processes.

**WLBP** mentioned that a full standards review has not taken place. However, WLBP has streamlined elements of standards more recently to reflect the changes in relation to the control of rodenticides, which have taken effect across the UK since the beginning of January 2026.

**GLOBAL GAP** noted its public consultations for the revision of existing farm assurance schemes.

The **Soil Association** stated that its standards development and consultation process covers this requirement. This includes full public consultation in line with ISEAL Codes.

**SEDEX** does not have any farm-based standards but does try to be transparent with regard to any risks raised by members about standard changes.

The **LEAF Marque** standard setting procedure requires consultation on the addition/ amendment/removal of a standard, with reference to delivery against LEAF Marque's intended impacts, contributions to topical issues and environmentally sustainable farming.

### Recommendation 3.06: A "federation" of farm assurance schemes (page 97)

Farm assurance schemes should reflect on the need to establish a loose “federation” of farm assurance schemes, which can act as a locus for knowledge transfer/thought leadership/best practice in the operation and development of the UK’s farm assurance system.

The federation would not be a new body, but a forum for agreeing common approaches to farm assurance across the UK. The secretariat for the federation should rotate between different schemes on an annual basis. Other governance arrangements for such a federation would need to ensure that no single farm assurance scheme would predominate and that the objective would be to support the farming industry, and wider food chain, in maintaining high standards in farm assurance to enable the UK to continue to compete in international food markets.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 2 years

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>FA Schemes</b>							<b>X</b>

Whilst a full Federation is not the preferred course of action, a Farm Assurance Forum has begun to meet to share best practice and address common concerns to help improve the farm assurance system. Two meetings have been held to date, involving a wide selection of farm assurance scheme representatives.

**Strategic Recommendation 4: A new industry-led initiative must set out the future environmental ambitions for farm assurance, establishing this as an area of competitive advantage for UK farming.**

**Recommendation 4.01: Developing acceptable environmental standards (page 99)**

The Red Tractor scheme has made clear that it will not revisit the Greener Farms Commitment (or its successor) unless, and until, the farming industry asks it to do so. Other schemes will be progressing their own environmental standards, in consultation with their respective members. In these circumstances, there is no firm leadership around the issue of establishing a consistent framework for environmental standards that can act as a guide for farm businesses. Nor is there clarity around how emerging legislation, with which the farming industry will be expected to comply, will be incorporated in farm assurance, other than in a very fragmented way.

This issue must therefore be taken out of the hands of the farm assurance system and addressed by farming representatives, working with the relevant regulators, to provide a “foresight” style approach to the conversion of environmental legal expectations into a code for use by farm assurance providers and farm businesses.

This process will require the respective central and devolved government ministries and their agencies, to work with the industry to establish as common a framework as possible, so that anomalies will not be “baked into” farm assurance standards in different parts of the UK. To begin this process, the AHDB/NFUs must clearly articulate what is currently required by each of the 7 industry sectors to be legally compliant with current environmental legislation and conduct a gap analysis of methods for compliance and requirements of emerging/anticipated legislation for discussion with the ministries and their agencies.

Action: The AHDB, NFUs, Government Ministries and relevant agencies

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>AHDB</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>EA</b>							<b>X</b>
<b>Natural Resources Wales</b>						<b>X</b>	

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>FSA</b>						<b>X</b>	
<b>Welsh Government</b>			<b>X</b>				

The **AHDB** agree with this recommendation's premise that leadership around the establishment of a consistent framework of environmental standards should be taken out of the hands of the assurance system. It believes that industry representatives and supply chain customers should review the evidence of environmental impact on farming's reputation, and consider all possible solutions, which will often vary by sector and nation. These could include voluntary initiatives, government incentives, assurance standards or supply chain action.

Without an appropriate forum for such discussions, the risk in some nations is that the only place for conversations of this nature is within the governance structure of assurance schemes, and therefore the only solution that is likely to be discussed is enhanced assurance standards (ie other industry wide solutions will not be considered).

AHDB has discussed this issue with key stakeholders and has acknowledged a preference to use existing forums or structures, rather than setting up something new, the need to reflect the devolved nature of environmental legislation and the importance of democratic accountability and devolution. Those discussions have demonstrated support for this approach, and it expects to see progress on this matter in the next 6-12 months.

**NRW** stated that the Welsh Government is the lead for the legislative environmental framework in Wales. It has not been contacted to date by the AHDB or the NFU about what is required to enable any progress on this recommendation.

The **Welsh Government (WG)** is willing to work with the AHDB and farming unions on the development of a gap analysis on how each sector can be compliant with current and anticipated environmental legislation.

#### **Recommendation 4.02: How can farmers implement environmental standards (page 99)**

In taking the above approach, there must be clear and regular communication with farm businesses about the steps they can take to meet the necessary environmental legislative baseline and any agreed farm assurance standards related to that baseline. This should be based on a menu of options for farming businesses to adopt, so that a "one size fits all" approach for farm businesses is avoided.

Action: The AHDB and NFUs

Timescale: 9 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>NFU</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>NFU Scotland</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>NFU Wales</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>UFU</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>AHDB</b>			<b>X</b>				

This recommendation refers to agreed farm assurance standards related to the environmental legislative baseline.

As explained in the response to Recommendation 4.01, the **AHDB** believes that in order to reach such consensus, there is a need to discuss environmental topics outside of the assurance system, to agree what assurance should action and what needs to be actioned in other ways. Without an appropriate forum for such discussions over appropriate assurance scope, the risk in some nations is that the only place for conversations of this nature is within the governance structure of assurance schemes, and

therefore the only solution that is likely to be discussed is enhanced assurance standards (ie other industry wide solutions will not be considered).

it is therefore proactively engaging relevant stakeholders to decide the appropriate forum(s) for such decisions to be made. Of relevance to this recommendation is its ongoing environmental baselining pilot project on 178 farms. This is looking to measure the outcome of an action, and whether that action delivered what it was intended to deliver.

The AHDB will be sharing emerging observations over the course of 2026 focusing on carbon stocks managed by farmers. The same principle of outcome measurement should be applied to other environmental standards. The AHDB will be working with industry to determine how a cost-effective way of baselining and re-measuring across the industry could be achieved.

**The NFU and NFU Cymru** noted that the integration of environmental standards (legislative) is a contentious subject, and attitudes vary by (sub) sector, due to the value proposition. An important prerequisite of delivery of environmental standards is for assurance schemes to set out clear and specific purpose and scope. Until this is done and clear, it is difficult to deliver a value led outcome for scheme members. There is added complexity for multi-sector schemes and those covering multiple devolved nations, which requires, in the case of Red Tractor, structural change to enable sector specific solutions to be put in place.

The NFU noted that it is routinely in communication with regulators on existing requirements and policy makers on emerging regulation. NFU positions are developed with its national commodity boards and insights fed out to the broader membership. Currently there is significant resource being invested in DEFRA's review of water quality regulations. There may well be a requirement for the industry to present industry led solutions in some sectors to avoid the hardest of regulation. As such, industry might need assurance to support such outcomes.

NFU Cymru noted that it is working with farm assurance schemes which are pan-UK, such as Red Tractor, in the dairy, crops and poultry sectors to understand how standards can evolve to cover the regulatory baseline in all nations. It is also working with Welsh stakeholders including assurance schemes and Welsh Government on this issue. The new Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) has strong environmental requirements, around several areas including soils, water, habitat management, biodiversity and carbon baselining with all these issues being discussed in stakeholder roundtables in which it is involved.

On water specifically, NFU Cymru is part of the Welsh Government Task and Finish Group that has been set up to consider the recommendations that were the outcome of an independent review Welsh Government undertook into the Control of Agriculture Pollutions Regulations. As such, it is vital that farm assurance schemes support this process, without moving ahead of the regulatory framework and that schemes do not undermine the opportunity for any future government incentives or policy change.

NFU Cymru is also routinely in communication with regulators on existing requirements and policy makers on emerging regulation. Its position is developed in consultation with its democratic structure, involving the membership at every opportunity to ensure the views of members are represented.

**NFU Scotland** noted that this recommendation has taken a back seat, as others have been prioritised. It has, however, taken part in discussion at the recent FAR Leadership Group and is discussing internally how best to progress. It is keen that should happen through existing forums and sees for itself a role in leading on this issue.

The **UFU** noted that the integration of environmental standards within farm assurance remains a complex issue. While farmers recognise the importance of environmental stewardship, it is critical that assurance schemes maintain clarity around their purpose and scope. Environmental regulation already exists within government policy frameworks and therefore any additional assurance requirements must demonstrate clear value to farmers and the wider supply chain. The UFU believes that a flexible, outcomes-based approach is preferable, as opposed to prescriptive standards. Farmers operate under diverse production systems and geographical conditions across the UK and a "one size fits all" model is unlikely to be effective. Farm assurance should support farmers in meeting regulatory requirements while avoiding unnecessary duplication of regulatory inspections.

**Recommendation 4.03: Rewarding the use of environmental standards (page 99)**

If businesses elsewhere in the food chain wish to see enhanced environmental or animal welfare standards (above the legal baseline) to help meet their public reporting requirements or to differentiate their position in the market, this must be accompanied by a clearly identified premium paid to the farm business. This would be for the collection of the necessary data, the implementation of different farming practices or the adoption of new technologies to enhance animal welfare and/or environmental protection.

This will recognise the benefit to the food chain business in delivering enhanced environmental and welfare standards, whilst also compensating the farm business for any additional work required and for the use of farm data associated with these additional standards.

Food chain businesses must report publicly on the steps they have taken to implement this recommendation to provide assurance to the farming industry, and to their customer base, that farm businesses are being, and will continue to be, adequately compensated for the additional work required to comply with enhanced farm assurance standards.

Action: Food chain businesses beyond the farm gate

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Barbers Cheese</b>							X
<b>M&amp;S</b>							X
<b>Cranswick</b>	X						
<b>Dairy UK</b>			X				
<b>Anglia Free Range Eggs</b>			X				
<b>Morrisons</b>	X						
<b>ABP</b>	X						
<b>British Sugar</b>							X
<b>Lidl</b>							X
<b>Co-op</b>						X	
<b>Arla</b>	X						
<b>UK Flour Millers Association</b>							X
<b>AIC</b>						X	

**ABP** requests farm businesses to undertake additional requirements and these are accompanied either by beneficial terms or the additional requests are funded by ABP. These outcomes are actively publicised and recorded through a number of knowledge transfer channels. In conjunction with retail customers, ABP is constantly looking for further activity which involves payment for additional services.

**Cranswick** has aligned a number of pig farming businesses with specific retailers/foodservice companies, with financial contracts held with the customer that reward producers financially through differing premiums/cost of production mechanisms for meeting environmental and welfare targets over a 3 to 10-year period.

**Arla** already complies with this recommendation, through standards in both the Arlagarden farm assurance programme and Farm Ahead check.

**Anglia Free Range Eggs** reported that its discussions with the RSPCA are ongoing. Its main customer currently requires RSPCA accreditation, as many retailers do. The standards that need to be complied with at this time do not present added cost and all registration/audits are paid for by the packer.

However, installing windows and extra tree planting will. The discussions with the RSPCA are whether windows give a welfare advantage to layers and how the significant cost of this will be paid for.

Currently the Lion scheme does not require any environmental requirements over the legal minimum, other than the completion of a carbon footprint per flock. However, a minor infringement might have a low penalty from the authorities and take time to rectify, whereas if the Lion scheme makes environmental and carbon footprinting a requirement of the standard, it could potentially mean suspension/loss of accreditation and impact adversely on livelihoods.

Retailers are requiring farms to use sustainable soya with certification. This does have an on cost and where retailers use a feed tracker system, this cost in the main will be met by the retailer. This in time will be a legislation requirement with the EUDR/UK legislation.

The **Co-op** launched a sustainability fund last year that rewarded farmers for their efforts to reduce their impact on the planet. This money went directly to farmers and was in addition to the market price.

The **Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC)** noted that it represents businesses that already actively support higher standards across the supply chain. AIC members are engaged in existing assurance and sustainability schemes, and premiums are paid where the market recognises added value. These include participation in schemes such as LEAF, renewable energy initiatives, and organic production systems, all of which provide routes for farmers and growers to secure enhanced returns where demand exists. However, AIC cannot require members to pay premiums where the market does not recognise or reward them. Commodity prices are driven by supply and demand. As the UK produces relatively small volumes globally, it is largely a price taker rather than a price maker. Much of the baseline for animal welfare and environmental performance is already established in legislation.

**Dairy UK** noted that the issue of how environmental standards can be funded is being addressed by the sector. The Dairy Roadmap has commissioned a Pathways Report from SRUC, which will set out the means by which dairy farming can achieve sustainability and how it can be financed. The report is due in the middle of this year, after which the Dairy Roadmap will develop recommendations for action.

**Morrisons** currently rewards farmers for completing an annual carbon footprint. It also noted that it provides free 1-1 sustainability consultancy, and a range of knowledge exchange events for farmers.

**Recommendation 4.04: Telling the wider world what farming delivers for the environment (page 100)**

Farm assurance schemes, in conjunction with the NFUs and the AHDB, must collaborate to develop and implement a communications/PR plan for the wider public to highlight farming practices that are helping to deliver enhanced environmental standards. It is recognised that this approach may not be as straightforward when addressing animal welfare standards, because of the position towards UK farming taken by some animal welfare organisations. Consideration should, nonetheless, be given to highlighting good practice in farm animal welfare to better inform and allay potential concerns in the public about UK farming standards.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>				X			
<b>SQC</b>			X				
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>				X			
<b>WLBP</b>	X						

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Soil Association</b>					X		
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>				X			
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>			X				
<b>AHDB</b>	X						

**SQC** would bring this back to the key question of “who we are, what we do, why we do it”. Part of this, as highlighted within the UKFAR, is to identify what they are also not responsible for. SQC is solely a farm assurance scheme – it is not its priority or responsibility to lobby – that is the role of the farming unions; nor to undertake specific marketing (which QMS and Red Tractor do); and it is not a levy board.

SQC believes that responsibility for this action must also be placed with the farming unions and AHDB. SQC feels that each individual farm assurance scheme has a responsibility to provide full transparency in relation to “what they do” – and feels it does this via its current level of communications.

This action is an area that the **BEIC**, as an egg sector specific organisation, continues to review and consider within its overall communications and PR plan. There are many factors at play. It is a complex area. Therefore, it determines appropriate communications plans with input from all sector stakeholders through the BEIC Council and its trade associations members.

This is a core part of the remit at **QMS** which then flows through the marketing of QMS brands. QMS is also working with AHDB on the environmental baselining project to ensure it has clear data to underpin evidence and communication. QMS used this to best effect when advocating for the Scottish Government to reject the Climate Change Committee (CCC) recommendations to reduce red meat and livestock numbers, which it did in June 2025.

**WLBP** feels that allied industries could use evidence and data that assurance schemes produce in order to tell the wider world what farming delivers across the board and, in particular, to differentiate from products that are imported to the UK. WLBP completed a successful pilot in 2025 with a group of members to measure GHG and provide insights to emissions, mitigations for emissions and benchmarking to improve productivity and efficiencies on the enterprises. This work was a collaboration led by WLBP, its members and the supply chain. WLBP will consider what the Sustainable Farming Scheme carbon footprint baseline rules will entail in 2027. It hopes that the (Welsh) government will collaborate on making this process as least burdensome to farmers/industry as possible. WLBP also hopes that government is able to collaborate in sharing data, with farmer permission, from government databases. This would help farmers comply with future supply chain evidence data which the industry can use to underpin the environmental credentials of the production systems.

**GLOBAL GAP** and its marketing experts are committed to highlighting environmental responsibility, stewardship and sustainability. This includes animal welfare topics related to its aquaculture farming modules.

The **Soil Association’s** focus remains on describing and delivering the benefits of its scheme in this area.

**SEDEX** has a team that promotes social compliance, but the issue of the environment is slightly less a priority for it.

As an environmental farming standard, **LEAF Marque’s** communications and wider activities (notably through its public engagement work through LEAF Education and Open Farm Sunday) are already focussed on this topic.

The **AHDB** is involved in a wide range of consumer facing activity of direct relevance to this recommendation, such as:

**1) Always-on consumer communications on environment**

- AHDB runs regular consumer-facing content that links farming, food and environmental stewardship, grounded in evidence about what matters to people and where misunderstanding is

most acute. This year it is on track to deliver 109 million impressions across Let's Eat Balanced social media with 2 million engagements

- The 2024 Trust Study shows year on year improvements to consumers' perceptions of farming's environmental impact. Positive sentiment to farming and environment is at the highest level it has been since records started 5 years ago (51% positive, up from 46% year-on-year)
- Earlier "Trust" work also shows farmers remain highly trusted, and that many consumers agree farmers care about the planet

## 2) Let's Eat Balanced: using farmer-led storytelling to evidence "care for nature"

- The "Let's Eat Balanced" initiative explicitly puts farmers at the heart of the campaign, including care for nature messaging alongside health/nutrition, delivered across major broadcast/streaming and social channels
- The campaign has featured 34 farmers' stories over five years, providing a scalable platform for real-world examples of on-farm practices
- The consumer site also carries environment-focused farmer stories (eg soil health, working with nature, feed/deforestation context), which are practical vehicles for explaining "how" farming outcomes are achieved—without relying on sweeping, unqualified claims
- The Environment Baseline Pilot (evidence/data)
- On the "Let's Eat Balanced" Environment → Farmer Stories page, the campaign uses named individuals and tangible on-farm actions to explain "environmental farming" in plain English - ie practice-led storytelling rather than broad, unqualified green claims

## 3) Education and public engagement: scaling farm experience + curriculum-linked resources

- Building first-hand understanding of modern farming, sustainability and environmental care: A-level/ secondary resources with LEAF
- AHDB and LEAF have produced a suite of secondary and A-level resources that link curriculum learning to farming and food production. Two versions exist: one for teachers, one to support farmers hosting visits
- The school farm visits support programme with LEAF Education. AHDB's School Farm Visit Support Programme equips farmers to host safe, high-quality visits and includes funded Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation scheme (CEVAS) training and tailored support from a LEAF Education Specialist. The AHDB explicitly positions this as helping young people understand modern British farming through interactive, on-farm experiences. In 2025, AHDB and LEAF delivered on-farm school events where students saw "cutting-edge technology and environmental care go hand in hand," including precision ag and biodiversity conservation—an example of making "enhanced environmental practice" tangible

The forthcoming school's initiative ambition (ie 1m children visiting a farm with LEAF) can be positioned as the flagship delivery vehicle for UKFAR Recommendation 4.04, because it converts communications into lived experiences and trusted learning. The evidence base above shows the enabling infrastructure is already in place (resources + farmer training + delivery pilots).

## 4) Governance, evaluation, and risk management (including the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)/greenwashing context)

- **Delivery discipline:** Positioning the environment as a KPI within spending controls supports a defensible "outcomes + evaluation" approach, aligned to the Monitoring Report's preference for evidenced progress
- **Evidence and insight loop:** Trust/tracker insight is being used as an evaluation signal, eg the 2024 uplift in perceived positive environmental impact provides a directional KPI for communications effectiveness
- **ASA/greenwashing constraint:** AHDB is operating in a higher-scrutiny environment where regulators expect environmental claims to be qualified, evidenced, and bounded (eg life-cycle clarity for general "green" claims). This underlines that the AHDB approach is increasingly:
  - farmer-led, practice-based storytelling (show the practice, avoid absolute claims)
  - evidence-backed wording with clear scope/limits
  - making use of independent research to guide what is said and how it is said

In addition to the previous **RSPCA** survey response, it noted that it is always looking for members who would like to feature in its external communications, and sometimes marketing campaigns (eg the

recent Pancake Day press release highlighting the welfare benefits free range egg producing members provide to consumers).

**Recommendation 4.05: A “foresight” exercise on future environmental standards (page 100)**

Farm assurance schemes must work with the whole food supply chain to look at emerging trends to help the food sector be current and less defensive on environmental issues. The UKFAR proposed a further “foresight” exercise to begin this process. It will be necessary to continue to monitor the UK’s farming performance on environmental standards and to benchmark this performance against competitor farming nations and international farm assurance standards. The review process must be driven from the perspective of farming businesses, taking longer term changes in environmental regulations as a baseline, whilst continuing to enable farms to determine how they will meet new standards from a menu of sector-appropriate farming measures.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes, with farming and food chain industry representatives

Timescale: 2 years

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>				X			
<b>SQC</b>			X				
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>						X	
<b>RSPCA</b>				X			
<b>WLBP</b>			X				
<b>Soil Association</b>			X				
<b>Agri Audit</b>							X
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>					X		
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>Barbers Cheese</b>							X
<b>M&amp;S</b>							X
<b>Cranswick</b>	X						
<b>Dairy UK</b>			X				
<b>Anglia Free Range Eggs</b>				X			
<b>Morrisons</b>	X						
<b>ABP</b>			X				
<b>British Sugar</b>							X
<b>Lidl</b>							X
<b>Co-op</b>				X			
<b>Arla</b>	X						
<b>UK Flour Millers Association</b>							X
<b>AIC</b>						X	
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

SQC commented that it will be happy to work with key partners to progress this recommendation.

**BEIC**, stated that the British Lion standards are focused first on food safety and therefore this recommendation is not hugely relevant. Any move towards setting environmental standards would be considered by its Technical Committee, before being discussed throughout its governance structures. Any environmental standards in place are focused on the areas considered to be important for maintaining the reputation of the egg sector in the UK and in light of developments seen in competing countries and assurance schemes worldwide.

**QMS** as a levy body and a standard owner, is strongly engaged in futureproofing not just QA schemes, but red meat production systems more generally. This feeds through to maintaining the strength of the Scottish brand within UK retail and export markets; and is integral to its organisational strategy.

**GLOBAL GAP** is already developing a future environmental standard and is active with stakeholder engagement.

The **Soil Association** is not in a position to leverage the action required by this recommendation but will work with the Farm Assurance Forum on this topic.

This is already a core element of **LEAF & LEAF Marque's** work.

**Dairy UK** stated that a comparative study on other national assurance schemes is being prepared on behalf of AHDB. This should feed into the current round of standards reviews. Red Tractor staff are well briefed on pending and possible developments that need to be addressed.

**ABP** feel there has not been a joined-up process that it is aware of, or in which it has been involved. There has been, and continues to be, some ad hoc benchmarking versus other nations and schemes and some very recent discussions about joining forces specifically on water pollution, but at this juncture these remain only intentions and high level.

**Cranswick** conducts soil mapping and measures carbon footprints on all of its farms annually. It practices catchment sensitive farming across the majority of its outdoor breeding units and monitors insect activity using latest field-based technologies.

**Anglia Free Range Eggs** stated that the Lion Standard is looking to enhance environmental requirements in line with legislation. It believes guidance on compliance for the sector is imminent, which is needed and welcome, especially if the threshold for IPPC comes down. However, the speed with which compliance at audit can be achieved needs to be considered. Farms need time to review the guidance and implement the changes needed. It hopes that sector bodies take heed and work with the supply base in terms of implementation. It would be concerned if this became an auditable point too soon, meaning farms lose accreditation and potentially livelihoods.

The **Co-op** has had conversations with assurance schemes on future environmental requirements.

**Morrisons** is happy to support and share knowledge on this topic. For example, this could be support from the company's agri colleagues, nutritionists, insights team, or from its direct customer listening sessions.

The **AIC** reported that, to date, no formal proposal for a "foresight" exercise has been put to it. The AIC remains open to constructive engagement and would support exploring how such a review could be structured with farming businesses and the wider supply chain.

The AIC sits on DEFRA's Food Data Transparency Partnership's Eco-Working Group alongside AHDB and the NFU. The Eco Working Group is developing detailed proposals to measure and communicate carbon emissions and other environmental metrics in the food and drink system. This will enable the food and drink and farming sectors to decarbonise and reduce impacts on the natural environment. The group is assisting government to achieve the following objectives:

- ensure GHG impact reporting for food and drink companies is consistent, accurate and fair, to enable the industry to reliably monitor progress and focus efforts towards net zero
- consider impact reporting for other environmental metrics beyond GHG emissions to support other positive efforts towards nature and the environment

- ensure consumer information including corporate claims and disclosures on the environmental impacts of food and drink is consistent, clear and accurate, including by building a process for product level comparison which enables consumers to make informed choices and avoids greenwashing
- enable government, civil society, investors, and the food industry to compare performance on environmental impacts consistently, fairly, and with clarity and to ensure good practice in determining and communicating outputs is adopted and recognised
- to effectively collaborate across government, the food and drink industry and wider experts, generating shared solutions to measuring and communicating environmental impacts

**Strategic Recommendation 5: The inclusion of regulatory requirements within farm assurance standards and audits should be conditional on government and regulators agreeing a form of “earned recognition”**

**Recommendation 5.01: Creating points of contact in government departments (page 101)**

There is no clear principal point of contact for farm assurance within government departments. They should address this as a matter of urgency, to ensure that governments across the UK are taking a more strategic view of how and when assurance schemes should feature as part of the regulatory landscape.

We anticipate that responsibility for engagement with farm assurance schemes, the development of relevant policies (such as “earned recognition”) and coordination with regulatory agencies using farm assurance accreditation would form part of these roles. The assignment of these responsibilities would also enable greater coordination to take place between central and devolved governments, and with the farming industry, on the future landscape for farm assurance and the maintenance of standards to enable the UK to compete in international markets.

Action: Government departments

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Natural Resources Wales</b>	X						
<b>FSA</b>	X						
<b>Welsh Government</b>	X						
<b>DEFRA</b>							X
<b>DAERA</b>							X
<b>Scottish Government</b>							X

As reported previously, the **FSA** considers that it is compliant with this recommendation. Its Regulatory Standards and Industry Assurance (RSIA) team provides a single point of contact for Earned Recognition (ER) at the FSA and shared mailboxes are used for the FSA approved assurance schemes (AAS) that operate across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. There are similar single point of contact arrangements for schemes that only operate in Wales and Northern Ireland.

The FSA has a clear policy of earned recognition (ER) where compliant members of an AAS can benefit from a reduced frequency of official controls. ER policy for the areas of primary production, dairy and feed sectors is embedded within the relevant statutory Code of Practice and associated Practice Guidance documents. Similarly, ER for dairy hygiene inspectors (DHIs) can be found in the Manual for Official Controls, which sets out the obligations of FSA Field Operations in discharging regulatory duties.

The FSA also has Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) in place with all FSA AAS which are published on its website. The MoUs set out roles and responsibilities of AAS and include clear points of contact for the FSA. It is in the process of reviewing the MoUs. Red Tractor Assurance (RTA) has also

indicated that it would like further standards, such as dairy goats and ducks and turkeys, to be in scope of the MoU.

As part of the FSA's Future of Food Regulation programme, it will be exploring further the role of assurance schemes as part of the regulatory landscape.

In addition to the activities reported previously, which included ensuring that Food Standards Scotland (FSS) and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) are part of its Earned Recognition Policy Group (ERPG), it has also undertaken the following activities to further the coordination of regulatory agencies:

- arranged, through the National Agriculture Panel (NAP), for training to be provided by RTA to local authority (LA) officers. The training covered details about the RTA scheme and how it operates. It also provided an opportunity for LA officers to ask questions. The training was attended by over 180 LA officers. This training was recorded, and a link to the training shared with all LAs as well as colleagues in DAERA and FSA DHIs. The recording has been viewed 115 times to date
- facilitated a meeting between the NAP and RTA where a pilot was agreed which enables LAs to find out further details about why a member has been withdrawn from an RTA scheme. This will enable LAs to make intelligence led and risk-based decisions as to when they undertake an official control of withdrawn members
- facilitated NAP providing RTA with LA officer details to ensure that every feed authority has an officer that can access the RTA online membership checker, enabling LAs to have up to date membership details for businesses in their area
- delivered a Feed Delivery Day in Wales for lead feed officers, at which Welsh Lamb and Beef Producers Ltd (WLBP) also presented. This covered how those premises awarded ER impact on the LA inspection frequency, the circumstances where ER is removed and the role of the AAS
- colleagues from the National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) attended an RTA assessors training day to highlight their role and what to be aware of in relation to food crime
- liaised with DHIs and the NFCU to ensure that the ERPG is aware of any intelligence or concerns relating to AAS, so that these can be discussed at its regular governance meetings
- worked with NAP to provide guidance to LA officers on accessing RTA data to support ER. This covers use of the RTA online portal, referrals for non-compliance and the online industry checker
- liaised with NAP representatives to discuss progress with ER workstreams and to ensure new ways of working and engagement with the FSA approved assurance schemes continues to be developed and embedded effectively

It is also planning on arranging a training day with RTA specifically for FSA DHIs to improve understanding of how both RTA and DHIs operate.

A Head of Farm Assurance and Food Certification role has been created within **Welsh Government**. The role takes a strategic view on farm assurance, engaging public and private sector interests and providing a co-ordinating role on assurances/certification schemes within the food chain in Wales. The Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) policy focus remains on having healthy and productive animals in Wales with a good quality of life. Regular and close interaction and collaborative working continues with key stakeholders such as Welsh Lamb and Beef Producers who administer the FAWL scheme.

Different elements of the Farm Assurance Schemes are relevant to different areas of **NRWs** business. Its Sustainable Land Management Team is co-ordinating input from across key contacts and areas across the business following recent changes.

#### **Recommendation 5.02: Consistency of regulatory use of farm assurance (page 101)**

There are a variety of ways in which government departments and agencies employ farm assurance, ranging from the concept of “earned recognition” resulting in reduced inspections from an agency, or a laissez-faire approach. This is where farm assurance has been outsourced to private providers and left to “the market”, to the engagement by a devolved government department in the co-development of farm support systems involving the industry and a farm assurance scheme.

This patchwork approach to the use of farm assurance in the regulatory environment is no longer viable. A more strategic view is required, where the respective government departments, and their agencies, must determine how, and when, they expect to use farm assurance in their regulatory

systems, and a consistent approach to its use is negotiated and agreed with farm assurance schemes and relevant industry bodies. An early part of these negotiations should be to properly define the term “earned recognition” so that the concept is employed consistently across the farm assurance landscape.

Action: Government departments, regulatory agencies and NFUs

Timescale: 9 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>NFU</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>NFU Scotland</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>NFU Wales</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>UFU</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>Natural Resources Wales</b>						<b>X</b>	
<b>FSA</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>Welsh Government</b>			<b>X</b>				

As reported previously, the **FSA** considers that it is compliant in relation to this recommendation. As outlined in its response to Recommendation 5.01, the FSA has a clear policy for ER where compliant members of an AAS can benefit from a reduced frequency of official controls. This policy is embedded within statutory Codes of Practice and associated Practice Guidance documents, as well as the Manual for Official Controls, in relation to dairy. Furthermore, it has shared refreshed MoUs with its AAS for feedback. The refreshed MoUs have been streamlined to ensure consistent understanding about ER. It is now considering feedback received before reaching final agreement on the amended MoUs. In addition to the activities reported previously, since September 2025, it has undertaken the activities outlined under Recommendation 5.01 to further ensure consistency in how ER is applied.

The **Welsh Government** would like to incorporate earned recognition into the Sustainable Farming Scheme and agrees that it needs a consistent definition of this term and any associated terms (eg specifying when farm assurance practices align completely with actions required in the Scheme, or where they are equivalent). The Welsh Government is also examining where organic certification can provide earned recognition, and a longer-term piece of work is needed on farm assurance schemes and earned recognition in the Sustainable Farming Scheme. As these schemes contain substantial technical detail across multiple sectors, incorporation of earned recognition for farm assurance schemes in the Sustainable Farming Scheme will not be possible for 2026 but may be included in future years.

**NRW** recognises the potential of earned recognition to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden, improve the targeting of regulatory activity, and support continuous improvement by linking strong compliance records to a proportionate level of oversight. Approaches used in the agricultural sector, including farm assurance schemes, could contribute to more risk based and efficient regulation, if standards, audit processes and information sharing arrangements are sufficiently robust.

While NRW has not yet adopted a formal position, early consideration suggests that earned autonomy may offer a suitable long-term approach for Wales. Under an earned autonomy model, operators who consistently demonstrate high levels of competence could be afforded greater flexibility in how they meet regulatory outcomes, while NRW maintains a clear regulatory framework. This could contribute to managing risks while enabling more proportionate regulation, better targeting of resources and improved alignment with wider legislative and funding scheme considerations. NRW intends to explore this further from 2026/27, to determine how such an approach can support those it regulates and ensure that people and nature thrive together.

**Recommendation 5.03: Agreeing how regulatory sanctions and farm assurance work together (page 102)**

There is scope for farm assurance schemes to continue to be used as a proxy for regulatory inspections, but the terms of such engagements must be publicly available, and an approach must be agreed for the way in which sanctions resulting from non-compliance will be reported. This is intended to avoid the charge (sometimes reported, but for which we have found no evidence) that farm assurance schemes used by regulatory agencies are not serious about maintaining standards and applying appropriate sanctions.

Action: Regulatory agencies working with farm assurance schemes

Timescale: 9 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Natural Resources Wales</b>						<b>X</b>	
<b>FSA</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>Welsh Government</b>						<b>X</b>	

The **FSA** considers that it is compliant with this recommendation, as the MoUs it has with its AAS, which set out the terms of engagement, are available on its website.

The statutory Codes of Practice and associated Practice Guidance documents, along with the Manual for Official Controls, clearly define the terms of engagement for enforcement authorities and AAS. As highlighted in Recommendation 5.01, it has continued to work to improve the process of notifying non-compliance and data sharing between enforcement authorities and the AAS.

It has also been reviewing the form that enforcement authorities use to notify the FSA where an AAS member is non-compliant and ER has been removed. It has engaged with its AAS and NAP about the changes to this form, which it anticipates implementing in Spring 2026. The amended form provides the ability for those reporting the non-compliance to share their details with the AAS to encourage more communication between enforcing authorities and AAS. There will also be the option to share other intelligence about AAS members, using the form as well.

**NRW** has recently published its Annual Regulation Report. NRW has not been approached to understand how farm assurance scheme assessments are conducted and non-compliances managed.

**Recommendation 5.04: Extending “earned recognition” (page 102)**

There is also scope for government bodies to extend the concept of “earned recognition”. Whilst the UKFAR does not support the suggestion that farm assurance accreditation can be used as a gateway to government funding schemes (such as SFI or SFS), it is possible that participation in a government funding scheme could be used to fulfil the relevant aspects of a farm assurance audit. In this way, duplication in the audit process can be avoided, or at least reduced. With the focus on current farming support schemes being largely on environmental measures, this approach may go some way to determining part of the requirements for environmental standards discussed earlier in our recommendations.

Action: Farm assurance schemes, in consultation with government departments

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>		<b>X</b>					
<b>OF&amp;G</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>SQC</b>		<b>X</b>					

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>						X	
<b>RSPCA</b>			X				
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>			X				
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>					X		
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>	X						
<b>Natural Resources Wales</b>						X	
<b>FSA</b>						X	
<b>Welsh Government</b>			X				

The **British Lion Scheme** regularly consults with government departments and the scheme is well understood. Its focus is on food safety and therefore there is little scope to pursue the recommendation further at this time.

**QMS** is always looking to increase earned recognition. The latest example is a Scottish Government earned recognition around health planning, whereby QMS members are already compliant with the whole farm plan health planning element.

Recent advances in digital systems that **WLBP** will offer to its members in 2026 will be recognised by the (Welsh) Government to eliminate the need for inspecting them from a government perspective. WLBP still maintains wider frustration that government and government agencies do not provide higher priority for developing further earned recognition agreements.

The **Soil Association** is prepared to work towards delivering the intention of this recommendation but is not able to leverage the delivery of the recommendation alone.

**LEAF Marque** is not aware of any instances of evidence required from producers for (eg for the SFI) that would not also be acceptable evidence for conformance with relevant LEAF Marque requirements (which in the majority of cases are designed with flexibility in terms of evidencing methods).

As previously reported, **FSA** ER policy only applies to members of FSA AAS in relation to food hygiene at the level of primary production, feed hygiene and dairy hygiene. Environmental standards are out of scope for the FSA, so this recommendation is not applicable to it.

The **Welsh Government** will consider how farm assurance schemes can be used for earned recognition in the Sustainable Farming Scheme.

**NRW** mentioned that no discussions have occurred with the farm assurance schemes on how evidence of a farms compliance and environmental legislation could contribute. It requires a risk-based approach to its regulatory activities. This is how it works out a site's charge through the Operational Risk Appraisals (OPRA) spreadsheet. Having an accredited environmental management system counts as a risk reduction factor. Similarly, the annual compliance multiplier results in higher charges for poor performing sites and a lower charge for sites with no non-compliance.

#### **Recommendation 5.05: Using farm data to determine the impact of policy changes (page 102)**

A better coordinated and resourced UK farm assurance system could provide a considerable source of information about farming across the UK, together with evidence on the implementation of major policy changes on farm operations. One example would be the longer-term assessment of the impact and effectiveness of environmental management schemes, using suitably anonymised data from across the farming industry.

To this end, central and devolved governments should work with farm assurance schemes to develop a commercial method of payment, in exchange for the release of relevant data from farming businesses, to support longitudinal studies on the outcomes of the UK's post-Brexit farming support schemes.

Action: Government departments

Timescale: 9 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Natural Resources Wales</b>						X	
<b>FSA</b>						X	
<b>Welsh Government</b>			X				

FSA policy on ER does not rely on establishment level data. Instead, it uses aggregated data from across AAS to identify risks in the system.

As part of its current work on ER, it has been reviewing the data collected from AAS on a quarterly and annual basis to ensure they are receiving the information necessary to provide assurances that schemes can continue to be FSA approved and to identify any risks in the system. It anticipates implementing the new quarterly data template in Spring 2026.

It has also been reviewing the exception report data submitted by enforcing authorities where a member of an AAS is found to be non-compliant and ER is removed. It has built a dashboard to present this information, so that trends in non-compliance are more readily identifiable, and concerns can be easily raised with the relevant AAS.

**Recommendation 5.06: Improving government understanding of the role of farm assurance (page 103)**

It follows from our recommendation for the allocation of clear responsibilities for farm assurance that, within DEFRA, there must be close liaison with its Farming and Countryside Programme. The aspiration of FCP is to transform the way central government regulates and supports agriculture and the countryside environment – and without better engagement and a focus on farm assurance, the opportunity will be lost to deliver recognition of the role of farm assurance schemes and how regulation and farming support mechanisms might be better aligned to the farm assurance system.

Action: DEFRA

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>DEFRA</b>						X	

DEFRA did not provide a ranking for this recommendation but noted that it continues to consider how best to respond to this recommendation in relation to the role of farm assurance.

**Strategic Recommendation 6: There must be greater coordination in the way in which farm assurance operates across the UK nations.**

**Recommendation 6.01: Consider a new approach for combinable crops (page 103)**

There are issues with the combinable crops sector, where evidence from the industry suggests that the Red Tractor model is not effective. Trust, in some cases, has broken down between the scheme and its members. We recognise that RT is working on a new entry level grain standard, but we still believe that the cereals sector must take stock of the UKFAR farmer feedback and decide if a new comprehensive model for the sector should be adopted.

To this end, an exercise to compare and contrast the RT assurance scheme for this sector with the SQC assurance scheme and the Food Fortress programme in Northern Ireland would provide a means to begin a thorough review, which should be time limited and which should engage widely with the combinable crops industry, and the AIC, to co-develop a new approach. The Review must take account of the mixed nature of many farm businesses, to ensure that a new approach, if adopted, does not increase farm assurance requirements or cost.

Action: Crops supply chain organisations, coordinated by the AHDB

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>AHDB</b>			X				

**AHDB** noted that outputs from the ongoing Cereals & Oilseeds research project will enable this recommendation to be addressed. Step 1 of the research (comparison of domestic assurance scheme standards and audit points, publication due in April 2026) and Step 2 (establish how the UK could meet legislative requirements and be compliant with contractual requirements if there was no farm assurance or under a different model than farm assurance, with publication due in late 2026) are of particular relevance to this recommendation.

**Recommendation 6.02: Improving Red Tractor understanding of farming in Northern Ireland (page 104)**

There are also particular issues pertaining to Northern Ireland and the complexities arising from its soft border with the European Union. These need to be taken into greater account by RT, which should establish a Northern Ireland governance board to focus on the farming circumstances found in this part of the UK. It is envisaged that the board would have strong farmer representation so that it can best understand the operating environment and trading arrangements that apply to Northern Ireland farm businesses.

Action: Red Tractor

Timescale: 6 months from publication of the UKFAR report

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Red Tractor</b>							X

**Red Tractor** has not reported a direct response to this recommendation, although it has reported that Assessor training sessions were held in April 2025, both online and in person, with assessors in Northern Ireland.

**Recommendation 6.03: Creating “one voice” for UK farm assurance (page 104)**

We recognise that efforts have already been made to find ways in which assurance schemes can collaborate to achieve greater coordination of effort across the UK. However, we understand that whilst some schemes have continued with a positive approach to this endeavour, not all schemes have participated to the same level. New overarching structures to deliver greater coordination are unlikely to be required, not least because of the cost this would entail.

Instead, farm assurance schemes must take part in our earlier recommended “federation,” if it is to yield benefits for the schemes and their farming members. This network of farm assurance schemes must seek to deliver economic benefits from collaboration in scheme developments, sharing of best practice and in representing farm assurance schemes to other elements of the food industry, as well as to their respective governments in seeking ‘earned recognition’ in their farming regulatory systems.

A “one voice” approach must be adopted when representing UK farm assurance to external bodies. To this end, as we note earlier, every scheme taking part in the federation must have an equal standing, there should be formal agreement as to how the network will operate, chairing of network meetings

should be rotated between members and the arrangements for the network should be subject to periodic review.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>			X				
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>				X			
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>	X						
<b>LEAF</b>				X			
<b>BEIC</b>			X				

**SQC** noted that since September 2025, the emerging Farm Assurance Forum has met twice - once in October in London and chaired/organised by Red Tractor and again in January - held in Edinburgh, chaired by NFU Scotland and organised by SQC and QMS. The next meeting is being organised for July/ August 2026 - to be held again in London but organised and chaired by the British Egg Industry Council. Minutes have been prepared and circulated for both meetings already held. Terms of Reference for the group are in production.

**SQC** would like to support the wider benefits of such a group - even if only to share information and good practice/look to reduce duplication across schemes.

**BEIC** is actively participating in the discussions and meetings that are contributing towards achieving this objective, at least in part. It noted that the stated timescales and ambitions are optimistic and do not recognise the differences between schemes, their objectives, resources, ambitions, pressures and overall purpose. Nevertheless, bringing assurance schemes together to discuss common issues and share best practise will help all involved.

**QMS** noted that the Farm Assurance Forum held its first meeting in October 2025, and a second meeting in January 2026. A communications subgroup has also been established. QMS attended both the first and second meetings and has been actively engaged in the setting up of the Forum.

**WLBP** has met with other UK assurance scheme providers to form a forum/roundtable of assurance schemes. The group will meet to discuss and consider actions that stem from Recommendation 6.03.

**GLOBAL GAP** schemes offer solutions on an international level. UK schemes are benchmarked. There is the option of having a national technical working group in each country. There is an active National Technical Working Group (NTWG) for GLOBAL GAP in the UK These groups consist of local stakeholders, including producers, retailers, and certification bodies, who adapt GLOBAL GAP standards to local legislation and develop national interpretation guidelines (NIGs). The UK NTWG participates in regular, often quarterly, discussions.

The **Soil Association** has participated in the Farm Assurance Forum meetings and intends to continue to do so.

**SEDEX** attended the Farm Assurance Forum meetings found them valuable. It plans to continue to attend and make coordinated efforts to better serve its UK farm members.

**LEAF Marque** continues to communicate with assurance schemes of which its members are also participants, prioritising those where there is the greatest potential benefit to farmers through collaboration.

**LMC** has attended 5 collaborative meetings over the course of the last 12 months. These included the AHDB “Farm Assurance Scheme Roundtable” as well as the Farm Assurance Forum, consisting of representatives from LMC, QMS, Red Tractor, WLBP, British Egg Industry Council, SQC, Organic Farmers and Growers, Soil Association and SEDEX. There are plans to continue these meetings and for more collaborative communications.

**Recommendation 6.04: The role of whole life in farm assurance (page 105)**

Livestock farm assurance schemes that do not deliver whole life assurance should establish a plan to do so. We recognise that this will disrupt elements of the farming industry, but it is essential to the longer-term delivery of consumer confidence in product standards and to maintaining the assurance link between product origin and the consumer.

Action: Relevant Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>						X	
<b>OF&amp;G</b>				X			
<b>SQC</b>						X	
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>			X				
<b>RSPCA</b>			X				
<b>WLBP</b>			X				
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>						X	
<b>LEAF</b>						X	
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

**OF&G** feel this could be an impossible, but still desirable, task. If a farm is suspended, the animals become unassured which could be difficult to address.

The **British Lion** scheme has standards covering the whole life cycle of laying hens.

**QMS** is already a whole of life-based scheme.

**WLBP** stated that to make this effective requires a functioning UK cross border animal movement database. It is aware that LIP and multispecies Wales are still works in progress after years of development.

The **GLOBAL GAP** scheme does not currently include any solutions for livestock.

The **Soil Association** noted that organic standards apply throughout the lifetime of the animal (with a limited number of exceptions for young poultry).

Where livestock are included in the scope of **LEAF Marque** audits, the emphasis is largely on related environmental management, and the integration of livestock into wider farming activities.

**Strategic Recommendation 7: Farm assurance schemes must better position the UK farming industry in world food markets and in competition with imported food.**

**Recommendation 7.01: Standards for imported food (page 106)**

There is a need for greater clarity on the food production standards of importing food nations and for these to be directly compared with the standards used by UK farm assurance schemes. To this end, the work begun by the AHDB to provide these assessments must continue and address other farming sectors and other nations. The UK farm assurance schemes must cooperate fully with these exercises to ensure that there is comprehensive information available to inform these assessments.

Action: AHDB

Timescale: Commencement within 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>AHDB</b>		<b>X</b>					

The **AHDB** noted that its ongoing dairy international standards comparison study is comparing production standards in the UK with those in some of our most significant trading partners - Ireland, France, the Netherlands, USA, Denmark, Germany and Italy.

It involves a comparison of both assurance and legislative standards, to enable production standards in countries where assurance does not include all relevant legislation to be compared with countries where assurance is more comprehensive. The report is due for publication in March 2026.

The Cereals and Oilseeds (C&O) research project is also progressing well. Step 1 (comparison of domestic assurance scheme standards and audit points) and Step 2 (comparison of each standard and audit point with legislation) analysis is currently undergoing external consultation and is due for publication in April 2026. The C&O research also involves an international standards comparison and will be published later in 2026.

**Recommendation 7.02: Informing UK farming about food standards in other nations (page 106)**

The AHDB and NFU's must use the information obtained via the ongoing programme of comparative assessments of international food standards to provide the farming industry with an evidence base of how UK food production really compares with that of competitor nations. The information in these assessments should provide clear comparisons for ease of interpretation and should highlight major differences where international standards, either exceed or fall below, those employed in the UK.

Action: AHDB and NFUs

Timescale: Commencement within 9 months of publication

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>AHDB</b>		<b>X</b>					

As explained in the **AHDB** submission for the first FAR progress report, the publication of each comparative assessment will be accompanied by a press release and web article to help levy payers digest key findings and highlight major differences where international standards either exceed or fall below those employed in the UK.

**Recommendation 7.03: Farm assurance for combinable crops (page 106)**

The combinable crops sector has issues with the use of assurance standards when imported products can be mixed with those produced in the UK. There is a view that this can distort the presentation and consumer understanding of a product, so that it is thought to solely meet UK farm assurance standards.

Whilst it is recognised that only a limited number of consumer products based on such crops carry the Red Tractor logo, there is no equivalent trade labelling for products when mixed with imported combinable crops. This practice must be changed, so that clear labelling is employed to identify the origin of component materials in a combinable crop product, in order to provide a complete picture for others in the food chain, and for consumers, about the nature of a product and, with the comparative studies we have previously recommended, the standards to which it has been produced.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes, working with Combinable Crops Sector representatives and their customer base

Timescale: 9 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>					X		
<b>SQC</b>				X			
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>						X	
<b>RSPCA</b>						X	
<b>WLBP</b>						X	
<b>Soil Association</b>					X		
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>						X	
<b>LEAF</b>						X	
<b>BEIC</b>					X		
<b>UK Flour Millers Association</b>						X	
<b>AIC</b>						X	

The **AIC** stated that it is important to note that labelling requirements are set by government regulations and rest with end users in the food chain. Retailers and processors respond to consumer demand for transparency, while farmers are responsible for promoting the provenance, quality, safety and standards of their crops. Merchants facilitate efficient trade and movement of crops but are not responsible for redefining product labelling beyond the regulatory framework. Imported and UK grown cereals are kept strictly separate from arrival at certified UK storage facilities, through trading, transport, and delivery. This segregation continues until primary processing. Only at that stage may processors mix cereals from different sources, usually due to supply availability or to meet specific product specifications.

**SQC** noted that it is disappointed with the approach and methodology that AHDB is undertaking in its Cereals & Oilseeds research, looking at the benchmarking of UK crops assurance schemes and issues with imports. SQC has received draft reporting on Stage 1 of the report (benchmarking of UK crop standards) but is disappointed to see that the Northern Irish Food Fortress Scheme has been omitted - meaning that SQC standards are being benchmarked against Red Tractor standards as a baseline. It is currently questioning the reasoning behind this and awaits feedback from AHDB.

SQC is also concerned that the publication of the research will not be as a complete report - rather, it will be broken down into several reports which it feels will not provide adequate correlation across the research programme.

With the draft Stage 1 report, it was further concerned that there is no context given around the data and if, as expected, it was to be a review of UK schemes it felt that this was not the case because it is focussed solely on standards. It does not consider the differences between the schemes; differing policy and legislation in devolved nations; key markets and supply chains; governance and structure etc. Nor does it include all of the UK schemes. Indeed, SQC questions if it actually aligns to the UKFAR Recommendation 7 and, if not, what its purpose actually is.

If a trader/buyer buys product originating from the **GLOBAL GAP** certified processes, it will be compliant.

The **LEAF Marque** standard, and Claims and Labelling Rules, do not include country of origin of ingredients in their scope. Where there is mixing of certified and non-certified ingredients, or a mass balance approach, product labelling must be clear as to which ingredients are certified and/or the mass balance nature of the sourcing.

The **NFU** set out its ambition for farm assurance in the combinable crops sector in June 2025. Before the end of the year, it conducted an analysis of the existing farm assurance standards under the Red Tractor scheme, identifying which standards appeared to be explicitly linked to feed and food safety legislation. It is the view of the NFU that the agreement of the standards that make up the legislative baseline is integral to determining the future of farm assurance standards in the sector. For this legislative baseline to have credibility, importers in the supply chain must be able to evidence how the grain they import meets the same legislation, albeit through different means than farm assurance.

The NFU does not believe that the issues found in the UKFAR with regard to assurance standards when imported products can be mixed with those produced in the UK will be resolved without this initial work being carried out. The NFU has been proactive in determining its analysis of the existing standards and now needs farm assurance schemes to coordinate the rest of the supply chain in responding to and agreeing upon the legislative baseline. This piece of work has not been conducted. The NFU is not aware that any other stakeholder within the supply chain has agreed to take on this work to provide the necessary evidence.

**Recommendation 7.04: Reviewing international standards by government (page 107)**

All government departments with responsibility for the farming and food industries should ensure that they reconsider their approach to ensuring that standards for imported food are equivalent to those of UK farm assurance schemes, and that changes in international standards are kept under close review to assist in the export of UK food products. The work proposed must be conducted by the AHDB and NFUs, to maintain oversight of international food assurance standards and should be used as evidence to support this recommendation. It should be seen as a refocus by government departments on developing and supporting a new, comprehensive, UK food export strategy.

Action: Relevant government departments, together with the AHDB and NFUs

Timescale: 9 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>NFU</b>	X						
<b>NFU Scotland</b>	X						
<b>NFU Wales</b>	X						
<b>UFU</b>	X						
<b>AHDB</b>		X					
<b>Natural Resources Wales</b>						X	
<b>FSA</b>	X						
<b>Welsh Government</b>			X				

**NFU Scotland** has engaged with the AHDB as part of its project on grain imports, which it understands is progressing. The issue of imports is a sensitive one for its membership, and it has a key role to play in helping to understand the complexities of this issue. This has been a key workstream for its combinable crops committee. In its supply chain work, it is now regularly surveying products in all the major retailers, to provide an oversight on imported meat products. It is working to discuss these findings with the retailers to understand how they can work in a strategic sense to promote more Scottish and British products on shelves.

**NFU Cymru** noted that core import standards remain one of its key workstreams and lobbying priorities.

The **UFU** noted that farm assurance schemes play an important role in supporting the international reputation of UK agricultural products.

The **Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBLFQAS)** plays a central role in maintaining market access for beef and lamb across the UK retail and foodservice sectors. Maintaining equivalence between assurance schemes across the UK is therefore critically important to avoid barriers to trade between regions and to ensure continued access to export markets. At the same time, the UFU believes that government must ensure that imported food products meet standards equivalent to those required of UK farmers. Maintaining consumer confidence and a level playing field for domestic producers is essential.

**AHDB** stated that regular meetings continue to take place between the NFU, AHDB and DEFRA, and it awaits DEFRA's formal response to the UKFAR recommendations. A potential different approach (that is not reliant on government involvement) would be for purchasers of imported produce (such as retailers) to impose the same standards as for domestic products through their purchasing specifications, or pay a premium for British product, if it is produced to higher standards than imported products. AHDB continues to deliver significant export support work in the livestock sectors.

The **FSA** does not have any evidence that UK farm assurance schemes hold UK farmers accountable to a higher standard than international farmers. Its ER policy is aligned to principles and guidelines of the Codex Alimentarius Commission for the Assessment and Use of Voluntary Third-Party Assurance Programmes. These aim to harmonise the use of voluntary third-party assurance schemes. FSA also only asks AAS standards to align with relevant food and feed legislation. It undertakes a legislative mapping exercise to be assured that the standards meet the requirements of relevant legislation.

**Recommendation 7.05: The Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC) (page 107)**

The UK Government should reconsider the way in which the TAC operates, so that it can provide advice during the negotiation process on free trade agreements where those agreements cover aspects of agriculture and food production, not just on the post-agreement impact of any Free Trade Agreement(s) (FTA) on the UK farming and food industry. The advice provided by the Trade and Agriculture Commission may be regarded as non-binding, but it should at least be considered to help inform the UK Government's negotiating position.

Action: UK Government

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>UK Government via DEFRA</b>	X						

**DEFRA** noted that the Trade and Agriculture Commission (TAC) provides an essential component of trade scrutiny that the Government takes very seriously. The TAC's remit is clearly defined and targeted, as set out in the Agriculture Act 2020 and the Trade Act 2021 and endorsed by both Houses of Parliament. To date, the TAC has contributed high-quality advice to the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) signed with partner countries, focusing on the policy areas that matter most to the public. Given the effectiveness of this established remit, there are currently no plans to alter its scope.

**Strategic Recommendation 8: All farm assurance schemes must review, and, where necessary, improve their methods of communication with the farming industry.**

**Recommendation 8.01 A "farmer first" approach to communications (page 108)**

Farm assurance schemes must continue to review the way in which they communicate with farming members to ensure that their institutional culture(s) deliver a "farmer first" approach to the delivery and development of their farm assurance scheme. This process should be revisited on a regular basis to

ensure that scheme staff understand the importance of farm member communications and that their means of communication remain effective.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 3 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>				X			
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>			X				
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>				X			
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>	X						

Since September 2025 **SQC** has further enhanced communications via the following:

- **SQC website** - a new SQC website was launched in late January 2026 to ensure that information for all growers is easily accessible; the website is easier to navigate; as a 'one stop shop' for SQC growers; and to better inform all partners on 'who, what, why' with regard to SQC's work. As part of this, SQC has introduced a "member hub" for easy access to all documentation pertaining to the farm audit and scheme. Finally, SQC will be able to run analytics to monitor usage and effectiveness across the new website
- **Crisis communications** - SQC has been working with Jane Craigie Marketing to produce a crisis communications strategy to ensure that when and where necessary, it is prepared to deal with key risks via communications - ensuring transparency and engagement with not only its assured growers, but all areas of the supply chain. It aims to provide additional training for the SQC Board of Directors in May 2026 to further the development of this area
- **Auditee portal** – SQC is currently preparing a communications plan to prepare all assured growers and ensure they are fully aware of how to access their harvest 2026 passports (when released in June). This is being developed around an approach of "Mission 100" - ensuring that by the time passports are available via the auditee portal, 100% of SQC growers already know how to gain access to and print their passports
- **Risk assessment** – SQC has just undertaken the annual review of its Board Risk Register – communication, and how they achieve this effectively, ties into all areas of this work

SQC sees the communications plan and strategy as paramount to its engagement with members, so it is now reviewed quarterly - identifying what is working well, where it needs to improve and how it can go about doing this.

The **BEIC**, as the organisation representing the vast majority of UK egg production, plays a critical role in ensuring the egg sector works effectively and delivers safe, quality eggs for UK consumers. It is funded by subscriptions from egg packers and producers. BEIC represents 39 Lion Packers and 1,330 producers, accounting for approximately 95% of UK egg production. By the nature of its organisation, it is in constant communication with the sector. It is also constantly reviewing its engagement and communication strategies and governance structures. Nevertheless, no significant changes have been required as a result of the UKFAR review.

This work forms part of the core strategy at **QMS**, prioritising levy payer and member communications. As part of its QA Certification Body tender, QMS included standard setting bodies and farmer representative groups in its discussions.

**GLOBAL GAP** demonstrates its "producer-first" approach on its website by focusing on practical, farm-level solutions, offering tailored support, and highlighting collaboration in standards development. The website structures its content around the needs of producers, rather than just buyers, emphasising accessibility for various farm sizes.

The **Soil Association** continues to follow a standards development process that observes the requirements of the ISEAL. These ensure that all interests are appropriately represented. Farmers are represented within the Standards Governance Structure. The Soil Association communicate regularly with farmers, which also influences the wider work of the Soil Association through the Organic Producer Board.

**SMETA** has a multi-industry and multi-country methodology, so cannot be a "farmer first" organisation. However, **SEDEX** is currently undertaking a member consultation on the CAR mechanism and has made efforts to ensure UK farmers are involved, including two in-person consultations with the NFU on the topic, and a discussion session (one of the 12 arranged for the global consultation) which was specifically earmarked for UK horticulture, which the NFU promoted.

As a farmer-led organisation, **LEAF** and its assurance scheme, **LEAF Marque**, prioritise farmer input into standard development (including public consultation periods), governance and advisory committees/groups. Communications with farmers, other stakeholders and consumers, is continually reviewed to make them as effective as possible. LEAF's Marketing & Communication now has additional capacity and expertise to support this work.

In addition to the previous update, **RSPCA** has selected a specialist agricultural agency to lead its member research project starting this month – and will deliver the results in three phases over the next six months. The RSPCA is keen to listen to the feedback of its members, and this project will provide the opportunity to for them to share their views.

### **Recommendation 8.02 Implementing the Commission’s recommendations (page 109)**

All farm assurance schemes must publish an initial report on the implementation of recommendations contained in the UKFAR report and ensure that this is made available to farming members and to the wider farming community. Where certain recommendations have not yet been implemented, a clear timetable for their completion must be provided in the report, and updates made available to the farming industry on a quarterly basis until the implementation work is complete.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>					<b>X</b>		
<b>OF&amp;G</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>SQC</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>QMS</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>Red Tractor</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>RSPCA</b>		<b>X</b>					
<b>WLBP</b>					<b>X</b>		
<b>Soil Association</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>LMC NI</b>						<b>X</b>	
<b>SEDEX</b>					<b>X</b>		
<b>LEAF</b>					<b>X</b>		

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>BEIC</b>				X			

**OF&G** is concerned as to who would be checking and policing this issue in future.

On completion of this feedback report, **SQC** will update its UKFAR Actionable Recommendations status document which it will publish via the SQC website. The updated document will also be promoted via the next SQC e-newsletter. SQC will then update the document for publication every 6 months.

The UKFAR report is discussed regularly in **BEIC** Council meetings and its trade association members and Lion subscribers are informed about its actions - the production of a lengthy report is not considered necessary.

**QMS** will publish an independent report, likely to be around the time it releases its CB tender, as it has used the UKFAR to input into some of the requirements of the CB tender.

**GLOBAL GAP** has no purely UK based schemes.

The **Soil Association** is not able to resource the publication of such a report. It is also not able to leverage or take responsibility for changes that require collaboration, though it participates in Farm Assurance Forum meetings and will actively support any joint initiatives.

**LEAF Marque** will not be publishing initial and subsequent progress reports with direct reference to the UKFAR recommendations. However, a great many of the recommendations are aligned with LEAF Marque's own strategy and aims, progress against which is communicated to its members through other means.

The **RSPCA** is working on its five-year strategy and is regularly updating members and supply chain partners with progress. This work is ongoing.

#### **Recommendation 8.03: Using Features/Advantages/Benefits statements (page 109)**

The finance and insurance sectors produce a Features/Advantages/Benefits (FAB) statement for each of their products, setting out in plain English, and in a consistent way, the nature of the product and the way in which it will operate.

Using the statement on good practice in farm assurance provided in the UKFAR report as a starting point, farm assurance schemes must produce a similar FAB statement to make clear what is required from farmers by the scheme, the standards in the scheme's operation that farmers can expect, as well as aspects that the scheme will not cover.

This will establish a clearer understanding of what it is that farm assurance is expected to deliver, and, importantly, what the farm assurance scheme will not provide.

Action: Farm Assurance Schemes

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>					X		
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>						X	
<b>WLBP</b>				X			

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>Agri Audit</b>							X
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>					X		
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>				X			

The new **SQC** website has been launched and features an advantages/ benefits document. It awaits an update on work currently being undertaken by AHDB to provide a broader definition of farm assurance and a template to provide an overview for each of the schemes to complete. It has commented on this (prior to September 2025) and will consider producing such a statement in addition to the information it already provides (if required).

The **BEIC** scheme has been in operation since 1998 and its features, advantages and benefits are well understood. It communicates these to the BEIC Council and all stakeholders on a regular basis, including reports on actions and activities in key areas of standard setting, lobbying and industry PR and representation. Its communications are regularly reviewed and updated to make sure they are relevant and are delivering key messages and requirements to the target audience.

**QMS** has a clear “marketing to members” programme which includes highlighting the benefits of scheme membership to members via integrated marketing delivery and face to face engagement at auction markets and local shows.

**GLOBAL GAP** addresses the need for a Features/Advantages/Benefits (FAB) statement through its Integrated Farm Assurance (IFA) standard documents, general regulations, and public facing "Impact Areas and Claims" documentation. These resources define what is required from farmers, what the scheme covers, and what it does not, in a structured, transparent manner.

The benefits and implications of organic certification are different to those generally associated with other FA schemes. The **Soil Association's** approach to communicating these and the requirements and benefits of certification have been developed over many years. It therefore considers that it already complies with the intention of this recommendation.

The **LEAF Marque** standard document sets out its purpose, scope and intended impacts. LEAF Marque has also previously shared its example of features/advantages/benefits with FAR and conveys the same information through its external communications.

The **RSPCA** does not have plans to compile a report of this specific type. However, as mentioned in other questions and its previous survey response, it is committed to improving communications channels with its members and supply chain partners. This is evidenced in the investment in its new and expanded teams - commercial, member and partner, data and impact, farming and technical. RSPCA will continue to work on improving the communication channels through projects like the member research project (response to Recommendation 8.01) and will continue to update its members and partners through its other existing channels (eg annual report, updated website).

#### **Recommendation 8.04: Avoiding “mission creep” to address third party requirements (page 109)**

We have already recommended changes to the way in which farm assurance standards are introduced to ensure that their origin is clearly stated. In cases where changes to farm audits that purport to relate to farm assurance requirements fall outside the accepted purpose and scope of farm assurance contained in this report, they must be subject to full industry consultation, an independent impact assessment and an agreed method to share the cost of implementation and operation. These actions must be undertaken collaboratively, to achieve a collective decision on whether, and how, such changes are to be implemented, and how the costs will be shared across the wider food chain.

Action: BRC with NFUs and the AHDB

Timescale: 6 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>AHDB</b>				X			

The **AHDB** acknowledges the merits of full industry consultation, independent impact assessment and cost sharing when proposed standards fall outside any scheme's agreed purpose and scope. Agreement on the principles that should underpin an impact assessment was proposed at the farm assurance scheme roundtable last September. However, farm assurance scheme representatives indicated that they did not want to engage on the subject, and that it was down to their own governance structures to guard against mission creep.

As explained in its response to Recommendation 4.01, the AHDB believes that industry representatives and supply chain customers should review the evidence of environmental issues' impact on farming's reputation. This should consider all possible solutions, which will often vary by sector and nation, and could include voluntary initiatives, government incentives, assurance standards or supply chain actions. Transparent discussions on what the industry should do in response to different challenges, and what should and should not fall into assurance scope, will help guard against mission creep.

### **Recommendation 8.05: Implementing culture change (page 109)**

Where farm assurance scheme boards do not already do so, they must implement culture change programmes with their respective senior management teams to ensure that the “farmer first” approach advocated in the UKFAR is followed through to all levels within their organisation. This could take one of several forms, including the use of leadership coaches and/or 360-degree appraisal. The outcome of this work must be measured with farmer member feedback at routine intervals so that scheme boards are kept apprised of progress in developing greater levels of trust between farm assurance schemes and their farmer members.

Action: Farm Assurance Scheme Boards

Timescale: 9 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>GLOBAL GAP</b>	X						
<b>OF&amp;G</b>					X		
<b>SQC</b>	X						
<b>QMS</b>	X						
<b>Red Tractor</b>	X						
<b>RSPCA</b>	X						
<b>WLBP</b>	X						
<b>Soil Association</b>	X						
<b>LMC NI</b>						X	
<b>SEDEX</b>					X		
<b>LEAF</b>	X						
<b>BEIC</b>					X		

A culture change programme within the **BEIC**, an organisation led by the sector and its trade body representatives, is not necessary or required.

As an NDPB, this is already a core part of **QMS** culture and strategy, with a levy payer focus forming part of its strategy delivery.

**GLOBAL GAP's** “farmer first approach” is a focus of the current governance structure.

The **Soil Association** scheme is owned by the Soil Association Charity. The remit of the organisation is far wider than the SA Standard Scheme. The interests of producers are protected and considered in the way that the scheme is governed and administered. It therefore considers that these arrangements fulfil the intention of this recommendation.

**LEAF and LEAF Marque** remain farmer-led organisations, with producers represented at all levels of governance, and in the LEAF network, education work, public engagement, consultations, and continual dialogue with producers on the development and operation of the LEAF Marque standard and assurance system (including post audit feedback opportunities following every audit). The LEAF & LEAF Marque Boards receive summary updates from all these areas of work at every meeting.

**Recommendation 8.06: The ownership of Red Tractor (page 110)**

We considered the current ownership arrangements of Red Tractor, and the merits, or otherwise, of changing to a more independent structure, as suggested in the scheme’s evidence submitted to the UKFAR. We recognise that this scheme can be caught between the requirements of its owners and need to implement change or address issues that might prove difficult with one of the industry sectors it serves.

This means that the scheme is sometimes held to account for matters beyond its immediate control, or that change can take much longer than necessary. Coupled with some shortcomings in its approach to communications with farming members, this has contributed to the largely negative feedback we have received from farmers about the scheme and its operation.

However, because the UKFAR concluded that the scheme exists to serve its farming members, and that there would be the possibility of a farm assurance landscape driven by other industry sectors, rather than with the full contribution of farmer members, a change to a more independent structure is not appropriate at this point.

It follows that the current ownership arrangements should remain in place, but these must be balanced by the RT Board being reaffirmed as the primary governing body for the organisation. The owners of the scheme must show greater and more active leadership, to help shape its future direction and organisational culture, but without straying into issues of setting strategic direction and overseeing operational delivery, which should remain with the RT board.

The terms of this arrangement should be established by the Board and the scheme owners and published so that they are clear to members of the scheme, to determine how farmer sentiment towards the scheme has changed because of this programme of work.

Action: Red Tractor Board and Ownership Organisations

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>AHDB</b>		<b>X</b>					
<b>NFU</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>NFU Scotland</b>	<b>X</b>						
<b>NFU Wales</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>UFU</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>Dairy UK</b>	<b>X</b>						

The **UFU** supports the principle that farm assurance schemes should continue to be industry-owned and farmer-focused. However, governance structures must ensure that farmers have a meaningful voice in the development of standards. The UKFAR highlighted the importance of improving communications and rebuilding trust between assurance schemes and farmers. The UFU supports measures that improve transparency around decision-making and strengthen farmer representation within assurance governance structures.

**NFU Scotland** is not on the full ownership board, so there is a limit to how much it can impact on this. It would like this to change in the future. However, it has recast its internal work on Red Tractor to ensure that there is communication between different sectoral representatives, the supply chain, and with the CEO who sits on the oversight board. This has led to better understanding of the work that is being done. It hopes that the new CEO of Red Tractor will bring a fresh approach and it will reach out to them to see where it can collaborate.

**NFU** is one of the six owners of Red Tractor. It has now consulted with its Food, Farming and Environment Board on involvement with the Red Tractor Ownership body and governance. NFU is engaging in bilateral discussions with other owners about how the ownership body can improve leadership but avoid micromanaging the Red Tractor main board.

**NFU Cymru** is one of the six owners of Red Tractor. NFU Cymru is also aware that the NFU has consulted with its Food, Farming and Environment Board on involvement with the Red Tractor Ownership body and governance.

The **AHDB** have been proactively engaging in discussions with other Red Tractor owners to ensure that the Ownership Body shows greater and more active leadership to help shape Red Tractor's future direction. Its action in response to Recommendation 1.1 is relevant, as it is essential that any discussion on the future direction of RT is rooted in a common understanding of the appropriate purpose, scope and value of foundational assurance by sector and nation.

It is seen as important that the RT Board owns the strategy and operational delivery but does that within the vision agreed by the owners. AHDB anticipates that the owners will meet regularly through 2026 to agree a shared vision for the future and it looks forward to working with the new CEO on the continued development and change at RT.

**Dairy UK** feels there is now greater clarity about the role of the Ownership Body and hopefully the subject area has been addressed, but there is still probably a degree of misconception outside the organisation.

**Strategic Recommendation 9: The Red Tractor (RT) scheme must complete the implementation of recommendations in the Campbell Tickell report.**

**Recommendation 9.01: Reviewing progress with the Campbell Tickell report (page 111)**

Red Tractor must publish a report on the way in which it has implemented the recommendations of the Campbell Tickell report and ensure that this is made available to farming members and to the wider farming community.

Where certain recommendations have not yet been implemented, a clear timetable for their completion must be provided in the report, and updates made available to the farming industry when these elements have been addressed.

Action: Red Tractor Board

Timescale: Initial report within 3 months of publication of the UKFAR report

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>RT Board</b>	<b>X</b>						

This action has been completed. See Annex 7 for further details.

**Recommendation 9.02: A formal assessment of changes to Red Tractor (page 111)**

Even though the Campbell Tickell report may address current issues concerning the governance of the RT scheme, it remains to be seen if, in the longer term, the measures in that report, together with those in the UKFAR, have successfully repaired the levels of trust necessary to create a more positive relationship between the scheme and the farming community. To this end, the sponsoring bodies for

the UKFAR must conduct a formal assessment of the outcome of both reports, to determine how farmer sentiment towards the scheme has changed because of this programme of work.

Action: NFU and the AHDB

Timescale: 12 months

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
AHDB			X				

Red Tractor has recently commissioned an independent 2026 Farmer Sentiment Survey, conducted by Grounded Research. A number of the questions are the same as previous farmer sentiment work undertaken by another external agency in 2024 so there will be an opportunity to compare data in some areas.

RT intends to wait for the results of the Ground Research survey, and the new CEO for RT to have been in post for approximately one year, before it assesses farmer sentiment towards RT. It will, however, continue to monitor anecdotal feedback from its levy payers. It recognises that there have been significantly different views on RT from farmers in different sectors.

### 5.3 Summary Assessment of Progress and Engagement with the Monitoring Exercise

This section provides an overview of some of the major features emerging from the evidence submitted to the second UKFAR monitoring round. It is not intended to cover every recommendation in detail, but to draw out some key points of progress, and to identify where further work is required in the future.

As in the first monitoring round, the submissions are very much a self-assessment of progress. Not all met the request to provide statements of action taken since the first round, and a number simply reiterated earlier comments about the state of the UK farm assurance system or their role within it. As it was not the purpose of this exercise to recast the original UKFAR recommendations these comments, whilst included in this report, have not been taken on board in the assessment of progress.

The original UKFAR report was published in January 2025. Whilst the first monitoring report, published in October 2025, paid particular attention to the recommendations with a 6-month completion deadline, this report sought information on those with a 12-month deadline, as well as progress on those with shorter implementation period. This timetable allowed time for the 12-month recommendations to be actioned, the monitoring survey to be undertaken and the second monitoring report to be prepared for publication. So, while there may be additional time required to complete some of the 12-month recommendations, there should, by now, have been action taken to address those with 3, 6 and 9 month deadlines.

As will be seen in the detailed survey results, a number of respondents have made clear that their systems are such that certain recommendations are not needed and that they are satisfied that they are working, at least to the spirit, of the UKFAR report. It is for farm assurance scheme members, and others, to judge whether or not this is the case, and to determine if these self assessments are accurate and justified.

Other respondents pointed to work in progress on certain recommendations that is taking further time because of the need for industry consultation, the completion of a research programme or the process of accreditation through UKAS. All of these are, on the face of it, valid reasons for a delay in implementation, but are likely to cause frustration to the farming community that wants to see positive changes made to the way in which farm assurance operates. On the one hand, there is a need for respondents to maintain pace with addressing these recommendations, and, on the other, for the farming community to understand that some changes do take time to put in place if they are subject to scrutiny by external bodies or need a wider view to be gathered before action is taken. That said, there are two instances arising from this round of survey responses, where delays in taking action are not supportable.

The first involves instances where farm assurance schemes believe that they are unable to act because the recommendation is the responsibility of a Certification Body (CB). We made clear in the UKFAR report that farm assurance schemes appoint CBs to act on their behalf in the conduct of audits, and it is the schemes that bear the responsibility for setting the terms under which CBs must operate. It is, in relevant cases, the scheme's name that is featured on assured products, not that of the CB, and for that reason, ultimate responsibility for the assurance of that product, and for ensuring that the farm assurance system operates in the best interests of all stakeholders, must rest with the scheme. It is therefore important for schemes to ensure that they are working with their CBs to effect changes that accord with the UKFAR recommendations.

The second instance involves the avoidance of action by relying on other bodies to get the ball rolling on addressing a recommendation. Whilst it might be the case that a certain organisation has been identified to take a lead role, it is perfectly legitimate, and might even be expected, for others involved in addressing a recommendation to help initiate discussions or prompt the lead organisation to get work under way. It is not enough to sit back and wait for a call to come, especially if the subject at hand is clearly causing a problem to the farming community and action is urgently required.

Notwithstanding the above points, those farm assurance schemes that are serious about making the UKFAR recommended changes are continuing to embed the work on which they reported in the first monitoring round and are continuing to take action to improve their approach to the delivery of their scheme. Again, farm assurance schemes have different priorities and are operating at different paces, often as a result of resource constraints, but the best are demonstrating a willingness listen to their members, take on board the UKFAR recommendations and make changes to their operations that fit with their scheme.

Each of the UKFAR Strategic Recommendations included a series of operational recommendations intended to guide the actions or identified organisations to comply with the recommendations. In this report, examples of the actions taken, and where they have not been taken, will provide an indication of the state of progress with the implementation schedule. It is recognised that not all actions will be captured in this way but will simply summarise the state of play. Further details can then be found in the survey responses in Section 5.1.

**Strategic Recommendation 1: On-farm audits must be reduced, simplified and delivered more consistently.**

Informal feedback suggests that there has been progress in the clarification and resetting of the purpose and scope of the farm assurance system, such that this can be published in the not too distant future. As noted in the original UKFAR report, this was a matter best addressed by industry representatives and is a fundamental requirement that will hopefully set out what can be expected of the system, and, importantly, what it should not be expected to deliver.

Progress has also been made on revising farm assurance standards to simplify the structure of assessment against them and, where possible, to reduce their number. In the best examples, schemes have reduced the number of standards, some are using the opportunity to provide data to help farmers and growers to meet the required standard or are engaging with members to provide justification for the retention of standards. In certain instances this work is complete, or at least ongoing, whilst in others it remains planned for later in 2026. Some schemes believe that a full review is not required at this stage because of the level of industry engagement in their development. Either way, schemes are encouraged to continue this programme of work.

Farm assurance schemes report that they either have, or have reviewed and updated, their appeals procedures and that they have appropriate sanctions in place for non-compliance. Most have either put in place, or intend to look at, risk-based assessments as a way of reducing the audit burden. Some report that they have engaged with UKAS on the requirements necessary to adopt this approach.

There is also general agreement by farm assurance schemes on the use of anonymised audit outcomes to help farmers comply with required standards. It was interesting to note, in one instance, that not all members of the scheme were aware of the requirements of the relevant standard. Whilst this has been addressed it points to a more general need for schemes to ensure that their members are fully

conversant with their expectations and that the auditors engaged through CBs continue to support the identification of best practice that can be shared with others in the scheme.

There was some “push-back” when it came to the question of collaboration between schemes to avoid audit duplication, with one mentioning that scheme standards can provide a point of difference required by buyers, whilst also pointing to collaborations already in place to coordinate audit programmes. Another mentioned that the differences between some schemes would make such collaborations difficult to achieve. That said, the submitted evidence was that there is scope for audit efficiencies to be gained through collaborative working, perhaps in more limited instances than across all schemes. To this end, the newly formed Farm Assurance Forum could play a role to enable schemes to consider where such efficiencies could be gained.

It was also felt that auditor training was already being addressed in most cases, largely by CBs, and that having a single external body such as TIAH involved in this process would restrict the ability for schemes to work with other organisations or might add complexity to the provision of training activities. The essence of this recommendation was that auditor training should be provided to improve communications and relationships between the audit process and the farming business. It is therefore incumbent on schemes to continue to ensure that their training programmes, either via their CBs or other parties, are meeting that objective, and that the provision of auditor training is recorded and published so that it is subject to external verification. So far, the commitment to deliver this latter outcome has not been evident across the farm assurance system.

On the other hand, there are signs that farm assurance schemes are engaging with, or at least seeking to engage with, industry regulators, with examples including mock assessments and open dialogues between schemes and these organisations. The NRW pointed to positive working arrangements with the FAWL scheme in Wales and was open to engagement with other schemes. The FSA also provided several examples of engagements with the Red Tractor scheme in support of earned recognition from the Agency.

It proved difficult to get an updated response from the farming organisations involved in supporting farm wellbeing, though a constructive relationship between schemes in Scotland and the RSABI was reported. Others noted that they had supported auditor training in mental health awareness or had other ways in which they were working on this important topic. It was encouraging to note that the Farm Assurance Forum has discussed the possibility of commissioning research to better understand the mental health burden arising from the process of farm assurance, with the hope that this might take place later in 2026.

There was a variety of views about the provision of consistent audit coverage, with a balance to be achieved between auditor impartiality against the potential benefit of familiarity with the farming business. Scheme accreditation requirements also need to be borne in mind. That said, schemes are encouraged, within the terms of such accreditation, to continue to look at ways in which greater consistency in audit coverage can be provided. Some positive examples of the promotion of auditing as a career path were provided, and whilst auditor appointments are the responsibility of CBs, some schemes were encouraging them to develop initiatives to assist with future auditor recruitment.

**Strategic Recommendation 2: There must be a transformational step towards embracing technology and managing data to deliver more effective farm assurance with greater added value for all**

Farm assurance schemes are at different stages with the adoption of technology and, in particular, their methods of obtaining audit information from farm businesses. Some are relatively new to the use of a portal for this purpose, whilst the WLBP has taken the step of developing an app to complete elements of the Sustainable Farming Scheme that is recognised by the Welsh Government but will have wider benefits, such as the compilation of data on animal health metrics.

Whatever the system in use, the essence of this recommendation was that auditors should be required to use information provided prior to an audit, and not to wait to use valuable audit time on farm looking at information that was previously available. The recommendation was based on the UKFAR research findings, though it is recognised, as identified in this latest survey round, that not all farmers want to use a portal or upload documents prior to an audit. Notwithstanding this view, the recommendation should

stand, to improve audit efficiency, whilst farm businesses should continue to be encouraged to use the available technology if it improves their audit experience. To this end, the introduction of document uploading to its portal initiated by the Red Tractor scheme in recent months, should be formally assessed to see if it has helped improve portal use, the audit experience and the “tell us once” principle recommended by the UKFAR.

Despite the work on farm assurance data acquisition, there remains a debate about data ownership has not yet been resolved. Whilst farm assurance schemes may have arrangements for data management and sharing, the wider questions of industry data ownership and custodianship remain the subject of discussion. The AHDB is developing a community of practice proposal, and working on its Farm Data Exchange project, to move the debate forward, because it is recognised that this issue extends beyond the farm assurance system. There also appears to be support for addressing this matter through wider industry engagement. It is hoped that this work will address the distinction between anonymised data sharing, as opposed to that of commercially sensitive data ownership by farming businesses, as set out in this recommendation. Meanwhile, Scottish organisations are continuing to work on the possibility of a farmers’ data co-op, in liaison with the AHDB, to help deliver UK alignment.

Whilst the majority of farm assurance schemes reported that they were compliant with the principle of providing training programmes to improve farmer take-up of their current technologies, there was a mixed picture on the evidence provided to support this claim. Some schemes actively provided training, whilst others were restricted by available resources or did not have an immediate need because of their level of technology use. This position will need to be kept under review as the use of technology to support the farm assurance system is extended. LEAF’s model of written and video guidance, together with email-based support for particular support issues, is helpful in this respect, whilst GLOBAL GAP appears to have a comprehensive programme of support for its farmer members.

There is support for addressing the question of longer-term technology developments in support of farm assurance from both Agri-Tech E and the UK Agri-Tech Centre, but other recommendations have taken priority to date and no progress has yet been made on this recommendation. Work on this topic should not be set aside, however, because there is a need to plan ahead for developments, not least in data management, that could improve the efficiency of the farm assurance system and help avoid fragmentation in the creation of systems by different farm assurance schemes. The survey responses pointed to several different approaches to the creation of data platforms across the farm assurance system, with others planned to take place.

AIMS provided a comprehensive update on progress with its Vetaverse system and is now working with the AHDB on the proof of concept for this novel assurance approach, as well as connecting with the AHDB’s Farm Data Exchange project.

Most farm assurance schemes commented on their activities to review standards in line with emerging legislation and regulatory requirements, noting that this was part of their normal work. Examples were provided of schemes pursuing audit equivalence to help extend regulatory body inspection intervals, but, at least in Scotland, progress had been slow and needed improved participation by the regulatory agencies, for which industry support was requested. The SQC pointed to particular issues with UKAS not being recognised by the EC as the national accreditation body because the UK is no longer a member state of the EU. This is hampering access for suppliers to the renewable energy market in Europe. The matter should be taken up by industry representatives to see whether the relevant UK government(s) can find a way to resolve this issue.

### **Strategic Recommendation 3: Farm assurance schemes need to reset and/or restate their decision-making structures to establish farmers as the driving voice in standards development**

Some farm assurance schemes already had processes in place to consult on changes to standards or the introduction of new standards. Others are working on procedures to improve their approach by the addition of justifications for their standards and to ensure that this information is available to farmer members, and there are also examples of schemes that publish the expected impact of standards and even methods for public consultation. The NIBLFQAS, as part of its recent strategic review of the scheme, has approved a revised method for standards development which will be introduced from 2027.

Most farm assurance schemes noted that they do not have sector boards to which farmer representatives can be appointed but have other ways in which the views of farmers can be represented. In the case of Red Tractor, which does have sector boards with farmer representation, they have been actively involved in addressing the scheme's UKFAR action plan. Most schemes also have regular processes for reviewing the skills mix of their main Boards. The UKFAR recommendation for schemes to periodically revisit its good practice statement was not, however, taken on board by all schemes, though some alluded to the fact that they were committed to ensuring that a balanced approach was taken to demands placed upon the farming community and that they were aware of the need for an equitable sharing, across the food chain, of farm assurance costs.

In the better examples, farm assurance schemes have also conducted work to identify the rationale for their standards and to incorporate this information into a regular standards review, the results of which will be publicly available.

A Farm Assurance Forum has met twice since the first Monitoring Report, to enable farm assurance schemes to consider matters of mutual interest and to share best practice. Most of the schemes covered in the UKFAR have taken part, and it is planned that these meetings will continue.

**Strategic Recommendation 4: A new industry-led initiative must set out the future environmental ambitions for farm assurance, establishing this as an area of competitive advantage for UK farming.**

While there is support from some farming organisations, and from the Welsh Government, for this recommendation, little action appears to have been taken to date, though it is noted that the AHDB is trying to establish a forum to get this work under way and is already investigating baseline environmental standards with a view to making the results of this work available later in 2026.

The view submitted to this survey round was that the development of an approach should be led by industry representatives, and not by farm assurance schemes. This was the premise of the UKFAR recommendation. Farm assurance schemes are likely only to develop approaches that meet the needs of their schemes, and not the wider industry. It is essential that work is undertaken to address this recommendation as a matter of urgency, because the current position could lead to a fragmented approach that will not serve the longer term interests of any part of the food chain. In this respect the recent announcement by Red Tractor that it was to consider again the development of environmental standards does not accord with the UKFAR recommendations and should not proceed.

It is, however, clear that establishing a position for the industry with regard to environmental measures will be an important step. Already, as noted in the survey responses, the farming unions are contributing views to their respective governments on emerging regulations, most recently those on water quality, and the wider requirements for environmental management improvements in farming support mechanisms are also evident.

Food processing organisations responding to the recommendation that increased environmental standards should be matched with a product premium generally noted that they had such systems in place. However, the responses to this question were low in number and, notably, included only two major retailers.

There was a broader response to the recommendation to inform the wider public about what farming delivers for the environment. In this instance, whilst recognising that some schemes do not necessarily see this as their role, the AHDB reported that it has a wide range of consumer facing activity intended to explain the connection between farming and the environment. The recommendation called for farm assurance schemes to work with the NFUs and AHDB on this issue. It remains the case that positive messaging from the schemes about this topic would no doubt assist other farming organisations to inform the public about the role of farming in environmental management and best practice in animal welfare.

It is also recognised that work on the future development of environmental standards, the "foresight exercise" recommended by the UKFAR, needs to be undertaken across the agri-food system and that farm assurance schemes should contribute to this work wherever possible. Respondents remain open

to engagement in such activities but suggest that either they are involved in their own initiatives or there is a lack of a convening body for such an exercise.

It is reported that the DEFRA Food Data Transparency Partnership's Eco-Working Group is already involved in developing metrics that could be employed on farms to help reduce impacts on the natural environment, but how far this is looking ahead to future environmental measures is, as yet, unknown. In the meantime, it may be helpful for the Eco-Working group to connect with the farm assurance system, to avoid the possibility of schemes developing their own environmental measures and as a means of communicating its work to assurance scheme members.

**Strategic Recommendation 5: The inclusion of regulatory requirements within farm assurance standards and audits should be conditional on government and regulators agreeing a form of “earned recognition”.**

Although support for the farm assurance system has been expressed by DAERA and the Scottish Government, they have not engaged with the monitoring process to any great extent or made submissions to this monitoring exercise. That said, farm assurance schemes in NI and Scotland pointed to positive signs of liaison with their respective government departments.

The Welsh Government, as reported in the first Monitoring Round, has taken the UKFAR recommendations on board, is liaising with relevant farm assurance schemes and has appointed an official with responsibility for engaging with these schemes, so that a more joined up approach can be established for the future. The complex nature of many current developments in farming and food production underline the benefits of such an approach, not least because the farming networks available to farm assurance schemes, and their role in other aspects of the food chain, provide a route to help inform farming policy development and to avoid duplication of effort.

The situation in England is somewhat different. DEFRA contributed a few sentences to this Monitoring Round, highlighting its support for farm assurance and noting, in general, that it continues to consider how best to respond to recommendations where it was seen by the UKFAR to have role. How long it will continue to consider how best to respond was not mentioned, nor was there any indication that DEFRA was seriously interested in the development of the farm assurance system and its role in the provision of high quality food. The lack of real engagement with the UKFAR recommendations at this level is disappointing and a missed opportunity for creating a more joined up approach between this aspect of the industry and the work of the Westminster government.

Some other regulatory bodies appear to have taken the point of collaborative engagement on board. The FSA provided a detailed, and positive, response about its work with the assurance system, including on its approach to “earned recognition”. The NRW also pointed to the potential for “earned recognition” to help improve the targeting of regulatory activity, though preferred the approach of “earned autonomy” to better manage risks and provide more proportionate regulation. It noted that it intends to explore this approach from 2026 onwards. It would, perhaps, be helpful for farm assurance schemes operating in Wales, to engage with the NRW to help inform this development.

The UKFAR, on the basis of feedback from the farming industry, encouraged government bodies to be open to an approach where access to a government funding scheme could be used to fulfil the relevant aspects of a farm assurance audit, thereby reducing audit duplication. The Welsh Government and WLBP are working on the alternative approach of using planned digital systems as a form of recognition by the Welsh Government to eliminate the need for certain aspects of government inspection. It will be interesting to see how this approach develops and whether or not it will provide scope for similar industry/government initiatives to be created in other parts of the UK.

**Strategic Recommendation 6: There must be greater coordination in the way in which farm assurance operates across the UK nations.**

One of the major sectoral issues arising from the UKFAR was the strongly held view that current farm assurance arrangements are not working effectively for the combinable crops sector. The Commissioners asked the AHDB to coordinate, with crops supply chain organisations, a time limited review to develop a new approach for this sector. A research phase is being conducted and will produce the first of its reports in April 2026. At the same time, the RT Combinable Crops and Sugar Beet Sector

Board and its Technical Advisory Committee have established a set of objectives as part of the scheme's improvement plan. These objectives address the requirements of the RT scheme (eg with regard to audit frequency and establishing the rationale for standards etc) but are not yet clear on the major issues of what happens to assured products at the next stage of processing; where RT branding does, or does not, play a role; and the sector's perception, at least in some quarters, of the lack of value of RT to their farm business. It is hoped that these issues will be surfaced in the AHDB research programme and considered in concert with other agencies in the sector so that meaningful improvements to the farm assurance process for this part of the industry can be made.

A further comparative research programme is being conducted by the AHDB to establish the food production standards in importing food nations as opposed to those used by UK farm assurance schemes. The Cereals & Oilseeds element of this work, which will make an important contribution to the review of the combinable crops farm assurance system, is expected to be available in April 2026. Studies in this research programme will be made available to the farming community to help provide information about the production standards in other nations. It is hoped that this work will take on board the views of farm assurance schemes during the research programme so that the comparative assessments are seen as fair and valid.

DEFRA responded to the recommendation to help improve scrutiny of international trade agreements from the perspective of the farming industry with its view that the established remit is effective and there are no plans to alter its scope.

The UKFAR also heard from representatives in Northern Ireland that more could be done by RT to consider the particular farming circumstances of this part of the UK. A direct response to this recommendation has not yet been provided by RT and it is hoped that this will be addressed by the scheme in due course.

Earlier recommendations addressed the development of the Farm Assurance Forum as a means of providing greater coordination of effort between farm assurance schemes, as well as enabling the sharing of good practice. Respondents to the survey mentioned that they have found these sessions helpful. The majority of schemes have taken part in Forum meetings to date (as well as other cross-industry meetings) and their continued participation is to be encouraged.

The UKFAR call for whole life livestock assurance generally met with responses that pointed to the approach already being adopted. The RT reported that its Beef & Lamb Sector Board also agreed, in November 2025, to further explore the issue of life assurance in the long term, to address gaps with this approach that remain in the sector.

### **Strategic Recommendation 8: A “farmer first” approach to communications.**

Farm assurance schemes reported, almost without exception, that they have a positive approach to farmer communications and that they are keen to listen to the views of their members. Where schemes involve other industries, measures have been taken to involve farmers and farming organisations, in consultation activities. RT reported that it has conducted a complete overhaul of its communications strategy and that feedback from farmer members on its approach has been positive.

There was a mixed response to the recommendation concerning the publication of progress reports on their work in implementing the UKFAR recommendations. Some schemes, such as SQC, are committed to this process, even by making up-to-date information available on their website, whilst others do not plan to produce progress reports with a direct reference to the UKFAR. The RT action plan commits to the production of progress reports via its Sector Boards but it has also provided a comprehensive statement, for this report, on the work it has undertaken to date. Schemes are encouraged to keep their members briefed on UKFAR related work, even if not by way of a dedicated report, so that the farming community is able to see that its recommendations have been considered and relevant actions taken.

There was also a mixed response to the recommendation concerning Features/Advantages statements, with some schemes adopting this approach, some having an alternative form of statement and others reporting that their members are already aware of the features and advantages of their scheme. The purpose of this exercise was to help establish the rights and responsibilities associated with scheme

membership, and it will be interesting to witness whether members of those schemes adopting this method find such statements helpful in the longer term.

Further work on the avoidance of “mission creep” in the adoption of farm assurance standards will depend on the agreement of the scope and purpose of farm assurance forming the basis of the first of the UKFAR recommendations. That said, a roundtable discussion in September 2025 on related impact assessments resulted in schemes preferring to use their own governance structures to guard against “mission creep”. It will be for assurance scheme members, and farming representatives on these schemes, to ensure that this commitment is maintained.

There has been positive participation in the UKFAR and subsequent monitoring rounds by the majority of farm assurance schemes, as well as the subsequent work that many have undertaken to address the UKFAR recommendations. This points to operational cultures that were already open to constructive guidance on improving the system or were prepared to respond to the need to take a different approach to their assurance system and the role of the farming community within it. Time will tell if the positive responses seen to date will continue, and it will be for the governing bodies of the schemes to ensure that progress with the UKFAR recommendations, not least the one on implementing culture change, is maintained.

The role of the RT Ownership Body was the subject of a particular UKFAR recommendation because its position in the governance of the scheme was unclear and, in some respects, it was not seen to be acting as a leading voice in what it expected the scheme to deliver, even if the responsibility for that delivery then rested with the RT Board. Setting expectations, and the overall vision for the scheme will continue to be a significant feature of the work of the Ownership Body, not least if the progress with the implementation of the UKFAR recommendations is to continue at pace. There remains much to be done to rebuild trust between the scheme and the farming community and this too will be an important aspect of the role that the Ownership Body should fulfil.

#### **Strategic Recommendation 9: The Red Tractor (RT) scheme must complete the implementation of recommendations in the Campbell Tickell report.**

Early in the monitoring period (June 2025) RT reported that it had completed the implementation of the Campbell Tickell recommendations. Progress with this aspect of the changes within RT is to be assessed by an independent Farmer Sentiment Survey to be conducted in 2026.

RT has produced a comprehensive report on its progress with the implementation of the UKFAR recommendations. This can be found at Annex 7, with a summary of the main points, provided by RT in response to the survey supplementary questions, at Annex 9. The inclusion of the full return from RT is intended to provide information to the farming industry about the extent of the programme of improvements it is undertaking.

The UKFAR report and the first monitoring report mentioned that some farm assurance schemes were already meeting many of the UKFAR expectations, whilst others had more to do. RT was in the latter position but indicated, early on, that it would work with the UKFAR process to deliver a change in its approach to farm assurance. It is clear from the RT report that the UKFAR is being taken seriously, not just in terms of processes and procedures but also in terms of its engagement with the farming community and its work to change its internal organisational culture.

However, the process of change is taking time, so that Sector Boards and Technical Advisory Committees can take stock of the RT assurance system and make changes in accordance with newly established sector priorities. RT is also engaging with its CBs to coordinate certain aspects of its action plan and has taken part in the new Farm Assurance Forum to consider ways in which the assurance system can share best practice and avoid duplication. The plan also highlights a change in its level of communications with members of the scheme.

Notwithstanding the progress already made, the plan points to the intended outcome of a lot of RT's work later in 2026. The full details of the work programme for the year ahead are set out in Annex 7. It remains to be seen how this work will alter the experience of its members during the audit process, but

there is a commitment to assess the outcomes through further farmer sentiment surveys and focus groups.

With the end of the monitoring period, it will be important for the RT Board, and in particular the RT Ownership Body, in setting the vision for the organisation, to ensure that momentum is maintained with the RT action plan, not least as the organisation settles into new CEO leadership later in 2026.

There remains a lot to be done to ensure that the work of the UKFAR is not overtaken by other events, of which there are many presently affecting the farming industry. To this end, the UKFAR sponsoring bodies may wish to consider a method to continue to have oversight of further developments with farm assurance schemes and those of others involved in the farm assurance system.

## **Section 6. Next Steps**

### **6.1 Disseminating the Results of the Monitoring Exercise to the Wider Industry**

Whilst the monitoring exercise was commissioned by the NFUs and the AHDB, it was always intended that each monitoring report would be published so that the wider farming industry might gain a view about progress with the implementation of the UKFAR recommendations.

It is important to put on record that the organisations commissioning the monitoring exercise have not had any editorial input to this report, and that their submissions to the exercise have been treated in the same way as others. In this way, the report has remained independent of the commissioning bodies.

It should be noted, also, that the monitoring exercise is based on self-assessments by responding organisations and that their submissions, including their indication of the status of their work on the recommendations, form the basis of this report. It remains too early to tell whether or not the actions taken to date will result in changes being witnessed by the farming industry in the nature and conduct of the farm assurance system.

Nonetheless, it is hoped that the progress shown in this report will indicate a willingness of many of the respondent organisations to continue to improve the system as a whole, and to enable the farming industry, in due course, to benefit from the changes being made.

## Annex 1: The Characteristics of Good Farm Assurance

The characteristics of good farm assurance identified in the UKFAR Report were as follows:

**Strong leadership - clarity of purpose** - those schemes showing greatest success in delivering value throughout the food system had clear objectives - making a well understood and transparent offer on the guarantees offered by scheme membership and maintaining their focus through strong leadership and a refusal to be sidetracked by political expediency. Several respondents we spoke with described this as the importance of a strong “controlling mind”.

**Regular review** - farmers reported the best experience where schemes were prepared to flex to reflect developments (eg to offer best practice in inspections, or to reflect the developing legislative framework). This kind of flexibility is a factor in securing producer confidence and avoiding a sense of “mission creep”, where standards constantly accumulate but those that are no longer relevant are not removed at the same pace.

**Transparency** - we heard a great deal about the importance of transparency – offering clarity about how standards are set at whose request and why, and about the importance of honest engagement of all interested parties, to ensure that standards are practical and to avoid the scope for duplication.

**Collaboration** - we heard very favourable feedback about those instances where different players within the food system had collaborated to share standards and assurance processes – whether this was Government relying on assurance schemes to meet statutory requirements, or retailers relying on established schemes for assurance. Where this had been possible, those involved spoke about the ways in which clarity about standards, implementation, enforcement and transparency had helped to build necessary trust.

**A focus on delivering value to participants** - many of those we spoke to talked about the ability, or otherwise, of schemes to deliver a market premium to farmers. This was especially difficult in those sectors (eg combinable crops) for which there is no consumer-facing label, or where there is poor consumer recognition of the value of assurance schemes. The best schemes focus on trying to deliver value - whether through a price premium or using data and advice on best practice to enhance farm performance. They also focus on the scope for scheme membership to improve market access, and to strengthen product integrity, including in export markets (although we heard from some that there is greater scope to think strategically about assurance in relation to exports).

**Consistency and continuity** - scheme participants valued an approach which allowed data to be transferred only once, where inspection practices were clear and predictable and where schemes were able to build a picture of the circumstances of individual businesses. Scheme portals have played an important first step in offering this kind of consistency, but there was an appetite for them to go further. And there is a significant appetite for all the players engaged in farm inspections to make greater efforts to co-ordinate their activities and to take proper account of information provided pre-audit to reduce the time burden of audit visits.

**A clear, transparent and proportionate approach to enforcement** - we heard compelling accounts from farmers about the extent to which a binary ‘pass/fail’ approach to inspection contributed to the overall stress of the farm assurance process. We also heard from Government Departments and Agencies about the importance of clarity about enforcement and penalties in deciding whether to rely on schemes for official/regulatory purposes. Schemes with mature and transparent policies on enforcement and a proportionate approach to penalties fare best on both counts.

**Healthy competition** - farmers and other consultees favoured a degree of choice over which scheme to join as offering a stimulus to improve scheme conditions for participants. By contrast, where participation in a particular scheme had effectively become a gateway to market participation, farmers often felt less confidence that schemes would carry out this improvement.



**Milestones**

				Months												Years				
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1+	2+	3+	4+	5+
<b>Strategic Recommendation 5: The inclusion of regulatory requirements within farm assurance standards and audits should be conditional on government and regulators agreeing a form of “earned recognition” (Themes 4 &amp; 6)</b>																				
Short	Creating points of contact in government departments	Government departments	6 months from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Short	Consistency of regulatory use of farm assurance	Government departments, regulatory agencies and NFUs	9 months from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Short	Agreeing how regulatory sanctions and farm assurance work together	Regulatory agencies working with farm assurance schemes	9 months from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Medium	Extending ‘earned recognition’	Farm assurance schemes in consultation with government departments	1 year from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Medium	Using farm data to determine the impact of policy changes	Government departments	9 months from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Long	Improving government understanding of the role of farm assurance	DEFRA	1 year from publication of the UKFAR report																	
<b>Strategic Recommendation 6: There must be greater coordination in the way in which farm assurance operates across the UK nations (Themes 3, 6 &amp; 8)</b>																				
Short	Creating a new Red Tractor approach for combinable crops	Red Tractor	6 months from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Short	Improving Red Tractor understanding of farming in Northern Ireland	Red Tractor	6 months from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Medium	Creating ‘one voice’ for UK farm assurance	All Farm Assurance Schemes	6 months from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Long	The role of whole-life in farm assurance	Relevant Farm Assurance Schemes	Within 1 year of publication of the UKFAR report																	
<b>Strategic Recommendation 7: Farm assurance schemes must better position the UK farming industry in world food markets and in competition with imported food (Themes 5, 4 &amp; 9)</b>																				
Short	Standards for imported food	AHDB	Commencement of an ongoing programme within 6 months of publication of the UKFAR report																	
Short	Informing UK farming about food standards in other nations	AHDB and NFUs	Commencement of a communications programme within 9 months of publication of the UKFAR report.																	
Short	Farm assurance for combinable crops	Farm Assurance Schemes working with Combinable Crops Sector representatives and their customer base	9 months from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Medium	Reviewing international standards by government	Relevant government departments, together with AHDB and NFUs	9 months from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Long	The Trade and Agriculture Commission	UK Government	1 year from publication of the UKFAR report																	
<b>Strategic Recommendation 8: All farm assurance schemes must review, and, where necessary, improve their methods of communication with the farming industry (Themes 4, 5 &amp; 10)</b>																				
Short	A ‘farmer first’ approach to communications	Farm Assurance Schemes	3 months from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Short	Implementing the Commission’s recommendations	Farm Assurance Schemes	Initial Report within 6 months of publication of the UKFAR report and quarterly thereafter																	
Short	Using Features/Advantages/Benefits statement	Farm Assurance Schemes	6 months from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Short	Avoiding ‘mission creep’ to address third party requirements	BRC with NFU & AHDB	6 months from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Medium	Implementing culture change	Farm Assurance Scheme Boards	9 months from publication of the UKFAR report																	
Long	The ownership of Red Tractor	Red Tractor Board and Ownership Organisations	1 year from publication of the UKFAR report																	
<b>Strategic Recommendation 9: The Red Tractor scheme must complete the implementation of recommendations in the Campbell Tickell report, publish a report on how it has responded to these recommendations and address remaining conclusions drawn by Campbell Tickell but left to the Commission to consider. (Themes 3, 5 &amp; 10)</b>																				
Short	Reviewing progress with the Campbell Tickell report	Red Tractor Board	Initial report within 3 months of publication of the UKFAR report.																	
Medium	A formal assessment of changed to Red Tractor	NFU & AHDB	1 year from publication of the UKFAR report																	

### **Annex 3: Monitoring and Reporting Phase Terms of Reference**

The Terms of Reference for the Monitoring and Reporting Phase of the UKFAR were as follows:

1. To monitor, with the assistance of an administrative team and (if required) occasional specialist input from other UKFAR Commissioners (for initial access to organisations, for example) the implementation by the identified organisations of the 9 strategic and 56 operational recommendations contained in the UKFAR Report (published January 2025)
2. To initiate contact with the identified organisations to determine:
  - a. Their initial understanding of the UKFAR report and the recommended roles and responsibilities assigned to them
  - b. Their understanding and acceptance of the role of the Monitoring & Reporting Commissioner
  - c. The name of a contact person(s) with responsibility and authority to act on behalf of the organisation in coordinating their response and reporting back to the Monitoring & Reporting Commissioner
  - d. Their view on any major obstacles to the implementation of assigned UKFAR recommendations and how these might be addressed (and not avoided)
  - e. A stock-take of recommendations where the identified organisation believes they are already compliant and can provide written evidence to this effect
3. To maintain, with the assistance of the administrative team, a record of assigned recommendations and actions already taken to comply, actions planned within the UKFAR Report's identified timescales and actions that would lead to compliance but might miss the specified timescale. Updates on these actions will be required from the identified organisations by way of an online reporting template to be assembled by the administrative team
4. To use Items 2 and 3 above to compile two independent reports for the sponsoring bodies on progress with the implementation of the UKFAR Report recommendations, together with steps taken to encourage further action, more timely action or improve coordination of effort in the implementation of group-related recommendations. The reports should be produced in the early Autumn of 2025 and the early Spring of 2026, to allow time for the 6 month and 12-month target recommendation deadlines to pass, for evidence of progress to be gathered and for the reports to be compiled
5. Once the reports at Item 4 have been submitted to the sponsoring bodies, to publish an independent "comply or explain" progress report, on the same two timescales as in Item 4 above, so that information about actions taken, missed through timing or avoided by the identified organisations is made publicly available
6. To engage, independently and actively, with press and other media organisations on progress and issues arising from the publication of the reports at Item 5
7. Where UKFAR recommendations require a group response, to encourage those organisations involved to coordinate their efforts, to identify a lead organisation/person and an appropriate reporting mechanism back to the Monitoring & Reporting Commissioner so that actions and updates are provided to the administrative team in a timely manner
8. To end the appointment as Monitoring & Reporting Commissioner on publication of the 12-month public report (Item 5 refers) and on agreeing with the sponsoring bodies whether such an appointment should continue further terms to be agreed or should be concluded

#### **Annex 4: Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner Biography**

**Dr David Llewellyn CBE FRAgS FIAgrE** was the Principal of Harper Adams from 2009 to 2012, and then, when Harper Adams received university title, its first Vice-Chancellor from 2012 until his retirement in 2021. From 2018 to 2021, amongst other appointments, he was Chair of Guild HE, one of the two higher education national representative bodies.

David is Chair of the LANTRA Board, Patron of the Douglas Bomford Trust and was a member of the Expert Panel for the 2022/23 Independent Review of Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain. In 2024 he was the Lead Commissioner for the UK Farm Assurance Review.

David is a past President of the East of England Agricultural Society, a Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Society and a Fellow of the Institution of Agricultural Engineers. He was the recipient of the 2022 IAgrE Award for Contribution to the Land Based Sector.

In 2022, David was also awarded a CBE for services to Higher Education, the Agri-Food Chain and Rural Industries.

## Annex 5: Operating and Independence Principles for the Monitoring and Reporting Phase

The UKFAR process was conducted in accordance with a set of operating and independence principles agreed at the start of the Review between the sponsoring bodies (the NFUs and the AHDB) and the Commissioners. To maintain the independence of the UKFAR process the same principles were agreed between the sponsoring bodies and the Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner for UKFAR Phase 2.

The agreed principles, as amended for this Phase, are set out below:

### Independence

1. Phase 2 of the UKFAR, and its conduct, must have, and maintain, independence from the commissioning bodies (the farming unions (NFUs) and the AHDB). The Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner has been selected for his independence, and maintaining the independence of the process and results will be key to the credibility of the Monitoring and Reporting exercise and of the commissioning organisations

### Protecting the interests of the NFUs and the AHDB

2. The bodies that have commissioned this Phase of the Review have legitimate interest in the following areas:
  - **Cost, financing, and value for money.** As the funding bodies for the Review, the NFUs and the AHDB will need to be assured that the work is affordable, that the funding requirements are predictable and that they offer value for money
  - **Coverage, stakeholder engagement, timeline, and direction of travel.** It will be important to offer full transparency on these points: although the conclusions of the Commissioner and the Monitoring and Reporting exercise must be independent, the bodies that have commissioned this Phase will need to understand the process by which those conclusions have been reached, the breadth of stakeholder coverage, and the expected timeline for completion of the exercise

### Operating Principles

3. With points 1 and 2 in mind, this Phase should follow these rules:
  - The NFUs and the AHDB should be involved in the process for the **selection of the Secretariat** although the final decision/choice of Secretariat shall remain with the Commissioner
  - The Secretariat, once selected, will report monthly to the NFUs and the AHDB on **financial outgoing and commitments**, but other aspects of reporting will remain the responsibility of the Commissioner
  - The Commissioner will report as required to the **Farm Assurance Review Leadership Group (FARLG)** on his activities. The role of the FARLG will be to provide assurance and observations given the independence of this Phase, and it is not intended that the FARLG will steer the Commissioner's work
  - Although it is intended that the FARLG shall be the main vehicle for contact with the Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner, the **Boards and Office Holders of the commissioning bodies** may at any time request updates from the Commissioner
  - The Commissioner will liaise with the respective **communications teams** of the NFUs and the AHDB to ensure that they remain aware of the Commissioner's activities and contacts with the press and other media, but such contacts, and their contents, will not be prescribed by the NFUs and the AHDB and will remain the responsibility of the independent Commissioner. Information about this Phase released by the NFUs and/or the AHDB will make clear that the Monitoring and Reporting exercise remains independent of the commissioning bodies, but that it will receive evidence to support the Monitoring Reports and their conclusions from, amongst others, the commissioning bodies and, if required, their members

## Annex 6: List of Organisational Participants in the Monitoring Exercise – Rounds 1 and 2

Participants are listed for both Monitoring Exercise rounds to provide a comparison of the survey contributions, with the survey periods as set out below. This report features the submissions made to Round 2.

Round 1 – September 2025	Round 2 – February 2026
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. UFU</li> <li>2. AHDB</li> <li>3. AIC</li> <li>4. Arla Foods</li> <li>5. Cranswick</li> <li>6. DEFRA</li> <li>7. DEFRA Data group</li> <li>8. Food Standards Agency</li> <li>9. LMC NI</li> <li>10. Natural Resources Wales</li> <li>11. NFU</li> <li>12. Organic Farmers and Growers (OF&amp;G)</li> <li>13. Red Tractor</li> <li>14. RSABI</li> <li>15. SEDEX</li> <li>16. SQC</li> <li>17. Welsh Government</li> <li>18. Welsh Beef and Lamb Producers</li> <li>19. LEAF</li> <li>20. ABP</li> <li>21. AIMS</li> <li>22. Anglia Free Range Eggs</li> <li>23. British Egg Industry Council</li> <li>24. Co-op</li> <li>25. GLOBAL GAP</li> <li>26. NFU Cymru</li> <li>27. NFU Scotland</li> <li>28. QMS</li> <li>29. RSPCA Assured</li> <li>30. Soil Association</li> <li>31. TIAH</li> <li>32. Dairy UK</li> <li>33. Morrisons</li> <li>34. Agri-Audit</li> <li>35. Barbers Cheese</li> <li>36. British Sugar</li> <li>37. Lidl</li> <li>38. Marks &amp; Spencer</li> <li>39. RABI</li> <li>40. UK Flour Millers</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. UFU</li> <li>2. AHDB</li> <li>3. AIC</li> <li>4. Arla Foods</li> <li>5. Cranswick</li> <li>6. DEFRA</li> <li>7. DEFRA Data Group</li> <li>8. Food Standards Agency</li> <li>9. LMC NI</li> <li>10. Natural Resources Wales</li> <li>11. NFU</li> <li>12. Organic Farmers &amp; Growers (OF&amp;G)</li> <li>13. Red Tractor</li> <li>14. RSABI</li> <li>15. SEDEX</li> <li>16. SQC</li> <li>17. Welsh Government</li> <li>18. Welsh Lamb &amp; Beef Producers</li> <li>19. LEAF</li> <li>20. ABP</li> <li>21. AIMS</li> <li>22. Anglia Free Range Eggs</li> <li>23. British Egg Industry Council</li> <li>24. Co-op</li> <li>25. GLOBAL GAP</li> <li>26. NFU Cymru</li> <li>27. NFU Scotland</li> <li>28. QMS</li> <li>29. RSPCA Assured</li> <li>30. Soil Association</li> <li>31. TIAH</li> <li>32. Dairy UK</li> <li>33. Morrisons</li> </ol>

The Round 1 submissions from LMCNI, SEDEX, AIC, BEIC, LEAF, and UK Flour Millers were received as written documents, as opposed to a response to the monitoring survey.

The Round 2 responses from LMCNI, RSPCA Assured and Red Tractor were received as written documents, as opposed to a submission to the monitoring survey. The NFU and the AHDB also submitted further information in addition to their survey responses. Responses and updates from several individuals commenting on the monitoring round are not provided in the above list, but their contributions were equally welcome. It should be noted some organisations that submitted to Round 1 may not have had additional information to share in Round 2. Their responses can be found in the first Monitoring Report.

## **Annex 7: The Red Tractor Response**

### **RED TRACTOR'S RESPONSE TO UKFAR PROGRESS 2<sup>nd</sup> SURVEY**

Dear David Llewellyn and team,

On behalf of the Red Tractor Board, I am pleased to share our response to the latest phase of the UK Farm Assurance Review (UKFAR) and to provide an update on the substantial progress we have made since your report.

Over the past year, Red Tractor has acted with urgency, transparency and commitment to deliver on your recommendations. We have made meaningful progress across every relevant theme of the Review, and the programme of work now underway across the organisation reflects an enduring shift in how we operate.

While some aspects of our programme of work are wide-ranging and long-term, I wanted to highlight those key areas where we have made substantial and meaningful progress that will increase the value of assurance to farmers and growers:

#### **1. A comprehensive reset of farm-facing standards development and simplification**

We have introduced a new Policy for Standards Development that ensures there is a rationale for every standard, that is understood by every supply chain stakeholder. Using that policy we have committed to undertake line by line review of every standard in every Sector, which will include removing redundant and duplicative standards.

#### **2. Smarter, simpler and more efficient audits**

Progress has already been made, and will continue to be made, in simplifying and reducing audit duplication by improvements to the Red Tractor Portal. Improvements include a “tell us once” model through, for example, the uploading of photographic evidence and audit frequency is under review using a risk profiling model.

#### **3. Clearer, more transparent and more farmer-focused communication**

We have delivered a complete overhaul of our communications strategy. Farmers now receive clearer explanations of decisions, access to more direct engagement opportunities, and significantly increased transparency about our governance and standards development processes. Farmer feedback regarding this approach has been positive.

#### **4. A clear forward plan for continued delivery**

Our 2026/27 Business Plan's first objective is “to ensure the sentiment and aims of the FAR are delivered for farmers and growers”. This will ensure that delivery of the Review is not a standalone exercise, but the foundation of our future direction as an organisation.

#### **5. Our commitment to ongoing collaboration**

In your original report, you emphasised the importance of collaboration across farm assurance schemes, retailers, processors, unions and government. As a whole supply chain assurance scheme, collaboration is fundamental to our delivering our purpose. We've taken steps to work more openly and constructively with all these partners, notably farm assurance schemes, and appreciate your support in these efforts.

There is always more that can be done although some of the issues you raised require deep collaboration across the supply chain and cannot be resolved by Red Tractor alone. But the direction is clear, and the commitment across our Boards is genuine and sustained.

Through our ongoing work and in delivering these improvements, I firmly believe that Red Tractor continues to be a significant asset to UK agriculture which delivers market opportunities while ensuring accountability and enhancing reputation.

Yours sincerely,

*Jim Moseley*

CEO, Red Tractor

This document mirrors the UKFAR survey RT has been invited to complete online.

FAR Code	FAR Recommendation		Time-scale	Compliance	Response to 1 <sup>st</sup> Report (1 September 2025)	Compliance	Response to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Report (2 March 2026)
8.1	A 'farmer first' approach to communications	Farm assurance schemes must continue to review the way in which they communicate with farming members to ensure that their institutional cultures deliver a 'farmer first' approach to the delivery and development of their farm assurance scheme. This process should be revisited on a regular basis to ensure that scheme staff understand the importance of farm member communications and that their means of communication remain effective.	3 months	Already compliant	<p><b>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</b></p> <p><b>RT action plan, 25 March:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Red Tractor is totally committed to ensuring that farmers see, hear and feel real change</li> <li>RT will review its communications with farmers before developing and starting to deliver a new farmer engagement strategy from June 2025</li> <li>RT will consult with other farmer-focused organisations to understand and collaborate on best practice approaches to farmer engagement</li> <li>This strategy will include working with farmer representatives on RT's Sector Boards to ensure they have the tools needed to communicate effectively to those that they represent</li> <li>As in 8.5, RT has developed new organisational values which will support a change in culture</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since 25 March, Red Tractor's newly appointed director of communications and engagement has reviewed Red Tractor's communications, consulting with technical, communications and leadership staff, Board and farming stakeholders including the NFU, AHDB and specialist agencies to identify areas for improvement</li> <li>This has informed the development of a comprehensive communications strategy which seeks to strengthen communications with all stakeholders, with a particular focus on building farmer trust</li> <li>This strategy was presented to, and agreed by, Red Tractor's Board of Directors on 23 May</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>We continue to deliver our communications strategy and have made significant progress since August 2025. Key developments include:</p> <p><b>Farmer communications agency support:</b> Following a comprehensive tendering process, in October 2025 RT appointed agricultural comms specialists, <a href="#">Pinstone</a> to deliver farmer facing PR and communications. Pinstone's brief focuses on two pillars: communicating value and increasing understanding. Pinstone is supporting RT with farming trade media briefings and editorial in farming trade media, ensuring communications speaks to and is easily understood by farmers. Pinstone replaces RT's corporate affairs agency. Examples of placed editorial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://www.farmersguardian.com/blog/4522901/letters-red-tractor-continue-promote-defend-standards-british-agriculture">https://www.farmersguardian.com/blog/4522901/letters-red-tractor-continue-promote-defend-standards-british-agriculture</a></li> <li><a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/foot-and-mouth-disease-anniversary/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/foot-and-mouth-disease-anniversary/</a> (also published in the West Morland Gazette)</li> <li><a href="https://www.magzter.com/stories/newspaper/Western-Morning-News/RED-TRACTOR-HAILS-WORK-BEHIND-UKS-BSE-STATUS">https://www.magzter.com/stories/newspaper/Western-Morning-News/RED-TRACTOR-HAILS-WORK-BEHIND-UKS-BSE-STATUS</a></li> <li><a href="https://www.fwi.co.uk/business/red-tractor-revamps-app-to-reduce-paperwork-for-farmers">https://www.fwi.co.uk/business/red-tractor-revamps-app-to-reduce-paperwork-for-farmers</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Listening and understanding farmers:</b> In November 2025, <a href="#">Grounded Research</a> was appointed to support Red Tractor with farmer and consumer-focused research. Work so far has included the review and refinement</p>

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector Boards were briefed on RT's new comms strategy with the opportunity to input on recommendations</li> <li>• Key elements of the communications strategy include face to face farmer meetings, appointing a communications agency to add value to farmer-facing communications, improvement to digital communications to farmers – including the RT website and newsletters, better cascade of information to farmers, training for farmer-facing spokespeople and a review of farmer-focused research</li> <li>• Some early results of this strategy are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Red Tractor staff and directors attended more than 50 farmer facing events, directly speaking to more than 750 stakeholders and members since 1 April 2025</li> <li>○ Improvements to Red Tractor's assurance <a href="#">website</a> went live on 3 July, including improved navigation, more accessible content and a new design</li> <li>○ Following the June Sector Board meetings RT trialled a new way of cascading updates, supporting representatives to talk about RT. Sector Board Terms of Reference have also been updated to clearly state the role of representatives in cascading information to, and gathering feedback from, those they represent</li> <li>○ Weekly communications updates are now being sent to all RT staff and Directors</li> <li>○ Sponsorship of the Mixed Farmer of the Year Award in the Farmers Weekly Awards,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		<p>of RT's Post Assessment Survey, which is sent to members following an assessment (live since 6 January 2026); and the launch of a new Farmer Sentiment Survey which will gather views and improve understanding of perceptions towards RT using a trust framework and equity theory (in the field until 27 February). Farmer focus groups are planned for March 2026 to better understand the results. We plan to take a full report on the findings to the RT Board of Directors in May. Results from the Post Assessment Survey will be reviewed and fed back to the organisation regularly. More info: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/help-shape-the-future-of-red-tractor/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/help-shape-the-future-of-red-tractor/</a></p> <p><b>Digital communications:</b> A Digital Communications Manager was recruited and started working in the team in November 2025. The role is newly created to increase capacity and competency within the organisation for digital communications, including website usability and SEO, newsletters and digital communications strategies. This has resulted in improvements to the Member Matters newsletter, which is now optimised to deliver key messages and link to the RT website (<a href="mailto:assuredfoodstandards.cmail20.com/t-e-wflutl-l-v/">assuredfoodstandards.cmail20.com/t-e-wflutl-l-v/</a>) Further updates to newsletters, including options for members to sign up to receive bespoke news are planned.</p> <p><b>New website content for farmers:</b> In the last three months, new content has been added to <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk">redtractor.org.uk</a> to increase transparency, understanding and value to farmers. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rewards of RT assurance: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/reap-the-rewards/">https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/reap-the-rewards/</a></li> </ul>

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					<p>and the Cumbrian Farmers Award</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recruitment of a digital communications manager is underway</li> <li>• RT will review its communications strategy annually. We are also in the process of tendering for a research consultancy to work with us to better measure and evaluate the impact of our communications. This brief will ensure we have accurate, credible and informative insights to help measure and inform work to build farmer trust. The deadline for proposals is mid-September. We anticipate that part of this work will include more comprehensive farmer sentiment research including focus groups</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint assessment opportunities: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/joint-assessments/">https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/joint-assessments/</a></li> <li>• About assessors: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/about-assessors/">https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/about-assessors/</a></li> <li>• Where to find support: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/where-to-find-farming-support/">https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/where-to-find-farming-support/</a></li> <li>• Member Portal guidance: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/member-portal/">https://redtractor.org.uk/member-portal/</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Meeting farmers face to face:</b> In 2025, Red Tractor staff and directors attended more than 50 farmer-facing events, directly speaking to more than 1,000 stakeholders. This included hosting a series of four farmer events across England in October 2025. The events provided an opportunity for farmers to share their feedback in person and for Red Tractor directors to listen and explain the steps being taken to address concerns. A summary of the events with answers to commonly asked questions was published on our website and shared with members via our printed and digital newsletters: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/farmers-and-red-tractor-in-open-conversation/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/farmers-and-red-tractor-in-open-conversation/</a></p> <p><b>Listening to feedback on sector priorities:</b> On 8 December 2025, RT published objectives and priorities for improvements identified for each sector by the relevant Sector Board (<a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/improvements/">https://redtractor.org.uk/improvements/</a>). This announcement marks the first step in reviewing farm facing standards in 2026. The announcement received extensive media coverage and was shared through all RT comms channels. Stakeholders were invited to feedback on these objectives and to share any specific feedback on existing</p>

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							<p>standards until 1 February 2026. RT received 131 responses to this consultation, with most responses coming from the crops sector. Overall, the feedback confirmed the priorities set out in the sector strategies, with some useful insights which were presented to Sector Boards at meetings in February. Technical Advisory Committees will now take this onboard as part of their review of standards. RT will consult in full on proposed revised standards in Autumn 2026. More info: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-shares-priorities-for-delivering-improvements-for-farming-sectors/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-shares-priorities-for-delivering-improvements-for-farming-sectors/</a></p> <p><b>Supporting farmers involved in exposés:</b> Red Tractor has been working closely with the pigs industry to prepare for potential action by animal welfare campaigns. This has included a review of how we support farmers involved in exposés, with new communications materials to help them to manage the pressure this puts on them, their family and their businesses.</p> <p><b>Supporting opportunities with government:</b> RT is in the process of recruiting a Senior Public Affairs Manager to lead on and coordinate engagement with government departments regulators and MPs. This role will support existing engagement detailed in our response to question 71 below.</p> <p><b>Other activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Printed Member Matters sent to all members in December 2025, focusing on the opportunities to feedback: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2026/01/RT.MNews-Dec-2025-NEW-V2.pdf">https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2026/01/RT.MNews-Dec-2025-NEW-V2.pdf</a></li> </ul>

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							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publishing updates following every Board and Sector Board meeting: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/category/board-updates/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/category/board-updates/</a></li> <li>• Backing British farming in the heart of London at the Lady Mayor's Show: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/backing-british-farming-in-the-heart-of-london/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/backing-british-farming-in-the-heart-of-london/</a></li> <li>• Communicating benefits of RT's consumer marketing and communications to farmers: <a href="https://www.farmersguardian.com/news/4520957/tv-presenter-joins-red-tractor-anniversary-celebrations">https://www.farmersguardian.com/news/4520957/tv-presenter-joins-red-tractor-anniversary-celebrations</a> and <a href="https://www.southwestfarmer.co.uk/news/25862428.red-tractor-now-uks-recognised-food-assurance-scheme/">https://www.southwestfarmer.co.uk/news/25862428.red-tractor-now-uks-recognised-food-assurance-scheme/</a></li> <li>• Updating pigs members on important changes to RT standards: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-provides-guidance-on-pig-euthanasia/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-provides-guidance-on-pig-euthanasia/</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Other planned activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation on proposed standards in Autumn 2026</li> <li>• New, more transparent, presentation of governance information on redtractor.org.uk</li> <li>• Hero video conveying value of RT to farmers</li> <li>• 2026 events schedule</li> <li>• Farmer wellbeing partnerships</li> </ul>
1.2	Revising Standards - Focusing only on what is necessary	There is an urgent need to remove or reduce the complexity of standards. Each farm assurance scheme must	6 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT recognises the importance of this and has started work in this area in consultation with Sector Boards and key stakeholders to develop and finalise a policy for standards.</li> </ul>	Already compliant	Sector Boards finalised strategies for improvements in their sectors in October 2025. These strategies, which have the support of everyone on sector boards, were

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		<p>undertake a deep dive of existing standards to provide a publicly available plan setting out which, in due course, will be removed, replaced or improved. Each scheme must, thereafter, report publicly on the rationale for keeping or removing a standard, be that, for example, added value or due diligence delivered. Each new standard introduced to a scheme must have a publicly identified sponsor/sponsors to provide greater transparency on the catalyst for its inclusion. This work will provide the basis for applicable UKAS scheme reviews, which we recognise take place on a longer cycle, but will enable time to be provided for improved communication with the farming industry on the steps to standards simplification being pursued by farm assurance schemes.</p>			<p>The policy will initiate a review of and justification for existing standards and identify future changes as specified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This new 'Red Tractor Policy for Standards' will be published on our website with a review plan by July 2025</li> <li>• Progress against the review plan will be monitored and published every 6 months</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT has met with farming representatives from all our Sector Boards to listen to their views and help inform a draft policy for the development of Red Tractor Standards</li> <li>• RT Sector Boards were briefed on the draft 'Policy for the Development of Red Tractor Standards' ahead of their meetings in June to allow time to consult within their organisations</li> <li>• RT Sector Boards considered and discussed the draft 'Policy for the Development of Red Tractor Standards' at their meetings in June and provided views on the future sector strategy</li> <li>• Sector Board feedback was incorporated into a revised draft which was considered and agreed by Standards Committee and the AFS Board at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> July</li> <li>• The Policy (which includes the principles from this UKFAR Recommendation) was <a href="#">published in August</a>, after Sector Boards were given a final opportunity to review. In September, we will make this policy more visible on our website</li> <li>• Red Tractor provided members with details of this work in its monthly newsletter, <a href="#">Member Matters</a>, on 22 July 2025</li> <li>• Sector Boards are currently developing and finalising individual sector strategies setting out the priorities for standards and operational aspects within each sector</li> </ul>		<p>shared with the Board of Directors in November, before publication of the objectives and priorities in each strategy on 8 December: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/improvements/">https://redtractor.org.uk/improvements/</a></p> <p>All strategies include a commitment to review all farm facing standards in 2026 with the objective of reducing audit burden and duplication for farmers. Stakeholders had the opportunity to feedback on the priorities by 1 February 2026.</p> <p>RT received 131 responses to this request for feedback. Overall, the feedback confirmed the priorities set out in the sector strategies, with some useful insights which were presented to Sector Boards at meetings in February.</p> <p>Technical Advisory Committees are now in the process of reviewing standards line by line with proposed changes being reviewed by Sector Boards.</p> <p>RT will consult in full on proposed revised standards in Autumn 2026.</p> <p>More info: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-shares-priorities-for-delivering-improvements-for-farming-sectors/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-shares-priorities-for-delivering-improvements-for-farming-sectors/</a></p>

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					Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.		Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1 <sup>st</sup> report.
					setting out next steps to deliver improvements. These sector strategies will take a sector-specific approach to delivering improvements, for example, while some will focus on reducing audit points, others are likely to look at reducing audit burden through duplication with other schemes. The strategies will be published and available for stakeholder feedback in October		
1.3	Right of Appeal	There must be recourse for farm businesses to refer an audit outcome to an independent arbitrator, outside the farm assurance scheme, who is capable of making binding decisions in instances where that outcome could restrict market access (for example in the dairy sector). Each farm assurance scheme must publicly restate its approach to having a transparent complaints and appeals procedure that takes account of the need for external arbitration. Unless non-compliance relates to an issue of food safety, or some other serious breach of standards, it should not result in immediate suspension of market access. Each farm assurance scheme must also publicly restate the timescales within which an appeal process will be completed.	6 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appealing audit outcomes is within the responsibility of the Certification Body so we will ask all who work with RT to ensure their appeals procedure is accessible to RT members</li> <li>• While RT has a Complaints and Appeals process which specifies that the appeal panel must include at least one person independent of RT, we will nevertheless consider steps to strengthen this process in line with the UKFAR recommendation. We will then publish the process in full by June 2025</li> <li>• RT will review the process every two years</li> <li>• RT's existing suspensions process includes a 28-day grace period for non-conformances to be resolved with the exception of major non-conformances against key standards</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT hosted a meeting of all Certification Bodies on 7 May. Appeals were included on the agenda</li> <li>• All RT members have access to their Certification Body's appeal procedure directly and links can be found on RT website <a href="#">Appeals section</a></li> <li>• RT Standards Committee met on 13 May and reviewed and updated the RT Appeals</li> </ul>	Already compliant	RT will monitor feedback from members to ensure the Appeal process is understood and unless required before RT will review the appeals process in two years, by May 2027.

FAR Code	FAR Recommendation		Time-scale	Compliance	Response to 1 <sup>st</sup> Report (1 September 2025)	Compliance	Response to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Report (2 March 2026)
					<p>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</p> <p>process to ensure the FAR recommendations were included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On 29 May RT published a <a href="#">summary of the appeals process</a> and the <a href="#">detailed appeals process</a></li> <li>Red Tractor provided members with details and links in its monthly newsletter, <a href="#">Member Matters</a>, on 4 June 2025</li> <li>RT will monitor feedback from members to ensure the Appeal process is understood and unless required before RT will review the appeals process in two years, by May 2027</li> </ul>		
1.4	Proportionate sanctions	Each farm assurance scheme must revisit the sanctions imposed for non-compliance to ensure that they are proportionate and do not unduly impact upon the viability of a farming business. To this end, standards should continue to be graded, but schemes must work together to ensure that there is greater consistency between their standards, grading and any sanctions imposed for non-compliance.	6 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While RT already has a process to ensure that sanctions are proportionate, the UKFAR has demonstrated that these sanctions are not sufficiently transparent or publicly available. Therefore, we will communicate and publish RT's sanctions by May 2025</li> <li>Following discussion with other FA schemes RT will review sanctions in consultation with Sector Boards, to ensure they are consistent</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT Standards Committee met on 13 May and reviewed and agreed sanctions ensuring they were fair and proportionate and in line with the UKFAR</li> <li>On 29 May RT published the <a href="#">Red Tractor Sanctions</a> to ensure they were transparent and publicly available to all members and stakeholders</li> <li>Red Tractor provided members with details and links to its sanctions in its monthly newsletter, <a href="#">Member Matters</a>, on 4 June</li> <li>RT has shared the Red Tractor Sanctions with Certification Bodies requesting they identify any opportunities to improve</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>On 16 October, Red Tractor hosted a meeting of assurance schemes to discuss the pros and cons of a 'loose federation of assurance schemes, to improve collaboration, share best practice and reduce duplication. The meeting was facilitated by lead Commissioner David Llewellyn, and it was attended by most schemes.</p> <p>As part of this meeting RT shared the Red Tractor Sanctions with Certification Bodies and other Farm Assurance Schemes – no opportunities to improve consistency any further have been identified.</p>

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					<p>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</p> <p>consistency with other FA schemes they certify</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT will share with other FA schemes and discuss to identify if there are any opportunities to improve consistency of approach at the meeting of all FA schemes on 16<sup>th</sup> October</li> </ul>		<p>Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1<sup>st</sup> report.</p>
1.5	Risk based, coordinated inspection	<p>Each farm assurance scheme must adopt a risk-based approach to audit visits, based on previous audit outcomes, so that the timing of visits, and their content, can be adjusted to enable more focussed audits to be undertaken, possibly over a longer time period between visits where this is permissible under the accreditation arrangements pertaining to the scheme. The risk assessment must be clearly communicated to the farm business so that it is aware of the timescales and areas of focus that will form the basis of future audit visits. Prior to a farm audit, the certification body must continue, as currently expected, to contact the farmer to set out an audit plan on how the process will work and offer the opportunity for the farmer to ask questions or raise any concerns.</p> <p>However, this should, henceforth, be conducted as a supportive contact to reduce the stress associated with an</p>	6 months	Imminently compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT already operates a <a href="#">risk based approach</a> to audits in pigs, poultry and dairy however, a risk-based approach acknowledging low risk farms has not yet been developed or implemented (see 1.13)</li> <li>RT will work with UKAS, our certification bodies, regulators, other FA schemes to ensure all aspects are considered in developing an achievable roadmap by sector</li> <li>RT will publish progress updates on this topic in <a href="#">Sector Board reports</a></li> <li>We will publish details of the RT Assessor Protocol and Training programme to demonstrate the processes that all assessors have to follow when conducting an audit by July 2025</li> <li>RT will work with our certification bodies to ensure appropriate information is shared prior to assessment including any guidance that may aid the member</li> <li>RT Complaints and Appeals process already published on our website will be reviewed as part of 1.3 to check the process meets this recommendation</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The potential for risk based coordinated inspections was discussed at the RT hosted meeting of all Certification Bodies on 7 May with all recognising the longer-term opportunities and associated</li> </ul>		<p>On 8 December, RT published priorities for improvements in farming sectors developed by Sector Boards. These include a commitment to further explore options for risk-based assessment.</p> <p><a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/improvements/">https://redtractor.org.uk/improvements/</a></p> <p><b>Note:</b> While RT agrees with the principle of longer time periods between visits based on previous audit outcomes, delivering this in reality will require consultation and agreement with UKAS, Certification Bodies and the entire food chain, including retailers and food service companies, in order to ensure risk based-audits are practical, possible under ISO17025 and accepted by customers.</p>

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		<p>audit. It should also be a mechanism by which advice about the audit process can be offered on a non-prejudicial basis. If an auditor is unable to conduct their audit in accordance with the timing in the agreed audit plan, they must set out their reasons for not complying with this requirement and provide a written statement to this effect to the farmer. If the farmer does not agree that the time taken for the audit was compliant with the audit plan, through no fault of their own, the farm assurance scheme must review the matter to ensure that the auditor's work is being conducted as effectively and efficiently as possible and inform the farmer of the outcome of its review</p>			<p>operational changes which will be needed in this area. (see 1.13)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT Standards Committee met on 13 May and reviewed and agreed the RT Complaints process ensuring it met the UKFAR Recommendations</li> <li>• On 29 May RT published the <a href="#">Complaints Procedure</a> to ensure they were transparent and publicly available to all members and stakeholders</li> <li>• Red Tractor provided members with details and links to its Complaints Procedure in its monthly newsletter, <a href="#">Member Matters</a>, on 4 June</li> <li>• Standards Committee on 8 July agreed the RT Assessor Protocol and Training programme which includes amendments to allow more joint assessments to be accommodated</li> <li>• In July Certification Bodies were issued with the updated Protocol and they will be monitored by RT Compliance team to ensure their recruitment, training and monitoring of assessors complies</li> <li>• In August RT published information <a href="#">About Assessors</a> including skills, training and monitoring and included a link to a more detailed <a href="#">Assessor Background &amp; Training</a></li> <li>• RT will use the pig sector initially to pilot potential risk-based solutions with input from the RT Pig sector board</li> <li>• Updates will be provided in <a href="#">Sector Board reports</a></li> <li>• As per UKFAR 1.10 RT has appointed John Pain as the new Vice Chair with part of the role responsible for leading on farmer well being</li> </ul>		

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					<p><b>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</b></p> <p><b>Note:</b> While RT agrees with the principle of longer time periods between visits based on previous audit outcomes, delivering this in reality will require consultation and agreement with the entire food chain, including retailers and food service companies, in order to ensure risk based-audits are practical and accepted by customers.</p>		<p><b>Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1<sup>st</sup> report.</b></p>
2.1	Tell Us Once': making good use of data	Farm assurance scheme auditors must be mandated to review their scheme's online portal prior to their audit visit and to conduct a 'tell us once' review of the documentation placed on the portal by the farm business. This is to enable the audit visit to focus more on any essential missing documentation and a review of farming practice during the course of the audit visit. Farm assurance scheme auditors must be required to provide written evidence that the pre-visit portal/repository review has been conducted.	6 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT and our Sector Boards unanimously agree with this recommendation on the proviso farmers – given their wide variation in levels of technology adoption – can still choose whether to use the portal or not</li> <li>• Priority work is already well underway to improve the portal experience for assessors. We will deliver training and issue a survey for further feedback on ideas for improvement by April 2025</li> <li>• RT wrote to all certification bodies on 19<sup>th</sup> March stressing the importance of all assessors using the portal where farmers indicate they want to</li> <li>• RT recognised this issue a number of years ago and developed its <a href="#">portal</a> in late 2019 and launched it in 2020 partly to address this and partly to address the challenge of Covid</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In response to assessor feedback improvements to <a href="#">RT portal tools</a> were launched with user guides issued to all assessors</li> <li>• Assessor training sessions were held in April both online and in person <a href="#">with assessors in Northern Ireland</a></li> <li>• Focus on how RT can support assessors more with the RT portal was discussed at</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>RT has been delivering a programme of continuous improvement to the RT Member Portal.</p> <p>On 19 February, Red Tractor announced improvements to its portal including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live photos and geolocation:</b> Time and date stamped to demonstrate compliance</li> <li>• <b>Quick links:</b> Easy access to industry templates</li> <li>• <b>Requirements shortlist:</b> Essential documents and records for the assessor at a glance</li> </ul> <p>This announcement was accompanied by new guides and help documents to assist farmers in using the portal: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/member-portal/">https://redtractor.org.uk/member-portal/</a></p> <p>Use of the portal remains optional to farmers, with assessors required to use the portal if the farmer wishes to do so.</p> <p>Of members who completed the RT post assessment survey in 2025 (n=2,109), 46% said that they used the Portal. Of these 77% said that their experience using the portal was excellent or good.</p> <p>As part of our efforts to promote ongoing uptake of the Portal, in January 2026, RT supported a side event at the Oxford</p>

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					<p>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</p> <p>the RT hosted meeting of all Certification Bodies on 7 May</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessor use of the portal is closely monitored by the RT Compliance team and on-going training is provided where needed</li> <li>• We will continue to consider further improvements in light of assessor feedback</li> </ul>		<p>Farming Conference discussing the role of technology in farm assurance:  <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/talking-technology-at-oxford-farming-conference-2026/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/talking-technology-at-oxford-farming-conference-2026/</a></p> <p>Additionally, RT is working with third party data providers to integrate RT requirements into their farm management apps. As a first step, we've worked with MeritAgCheck to integrate a crops standards check list into their app.</p> <p>More info: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-launches-new-portal-features/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-launches-new-portal-features/</a></p>
2.2	Data ownership: the need for resolution	Any outstanding issues surrounding the ownership, holding and use/sharing of data required by farm assurance schemes, following the review and streamlining of current standards recommended earlier in this report, must be clarified in conjunction with farming industry bodies and the results communicated to the farming industry as soon as practicable. It is recognised that certain farming data may be seen as valuable by assurance scheme members, but it is essential that value creation by a farming business is not conflated with the use of anonymised data that can help direct improvements in farming assurance and farming systems. This distinction needs	6 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT recognises that the issue of data ownership is extremely important to our members, so we support this recommendation</li> <li>• RT wrote on 21 March to those identified to lead this action offering to collaborate at a time they feel is appropriate</li> <li>• <a href="#">RT Membership Rules</a> (61-67) clearly cover Confidentiality and Data Protection and are in line with the UKFAR recommendation</li> <li>• In February 2024 Red Tractor was awarded a full <a href="#">Farm Data Principles Certificate</a>, independently verifying that we operate to the highest standards of data security, privacy, and integrity</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red Tractor representatives participated in a NFUs / AHDB hosted meeting on 29 May when AHDB work on Farm Data Sharing Proof of Concept was presented</li> </ul>	Already Compliant	<p>RT attended a further meeting hosted by AHDB on 17 September 2025 where AHDB updated on their Farm Data Exchange Proof of Concept project which they reported was due to complete by the end of March 2026.</p> <p>As part of an organisational restructure, the role of Data Manager has been created within Red Tractor. A key responsibility of this role is to ensure data sharing principles are followed.</p>

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		to be 'written in' to an industry compact about data ownership, custodianship and use that will be vital if the longer term benefits arising from the wider use of technology in farm assurance systems are to be realised.			Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.		Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1 <sup>st</sup> report.
2.3	Creating a data co-op	Farm assurance schemes, working together, should support the feasibility work into a data co-op, building on activities already started by Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd (SAOS), whereby data could be shared across the private and public sector to reduce duplication and improve efficiency. However, through a co-operative mechanism farmers should retain control of the commercially sensitive data, managing consent and protecting any commercial value associated with it. Consideration must also be given to replicating the approach seen in Wales for the development of data hubs that can be used to pull data sources together to provide guidance and resources for the farming industry and inform the development of farming practices and policies.	6 months	TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As suggested by UKFAR Commissioners back in February when we asked for clarification RT has engaged with AHDB and at the NFUs / AHDB hosted meeting on 29 May received an update on their <a href="#">Farm Data Sharing Proof of Concept</a>.</li> <li>RT will consider the results of the AHDB proof of concept and consult with farming stakeholders on most appropriate next steps for RT handling of member data</li> <li>Topic to be discussed at FA roundtable on 16<sup>th</sup> October</li> </ul> <p>Note: RT is unable to categorise how we will be compliant with this recommendation in future using the options given until this process and consultation has been completed.</p>	TBC	<p>This topic was discussed at the FA roundtable event on 16 October.</p> <p>RT will consider the results of the AHDB proof of concept when this is available (see 2.2).</p>

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2.4	Supporting farmers in a digital world	Farm assurance schemes must publish information about the training programmes they have put in place to help improve farmer take-up of current technologies used within their scheme and must ensure that future system developments include relevant training for end users at cost to the scheme, not to the farm business.	6 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan; 25 March:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In April 2025 RT will publish the first in a regular update in Member Matters and on the website about the RT portal, how it works and the benefits to members of using it, together with a survey for farmers to feedback ideas that RT can use to improve</li> <li>• RT currently provides user guides and a video on our website to help farmers use the RT Portal</li> <li>• RT does not charge members to use the RT portal</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT published details of improvement to the Portal in its special printed edition of <a href="#">Member Matters</a>, on its website, and social channels</li> <li>• RT continues to make improvements to its Portal. Developments underway include data integration for complex farm structures and live task logging, which will support a more streamlined assurance process</li> <li>• RT has published up to date <a href="#">user guides and videos</a> to help farmers and offer customer support by telephone</li> <li>• RT has a series of meetings with third party service providers who support farmers to ensure they understand the RT standards and portal and how their systems interact which will allow for better user and assessor support resources. Will also help with UKFAR 2.6</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>New developments to the RT Member Portal on 19 February were accompanied by new guides and help documents to assist farmers in using the portal: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/member-portal/">https://redtractor.org.uk/member-portal/</a></p> <p>As part of our efforts to promote ongoing uptake of the Portal, in January 2026, RT supported a side event at the Oxford Farming Conference discussing the role of technology in farm assurance: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/talking-technology-at-oxford-farming-conference-2026/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/talking-technology-at-oxford-farming-conference-2026/</a></p> <p>Additionally, RT is working with third party data providers to integrate RT requirements into their farm management apps. As a first step, we've worked with MeritAgCheck to integrate a crops standards check list into their app.</p> <p>More info: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-launches-new-portal-features/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-launches-new-portal-features/</a></p> <p>See 2.1 for further details.</p>
3.1	Creating and amending standards	We recognise that farm assurance schemes have different ways in which they engage with the farming community, but it is essential that farmers are involved in the process of creating or amending farm assurance	6 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT acknowledge that more can be done to ensure farmers feel consulted, listened to and able to influence decision-making on standards. We also recognise that farmers have concerns about representation.</li> <li>• We are committed to continuous improvement in this area and will review</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>RT published a new web page detailing the Policy for the Development of Red Tractor Standards, in an easy to read format: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/how-we-set-standards/">https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/how-we-set-standards/</a></p> <p>On 8 December, RT initiated the process for reviewing farm-facing standards in 2026 by publishing priorities identified by each Sector</p>

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		standards. Initially, each farm assurance scheme must publish the way in which it achieves this objective so that the routes for farmers to make their views known are clear. In the longer term, farm assurance schemes must collaborate to set out an agreed framework for the way in which consultation with the farming industry, beyond scheme board members, for example, is conducted.			<p>how we consult on creating and amending standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feedback from members on standards or other areas will continue to be encouraged via direct communication or our post assessment surveys, and we will consider other methods</li> <li>● The input and contribution that farmers make to the development of our standards, governance structures and on our Board is of vital importance to Red Tractor</li> <li>● Farmers are involved in RT Governance at all stages from Ownership Body to Board, Sector Boards and Technical Advisory Committees</li> <li>● Details are available in our <a href="#">Governance Handbook</a>.</li> <li>● In the past RT members have had a clear route to making their views known on proposed RT standards through an open and transparent consultation process which we will improve. E.g. Version 5 Consultation</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● With input from our sector boards RT has developed a Policy for the Development of Red Tractor Standards which has been <a href="#">published on the website detailing</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ accountability,</li> <li>○ the principles for standard setting,</li> <li>○ horizon scanning and drivers for change,</li> <li>○ timescales and windows for change,</li> <li>○ interim changes,</li> <li>○ full review and version changes and governance,</li> </ul> </li> <li>● See 1.2 for details of how the Policy was developed and agreed</li> <li>● See 8.1 on communications</li> </ul>		Board with the opportunity for feedback until 1 February 2026. This process will include further consultation in 2026, following the policy for standards development.

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					<p>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In April-June, RT consulted on amendments to its Pigs Standards. The consultation received 122 responses from a broad range of stakeholders. Details of the consultation and responses have been <a href="#">published on our website</a></li> <li>Topic to be discussed at FA roundtable on 16 October</li> </ul>		<p>Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1<sup>st</sup> report.</p>
3.2	Appointments to sector boards	It is also essential that the process for appointing farmers to sector boards (or similar) as representatives of their sector are transparent and that those acting in this capacity are clear that they must engage with the wider farming community to act as a representative voice for that community. The process for appointment should be independent of the scheme's senior executive team so that those selected are able to appropriately challenge that team on the operation and development of the farm assurance scheme. Furthermore, there must be a clear role description for farmer appointments which sets out their obligations to act as a representative for the relevant industry sector and in the wider interests of the farming industry.	6 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT recognises that some farmers do not feel their voices are heard. To address this, we will review the Sector Board Terms of Reference covering the structure of each Sector Board, how members are recruited and appointed, and their duties outlined to both represent their sector and disseminate information back from RT. They will also particularly examine how RT and those on our Sector Boards can be more transparent and engage with the wider farming community more thoroughly</li> <li>Sector Board Terms of Reference will be reviewed by July 2025</li> <li>Farmers are involved in RT Governance at all stages from Ownership Body to Board, Sector Boards and Technical Advisory Committees</li> <li>Details are available in our <a href="#">Governance Handbook</a></li> <li>The appointment process is defined in the <a href="#">Nominations Committee Terms of Reference</a> which is published in the Governance Handbook</li> <li>RT publishes summaries of the <a href="#">Red Tractor Board</a> and <a href="#">Sector Board meetings</a> on our website</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT has met with farming representatives from all our Sector Boards to listen to their</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>Red Tractor appointed two new Sector Board chairs, following the process set out in the Nomination Committee and Sector Board Terms of Reference;  <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/new-red-tractor-chairs-appointed-to-lead-fresh-produce-and-poultry-sectors/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/new-red-tractor-chairs-appointed-to-lead-fresh-produce-and-poultry-sectors/</a></p> <p>Red Tractor has also applied this process in the recruitment of a new CEO, which has been clarified on its website:  <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/recruiting-a-new-chief-executive-officer/">https://redtractor.org.uk/recruiting-a-new-chief-executive-officer/</a></p>

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					<b>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</b>		<b>Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1<sup>st</sup> report.</b>
					<p>views and help inform a revised Sector Board Terms of Reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT Sector Boards were briefed on the draft ToR ahead of their meetings in June to allow time to consult within their organisations</li> <li>• RT Sector Boards considered and discussed the draft 'Sector Board Terms of Reference' at their meetings in June</li> <li>• Sector Board feedback was incorporated into a revised draft which was considered and agreed by Standards Committee and the AFS Board at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> July</li> <li>• The <a href="#">Sector Board Terms of Reference</a> were published in the <a href="#">RT Governance Handbook</a> in August, after Sector Boards were given a final opportunity to review</li> <li>• Red Tractor provided members with details and links in its monthly newsletter, <a href="#">Member Matters</a>, on 22 July 2025</li> <li>• Sector chairs will review the composition of each sector board to ensure the skills mix is balanced</li> </ul>		
3.3	Board structures in farm assurance schemes	All farm assurance schemes must review their structures and board composition to ensure that their skills mix is balanced and equitable across the food supply chain and should use the Campbell Tickell report as a guide to ensuring that their governance arrangements deliver best governance practice.	6 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT welcomed the Campbell Tickell report in March 2024 and has implemented its recommendations since then. A report will be published in May 2025 on how these recommendations have been completed</li> <li>• RT and our Sector Boards unanimously agree that there must be balance across the food supply chain on RT Sector Boards</li> <li>• Following a review of our Sector Board Terms of Reference in July 2025 (see 3.2) we will then review each Sector Board to ensure the skills mix is balanced</li> </ul>	Already Compliant	RT Sector Board survey was carried out in August. Overall, the feedback shows a significant improvement in all areas in comparison to the survey commissioned for the Campbell Tickell Report in April 2024. The results were shared with Sector Boards in their November meetings.

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					<p><b>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</b></p> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT <a href="#">published a report</a> on how it's delivered the recommendations of the Campbell Tickell Report on 3 June 2025</li> <li>The Sector Board Terms of Reference were published in the <a href="#">RT Governance Handbook</a> in August (See 3.2)</li> </ul>		<p><b>Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1<sup>st</sup> report.</b></p>
3.5	Using impact assessments	The publication of an impact assessment for either the creation or removal of a farm standard must become a matter of course for each farm assurance scheme. In this way the origin and rationale behind the standard/removal of the standard, and the way in which the farming industry has been consulted about this change can be publicly reported to help improve communication and levels of trust between the relevant scheme and its members.	6 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See 1.2 - RT will consult Sector Boards on a new RT Policy for Standards and take this recommendation into account when finalising</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new RT Policy for Standards includes a section under Principles for Standard Setting on Impact assessments</li> <li>It states: Standard development is informed by an understanding and appreciation of the impact on scheme members of introducing new or modified standards. The need for impact assessment and approach adopted should be efficient and proportionate, protect scheme reputation and ensure that any additional costs for scheme participants are justified, practical to implement and that any associated complexity or cost is proportionate to the benefits of introduction. The correct approach will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Impact assessment may include a consideration of the depth and breadth of change required to enable compliance and – where appropriate – a consideration of the opportunity cost of not introducing a change</li> </ul>	Already compliant	Technical Advisory Committees are currently in the process of reviewing Red Tractor Standards following the approach set out in the RT Policy for Standard Setting.
6.3	Creating 'one voice' for UK farm assurance	We recognise that efforts have already been made to find ways in which assurance schemes can collaborate to achieve greater	6 months		<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT has started progress against this recommendation by writing 19 March to other FA Schemes to suggest we all collaborate on this recommendation</li> </ul>	Already Compliant	On 16 October, Red Tractor hosted a meeting of assurance schemes to discuss the pros and cons of a 'loose federation of assurance schemes', to improve

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		<p>coordination of effort across the UK. However, we understand that whilst some schemes have continued with a positive approach to this endeavour, not all schemes have participated to the same level. New overarching structures to deliver greater coordination are unlikely to be required, not least because of the cost this would entail. Instead, farm assurance schemes must take part in our earlier recommended federation if it is to yield benefits for the schemes and their farming members. This network of farm assurance schemes must, in particular, seek to deliver economic benefits from collaboration in scheme developments, sharing of best practice and in representing farm assurance schemes to other elements of the food industry, as well as to their respective governments in seeking 'earned recognition' in their farming regulatory systems. A 'one voice' approach must be adopted when representing UK farm assurance to external bodies. To this end, as we note earlier, every scheme taking part in the federation must have an equal standing, there should be formal agreement as to how the</p>			<p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red Tractor representatives participated in a NFUs / AHDB hosted meeting on 29 May attended by other FA schemes</li> <li>• Individual meetings with some FA schemes have taken place to discuss potential ways of working (SQC, QMS, FAWL, NIBL FQAS)</li> <li>• RT has offered to host an initial meeting of FA schemes which has been confirmed for 16<sup>th</sup> October and will be attended by David Llewellynn</li> <li>• RT will continue to liaise with those FA schemes agreeing to collaborate</li> </ul> <p>Note: As this is a collective recommendation we have not classified how we as RT individually comply.</p>		<p>collaboration, share best practice and reduce duplication. The meeting was facilitated by lead Commissioner David Llewellynn, and it was attended by most schemes. The attendees agreed it would be good to meet regularly under the title The Assurance Forum and discuss how the collective could add value to all aspects of the supply chain.</p> <p>A second meeting took place in Edinburgh on 15 January 2026, hosted by SQC and QMS and facilitated by John Davidson from NFUS. All participants from the October meeting attended, with the welcome addition of OF&amp;G. Everyone agreed that Leaf Marque and RSPCA would be welcome additions to future meetings.</p> <p>Participants updated on their own scheme activities which highlighted several areas of commonality.</p> <p>The meeting discussed relationships with Certification Bodies, audit consistency, the Farm Assurance Review monitoring report and farmer wellbeing.</p> <p>Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formation of a Communications Task &amp; Finish group</li> <li>- UKAS Chair &amp; CEO to be invited to attend the next meeting</li> <li>- Circulation of a farmer wellbeing research proposal</li> <li>- Future meeting with AHDB and SAOS to discuss data</li> </ul>

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		network will operate, chairing of network meetings should be rotated between members and the arrangements for the network should be subject to periodic review.					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A joint letter on the impact of Govt's proposed animal welfare policy</li> </ul> <p>The next meeting to be hosted by BEIC</p>
8.2	Implementing the Commission's recommendations	All farm assurance schemes must publish an initial report on the implementation of recommendations contained in the Commission's report and ensure that this is made available to farming members and to the wider farming community. Where certain recommendations have not yet been implemented a clear timetable for their completion must be provided in the report, and updates made available to the farming industry on a quarterly basis until the implementation work is complete.	6 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are committed to providing regular updates on progress at <a href="http://www.redtractor.org.uk/FAR">www.redtractor.org.uk/FAR</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red Tractor has and will continue to provide regular updates on our delivery of the FAR recommendations every two months following AFS Board meetings on our dedicated webpage <a href="http://www.redtractor.org.uk/FAR">www.redtractor.org.uk/FAR</a> and in member and stakeholder communication (See 8.1).</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>RT continues to report regularly on the implementation of the FAR recommendations: <a href="http://www.redtractor.org.uk/FAR">www.redtractor.org.uk/FAR</a></p> <p>The 2026/27 objectives for RT, agreed by the Board of Directors, include a commitment to continue to deliver the sentiment and aims of the FAR for farmers and growers.</p>
8.3	Using Features/Advantages/Benefits statement	The finance and insurance sectors produce a Features/Advantages/Benefits (FAB) statement for each of their products, setting out in plain English, and in a consistent way, the particular nature of the product and the way in which it will operate. Using the statement on good practice in farm assurance provided in this	6 months	Imminently compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT will work with the Review Commissioners to understand the expectations and structure for FAB statements, before developing these or similar Value Propositions for farmers</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing clear messaging and value propositions is a deliverable within Red Tractor's new communications strategy. (see 8.1) Once these are in place Red</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>RT has developed Value Propositions for each of its key stakeholders. From this RT has developed and published content on its web page about the features and benefits of RT assurance for farmers: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/reap-the-rewards/">https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/reap-the-rewards/</a></p>

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		report as a starting point, farm assurance schemes must produce a similar FAB statement to make clear what is required from farmers by the scheme, the standards in the scheme's operation that farmers can expect, as well as aspects that the scheme will not cover. This will establish a clearer understanding of what it is that farm assurance is expected to deliver, and, importantly, what the farm assurance scheme will not provide.			<p>Tractor will use these to develop FAB statements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FAB statements are in development following a workshop with RT staff on 3 July</li> <li>• Next steps will include finalising messaging, tone of voice and value propositions</li> </ul>		<p>Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1<sup>st</sup> report.</p>
1.6	Learning lessons: using experience to support members	Whilst recognising the nature of audit requirements, farm assurance schemes must establish processes to make the lessons learned from audit visits available to their membership in an anonymised form so that best practice, and the means to develop that practice, can be shared across the scheme. This should recognise the role that farm assurance plays in helping to maintain and improve standards across the farming industry and auditors should be tasked with the requirement to identify best practice to feed into these processes.	9 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT agrees there is an opportunity improve the value provided by audit information, and will consult with farming representatives on Sector Boards, other external support organisations (e.g. AHDB) and auditors to review how such information, including best practice examples, can be shared widely across the RT membership and industry</li> <li>• RT will pilot this with the dairy sector by September 2025</li> <li>• RT publishes compliance advice based on the most common non-conformances for members across all sectors</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT Dairy board on 17<sup>th</sup> June considered work already done in this area and agreed that previous work met this UKFAR recommendation – e.g. <a href="#">Demonstrating Compliance</a> and article on Chlorates in January <a href="#">Technical Briefing</a></li> <li>• RT Dairy board agreed that this work should continue and RT will publish a technical</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>Additional assessor training and guidance around standard expectations is ongoing. We have a constant feedback loop on how RT and CBs can engage with opportunities and how members can demonstrate compliance via different routes. Eight assessors meetings had RT input since last update plus 2 RT hosted webinars around topic of compliance.</p> <p>In December 2026 Red Tractor published a briefing to Pig Members sharing updated guidance on piglet euthanasia in relation to clarification on what is considered legally permitted methods:  <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-provides-guidance-on-pig-euthanasia/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-provides-guidance-on-pig-euthanasia/</a></p>

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					<p>article each quarter to highlight best practice examples which certification bodies will be asked to contribute input from assessors on best practice examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other RT sectors will discuss more opportunities for the future at their meetings in November</li> <li>• Work with on-farm IT service providers (see 2.4) aims to reduce the risk of non-conformances arising due to system set ups</li> </ul>		
1.7	Working in tandem: collaboration and cooperation between schemes	Additional work is required to secure collaboration and cooperation between farm assurance schemes to allow for multiple scheme audits to be conducted at the same time, reduce duplication and encourage 'earned recognition' between schemes, with the aim of reducing the time required from farm businesses in preparing for, and participating in, their audits. In due course there must be a common scale of standards (or at least a 'read across' between scheme standards) – with minimum standards and additional requirements related to customer requirements only where they are strictly necessary to obtain particular or specialist market access.	9 months	Imminently compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On a large proportion of farms where RT and other FA scheme audits are required by the member they are already conducted at the same time (e.g. RT + LEAF we estimate &gt;95%). This is delivered through our work with our certification bodies who also assess for many other FA schemes. However, this can improve, and separate audits in some devolved regions and between RT and RSPCA audits are the exception</li> <li>• RT has started progress against this recommendation by writing on 19th March to all other FA schemes to suggest we all collaborate on this important area and seek ways to improve</li> <li>• In some sectors, considerable additional audit burden is created by separate processor and customer audits, which RT has identified as a significant area omitted from the Commissioners' Report. RT will write to all retailers to urge them to work with RT to address this together</li> <li>• Relevant RT Sector Boards will identify areas for improvement in this area and develop an action plan to consult with relevant processors and customers</li> <li>• RT will publish progress updated on this topic in <a href="#">in sector board reports</a></li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>Red Tractor hosted a meeting of FA schemes on 16 October, where opportunities for collaboration were discussed.</p> <p>New modules for pigs were launched on 1 February 2026, offering opportunities to reduce audit burden for pigs producers.</p> <p>The Red Tractor Fresh Produce Sector Board commissioned Grounded Research to conduct research into audit duplication and perceptions of audit burden. The research received 189 responses from growers, an 11% response rate. The results showed that crop risk is a key driver for perceptions of audit burden, with growers of lower risk crops less likely to support RT. Growers who participated in more assurance schemes were more supportive. The Fresh Produce Sector Board will take these results forward into its review of standards which will consider more of a risk/crop-based approach in order to reduce audit burden in lower risk categories.</p> <p>RT published details of existing joint assessment opportunities, including in fresh produce on its website, and communicated these to members via the Members Matters newsletter in January 2026:</p>

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					<p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint inspections were discussed at the RT hosted meeting of all Certification Bodies (CBs) on 7 May. All CBs agreed to share data with RT to show proportion already delivered and identify opportunities</li> <li>• Red Tractor representatives participated in a NFUs / AHDB hosted meeting on 29 May - when topic was discussed – other schemes felt this was for certification bodies to action</li> <li>• Data on the proportion of joint inspections which are currently delivered was presented to Standards Committee on 8th July and areas for improvement identified. (This confidential information will be shared via email to provide further evidence)</li> <li>• RT is currently liaising with appropriate CBs and other FA schemes prioritised by the Standards Committee to identify steps to increase the number of joint inspections</li> <li>• Our proposals to offer an Enhanced Welfare pigs module will help reduce audit burden for pig farmers currently unable to have a joint RT &amp; RSPCA assessment</li> <li>• RT has been liaising with retailers and relevant fresh produce processors to help inform an accurate picture of audit burden additional to RT and other FA schemes in the sector</li> <li>• RT Fresh Produce board on 24th June discussed work to date on customer and processor additional audits and agreed priorities</li> <li>• In Fresh Produce RT has commissioned an external agency to survey members and work with Fresh Produce Consortium on audit mapping</li> </ul>		<p><a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/joint-assessments/">https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/joint-assessments/</a></p> <p>RT continues to work in collaboration with Tesco so those in specific milk pools can continue to benefit from joint assessments</p>

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1.8	Joint training for inspectors	Farm assurance schemes must revisit their induction and training programmes for both new and existing auditors to create and publish a common 'framework' that is mandatory for all scheme auditors to follow to address the simplified assurance structure sought in this report. There must be a renewed focus on training to develop interpersonal skills amongst the audit community so as to better understand and improve communication and relationships between the audit process and the farm business. To this end, farm assurance schemes should engage with The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture (TIAH) as a means to capture and recognise the completion of continuing professional development of farm assurance auditors and for TIAH to help signpost farm assurance schemes, and their auditors, to appropriate training providers. Farm assurance schemes must publish data on auditor training and completion on an annual basis.	9 months	Imminently compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT is committed to continuous CPD for auditors delivering RT audits, and we have a dedicated Assessor Training Academy and internal staff resource in our Compliance Team to focus and deliver this</li> <li>RT will review the current training provision to ensure it delivers the required framework, and training around communications and interpersonal skills</li> <li>We will publish details of the RT Assessor Protocol and Training programme to demonstrate this by July 2025</li> <li>RT is already a member of the TIAH Consultation Group, and wrote to TIAH on 19 March reconfirming our commitment to the work TIAH are doing and asking for suggested appropriate training providers as recommended</li> <li>Statistics on the RT assessor training programme will be published annually, starting in September 2025</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT already offers training with (eg Assurwel in Dairy) and for organic schemes (SA and OF&amp;G) to allow RT members to benefit from joint assessments (see 1.7)</li> <li>RT will offer other FA schemes more collaboration at the meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> October</li> <li>Standards Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> July agreed the RT Assessor Protocol and Training programme which includes amendments to allow more joint assessments to be accommodated</li> <li>In July Certification Bodies were issued with the updated Protocol and they will be monitored by RT Compliance team to ensure their recruitment, training and monitoring of assessors complies</li> <li>In August RT published information <a href="#">About Assessors</a> including skills, training and</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>RT has worked with TIAH to develop both a certification manager and a farm assessor job profiles on the TIAH website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certification manager: <a href="https://tiah.org/w/certification-manager">https://tiah.org/w/certification-manager</a></li> <li>Farm assessor: <a href="https://tiah.org/w/farm-assessor">https://tiah.org/w/farm-assessor</a></li> </ul> <p>RT offered other FA schemes more collaboration at the meetings on 16 October 2025 and 15 January 2026.</p> <p>RT attended four NSF Assessor CPD events across February and March 2026 and will continue to attend others in future .</p> <p>In the Fresh Produce sector, GLOBALG.A.P training is delivered alongside RT training.</p>

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					<p>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</p> <p>monitoring and included a link to a more detailed <a href="#">Assessor Background &amp; Training</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT met with TIAH leadership in May and on July 15<sup>th</sup> and agreed to progress the assessor profile for the TIAH website along with an interview video with a target publication date of September 2025</li> <li>Assessor CPD events will continue to be attended by RT</li> </ul>		<p>Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1<sup>st</sup> report.</p>
1.10	Addressing the impact of audit on farmer wellbeing	We have been told about the pressure placed on some farmers by participation in farm assurance schemes, and of the impact on their level of stress and mental health. We are also aware of the wide variety of farms undergoing schemes audits, and the fact that farming is an industry where there are reported to be high levels of neurodiversity. There is a need for auditors to be aware of these factors and to be able to take them into account in their auditing approach, so farm assurance schemes must pay particular attention to audit style and approach in their auditor training programmes. Training and support is available on mental health awareness from, for example, FCN, RABI, RSABI and Rural Support and we encourage farm assurance schemes to engage proactively	9 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT recognises the huge challenges facing the farming community and the pressure placed on some farmers and is fully committed to ensuring RT staff and auditors working on our behalf are appropriately trained. In addition, we believe that work in streamlining audits and implementing a risk-based approach has the potential to improve the impact</li> <li>To amplify existing efforts, by July 2025 the RT Board will identify a Director to take responsibility for overseeing this work and identify where improvements can be made, for example in the prominence and frequency of published support, or in the training provided to auditors or the RT telephone helpdesk</li> <li>The <a href="#">RT website</a> carries more information and details are published in our Member Matters newsletter from time to time</li> <li>RT staff who liaise with members on a regular basis have attended RABI Mental Health Training, and RT direct communication with individual members, particularly when sanctions are being applied, always highlights where further support can be found</li> <li>Certification Bodies working with RT all provide regular training for their staff and auditors</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>Since being appointed Vice Chair, John Pain has reached out to farming charities to understand their views and opportunities for collaboration on farming wellbeing. He also spoke with the four RT contracted CBs which provide a briefing on work and training already in place in area – as they work across different schemes the training is linked to the outcomes rather than the specific schemes.</p> <p>John is now identifying potential next steps, with the potential of involving other FA schemes and farming charities in this work.</p> <p>The final direction of this work will be determined following the full results to the RT Farmer Sentiment Survey by Grounded Research, as this work is likely to inform the approach.</p> <p>Additionally, RT has supported the Yellow Wellies campaign, sharing messages of support to farmers and has updated its support page on the RT website. More bespoke support information will be shared with livestock farmers facing potential exposes.</p> <p><a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/where-to-find-farming-support/">https://redtractor.org.uk/assurance/where-to-find-farming-support/</a></p>

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		with these charities and support mechanisms.			<p><b>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</b></p> <p><b>Progress to 1 September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the end of July <a href="#">John Pain</a> was confirmed as the new Vice Chair</li> <li>The Vice Chair job description was updated to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>As the Lead on Farmer Wellbeing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Vice Chair is the Board Director nominated to oversee the impact of audits and assurance on farmer wellbeing</li> <li>The Vice Chair should identify where improvements can be made, for example in the prominence and frequency of published support, in the training provided to auditors and through a revised approach to audits aimed at reducing the burden</li> <li>The Vice Chair will report progress to the Main Board</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>		<p><a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/seeking-support-if-youre-struggling-with-mental-wellbeing/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/seeking-support-if-youre-struggling-with-mental-wellbeing/</a></p>
7.3	Farm assurance for combinable crops	The combinable crops sector has particular issues with the use of assurance standards when imported products can be mixed with those produced in the UK. There is a view that this can distort the presentation and consumer understanding of a product so that it is thought to solely meet UK farm assurance standards. Whilst it is recognised that only a limited number of consumer products based on such crops carry the RT logo there is no equivalent trade labelling for products mixed with imported combinable	9 months	TBC	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT Board will consult with the Commissioners and the stakeholders represented on the crops sector board to consider how best to meet this recommendation</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On hold as other priorities for the crops sector are progressed</li> </ul> <p>Note: RT can't comment on whether we will be complaint with this UKFAR recommendation in future until we have consulted with relevant stakeholders at the appropriate time.</p>	TBC	<p>RT is very aware of this issue, which is reflected in feedback to the Crops Sector priorities and objectives and the priorities identified in the Crops Sector Strategy. The topic has been discussed at length by the Crops Sector Board.</p> <p>In February, the Crops Sector Board received an update from AHDB on work to map crops assurance schemes within the UK and internationally. Members of the Crops Sector Board – in their individual capacity – have expressed concern that AHDB's work to look at international standards won't be delivered until the summer at the earliest, after the planned work by our Technical Advisory Committee to review RT Standards. Therefore, to help inform this work, the members of the Crops board have asked RT to support in</p>

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		crops. This practice must be changed so that clear labelling is employed to identify the origin of component materials in a combinable crops product, in order to provide a complete picture for others in the food chain, and for consumers, about the nature of a product and, with the comparative studies we have previously recommended, the standards to which it has been produced.					coordinating an effort to gather the information on standards in other countries. This information is needed in order to identify opportunities for equivalence and clearly understand the competitive landscape. RT will support the industry in compiling and sharing this information by coordinating presentations from other organisations.
8.5	Implementing culture change	Where farm assurance scheme boards do not already do so, they must implement culture change programmes with their respective senior management teams to ensure that the 'farmer first' approach advocated in this review is followed through to all levels within their organisation. This could take one of a number of forms, including the use of leadership coaches and/or 360 degree appraisal. The outcome of this programme must be measured with farmer member feedback at routine intervals so that scheme boards are kept appraised of progress in developing greater levels of trust between farm assurance schemes and their farmer members.	9 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT is doubling down on our efforts to increase engagement with farmers as part of our leadership culture</li> <li>RT will implement an annual survey with our Sector Boards to measure the effectiveness of the way our leadership act and communicate</li> <li>RT will continue to seek feedback from farmers on a regular basis to understand how they feel about Red Tractor</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As detailed in 8.2 RT sought farmers views through a webinar on the FAR</li> <li>RT has also met face to face with farmer groups, including at a local NFU event, Pigs Tomorrow and the Balmoral Show</li> <li>Director appraisals involved feedback about behaviours</li> <li>RT's values have been incorporated into staff development plans and objectives for 2025/26</li> <li>RT's values are included in the recruitment process for new appointments</li> <li>RT staff have engaged in face-to-face farmer events, including Cereals 2025, The</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>RT continues to invest in consultancy support to facilitate the development and build an inclusive and accountable culture.</p> <p>Once the values of Red Tractor had been defined, associated behaviours were developed with the input of all staff to ensure common understanding. These have been applied in all people processes from recruitment through to development.</p> <p>Personal Development Plans were introduced and used as the basis for developing a training programme. Based on identified individual development priorities, over 70% of employees have attended the arranged courses. Additionally, all employees have attended workshops covering trust and insights which help to build self awareness. Team events have been arranged to discuss and develop ways of working both within and between teams.</p> <p>An annual appraisal system was implemented for all Main Board Directors and staff in 2025.</p>

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					<p>Three Counties Show, the Royal Highland Show, Royal Welsh Show and NFU Livestock Board and Regional meetings as part of the role out of our communications strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT Sector Board survey has been carried out and results are currently being analysed.</li> <li>• RT is organising a 'road show' to meet farmers around the country during the autumn</li> <li>• The RT extended leadership team have completed training on 'Trust' and this will be extended to all staff on 26th November</li> <li>• RT has developed and is delivering a farmer-first communications strategy, which puts building farmer trust at the heart of our communications (see 8.1)</li> <li>• RT already gathers feedback from farmers in a post assessment survey which includes sentiment questions. How we conduct this research is currently being reviewed, with a request for proposals issued to research consultancies to help RT improve how it gathers feedback from members</li> </ul>		<p>All employees and Board Directors have been asked to complete the online Nuffield Agdiversity training.</p> <p>A survey was conducted across all sector boards in July - August 2025. This covered governance, effectiveness of Sector Board/skills and effectiveness of Sector Chair. Overall, responses were positive and showed a significant improvement in all areas when compared to the Campbell Tickell report (April 2024). Common themes and specific comments were discussed within each Board to agree improved ways of working.</p> <p>An employee engagement survey conducted in October/November also showed positive results with all categories &gt;80% positive and a net promoter score of 85%. This is significantly above UK benchmarks and was cascaded to all teams in December when actions plans were developed.</p> <p>In February 2026, RT conducted 360 degree feedback for its leadership team. This will be used to support their development and was based on the organisation values of integrity, trustworthy, community and expertise.</p> <p>As detailed in 8.1 RT continues to prioritise farmer communication and engagement.</p>
1.9	Transparency between schemes and regulators	Farm assurance schemes must instigate a training programme/awareness raising exercise with farming industry regulators to better explain the	12 months	Imminently compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT recognises that transparency with regulators could deliver benefits to all parties – members, FA schemes and regulators themselves</li> </ul>	Already compliant	On 19 November RT delivered an on-line session (3 hours) for 180 local authority personnel hosted by FSA explaining Red Tractor standards, assessment process and sanctions. Session also covered the RT

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		<p>purpose and scope of good practice farm assurance, and to help improve understanding of the respective roles of farm assurance versus regulatory requirements. Ideally, this process should be coordinated between the farm assurance schemes, though it is recognised that it will need to take account of the devolved nature of certain regulators and the schemes most relevant to their respective territories. This exercise must be repeated on a routine basis (we recommend once every two years) to ensure that the exchange of information is up to date. Account must also be taken of the regulatory review being undertaken by Defra to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of its regulatory landscape. Each year, under each farm assurance scheme, auditors should come together alongside key stakeholders to walk through mock inspections to improve two-way dialogue and learning. We are aware this happens under QMS/SQC schemes and strongly encourage all farm assurance schemes to adopt such an approach.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT has started progress against this recommendation by writing on 19 March to all other FA schemes to ascertain the potential to collaborate on knowledge exchange initiatives with regulators</li> <li>• Through its existing memorandum of understanding with the Food Standards Agency, RT has agreed to host an on-farm awareness day for key FSA staff and inspectors</li> <li>• RT will produce videos showing elements of a RT farm inspection for sharing with FSA and other regulators to improve transparency by May 2025</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT has produced a series of <a href="#">8 videos showing key elements of a farm assessment</a>. These were shared with FSA on 27 February 2025</li> <li>• RT hosted an <a href="#">on-farm awareness day</a> for key FSA staff on 19 May 2025</li> <li>• RT together with FSA met the National Agriculture Panel (NAP) of Trading Standards regional representatives on 10 June to discuss earned recognition procedures</li> <li>• RT will shortly participate in an FSA hosted online meeting for all relevant Trading Standards officers to explain how the scheme works and answer questions</li> <li>• Topic to be discussed at FA roundtable on 16 October</li> </ul>		<p>portal where local authorities can cross reference farm status.</p> <p>Collaboration between assurance schemes was discussed at a meeting of farm assurance schemes organised by RT on 16 October, and again at another meeting on 15 January.</p> <p>RT is in the process of recruiting a Senior Public Affairs Manager role who will have a responsibility for coordinating engagement with government and regulators. Second round interviews for the role will take place w/c 2 March 2026.</p>

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1.11	Promoting consistency in inspections	Where possible, there must be greater consistency in the appointment of an auditor to a particular farm business, to enable a better understanding of that business to be generated in the audit process. It is recognised that this will be subject to accreditation requirements and that a term of appointment may be necessary, but that term should be sufficient to enable an auditor to get to know the farm they are auditing.	12 months	Will not be compliant but have made different changes	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT will consult with UKAS and certification bodies by July 2025 to identify what is possible whilst maintaining balance between consistency and objectivity and as such RT wrote to all RT certification bodies on 19 March</li> <li>RT will also investigate whether capturing key information on IT systems and portals could assist with better knowledge retention in the future if the individual auditor has to change, for whatever reason</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussed at the RT hosted meeting of all Certification Bodies on 7 May where concern was raised that this recommendation is contrary to accreditation requirements which require auditors to change after a set time</li> <li>However, CBs did agree that portal information could help provide the information about the farm to help a different auditor know more about the farm prior to the physical assessment</li> </ul>	Will not be compliant but have made different changes	<p>RT hosted Red Tractor hosted contracted certification body meeting 9<sup>th</sup> Dec which included discussions of methods of assessment.</p> <p>Improvements being delivered to the RT portal, including the need for all assessors to use the portal if the farmer wishes to do so, are helping to improve consistency in approach and improve knowledge retention between assessors.</p> <p>Assessment consistency was also identified as a topic for potential cross-scheme focus at the Assurance Forum meeting in January (see 6.3).</p>
1.12	Inspection as a career path	Farm Assurance schemes must collaborate to secure and improve the pipeline of experienced and trained farm auditors. This may require greater engagement of farm assurance schemes with external bodies (such as colleges and universities), and publication of how this is done, to raise awareness of farm assurance as a potential role of interest (even if part time) to the next generation of farmers, and	12 months	Imminently compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT will consult with Certification Bodies who contract / employ auditors as they are a key partner in addressing this area, together with universities and colleges</li> <li>RT has started progress against this recommendation by writing on 19 March RT to certification bodies and FA Schemes offering to discuss how we can all collaborate to address this important topic</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT met with TIAH and BASIS to discuss training opportunities for assessors</li> <li>RT discussed the need for developing inspection as a career path with Certification Bodies in a meeting hosted on 7 May</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>RT has worked with TIAH to develop a farm assessor job profiles on the TIAH website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certification manager: <a href="https://tiah.org/w/certification-manager">https://tiah.org/w/certification-manager</a></li> <li>Farm assessor: <a href="https://tiah.org/w/farm-assessor">https://tiah.org/w/farm-assessor</a></li> </ul> <p>The job of a farm assurance and welfare auditor was featured in Farmers Guardian Careers: <a href="https://www.farmersguardian.com/news/4525054/careers-farming-jobs-probably-realise-existed">https://www.farmersguardian.com/news/4525054/careers-farming-jobs-probably-realise-existed</a></p> <p>Assessor CPD was also identified as a topic for potential cross-scheme focus at the</p>

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		could involve work experience placements, student projects on farm assurance and discussions with course tutors on the latest developments in farm assurance and how they can be built into educational curricula.			<p><b>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT is working with TIAH to develop a farm assessment job profile along with an interview video (filmed 18<sup>th</sup> August) for the TIAH website due to be published by September (See 1.8)</li> <li>In August RT published information <a href="#">About Assessors</a> including skills, training and monitoring and included a link to a more detailed <a href="#">Assessor Background &amp; Training</a></li> </ul>		<p>Assurance Forum meeting in January (see 6.3).</p> <p>RT is currently working on a Day in the Life of an Assessor video with British Dairying Magazine.</p>
2.6	'Tell Us Once': collecting and storing data	Farm assurance schemes must ensure that they have a portal or similar data repository which can be used by scheme members to host information required during their audit visit. The format of that data should be flexible (for example, data provided from farm management systems, relevant images, scanned copies of certificates etc) to better provide for data collection during the course of the audit cycle rather than during the period immediately before the audit visit. Information provided via a portal/repository should be a mandatory element of data collection and, to this end, farm businesses must be positively incentivised by farm assurance schemes to use these basic technologies as part of the audit process. Furthermore, farm assurance schemes must publish annually the take-up of their respective portal/repository	12 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT and our Sector Boards unanimously agree with this recommendation, although feel that mandating it at this time would not be appropriate as use should be a farmer choice, with efficiency and visit frequency driving that decision</li> <li>As outlined in 2.4, in April 2025, RT will publish its first of a regular update in Member Matters and on the website about the RT portal, how it works and the benefits to members of using it, together with a survey for farmers to feedback ideas that RT can use to improve</li> <li>As described in 2.1, RT previously recognised this challenge and launched <a href="#">our portal</a> in 2020</li> <li>As at March 2025 the RT portal has been used for documents relating to 10,482 member sites. RT commits to publishing an update on usage figures annually</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In response to farmer feedback improvements to the RT portal were launched in April</li> <li>Red Tractor published a special printed edition of its monthly newsletter, <a href="#">Member Matters</a>, on 24 April with a feature on the <a href="#">RT portal and improvements</a> which have been launched</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>RT has been delivering a programme of continuous improvement to the RT Member Portal.</p> <p>On 19 February, Red Tractor announced improvements to its portal including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Live photos and geolocation:</b> Time and date stamped to demonstrate compliance.</li> <li><b>Quick links:</b> Easy access to industry templates.</li> <li><b>Requirements shortlist:</b> Essential documents and records for the assessor at a glance.</li> </ul> <p>This announcement received wide media coverage and was accompanied by new guides and help documents to assist farmers in using the portal: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/member-portal/">https://redtractor.org.uk/member-portal/</a></p> <p>Use of the portal remains optional to farmers, with assessors required to use the portal if the farmer wishes to do so.</p> <p>Of members who completed the RT post assessment survey in 2025 (n=2,109), 46% said that they used the Portal. Of these 77% said that their experience using the portal was excellent or good.</p>

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		by scheme members so that a record of progress towards universal use of such systems is publicly available.			<p><b>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT team have met with farming stakeholders to identify further portal improvements for development</li> <li>• RT is continuing to progress developments on portal functionality</li> <li>• Developments focussed on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate structure pilot (poultry)</li> <li>• Integrating data - pilot with Pigs eMB data from AHDB</li> <li>• Scoping potential for 'tasks' record using photos on portal (Crops &amp; livestock)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		<p>As part of our efforts to promote ongoing uptake of the Portal, in January 2026, RT supported a side event at the Oxford Farming Conference discussing the role of technology in farm assurance: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/talking-technology-at-oxford-farming-conference-2026/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/talking-technology-at-oxford-farming-conference-2026/</a></p> <p>Additionally, RT is working with third party data providers to integrate RT requirements into their farm management apps. As a first step, we've worked with MeritAgCheck to integrate a crops standards check list into their app.</p> <p>More info: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-launches-new-portal-features/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-launches-new-portal-features/</a></p>
2.8	Keep it live: reviewing standards	As new approaches to farm inspections are created, either as a result of emerging legislation or other regulatory requirements, a dynamic approach to implementing related exemptions in current farm assurance systems must be taken. One example might be the impact of Vet Attestation and how this might be applied, or used as an equivalent method, to help reduce audit requirements in some farming sectors. We expect current farm assurance schemes to use data on a 'tell us once' principle to avoid duplication of effort by farm businesses and to deliver	12 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the standards review (see 1.2) RT will consult with Sector Boards and government agencies to identify other similar opportunities</li> <li>• In February 2025 RT changed the beef and lamb standard to recognise the DEFRA Pathway visit as a way to demonstrate compliance with the standard requiring a health performance review. Details published in <a href="#">Technical Briefing</a>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector strategies are currently being developed by sector boards and will include the principles outlined in this UKFAR (See 1.2)</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>Sector Boards finalised strategies for improvements in their sectors in October 2025. These strategies, which have the support of everyone on sector boards, were shared with the Board of Directors in November, before publication of the objectives and priorities in each strategy on 8 December: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/improvements/">https://redtractor.org.uk/improvements/</a></p> <p>All strategies include a commitment to review all farm facing standards and auditing processes in 2026 with the objective of reducing audit burden and duplication for farmers.</p> <p>Technical Advisory Committees (TAC) are now in the process of reviewing standards line by line with proposed changes being reviewed by Sector Boards. The review by</p>

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		greater efficiency in farm assurance processes.					<p>TACs will review emerging legislation and other regulatory requirements with a view to removing duplication wherever possible.</p> <p>RT will consult in full on proposed revised standards and any proposed changes in audit cycles in Autumn 2026.</p> <p>More info:  <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-shares-priorities-for-delivering-improvements-for-farming-sectors/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-shares-priorities-for-delivering-improvements-for-farming-sectors/</a></p> <p>Additionally, in January 2026, RT announced a move to require all Safe Haven members, assured for seed potato production, to use the RT portal for recording and sharing documents. This is expected to significantly reduce the amount of time assessors spend on farm, creating efficiencies for both growers and auditors:  <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-launches-portal-first-approach-for-safe-haven-members/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-launches-portal-first-approach-for-safe-haven-members/</a></p>
4.4	Telling the wider world what farming delivers for the environment	Farm assurance schemes, in conjunction with the NFUs and AHDB, must collaborate to develop and implement a communications/PR plan for the wider public to highlight farming practices that are helping to deliver enhanced environmental standards. It is recognised that this approach may not be as straightforward when addressing animal welfare standards, because of the position towards UK farming taken by some animal welfare organisations, but	12 months	Will not be compliant but have made different changes	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT will consult with Sector Boards and stakeholders once requested to be involved in communicating enhanced environmental standards to the wider public by NFUs, AHDB and wider farming and food chain stakeholders.</li> <li>RT will continue to highlight good practice in farm animal welfare and food production to the general public through our consumer <a href="#">marketing campaigns</a>.</li> <li>Note: Red Tractor does not set environmental standards, so cannot promote these claims.</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT has championed British farming standards, including on animal welfare, in its</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>Red Tractor's consumer PR and marketing campaign went live on 22 October. The campaign is reached 93% British shoppers an average of seven times. PR activity secured media coverage with an estimated reach of 3.35 million, including 9 national news articles and 12 broadcast features. Social media content had 454,000 views with an engagement rate of 2.4%. The campaign focused on food safety, animal welfare and traceability.</p> <p>More details:  <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/our-new-campaign/">https://redtractor.org.uk/our-new-campaign/</a></p>

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		consideration should nonetheless be given to highlighting good practice in farm animal welfare to better inform and allay potential concerns in the general public about UK farming standards.			<p>recent communications on trade negotiations with the US and EU. This has included a <a href="#">media statement</a> shared with mainstream media and social media communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In June, RT appointed a consumer PR agency, WPR to work on the delivery of its 25-year consumer PR campaign</li> <li>• In July, RT published results of <a href="#">new consumer research</a> showing support for British food, with coverage across social and trade media</li> <li>• On 26 August, RT launched a <a href="#">consumer marketing and PR campaign</a> which will profile the high standards of British produce</li> <li>• RT has developed a communications strategy which includes activities to promote British farming (see 8.1)</li> <li>• RT stands ready to support the industry in a similar way to the above on enhanced environmental practices should NFUs and AHDB agree we have a role to play</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> While the recommendation references animal welfare organisations, it should be noted that there are equally strong environmental campaign organisations such as River Action, and sustainability claims are subject to increasing scrutiny by organisations such as the Advertising Standards Authority.</p>		<p><a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/recipes-to-remember/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/recipes-to-remember/</a></p> <p><a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/connecting-with-consumers-red-tractors-new-tv-advert-goes-live/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/connecting-with-consumers-red-tractors-new-tv-advert-goes-live/</a></p> <p><a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-awareness-reaches-75-following-25th-anniversary-campaign/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractor-awareness-reaches-75-following-25th-anniversary-campaign/</a></p> <p>On 15 October, RT responded to an ASA ruling relating to an old RT advert first aired in 2021. The ASA upheld a complaint by River Action that the advert misled consumers about the environmental standards covered by Red Tractor. RT strongly disagreed with the ruling and explained that the complaint was based on a misinterpretation of EA data. CEO, Jim Mosely appeared on BBC News defending RT and the standards we uphold. Media reporting as a result was balanced and carried RT's messaging. However, this ruling demonstrates the scrutiny that UK farmers are under in relation to the environment, in particular water pollution and the need for greater collaboration in this area, as highlighted by the FAR strategic recommendation 4.</p> <p>RT's statement: <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractors-response-to-asa-ruling/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/red-tractors-response-to-asa-ruling/</a></p> <p>Following the ASA Ruling, in November the RT Board of Directors requested that all Sector Boards discuss the role that RT might play in supporting the industry on water and air quality in their February 2026 meetings. All Sector Boards agreed that this is an issue that should remain on the agenda for RT</p>

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							<p>Board meetings by that any action by RT should follow greater clarity on potential changes in regulation. Summaries from these meetings are available on the RT website:  <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/category/board-updates/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/category/board-updates/</a></p> <p>With regards to animal welfare, Red Tractor has been working closely with the pig industry to prepare for potential action by animal welfare campaigns. This has included collaboration on communicating the standards upheld by assured producers.</p>
5.4	Extending 'earned recognition'	There is also scope for government bodies to extend the concept of 'earned recognition'. Whilst we do not support the suggestion that farm assurance accreditation can be used as a gateway to government funding schemes (such as SFI or SFS), it is possible that participation in a government funding scheme could be used to fulfil the relevant aspects of a farm assurance audit. In this way duplication in the audit process can be avoided, or at least reduced, and with the focus on current farming support schemes being largely on environmental measures this approach may go some way to determining part of the requirements for environmental standards	12 months	TBC	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT will write to government departments once clarity over the appropriate contacts is available (see 4.1 – AHDB, NFUs &amp; Gov Ministries)</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT continues to work closely with the FSA with whom we have a close working relationship and earned recognition arrangements (see 1.9)</li> <li>• RT participated in a NFUs/AHDB hosted meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> May and shared experience of working with Government on delivering earned recognition</li> <li>• RT has offered to help NFU who took the action from the meeting – “NFU to set out potential and actual earned recognition benefits and ask FASs to review and to add detail about interaction with regulators.” and is awaiting confirmation of next steps</li> <li>• RT will continue to explore opportunities for earned recognition as part of the development of its sector strategies</li> <li>• RT has reached out to the Welsh Assembly to offer to demonstrate where farmers comply with the new SFS scheme as a result of being RT assured</li> </ul>	TBC	<p>Earned recognition remains high on the agenda for RT and we continue to work closely with the FSA.</p> <p>Progress in this area on environmental regulation has been slow due to the review of water regulation and awaiting clarity from AHDB and NFU (see recommendation 4.1).</p> <p>RT is in the process of recruiting a senior public affairs manager to support with discussions with government and regulators.</p>

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		discussed earlier in our recommendations.			Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.  Note: RT has been unable to categorise progress using the options given – we are <b>working towards being compliant in the future.</b>		Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1 <sup>st</sup> report.
6.4	The role of whole-life in farm assurance	Livestock farm assurance schemes that do not deliver whole life assurance should establish a plan to do so. We recognise that this will disrupt elements of the farming industry, but it is essential to the longer-term delivery of consumer confidence in product standards and to maintaining the assurance link between product origin and the consumer.	12 months	Compliance in the future but deadline missed	<b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivering whole-life is a clear objective for the RT beef and lamb sector board at the right time and in consultation and agreement with all stakeholders. Other recommendations are considered a priority at this stage</li> </ul> <b>Progress to 1 September</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On hold as other priorities for beef and lamb are progressed</li> </ul>	Compliance in the future but deadline missed	At its meeting on 12 November 2025, the RT Beef & Lamb Sector agreed to further explore the issue of life assurance in the long term.  <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/beef-lamb-sector-chair-update-november-2025/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/beef-lamb-sector-chair-update-november-2025/</a>
3.4	Balancing scheme demands (to be reviewed annually)	The statement of good practice for farm assurance set out in this report must be revisited periodically by farm assurance schemes to ensure that the demands placed on various parts of the food supply chain represented in the farm assurance scheme remain balanced, and that additional farm assurance costs arising from new or enhanced standards are shared across the food chain on an equitable basis. We suggest an annual review of this nature, with published outcomes, would provide the necessary assurance that such an	Annually	Already compliant	<b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT Board will consult with the Commissioners and Sector Boards to consider how best to meet this recommendation</li> </ul> <b>Progress to 1 September</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RT Governance process means that the scheme is continually consulting with all stakeholders across the food supply chain.</li> <li>The new Policy for Red Tractor Standards has a section outlining how Full Reviews and Version Changes will be carried out in future</li> </ul>	Already compliant	No further updates

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		assessment has been conducted and the results enacted.					
2.7	Alternative approaches	The AIMS/Vetaverse scheme, along with other schemes under development using new technological approaches, should be explored further, with support from others, to provide a strong focus on their governance structures, data ownership and funding models. Whilst not an immediate replacement for accredited farm assurance schemes as they currently stand, technology-based approaches, such as that proposed by AIMS, may have the longer term potential to disrupt current methods of farm assurance in the livestock sector, and could bring non-assured livestock products into farm assurance scope. Like similar initiatives, it will need to move from concept to coordinated application with the support of other actors in the food supply chain, the government and the wider farming industry.			Not applicable to RT		Not applicable to RT
1.13	Risk-based inspection	There must be a reduction in the frequency of farm assurance audits for those farm businesses that are consistently compliant, building upon the risk-based audit approach that we	2 years		<b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This directly links to Recommendation 1.5, in which all RT sectors fully agree this approach is an important ambition, whilst also recognising the risk assessment method and ways to deliver it will need to incorporate sector differences</li> </ul>		On 8 December, Red Tractor published priorities developed by Sector Boards for delivering sector-specific improvements. Many of these include consideration and options for risk-based assessment as a potential option for reducing audit burden and recognising good performance.

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		recommend should be adopted by farm assurance schemes. Farm assurance schemes must also consider having a focus on particular topics while auditors are on site, which, alongside the greater use of technology to deal with remaining audit requirements that can be reviewed before the farm visit, could release more time for the auditor to assess more aspects of farming practice rather than assembled paperwork.			<p><b>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT will work with UKAS, our certification bodies, regulators, other FA schemes to ensure all aspects around audit efficiency and best use of time are considered in developing an achievable roadmap by sector</li> <li>RT will publish progress updates on this topic <a href="#">in sector board reports</a> on an ongoing basis</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The potential for risk-based coordinated inspections was discussed at the RT hosted meeting of all Certification Bodies on 7 May with all recognising the longer-term opportunities and associated operational changes which will be needed in this area</li> <li>A number of sectors have discussed risk-based approaches as part of the future sector strategies at their June meetings and it is likely to be included in the published sector strategies in October</li> <li>RT will use the pig sector initially to pilot potential risk-based solutions with input from the RT Pig sector board</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> While RT agrees with the principle of longer time periods between visits based on previous audit outcomes, delivering this in reality will require consultation and agreement with the entire food chain, including retailers and food service companies, in order to ensure risk based-audits are practical and accepted by customers.</p>		<p><a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/improvements/">https://redtractor.org.uk/improvements/</a></p> <p>Technical Advisory Committees are now following these priorities in their review of standards and auditing cycles. Proposals will be published for consultation in autumn 2026.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> While RT agrees with the principle of longer time periods between visits based on previous audit outcomes, delivering this in reality will require consultation and agreement with the entire food chain, including retailers and food service companies, in order to ensure risk based-audits are practical and accepted by customers.</p>
4.5	A 'foresight' exercise on future environmental standards	Farm assurance schemes must work with the whole food supply chain to look at emerging trends to help the food sector be current and less defensive on environmental issues. We propose a further 'foresight'	2 years		<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By necessity, this will be built upon 4.1, hence RT will await a steer from AHDB and the farming unions upon which we will consult with our Sector Boards and stakeholders</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September</b></p>		<p>See 4.1 and 4.4</p> <p>Following its meeting in November 2025, the Red Tractor Board of Directors asked all Sector Boards to discuss the role that RT might play in supporting the industry on water and air quality in their February 2026 meetings.</p>

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		exercise to begin this process. It will be necessary to continue to monitor the UK's farming performance on environmental standards and to benchmark this performance against competitor farming nations and international farm assurance standards. The review process must be driven from the perspective of farming businesses, taking longer term changes in environmental regulations as a baseline, whilst continuing to enable farms to determine how they will meet new standards from a menu of sector-appropriate farming measures.			<p><b>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red Tractor representatives participated in a NFUs / AHDB hosted meeting on 29 May when an update on the AHDB position on this topic and their current strategy was presented</li> <li>• RT will collaborate with the lead bodies when requested</li> </ul>		<p>Having heard presentations on the changing regulator landscape from NFU's policy team, all Sector Boards agreed that this is an issue that should remain on the agenda for RT Board meetings by that any action by RT should follow greater clarity on potential changes in regulation. Summaries from these meetings are available on the RT website:  <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/category/board-updates/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/category/board-updates/</a></p>
9.1	Reviewing progress with the Campbell Tickell report	RT must publish a report on the way in which it has implemented the recommendations of the Campbell Tickell report and ensure that this is made available to farming members and to the wider farming community. Where certain recommendations have not yet been implemented a clear timetable for their completion must be provided in the report, and updates made available to the farming industry when these elements have been addressed.	3 months	Already compliant	<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RT has implemented all the recommendations of the Campbell Tickell report</li> <li>• RT will publish a report detailing how the recommendations have been implemented by May 2025</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On 3 June Red Tractor <a href="#">published a report</a> detailing how it has implemented the recommendations of the Campbell Tickell report</li> <li>• Red Tractor's governance now incorporates the recommendations made in the Campbell Tickell review</li> </ul>	Already compliant	<p>Report available at  <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2025/06/assurancer-tstg.wpengine.com-rt-campbell-tickell-review-report-rt-campbell-tickell-review-report-rt-campbell-tickell-review-report-rt-campbell-tickell-review-report.pdf">https://redtractor.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2025/06/assurancer-tstg.wpengine.com-rt-campbell-tickell-review-report-rt-campbell-tickell-review-report-rt-campbell-tickell-review-report-rt-campbell-tickell-review-report.pdf</a></p>
8.6	Ownership of RT	<b>What progress has been made, from the perspective of the RT Board, on addressing the relationship between the Ownership Body and the</b>	1 year		<p><b>RT Action Plan, 25 March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red Tractor welcomes the Review's recommendation that the RT Board is reaffirmed as the primary governing body for the organisation</li> </ul>		<p>At Red Tractor's AGM in November 2025, the UFU and NFUS commended Red Tractor for the work they had done in relation to the FAR and for the Communications</p>

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		<p><b>Board, to ensure that their respective roles and responsibilities are clear to all concerned?</b></p> <p><i>It follows that the current ownership arrangements should remain in place but these must be balanced by the RT Board being reaffirmed as the primary governing body for the organisation. The owners of the scheme must show greater and more active leadership, to help shape its future direction and organisational culture, but without straying into issues of setting strategic direction and overseeing operational delivery, which should remain with the RT board. The terms of this arrangement should be established by the Board and the scheme owners and published so that they are clear to members of the scheme.</i></p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RT Board also welcomes the recommendation that the owners of the scheme must show greater and more active leadership</li> <li>The RT Board is committed to consulting with the Ownership Body as to how to progress this recommendation. Discussions started at a meeting of the Ownership Body on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025 and will continue at meetings over the coming months</li> </ul> <p><b>Progress to 1 September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RT Ownership Body <a href="#">announced the appointment</a> of Alistair Mackintosh as Red Tractor Chair on 23 May. At the time it also accepted the recommendation that it should take a more active role and 'will support the Chair as the AFS Board considers the recommendations of both Reviews'.</li> </ul> <p>Since his appointment the Chair has had meetings with some of the Ownership Body representatives and will meet more in September to discuss. Changes in AHDB leadership and other priorities within farming bodies have taken priority for them.</p>		<p>programme, which had been positively received amongst the farming community.</p> <p>The NFU and AHDB through their Main Board representation have given similar feedback and have shown their support in working with Red Tractor to address specific challenges such as air and water quality.</p> <p>The BRC publicly supported Red Tractor post the ASA ruling.</p> <p>It's also worth noting that this support has come at a time when 50% of the Owners (AHDB, NFU and UFU) are also transitioning to either new Chairs or CEOs.</p> <p>The Owners, through their Main Board representatives, have also given their support to the updating of Red Tractor's Vision and the 2026/27 draft Business Plan.</p>
69		<p>What aspects (either positive or negative) of collaboration and coordination with other farm assurance schemes or other relevant organisations have you encountered when addressing the UKFAR recommendations?</p>			<p>Our ongoing liaison with SQC, Leaf and the devolved beef and lamb schemes continue to be positive and is further informed by the recommendations of the FAR.</p> <p>For example, with SQC we have been working to maintain seamless membership of the Renewable Energy Directive, which provides an additional market for UK grain growers.</p> <p>RT met with RSPCA Assured post the publication of the FAR to discuss opportunities for collaboration on inspections to reduce audit burden on farmers. However, RSPCA Assured were not open to this suggestion as they see</p>		<p>On 16 October, Red Tractor hosted a meeting of assurance schemes to discuss the pros and cons of a 'loose federation of assurance schemes, to improve collaboration, share best practice and reduce duplication. The meeting was facilitated by lead Commissioner David Llewellyn, and it was attended by most schemes. The attendees agreed it would be good to meet regularly under the title The Assurance Forum and discuss how the collective could add value to all aspects of the supply chain.</p>

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					<p>the independence of RSPCA inspections as a USP.</p> <p>Challenges that we've encountered when speaking with other organisations have been different interpretations of the FAR recommendations and a sense among many that this is a review of Red Tractor, not of all assurance schemes, and therefore not relevant to them.</p> <p>In addition, we have also found that some customers / retailers are reluctant to engage on the topic of UKFAR as they see it as a distraction and not a priority for their business.</p>		<p>A second meeting took place in Edinburgh on 15 January 2026, hosted by SQC and QMS and facilitated by John Davidson from NFUS.</p> <p>All participants from the October meeting attended, with the welcome addition of OF&amp;G. Everyone agreed that Leaf Marque and RSPCA would be welcome additions to future meetings.</p> <p>Participants updated on their own scheme activities which highlighted several areas of commonality.</p> <p>The meeting discussed relationships with Certification Bodies, audit consistency, the Farm Assurance Review monitoring report and farmer wellbeing.</p> <p>Actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formation of a Communications Task &amp; Finish group</li> <li>- UKAS Chair &amp; CEO to be invited to attend the next meeting</li> <li>- Circulation of a farmer wellbeing research proposal</li> <li>- Future meeting with AHDB and SAOS to discuss data</li> <li>- A joint letter on the impact of Govt's proposed animal welfare policy</li> </ul> <p>The next meeting to be hosted by BEIC.</p>
70		What can be done to improve collaboration and coordination across the farm assurance			The meeting of the 'loose federation of assurance schemes' on 16 October is an opportunity to discuss and secure collaboration between schemes. We'd		As above, following the FAR, a coalition of farm assurance schemes has been created which is increasing engagement and interaction between these groups.

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		system and how would you suggest that this be achieved?			welcome the support of David Llewellyn in helping to secure buy-in from everyone in attendance.		Assurance schemes will take it in turns to host future meetings.  RT will further facilitate these discussions between communications staff at assurance schemes.  We believe there is an appetite to continue this dialogue.
71		What action(s) are you taking to connect with relevant government departments and/or regulatory agencies to help ensure that overlaps in farm assurance audits and government/regulatory agency inspections are removed?			<p>We have met with Daniel Zeichner, Baroness Hayman, Welsh Government to discuss opportunities for earned recognition on farm inspections.</p> <p>We've also been engaged with the European Commission and Department for Transport to ensure RT's continued accreditation to the renewable energy scheme enabling an additional market for UK grain growers.</p> <p>RT staff have engaged with and been involved in a UK Food Strategy development and attended a multi stakeholder workshop.</p> <p>CEO, Jim Moseley liaised with Minette Batters on the Farm Profitability Study.</p> <p>RT's Board Director, James Russell has been appointed to the Trade and Agriculture Commission to review the impact of future trade deals on the UK.</p> <p>RT has also engaged with Defra on the mandatory animal welfare labelling to reduce demands on the food supply chain.</p> <p>RT plans to recruit a Senior Public Affairs Manager later this year to oversee our engagement with government and public sector organisations.</p>		<p>RT continues to participate in government-led round tables and strategy workshops, including those being led by Defra on water pollution and the 25-year agriculture roadmap.</p> <p>Recruitment for a Senior Public Affairs Manager is in progress. The purpose of this role is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead strategic engagement with political decision makers</li> <li>• Build relationships with MPs, regulators, and advocacy groups</li> <li>• Monitor policy developments and provide actionable insights</li> <li>• Develop impactful communications and educational materials</li> <li>• Work with colleagues and partner organisations to create win-win solutions for government and farmers</li> </ul>

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					<p>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</p> <p>See our response to 1.9 and 5.4.</p> <p>Note, despite the recommendation 5.1 in the FAR for government agencies to identify a clear principle point of contact and engage more with farm assurance schemes, we've seen no evidence of this and have not been approached by any agencies in relation to the recommendation. This makes it very challenging for us to progress in this area.</p>		<p>Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1<sup>st</sup> report.</p>
72		<p>What data/evidence do you hold on farmer sentiment about the changes you have made/are making in response to the UKFAR recommendations? Are you prepared to share this data/evidence at this stage of the UKFAR monitoring exercise?</p>			<p>Since the publication of the FAR, Red Tractor has conducted the following research:</p> <p>1) A survey amongst Sector Board members. We are currently analysing the results and would be willing to share these confidentially with David Llewellyn once complete. A similar survey was conducted by Campbell Tickell as part of their Review in 2024</p> <p>2) A post assessment survey is sent to all Red Tractor members following a Red Tractor audit. This survey includes questions related to perceived transparency; assessment efficiency; value and experience. The latest data shows a positive trend across all of these measures since Q3 2024. Below we've provided the figures for Q3 2024 compared with the figures for Q3 2025 to date.</p> <p>Perceived transparency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive perception ("Good" + "Excellent") rose from 57% → 66% (a 9% overall improvement)</li> <li>• Negative perception ("Poor" + "Very Poor") fell from 20% → 13% (a 7% improvement)</li> </ul> <p>Perceived assessment efficiency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive perception ("Good" + "Excellent") rose from 61% → 63% (a 2% overall improvement)</li> </ul>		<p>In November 2026, following a comprehensive tendering process, RT appointed agricultural research specialists, Grounded Research to support with improved and ongoing research into farmer sentiment.</p> <p>Since then, we have worked with Grounded Research to review and relaunch our post assessment survey, which is sent to all Red Tractor members following an assessment to include more insights on the value and perceptions towards RT as well as maintaining tracking data. This work has included building a dashboard to allow real-time access to farmer feedback and insights shared with leadership.</p> <p>In addition to the post assessment survey, in January 2026, we also launched a Farmer Sentiment Survey which will gather views and improve understanding of perceptions towards RT using a trust framework and equity theory (in the field until 27 February). As of 22 February we have 1,800 responses to this survey.</p> <p>Farmer focus groups are planned for March 2026 in order to better understand the results.</p>

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					<p><b>Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative perception (“Poor” + “Very Poor”) fell from 13% → 10% (a 3% improvement)</li> </ul> <p>Perceived delivery of value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive perception (“Good” + “Excellent”) rose from 42% → 46% (a 4% overall improvement)</li> <li>Negative perception (“Poor” + “Very Poor”) fell from 26% → 21% (a 5% improvement)</li> </ul> <p>Overall experience of Red Tractor membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive perception (“Very Positive ” + “Positive”) rose from 50% → 57% (a 7% overall improvement)</li> <li>Negative perception (“Very Negative” + “Negative”) fell from 21% → 14% (a 7% improvement)</li> </ul> <p>We are happy to share the data with the commissioners.</p> <p>In addition, Red Tractor has issued a request for proposals for research agencies to work with us to ensure we have accurate, credible and informative insights to help measure farmer sentiment and inform work to build farmer trust. The deadline for proposals is mid-September. We anticipate that part of this work will include more comprehensive farmer sentiment research including focus groups.</p>		<p><b>Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1<sup>st</sup> report.</b></p> <p>We plan to take a full report on the findings to the RT Board of Directors in May but have provided some initial results from the 2025 Post Assessment data below.</p> <p>More info:  <a href="https://redtractor.org.uk/news/help-shape-the-future-of-red-tractor/">https://redtractor.org.uk/news/help-shape-the-future-of-red-tractor/</a></p> <p>Post Assessment Survey results for calendar year 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of responses: 2,109</li> <li>70% assessments took 1-3 hours</li> <li>83% said that the length of time that the assessor was on site as ‘just right’</li> <li>Assessors were rated 4.7 / 5</li> <li>Perceived transparency: 13% ‘excellent’, 51% ‘good’, 22% ‘fair’, 9% ‘poor’, 5% ‘very poor’</li> <li>Perceived efficiency: 18% ‘excellent’, 47% ‘good’, 24% ‘fair’, 7% ‘poor’, 3% ‘very poor’</li> <li>Perceived value: 9% ‘excellent’, 34% ‘good’, 33% ‘fair’, 14% ‘poor’, 10% ‘very poor’</li> <li>Overall experience: 11% ‘very positive’, 41% ‘positive’, 30% ‘neutral’, 12% ‘negative’, 7% ‘very negative’</li> </ul>
73		Please provide any other comments relating to the UKFAR and the current monitoring exercise that might assist with the implementation of the UKFAR recommendations.			It would be helpful for the UKFAR to provide examples of good practice so that it’s clear for FA schemes and all stakeholders what good looks like.		The UKFAR report said: <i>“Farm assurance in the UK is a necessary and important component of the food production landscape and should be retained by the farming and food production sectors, of which and to which, it is a significant asset.”</i> We would like to encourage the commissioners of the UKFAR to reiterate the positive findings of the review in relation to the value that farm assurance offers UK agriculture, particularly

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							<p>in the changing economic and political landscape which has evolved significantly over the past year. While assurance schemes continue to deliver improvements identified by FAR, it's vital that these do not detract from the significant benefits and opportunities that assurance already delivers.</p> <p>We also welcome the ongoing support and commentary from retail, out of home and supply chain organisations in their commitments to source and sell assured British produce and the value they believe assurance offers both them and their suppliers.</p> <p>We would also like to reiterate the request for examples of good practice or positive progress by FA schemes in order for stakeholders to understand what good looks like.</p>
NEW		<p>Please provide information on changes made to your approach to farm assurance that directly, and positively, impact upon the experience of the farm assurance system by farmers, crofters and growers (eg through the audit process, methods of communication, involvement in decision making etc). We are particularly seeking information on how you have sought to simplify the farm assurance process, reduce audit burden, improve efficiency within the system in terms of engagement of time and data collection effort</p>			<p>In keeping with the <a href="#">commitment that the Red Tractor Board of Directors made</a> in March 2025, Red Tractor has made extensive changes since the publication of the UKFAR recommendations.</p> <p>Across communications, digital tools, standards development, joint audits, audit consistency, wellbeing and governance, this substantial programme of change is aimed at directly improving the assurance experience for farmers and growers.</p> <p>We recognise the responsibility we have to deliver meaningful, farmer-first- improvements, and our programme of work reflects that commitment.</p> <p>This work will continue as part of our 2026/27 business plan, which includes the following specific objective: "To ensure that the sentiment and aims of the FAR are delivered for farmers and growers."</p> <p>Below is a summary of the most significant changes and their direct positive impact on farmers, as detailed in our responses to the detailed recommendations above:</p> <p><b>1. A more farmer-first approach to communication and engagement</b> We have completely overhauled how we communicate with, and listen to, farmers. Key improvements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <b>comprehensive new communications strategy</b> with a focus on clarity, transparency and building trust. This includes <a href="#">improved website content</a>, clearer navigation, redesigned <a href="#">newsletters</a>, and a stronger cascade of information through Sector Boards</li> </ul>		

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		and reduce audit duplication, but other reported improvements will also be welcome.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Expanded face-to-face engagement:</b> Red Tractor staff and directors attended more than 50 farmer-facing- events in 2025, speaking directly with over 1,000 farmers. Four dedicated <a href="#">farmer events</a> were also held across England, giving members the opportunity to raise concerns directly with the Board</li> <li>• Appointment of an agricultural PR specialist, to strengthen farmer-focused messaging and ensure communications are written for – and tested with – farmers</li> <li>• Launch of <a href="#">farmer sentiment research</a>, including a redesigned post-assessment survey and a new farmer sentiment survey. This provides real time- evidence of where improvements are needed and how changes are landing with members</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b> Farmers now benefit from clearer, more accessible information, more routes to influence decision-making, and a more visible, approachable assurance organisation. Farmer understanding of, and confidence in, the assurance process is steadily improving.</p> <p><b>2. Simplifying standards and reducing complexity</b> We have taken major steps to simplify standards and make them easier to understand and comply with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication of the <b>new <a href="#">Policy for the Development of Red Tractor Standards</a></b>, which requires every standard to be justified, proportionate, and based on evidence of value or due diligence</li> <li>• Sector Boards have now published <a href="#">sector specific priorities</a> for reducing audit burden and duplication, with a full review of all farm-facing standards underway in 2026</li> <li>• Technical Advisory Committees are reviewing every standard <b>line-by-line</b>, explicitly looking for ways to remove duplication, reduce paperwork and streamline requirements</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b> Standards will now change in a more, transparent and farmer-influenced way, with simplification built in from the start.</p> <p><b>3. Reducing audit burden and duplication</b> Reducing the time, stress and duplication associated with audits has been a core priority. Progress includes:</p> <p><b>Joint assessments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publication of clearer <a href="#">guidance</a> on <b>joint assessment opportunities</b> for farmers, including with LEAF, GLOBALG.A.P and other schemes</li> <li>• New <b>Enhanced Welfare modules for pigs</b> <a href="#">launched in December 2025</a> to reduce the need for separate audits</li> <li>• Collaborative work with retailers and processors to understand and reduce additional customer-driven audits, particularly in fresh produce</li> </ul> <p><b>Towards risk-based auditing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector <a href="#">objectives and priorities</a> published in December 2025 all include commitments to exploring reduced audit frequency for consistently compliant farms</li> </ul>		

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					<p><b>Improving consistency and quality of assessments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publication of the <b>Assessor Protocol and Training Programme</b>, enhancing assessor skills, including interpersonal skills and use of the portal</li> <li><a href="#">Improvements to the Member Portal</a> have also increased audit efficiency and reduced time on-farm for those who wish to use it</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b> Farmers can expect more consistent, proportionate, better-planned assessments, with the opportunity to use the Red Tractor Member Portal to manage records and documents.</p> <p><b>4. Improving audit efficiency through technology and the Red Tractor Portal</b> To reduce data collection effort and make audits less stressful and time-consuming, we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivered <a href="#">major upgrades</a> to the <b>Red Tractor Member Portal</b>, including live photos with geolocation, requirements shortlists, better navigation and a significantly improved user experience</li> <li>Required assessors to use the portal where farmers choose to do so, ensuring a “<b>tell us once</b>” model</li> <li>Run extensive training for assessors and provided help guides and video support for farmers</li> <li>Begun integration with third-party farm management apps (e.g. MeritAgCheck), enabling data to flow automatically and reduce duplication</li> </ul> <p>Portal feedback is positive: in 2025, 77% of portal users rated their experience as good or excellent.</p> <p><b>Impact:</b> For farmers choosing to use the portal, audits are shorter, preparation is more efficient, and duplication of paperwork is reduced.</p> <p><b>5. Increasing transparency in decision-making</b> Red Tractor has published clear policies which ensure farmers and growers contribute fully to decision making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publication of a clear, accessible description of <a href="#">how standards are set</a>, including defined consultation windows and routes for farmers to shape decisions</li> <li>Revised <a href="#">Sector Board Terms of Reference</a>, strengthening the representative role of farmers and improving the transparency of appointments</li> <li>Regular publication of <a href="#">Board and Sector Board meeting summaries</a>, enabling farmers to see how their feedback influences decisions</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b> Farmers now have more clarity and more visible accountability across governance structures.</p> <p><b>6. Supporting farmer wellbeing and reducing stress associated with audits</b> Recognising the pressure the audit process can place on people, we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appointed a <b>Board-level lead for Farmer Wellbeing</b></li> <li>Understood more about how assessors are trained around communication style and understanding stress factors</li> </ul>		

FAR Code	FAR Recommendation		Time-scale	Compliance	Response to 1 <sup>st</sup> Report (1 September 2025) Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.	Compliance	Response to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Report (2 March 2026) Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1 <sup>st</sup> report.
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved <a href="#">guidance</a> and support for farmers involved in exposes or high-pressure situations</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b> The audit experience is respectful, empathetic and farmer-centred.</p> <p><b>7. Strengthening collaboration across assurance schemes</b> Joint working across the industry is central to reducing duplication and alignment of standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of the <b>Assurance Forum</b>, a coalition of assurance schemes meeting twice a year to share best practice and collaborate on areas such as audit consistency, data and farmer wellbeing</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b> Assurance schemes are openly discussing and identifying ways to address duplication and inconsistency across the system.</p> <p><b>8. Culture Change: Embedding a Farmer-First Mindset Across the Organisation</b> Red Tractor has taken significant steps to embed a more open, accountable culture throughout the organisation. This work recognises that the assurance experience is shaped not only by standards and audits, but also by organisational values and behaviours. Changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">New organisational values</a> – integrity, trustworthiness, community and expertise – which are now built into staff development plans, recruitment processes, and leadership objectives. These values are actively shaping how Red Tractor engages with and supports farmers</li> <li><b>Delivery of culture and leadership training</b>, including Trust workshops for the extended leadership team, with roll-out to all staff.</li> <li><b>Introduction of 360-degree feedback</b> for senior leaders</li> <li><b>Creation of a new communications strategy</b> centred around building farmer trust, increasing transparency and demonstrating value — signalling a shift to proactive listening and engagement as core organisational behaviours</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b> These changes are helping rebuild trust, improve the tone of interactions with farmers, and ensure Red Tractor’s culture is consistently aligned with the expectations set out in the UKFAR. Staff and leadership are now better equipped to engage constructively, listen openly, and respond to farmer concerns in a more empathetic and transparent way.</p>		
NEW		Please provide information about any planned changes to your approach to farm assurance during the next year, together with a timescale for their implementation.			Red Tractor’s 2026/27 business plan includes the following objective: “To ensure that the sentiment and aims of the FAR are delivered for farmers and growers.”		<p>Much of the activity included in the business plan directly reflects the recommendations of the UKFAR, feedback from farmers, and the new Sector Technical Strategies endorsed by industry representatives sitting on Sector Boards. Key elements of the plan are:</p> <p><b>1. A review of all farm-facing standards</b> <b>Timescale: Proposals by Autumn 2026; final standards in 2027</b> Each sector will complete a full, line-by-line review of standards following the new Policy for Standards. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Streamlining checklists and removing unnecessary complexity</li> <li>Reorienting standards to emphasise practical, outcome-focused compliance</li> </ul>

FAR Code	FAR Recommendation		Time-scale	Compliance	Response to 1 <sup>st</sup> Report (1 September 2025)  Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.	Compliance	Response to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Report (2 March 2026)  Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1 <sup>st</sup> report.
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring proportionality and sector specificity (e.g. lower audit burden for low-risk fresh produce crops; 'level playing field' considerations in crops)</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Development of smarter, more efficient and more flexible audits</b>  <b>Timescale: Finalise initial first stage proposed changes by end of 2026</b>  The standards review process includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewing audit cycles across all sectors, including length, flexibility and data led- risk-based approaches</li> <li>In some sectors, exploring options such as surveillance audits, alternative intervals for consistently compliant farms, and recognition of other schemes to reduce duplication</li> <li>Enhancing assessor guidance, consistency and performance monitoring</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Ongoing development of the Red Tractor Portal to support 'tell us once' data use</b>  <b>Timescale: Continuous development through 2026/27</b>  A programme of digital development will continue, focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improving portal usability and user experience for farmers</li> <li>Integrating additional data streams to reduce paperwork and pre-audit preparation</li> <li>Exploring further use of photo-based compliance records</li> <li>Enhancing portal capability to support more risk-based assessment in future</li> </ul> <p><b>4. Expanded and more structured farmer engagement programme</b>  <b>Timescale: Delivery throughout 2026/27</b>  Red Tractor will formalise and strengthen farmer engagement through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A national programme of farmer events, webinars and direct engagement activity</li> <li>Farmer Sentiment Survey and farmer focus groups</li> <li>A formal consultation on standards changes</li> </ul> <p><b>5. Explaining and embedding values and governance</b>  <b>Timescale: Throughout 2026/27</b>  Planned changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearer communication on Red Tractor's website of Red Tractor's existing governance structure and how decisions are made</li> <li>Continued implementation of cultural change initiatives, embedding Red Tractor's values and enhancing leadership accountability</li> </ul> <p><b>6. Improvements to post-farm-gate assurance and supply chain compliance</b>  <b>Timescale: July–December 2026</b>  Planned changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhancing the traceability challenge programme, including developing a new post-assessment survey for licensees</li> <li>Developing and piloting a training programme for licensees on logo/claim rules</li> <li>Review how RT can help to reduce processor audit burden for its licensees</li> </ul>		

FAR Code	FAR Recommendation		Time-scale	Compliance	Response to 1 <sup>st</sup> Report (1 September 2025) Please explain your answer, providing details about the changes that have been made, or why they have not yet been actioned.	Compliance	Response to 2 <sup>nd</sup> Report (2 March 2026) Provide details about the changes which have been made since the submission to the 1 <sup>st</sup> report.
					<p><b>7. Enhanced support around compliance, wellbeing and audit readiness</b>  <b>Timescale: Interventions by end of 2026</b>  Key initiatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better understand the impact of assurance on farmer wellbeing</li> <li>• Continue to promote a culture of compliance in the pigs, poultry and dairy sectors</li> <li>• Introduce a lessons learned model after exposes to support members and enhance compliance</li> </ul> <p><b>8. Ongoing improvements in communications</b>  <b>Timescale: throughout 2026/27</b>  Planned developments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to build understanding of assurance amongst farmers, including explainers and myth busting</li> <li>• Communications initiatives focused on conveying pride in British food and farming</li> <li>• Appointment of a senior public affairs manager</li> <li>• A revitalised digital communications strategy</li> </ul> <p><b>9. Enablers for long-term operational efficiency and improved customer service</b>  Key initiatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Onboarding a new Head of Operations to develop appropriate technology strategies to deliver improved efficiencies across the business and membership</li> <li>• Onboarding a new Technical Co-ordinator to support standards development</li> <li>• Implementation of a new CRM</li> <li>• Internal digital strategy enhancements including appropriate use of AI</li> </ul> <p>In addition to the above, Red Tractor expects to be joined by a new CEO in spring/summer 2026.</p>		

## **Annex 8: Supplementary Questions and Responses by Respondent Group**

Respondents to the monitoring survey were asked a series of additional questions to provide further context for their contributions about progress with the UKFAR recommendations. The questions were grouped according to the respondent categories outlined in Section 2.3 and are presented in this Annex in accordance with those respondent categories.

### **Farm Assurance Schemes**

**What aspects (either positive or negative) of collaboration and coordination with other farm assurance schemes (or other relevant organisations) have you encountered when addressing the UKFAR recommendations?**

**OF&G** - It won't happen while they are in competition with each other.

**BEIC** - The meetings organised between farm assurance schemes are a good development that we support and hope continues. We can learn from each other in many areas, albeit much of the collaboration suggested in the farm assurance review fails to recognise the core differences that exist between schemes, their resources, ambitions and goals.

**QMS** - We have found that the FAR has slipped down the priority list of some organisations as other external issues have presented themselves - not because the UKFAR isn't important, but because organisations with limited resources have to prioritise to the most pressing issue.

**GLOBAL GAP** - GLOBAL GAP already offers benchmarking and Red Tractor in the UK is already benchmarked to GLOBAL GAP.

**Soil Association** - Development of the Farm Assurance Forum is seen as positive.

**SEDEX** - It has been very valuable to connect with the assurance schemes on a regular basis, and while the Review has provided some framework, additional points of collaboration come out of those sessions which are perhaps more organic/actionable.

**LEAF** - As described in the response to FAR recommendations, LEAF Marque remains in dialogue with farm assurance standards in the UK and internationally, prioritising those where there is the greatest degree of overlap - with the primary aim to reduce duplication and audit burden.

**What can be done to improve collaboration and coordination across the farm assurance system and how would you suggest that this be achieved?**

**OF&G** - One new independent not for profit CB under the AHDB.

**BEIC** - The current programme of meetings is sufficient.

**QMS** - Time, money and people would all help, but as an organisation funded by levy and limited membership fees, we have to be very clear how and what we prioritise at any one time.

**GLOBAL GAP** - Better acceptance by retailers of benchmarked schemes

**Soil Association** - We are participating in the Farm Assurance Forum - time will tell if this is a suitable vehicle for delivering collaboration. Support from the AHDB and government would be helpful.

**SEDEX** - We are the only social scheme in the Forum and being asked to complete this review, which means we are missing out slightly on the benefits of coordination. It might be good to bring in other schemes, eg GLOBAL GAP Risk Assessment on Social Practice (GRASP).

**What action(s) are you taking to connect with relevant government departments and/or regulatory agencies to help ensure that overlaps in farm assurance audits and government/regulatory agency inspections are removed?**

**OF&G** - DEFRA need to oversee this, not farm assurance bodies.

**BEIC** - British Lion Standards are specific to the egg sector and therefore opportunities to remove 'overlaps' are limited. As highlighted previously, we work closely with government and regulatory bodies that are relevant to the egg sector and the standards are very well understood.

**QMS** - We work closely with the Scottish Government, particularly on future policy development to ensure QA is aligned with future policy goals.

**GLOBAL GAP** - GLOBAL GAP already has a benchmarking system in place. It has stakeholder committees, NTWGs and does public consultation on all standards.

**Soil Association** - We work with governments on a vast range of issues but we are not in a position to set their priorities around the recommendations of the FAR.

**SEDEX** - Our scheme is not regulated by government.

**LEAF** - LEAF Marque has open communications on a number of topics with various bodies including DEFRA, the Environment Agency, Natural England and NatureScot.

**What data/evidence do you hold on farmer sentiment about the changes you have made/are making in response to the UKFAR recommendations? Are you prepared to share this data/evidence at this stage of the UKFAR monitoring exercise?**

**OF&G** - Farmers are all different. Some want an easy ride, others want challenging. Some cheat, some go OTT. We need a score on the door and grading and a league table.

**QMS** - we are not sure this is relevant to us, we undertake an annual member survey but most of our changes were made before the UKFAR, not because of it.

**GLOBAL GAP** - already has a benchmarking system in place. It has stakeholder committees, NTWGs and does public consultation on all standards.

**Soil Association** - We do not hold this data.

**SEDEX** - We have an annual global Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT) survey.

**LEAF** - LEAF Marque has conducted various surveys on farmer's experience of LEAF Marque assurance and the investments made in the new LEAF Sustainable Farming Review platform. As the substance of the surveys are not directly in response to the UKFAR recommendations, and the participants were not informed at the time of such an intended use of their responses, and the responses are informing further ongoing development, we are not able to share these.

**Please provide any other comments relating to the UKFAR and the current monitoring exercise that might assist with the implementation of the UKFAR recommendations.**

**OF&G** - Overall I am so disappointed with the Review. While it has concentrated on many of the farmers concerns it has totally failed to address the critical issues, namely:

- 1) The CBs which operate to their own rules and have become cash cows to big overseas businesses that have taken millions out of UK Farmers. Competition has failed to keep it efficient and costs down
- 2) Red Tractor over the years have not been nice standard holders. Some of their staff have adopted bullying tactics with CBs who collect their revenue and they also exhibit a total lack of understanding of farmers
- 3) The failure to use RT as an export tool. Not one export premium has been achieved by RT accreditation
- 4) Imports do not have to meet home produced standards and the two are always mixed together
- 5) The repacking of imported food under the RT logo is rife
- 6) Fees have always gone up by more than inflation

- 7) Until there is one independent not for profit CB this will not change
- 8) Further down the supply chain The BRC and AIC have made a fortune out of their own schemes and bank rolled their own organisations. The farmers laudably gave away their standards to keep it independent and have paid the penalty
- 9) Farmers created a stick to hit them over the head with and the other stakeholders in assurance have run rings around them and milked it for their own good
- 10) Still no Regen scheme - probably good as it needs to be independent

The Review does not address any of the above and was not conducted in a way to get the right results to change assurance for the good and into a positive benefit for GB Ltd. We need a total change of goals and operation.

**GLOBAL GAP** - We already have a benchmarking system in place. It has stakeholder committees, NTWGs and does public consultation on all standards.

**SEDEX** - We feel that an interview format would be easier, as it is not always easy to fully convey our approach within this formal structure. So much of what we do is different to the other participants - it feels a bit 'square peg in a round hole'.

**LEAF** - Although based in the UK and with a UK core of members, LEAF Marque also has a significant international membership - making some of the UKFAR recommendations less applicable at an organisation level. Additionally, LEAF Marque's position as an environmental sustainability farming standard means many of the recommendations relevant to other farm assurance standards are less so for LEAF Marque.

**Please provide information on changes made to your approach to farm assurance that directly, and positively, impact upon the experience of the farm assurance system by farmers, crofters and growers (eg through the audit process, methods of communication, involvement in decision making etc). We are particularly seeking information on how you have sought to simplify the farm assurance process, reduce audit burden, improve efficiency within the system in terms of engagement of time and data collection effort and reduce audit duplication, but other reported improvements will also be welcome.**

**OF&G** - After 25 years of working in the industry I have quit. It has been hijacked by overseas corporates. RT have become an opulent quango and too many people have got cosy little retainers for being in the system, All the good intentions at the start have never materialised for the farmer and they have become the whipping boys.

**QMS** - This has effectively been the basis of our QMS strategy launched in 2023 which has sought to align our quality assurance with our marketing activities much more closely and put levy payers and members at the heart of QMS and our activities. This has led to a 15% reduction in QA standards, a stronger focus on member experience and a reviewed approach to how we set standards. We have also increased the visibility of our QA schemes within our consumer marketing.

**GLOBAL GAP** - In the most recent version of GLOBAL GAP, the approach was changed to more risk based and outcome-based auditing.

**Soil Association** - These are largely matters for the Certification Body. We are aware that they have invested heavily (and continue to do so) on work that is well aligned with all of these topics.

**LEAF** - There are several projects which will result in changes over the next 12 months: revision of the LEAF Marque standard V17 and its format, structure and terminology intended to increase its effectiveness and clarity for farmers; the ongoing development of the LEAF Sustainable Farming Review and its alignment and interoperability with the audit process, intended to aid preparation and provision of evidence for audit; and cooperation with other farm assurance standards on improving efficiency of joint audit visits and other areas of mutual benefit.

**Please provide information about any planned changes to your approach to farm assurance during the next year, together with a timescale for their implementation.**

**OF&G** - I would love to come back in and put it back on track however too many people are now on the gravy train and won't allow that to happen. We need a total restructure and re-evaluation and a clear out.

**QMS** - We are due to go out to tender for a certification body in June 2026 and have used the UKFAR to underpin some areas of the tender specification. The outcome of this will be known in October 2026, with a view to certification body being in place for April 2027.

**GLOBAL GAP** - There are no plans to change the approach.

**SEDEX** - We will be implementing some changes to the Corrective Action request (CAR) process and issuing titles during Q2/3 this year.

## **AHDB**

**What measures have been taken to join up the responses of the AHDB and other UK Levy Boards when addressing the UKFAR recommendations? Have these measures been effective and, if not, what would be your suggested approach to make them effective?**

QMS, LMC and HCC were invited to attend the two assurance roundtable meetings that the AHDB jointly facilitated with the NFU in 2025, and QMS participate in regular Farm Assurance Review Leadership Group meetings. It should be noted that other levy boards engage in discussions with a different dynamic, as unlike AHDB, both QMS and LMC administer their own assurance schemes.

**What steps have you taken to engage with your respective government departments and regulatory agencies to address any overlaps in the farm assurance audit and regulatory inspection requirements?**

We have engaged in regular calls with DEFRA colleagues and await their formal response to the UKFAR recommendations.

**Please provide information on changes made to your approach to farm assurance that directly, and positively, impact upon the experience of the farm assurance system by farmers, crofters and growers (eg through the audit process, methods of communication, involvement in decision making etc). We are particularly seeking information on how you have sought to simplify the farm assurance process, reduce audit burden, improve efficiency within the system in terms of engagement of time and data collection effort and reduce audit duplication, but other reported improvements will also be welcome.**

This question is of limited relevance to the AHDB as we do not administer assurance schemes. However, we do agree with the need to simplify the farm assurance process, reduce audit burden and improve system efficiency, and as such we support enhanced democratisation of schemes' governance structures to ensure farmers have an active voice in decision-making.

**Please provide information about any planned changes to your approach to farm assurance during the next year, together with a timescale for their implementation.**

As explained in our response to Recommendation 8.6, our discussions with the other Owners of Red Tractor continue. Existing projects of particular relevance to assurance, such as the Farm Data Exchange PoC, Environmental Baselineing, the dairy production standards comparison study and the C&O research project all have significant milestones over the next three months.

## **DEFRA**

**Please provide information on changes made to your approach to farm assurance that directly, and positively, impact upon the experience of the farm assurance system by farmers, crofters and growers (eg through the audit process, methods of communication, involvement in decision making etc). We are particularly seeking information on how you have sought to simplify the farm assurance process, reduce audit burden, improve efficiency within the system in terms of**

**engagement of time and data collection effort and reduce audit duplication, but other reported improvements will also be welcome.**

Farm Assurance schemes are industry led initiatives and it is not for Government to comment on how individual schemes operate. DEFRA continues to look at how farm assurance schemes can strategically add value to DEFRA's responsibilities.

**Please provide information about any planned changes to your approach to farm assurance during the next year, together with a timescale for their implementation.**

We continue to consider how best to respond to this recommendation in relation to the role of farm assurance, particularly in relation to the use of data transparency and earned recognition.

## **AIMS**

**Please provide information on changes made to your approach to farm assurance that directly, and positively, impact upon the experience of the farm assurance system by farmers, crofters and growers (eg through the audit process, methods of communication, involvement in decision making etc). We are particularly seeking information on how you have sought to simplify the farm assurance process, reduce audit burden, improve efficiency within the system in terms of engagement of time and data collection effort and reduce audit duplication, but other reported improvements will also be welcome.**

Since the September 2025 survey, AIMS has pivoted its approach to farm assurance from a traditional inspect and verify model to a data-led verification model through the Vetasure project. Our strategy focuses on four key pillars of improvement:

### **Simplifying the Process:**

We have moved away from the requirement for farmers to manually compile audit folders. Through the Vetasure Pilot Phase 1, we are testing a system where data is captured at the source—primarily during the Annual Health and Welfare Pathway (AHWP) vet visits. By using the vet visit as the primary assurance event, we are effectively stacking requirements so the farmer does one job that satisfies multiple regulatory and assurance needs.

### **Reducing Audit Burden via Automation:**

A central focus of our current feasibility study with the AHDB is the reduction of manual data entry. Vetasure is being designed to pull existing data from current platforms such as the Livestock Information Service (LIS) and eAML2. This reduces the data collection effort by the farmer. Instead of the farmer proving they moved animals, the system confirms it automatically via existing movement logs.

### **Improving Efficiency & Methods of Communication:**

We have engaged directly with farmer groups to identify communication fatigue. In response, the Vetasure platform is being developed to provide farmers with a Real-Time Assurance Dashboard. Rather than waiting for an annual certificate, farmers can see their live compliance status. This eliminates the anxiety and scramble associated with preparing for a scheduled inspection.

### **Reducing Audit Duplication through Supply Chain Integration:**

We are currently consulting with retailers and processors to understand their specific add-on requirements. Our approach is to integrate these add-ons into the Vetasure digital record. If a retailer requires specific welfare metrics, these are captured by the vet during their routine visit and shared digitally. This removes the need for a secondary, retailer-specific inspector to visit the farm.

**Please provide information about any planned changes to your approach to farm assurance during the next year, together with a timescale for their implementation.**

Timescale: April 2026 – March 2027

Following the conclusion of the Phase 1 Feasibility Study at the end of this month (March 2026), AIMS has a defined roadmap for the implementation of Vetasure:

Q2 2026: Publication of Feasibility Report

We will present the findings of the Vetasure feasibility study to the AHDB. This will include a proposed governance framework that has been stress-tested against industry requirements.

Q3 2026: Launch of Pilot Phase 2 (Live Integration)

Moving from theoretical mapping to platform development and live data trials. This will involve a cohort of early-adopter farmers using the Vetasure interface to link their vet records directly to participating processors.

Q4 2026: Refinement of the Funding Model

Based on the Phase 1 investigation, we will finalise the commercial model for Vetasure, ensuring that the cost-burden of assurance is redistributed away from the primary producer and toward the data-beneficiaries within the wider supply chain.

Q1 2027: Integration of Vetaverse

The final stage of this 12-month cycle involves the full integration of Vetasure into all animal species and farm assurance requirement sectors.

All of the above is dependent of obtaining support funding for further development and testing or investment from an industry partner to move the Vetasure concept forward rapidly.

## **Farming Support Organisations**

**Please provide information on changes made to your approach to farm assurance that directly, and positively, impact upon the experience of the farm assurance system by farmers, crofters and growers (eg through the audit process, methods of communication, involvement in decision making etc). We are particularly seeking information on how you have sought to simplify the farm assurance process, reduce audit burden, improve efficiency within the system in terms of engagement of time and data collection effort and reduce audit duplication, but other reported improvements will also be welcome.**

This is probably not relevant to RSABI. As a charity we work with the farm assurance providers in Scotland to offer free Mental Health First Aid training and also to provide updates to staff to ensure there is awareness of the support we offer eg financial, practical and emotional support and awareness of the challenges farmers face eg a considerable percentage of farmers are dyslexic.

**Please provide information about any planned changes to your approach to farm assurance during the next year, together with a timescale for their implementation.**

RSABI will continue to work closely with those involved in planning and delivering farm assurance schemes in Scotland.

## **Red Tractor Board**

**Please provide information on changes made to your approach to farm assurance that directly, and positively, impact upon the experience of the farm assurance system by farmers, crofters and growers (eg through the audit process, methods of communication, involvement in decision making etc). We are particularly seeking information on how you have sought to simplify the farm assurance process, reduce audit burden, improve efficiency within the system in terms of engagement of time and data collection effort and reduce audit duplication, but other reported improvements will also be welcome.**

In keeping with the commitment that the Red Tractor Board of Directors made in March 2025, Red Tractor has made extensive changes since the publication of the UKFAR recommendations. Across communications, digital tools, standards development, joint audits, audit consistency, wellbeing and governance, this substantial programme of change is aimed at directly improving the assurance experience for farmers and growers. We recognise the responsibility we have to deliver meaningful, farmer-first-improvements, and our programme of work reflects that commitment.

This work will continue as part of our 2026/27 business plan, which includes the following specific objective: “To ensure that the sentiment and aims of the FAR are delivered for farmers and growers.”

Below is a summary of the most significant changes and their direct positive impact on farmers, as detailed in our responses to the recommendations above:

1. A more farmer-first approach to communication and engagement. We have completely overhauled how we communicate with, and listen to, farmers. Key improvements include:

- A comprehensive new communications strategy with a focus on clarity, transparency and building trust. This includes improved website content, clearer navigation, redesigned newsletters, and a stronger cascade of information through Sector Boards
- Expanded face-to-face engagement: Red Tractor staff and directors attended more than 50 farmer-facing events in 2025, speaking directly with over 1,000 farmers. Four dedicated farmer events were also held across England, giving members the opportunity to raise concerns directly with the Board
- Appointment of an agricultural PR specialist, to strengthen farmer-focused messaging and ensure communications are written for – and tested with – farmers
- Launch of farmer sentiment research, including a redesigned post-assessment survey and a new farmer sentiment survey. This provides real-time evidence of where improvements are needed and how changes are landing with members

Impact: Farmers now benefit from clearer, more accessible information, more routes to influence decision-making, and a more visible, approachable assurance organisation. Farmer understanding of, and confidence in, the assurance process is steadily improving.

2. Simplifying standards and reducing complexity

We have taken major steps to simplify standards and make them easier to understand and comply with:

- Publication of the new Policy for the Development of Red Tractor Standards, which requires every standard to be justified, proportionate, and based on evidence of value or due diligence
- Sector Boards have now published sector specific priorities for reducing audit burden and duplication, with a full review of all farm-facing standards underway in 2026
- Technical Advisory Committees are reviewing every standard line-by-line, explicitly looking for ways to remove duplication, reduce paperwork and streamline requirements

Impact: Standards will now change in a more, transparent and farmer-influenced way, with simplification built in from the start.

3. Reducing audit burden and duplication Reducing the time, stress and duplication associated with audits has been a core priority. Progress includes:

Joint assessments

- Publication of clearer guidance on joint assessment opportunities for farmers, including with LEAF, GLOBAL GAP and other schemes
- New enhanced welfare modules for pigs launched in December 2025 to reduce the need for separate audits
- Collaborative work with retailers and processors to understand and reduce additional customer-driven audits, particularly in fresh produce

Towards risk-based auditing

- Sector objectives and priorities published in December 2025 all include commitments to exploring reduced audit frequency for consistently compliant farms. Improving consistency and quality of assessments
- Publication of the Assessor Protocol and Training Programme, enhancing assessor skills, including interpersonal skills and use of the portal
- Improvements to the Member Portal have also increased audit efficiency and reduced time on-farm for those who wish to use it

Impact: Farmers can expect more consistent, proportionate, better-planned assessments, with the opportunity to use the Red Tractor Member Portal to manage records and documents.

4. Improving audit efficiency through technology and the Red Tractor Portal. To reduce data collection effort and make audits less stressful and time-consuming, we have:

- Delivered major upgrades to the Red Tractor Member Portal, including live photos with geolocation, requirements shortlists, better navigation and a significantly improved user experience
- Required assessors to use the portal where farmers choose to do so, ensuring a “tell us once” model
- Run extensive training for assessors and provided help guides and video support for farmers
- Begun integration with third-party farm management apps (eg MeritAgCheck), enabling data to flow automatically and reduce duplication. Portal feedback is positive: in 2025, 77% of portal users rated their experience as good or excellent

Impact: For farmers choosing to use the portal, audits are shorter, preparation is more efficient, and duplication of paperwork is reduced.

5. Increasing transparency in decision-making. Red Tractor has published clear policies which ensure farmers and growers contribute fully to decision making:

- Publication of a clear, accessible description of how standards are set, including defined consultation windows and routes for farmers to shape decisions
- Revised Sector Board Terms of Reference, strengthening the representative role of farmers and improving the transparency of appointments
- Regular publication of Board and Sector Board meeting summaries, enabling farmers to see how their feedback influences decisions

Impact: Farmers now have more clarity and more visible accountability across governance structures.

6. Supporting farmer wellbeing and reducing stress associated with audits. Recognising the pressure the audit process can place on people, we have:

- Appointed a Board-level lead for Farmer Wellbeing
- Understood more about how assessors are trained around communication style and understanding stress factors
- Improved guidance and support for farmers involved in exposes or high-pressure situations

Impact: The audit experience is respectful, empathetic and farmer centred.

7. Strengthening collaboration across assurance schemes. Joint working across the industry is central to reducing duplication and alignment of standards:

- Creation of the Farm Assurance Forum, a coalition of assurance schemes meeting twice a year to share best practice and collaborate on areas such as audit consistency, data and farmer wellbeing

Impact: Assurance schemes are openly discussing and identifying ways to address duplication and inconsistency across the system.

8. Culture Change: Embedding a Farmer-First mindset across the organisation. Red Tractor has taken significant steps to embed a more open, accountable culture throughout the organisation. This work recognises that the assurance experience is shaped not only by standards and audits, but also by organisational values and behaviours. Changes include:

- New organisational values – integrity, trustworthiness, community and expertise – which are now built into staff development plans, recruitment processes, and leadership objectives. These values are actively shaping how Red Tractor engages with and supports farmers

- Delivery of culture and leadership training, including Trust workshops for the extended leadership team, with roll-out to all staff
- Introduction of 360-degree feedback for senior leaders
- Creation of a new communications strategy centred around building farmer trust, increasing transparency and demonstrating value - signalling a shift to proactive listening and engagement as core organisational behaviours

Impact: These changes are helping rebuild trust, improve the tone of interactions with farmers, and ensure Red Tractor's culture is consistently aligned with the expectations set out in the UKFAR. Staff and leadership are now better equipped to engage constructively, listen openly, and respond to farmer concerns in a more empathetic and transparent way.

**Please provide information about any planned changes to your approach to farm assurance during the next year, together with a timescale for their implementation.**

Red Tractor's 2026/27 business plan includes the following objective: "To ensure that the sentiment and aims of the FAR are delivered for farmers and growers."

Much of the activity included in the business plan directly reflects the recommendations of the UKFAR, feedback from farmers, and the new Sector Technical Strategies endorsed by industry representatives sitting on Sector Boards. Key elements of the plan are:

1. A review of all farm-facing standards

Timescale: Proposals by Autumn 2026; final standards in 2027

Each sector will complete a full, line-by-line review of standards following the new Policy for Standards. This includes:

- Streamlining checklists and removing unnecessary complexity
- Reorienting standards to emphasise practical, outcome-focused compliance
- Ensuring proportionality and sector specificity (eg lower audit burden for low-risk fresh produce crops; 'level playing field' considerations in crops)

2. Development of smarter, more efficient and more flexible audits

Timescale: Finalise initial first stage proposed changes by end of 2026

The standards review process includes:

- Reviewing audit cycles across all sectors, including length, flexibility and data-led risk-based approaches
- In some sectors, exploring options such as surveillance audits, alternative intervals for consistently compliant farms, and recognition of other schemes to reduce duplication
- Enhancing assessor guidance, consistency and performance monitoring

3. Ongoing development of the Red Tractor Portal to support 'tell us once' data use

Timescale: Continuous development through 2026/27

A programme of digital development will continue, focused on:

- Improving portal usability and user experience for farmers
- Integrating additional data streams to reduce paperwork and pre-audit preparation
- Exploring further use of photo-based compliance records
- Enhancing portal capability to support more risk-based assessment in future

4. Expanded and more structured farmer engagement programme

Timescale: Delivery throughout 2026/27

Red Tractor will formalise and strengthen farmer engagement through:

- A national programme of farmer events, webinars and direct engagement activity
- Farmer Sentiment Survey and farmer focus groups
- A formal consultation on standards changes

#### 5. Explaining and embedding values and governance

Timescale: Throughout 2026/27

Planned changes include:

- Clearer communication on Red Tractor's website of Red Tractor's existing governance structure and how decisions are made
- Continued implementation of cultural change initiatives, embedding Red Tractor's values and enhancing leadership accountability

#### 6. Improvements to post-farm-gate assurance and supply chain compliance

Timescale: July–December 2026

Planned changes include:

- Enhancing the traceability challenge programme, including developing a new post-assessment survey for licensees
- Developing and piloting a training programme for licensees on logo/claim rules
- Reviewing how RT can help to reduce processor audit burden for its licensees

#### 7. Enhanced support around compliance, wellbeing and audit readiness

Timescale: Interventions by end of 2026

Key initiatives include work to:

- Better understand the impact of assurance on farmer wellbeing
- Continue to promote a culture of compliance in the pigs, poultry and dairy sectors
- Introduce a lessons learned model after exposes to support members and enhance compliance

#### 8. Ongoing improvements in communications

Timescale: throughout 2026/27

Planned developments include:

- Work to build understanding of assurance amongst farmers, including explainers and myth busting
- Communications initiatives focused on conveying pride in British food and farming
- Appointment of a senior public affairs manager
- A revitalised digital communications strategy

#### 9. Enablers for long-term operational efficiency and improved customer service

Key initiatives include:

- Onboarding a new Head of Operations to develop appropriate technology strategies to deliver improved efficiencies across the business and membership
- Onboarding a new Technical Co-ordinator to support standards development
- Implementation of a new CRM
- Internal digital strategy enhancements including appropriate use of AI
- In addition to the above, Red Tractor expects to be joined by a new CEO in spring/summer 2026
- Review how RT can help to reduce processor audit burden for its licensees

### **DEFRA Data Group (Food Data Transparency Partnership)**

**What can be done to ensure that farm assurance is considered as part of farming and food chain data developments within policy making?**

I am disappointed in the slowness of the response to the Review in this context. There seems to be more proliferation in developments around supply chain data than a co-ordinated response. The DEFRA Food Data Transparency Partnership work is ongoing - AHDB is progressing with its proof of concept; Red Tractor has stated it is switching to digital - but farmers want clarity over data security if they share the data.

**Please provide information on changes made to your approach to farm assurance that directly, and positively, impact upon the experience of the farm assurance system by farmers, crofters and growers (eg through the audit process, methods of communication, involvement in decision making etc). We are particularly seeking information on how you have sought to simplify the farm assurance process, reduce audit burden, improve efficiency within the system in terms of engagement of time and data collection effort and reduce audit duplication, but other reported improvements will also be welcome.**

I have not seen this on the ground. With the UK government stepping up their regulatory asks eg considering environmental permitting for dairy, intensive beef and sewage sludge use - how this is going to be integrated into RT?

**Please provide information about any planned changes to your approach to farm assurance during the next year, together with a timescale for their implementation.**

Not applicable

### **Government Departments/Industry Regulators**

**What progress has been made in ensuring that there is greater coordination between the 4 UK governments in addressing farm assurance within your policy making, engagement with this aspect of the farming industry, data sourcing and earned recognition (ER) in relation to new and emerging government data requirements?**

**FSA** - As previously reported, FSA ER policy only applies to members of FSA AAS in relation to food hygiene at the level of primary production, feed hygiene and dairy hygiene. Environmental standards are out of scope for the FSA, so this recommendation is not applicable to us.

**Welsh Government** - The Welsh Government will consider how farm assurance schemes can be used for earned recognition in the Sustainable Farming Scheme.

**NRW** - No discussions have occurred with the farm assurance schemes on how evidence of a farm's compliance and environmental legislation could contribute. We have to have a risk-based approach to our regulatory activities. For industry installations we apply this to how we work out a site's charge through the OPRA spreadsheet. Having an accredited environmental management system counts as a risk reduction factor. Similarly, the annual compliance multiplier results in higher charges for poor performing sites and a lower charge for sites with no non-compliance.

See also our response to Recommendation 5.02.

**What steps have been taken with your respective regulatory agencies to ensure that there is greater clarity around their engagement with the farm assurance system?**

**Welsh Government** - The Welsh Government can raise the issue of farm assurance through the Four Nations Agricultural Policy Collaboration Group. While our policies in each nation will diverge, we wish to ensure that we can exchange examples of good practice and to raise concerns if policies in one nation have a detrimental impact on another.

**Please provide information on changes made to your approach to farm assurance that directly, and positively, impact upon the experience of the farm assurance system by farmers, crofters and growers (eg through the audit process, methods of communication, involvement in decision making etc). We are particularly seeking information on how you have sought to simplify the farm assurance process, reduce audit burden, improve efficiency within the system in terms of**

**engagement of time and data collection effort and reduce audit duplication, but other reported improvements will also be welcome.**

**NRW** - This is currently under review following further updates from the Farm Assurance Schemes

**Please provide information about any planned changes to your approach to farm assurance during the next year, together with a timescale for their implementation.**

**Welsh Government** - the Welsh Government recognises the importance of farm assurance/certification schemes within the food chain in Wales. We will continue to work with farm assurance scheme managers towards achieving better alignment as the assurance schemes and the SFS continue to evolve, to benefit food producers and farming businesses.

## **TIAH**

**Where else do you think that TIAH might have a role in supporting the implementation of the UKFAR recommendations?**

There is an opportunity to create one set of training resources accessible by all farm assurance members and to meet the recommendation on supporting farmers in a digital world. This recommendation could be achieved through cost effective, impactful, online learning hosted on TIAH's learning hub.

**Please provide information on changes made to your approach to farm assurance that directly, and positively, impact upon the experience of the farm assurance system by farmers, crofters and growers (eg through the audit process, methods of communication, involvement in decision making etc). We are particularly seeking information on how you have sought to simplify the farm assurance process, reduce audit burden, improve efficiency within the system in terms of engagement of time and data collection effort and reduce audit duplication, but other reported improvements will also be welcome.**

No response

**Please provide information about any planned changes to your approach to farm assurance during the next year, together with a timescale for their implementation.**

No response

## **Food Chain Businesses/Industry Representatives**

**If you operate a farm assurance scheme as a “bolt-on” to the use of another scheme, what is your reason for doing so and what does it add to your commercial offering to (a) your supply chain and (b) your consumers?**

**ABP** - We only operate parallel audits at the specific request of M&S as part of their Select Farm Scheme and a representative sample for Tesco.

**Cranswick** - We do not use any “bolt on” audits.

**Arla** - Arla does not use a bolt on scheme but operates its own higher welfare assurance programme named Arlagarden

**Anglia Free Range** - As per previous response, 2 retail customers have their own standards, which have some minor differences to the Lion and RSPCA. The auditing is not very onerous for farms and just created more work for the packer. The M&S standard had value as, at the time, eggs going for processing received better returns than those not M&S approved. It believes there is a consumer perception re M&S supply farms and the audit gave M&S confidence in its supply base. Both require outcome measure data to be supplied which is useful in terms of monitoring and trends, this data is packer level and an average across all supply farms.

**Co-op** - We use LEAF assurance which requires growers to be RT farm assured. Provides assurance to our consumers that our growers are trying to improve the environment around their farms.

**Morrisons** - does not have any additional welfare standards but completes additional brand reputation visits to its farms which are undertaken by a third party.

**How best do you believe that new mandatory reporting requirements within the retail and processing sectors could be delivered if not through the farm assurance system (for example, if the scope of the system became more focussed on food safety, animal welfare and good food production practices)? What impact would this have on your relationship with the current farm assurance system and what approach would you then take to obtain the mandatory reporting information you require?**

**ABP** - These are embryonic in development and the role of assurance is uncertain. Discussions with customers around Country of Origin and lesser standards, the absence of National Assurance schemes in many countries etc are proving to be a barrier to trade for our specific sector in some instances. This may be more useful for some sectors than others and reinforces that within the overall Farm Assurance framework there should be greater autonomy as to what benefits each individual sector, versus a blanket approach.

**Cranswick** - We would prefer an independent farm assurance system, but just one, not several as per the current way of working. However, we already run our own farm assurance standard, so are familiar with capturing and reporting on information.

**Arla** - we perform an analysis of our standards to ensure they do not duplicate current RT standards.

**Anglia Free Range** - We believe in the 'marketing' value of the Lion, as it is well recognised with consumers and has a marketing budget for promotion of eggs as a commodity which benefits all. So we would still support Lion but would hope it could use the any data out of mandatory reporting for the benefit of all. The RSPCA again is a well-recognised welfare charity and gives credibility to welfare above the legal minimum, so accreditation with the RSPCA, or similar, has value.

**Co-op** - if assurance schemes don't provide the information required then I think we would have to look at our contracts and ensure they cover the mandatory reporting information. Don't see it changing our relationship with farm assurance schemes as the other areas (eg welfare) are important to us and our consumers. Worry it would result added burden on farmers.

**Morrisons** – Our preference would be a holistic approach covering food safety, animal welfare and environment. We need to move to more real time outcome measures to give our customers, investors and other stakeholders the assurance they need that animals live a life worth living – a move towards the 5 domains of animal welfare, moving away from the 5 freedoms.

**Please provide information on changes made to your approach to farm assurance that directly, and positively, impact upon the experience of the farm assurance system by farmers, crofters and growers (eg through the audit process, methods of communication, involvement in decision making etc). We are particularly seeking information on how you have sought to simplify the farm assurance process, reduce audit burden, improve efficiency within the system in terms of engagement of time and data collection effort and reduce audit duplication, but other reported improvements will also be welcome.**

**ABP** - Our current representation in all farm assurance discussions is commensurate with the UKFAR. We have no plans for any additional modules, add ons or extensions etc. We are looking to use more automated data collection and transfer but this is mainly for internal efficiency and unlikely to benefit the audit process, albeit it could have future uses if and when assurance develops.

**Cranswick** - We asked and encouraged Red Tractor to develop an outdoor pig standard, equivalent to RSPCA Assured, so that we could halve our audit costs and resource needed to be compliant. However Red Tractor and RSPCA Assured are not collaborating to allow this to start to happen. Red Tractor also needs to ensure its new outdoor standard is recognised by our overseas customers. It also needs to

engage effectively with our UK customer base. There is a current expectation from Red Tractor that we will do all of this work.

**Arla** - Any developments and changes in Arlagarden are completed with the assistance of a preparatory working group made up of farmer owners who work on methods of improvements and how this is relayed to farmers. A part of the Arlagarden programme is a self-assessment which we review. An app is also being developed to assist farmers with Arlagarden.

**Anglia Free Range** - As a heavily audited sector it is a challenge. We aim to support our producers by creating record books/generic polices and templates for site specific paperwork to make the process more straightforward. Tesco used to do their own unannounced audits - by pushing back to make this a supplier responsibility this makes it less onerous for the farmer.

**Co-op** - Where we have our own standards in place, we have done and continue to review them annually to ensure they are fit for purpose and, where possible, reduce the burden on farmers. Given our use of assurance schemes, we support any activity that reduces the burden on farmers by the scheme operators while maintaining scheme integrity.

**Morrisons** – We have....

**Please provide information about any planned changes to your approach to farm assurance during the next year, together with a timescale for their implementation.**

**Cranswick** - We will continue to strengthen our own internal Cranswick standards, whilst we wait for Red Tractor and RSPCA Assured to get their own houses in order. Currently we do not view their farm audit programme as effective and mitigating all necessary risks.

**Arla** - We are currently working to introduce confidential risk-based changes to Arlagarden which are due to be launched in August.

**Anglia Free Range** - As active members of Lion either at subscriber and technical meetings we aim to speak on behalf of our supply base and approach things bearing the farm assurance review in mind. The Lion has a small 'exec' group, made up of volunteers from the sector to review how the standard should evolve and make it fit for the future for farmers, packers, customers and consumers. This project is soon to start so it will be interesting to see how it progresses and how more progress is made.

**Co-op** - No planned changes

## **National Farming Unions (NFUs)**

**What measures have been taken to join up the responses of each of the National Farming Unions when addressing the UKFAR recommendations? Have these measures been effective and, if not, what would be your suggested approach to make them effective?**

**NFU and NFU Cymru** - aim to meet fortnightly as part of the Farm Assurance Review Leadership Group (FARLG), which includes other UK farming unions. During these sessions and other UK Farming Unions meetings, and other multi-nation occasions, we have been sharing insights about our responses and our approaches to farm assurance. This discussion occurs from officeholder level down to individual sector discussions.

**NFUS** - continues to take part in the UKFAR Leadership Group which receives regular operational updates on progress. This is a success in that there is ongoing conversation and ability to share concerns and views. Retaining this is key to ensuring that there is discussion and progression, and that the devolved nations can input to wider discussion.

**UFU** - farming unions across the UK have continued to work together through the Farm Assurance Review Leadership process to share information and align responses where appropriate. While each nation faces different policy environments and agricultural structures, there is a shared objective across the unions to ensure that farm assurance delivers genuine value to farmers while maintaining consumer trust.

**What steps have you taken to engage with your respective government departments and regulatory agencies to address any overlaps in the farm assurance audit and regulatory inspection requirements?**

**NFU Cymru** - has met with Welsh Government and its regulatory agencies such as Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Rural Payments Wales (RPW) and the FSA multiple times to discuss the role of farm assurance. We have also met with Red Tractor and WLBP to discuss the role of earned recognition. In particular, we have been focusing on the overlap with the forthcoming SFS and with the existing Control of Agriculture Pollutions Regulations. This work is ongoing and avoiding duplication with the aim of enabling earned recognition continues to be a priority for NFU Cymru.

**NFU** - In partnership with AHDB we have had a number of meetings with DEFRA to support their understanding of assurance and the review. In addition, in NFUs day-to-day policy work, NFU appropriately discusses industry led solutions as an alternative to hard regulation, where assurance schemes might play a role.

**NFU Scotland** - We are not at this stage currently; specific sectoral issues are addressed very much through our commodity committees. Work with individual scheme owners has been useful in identifying where the burden can be reduced and simplified. Wider than this, we have raised with officials the work of the FAR group and the ownership industry is taking on assurance issues.

**UFU** - continues to engage with DAERA, UK government departments and regulatory agencies to ensure that the role of farm assurance within the regulatory framework is clearly understood. In Northern Ireland, farm assurance schemes operate within a unique policy environment due to devolved governance arrangements. This can lead to divergence in regulation and policy priorities between the UK nations, which must be considered when developing assurance standards.

**Please provide information on changes made to your approach to farm assurance that directly, and positively, impact upon the experience of the farm assurance system by farmers, crofters and growers (eg through the audit process, methods of communication, involvement in decision making etc). We are particularly seeking information on how you have sought to simplify the farm assurance process, reduce audit burden, improve efficiency within the system in terms of engagement of time and data collection effort and reduce audit duplication, but other reported improvements will also be welcome.**

**NFU Cymru** - does not get directly involved in farm assurance delivery and we feel this question is more suited to assurance schemes.

**NFU** - doesn't get directly involved in farm assurance delivery and we feel this question is more suited to assurance schemes.

**NFU Scotland** - this question is more for scheme providers. Our role is working through our commodity committees where there is the opportunity to provide farmer input on sectoral assurance issues. We also work alongside organisations such as SQC on an ongoing basis to collaborate and share industry knowledge where we can.

**UFU** - strongly supports efforts to:

- reduce audit duplication
- simplify assurance standards
- improve communication with farmers
- ensure farmers are involved in decision-making processes

Within Northern Ireland, the governance structure of NIBLFQAS already includes direct representation from farming organisations including the Ulster Farmers' Union. This ensures that farmer voices are represented in both strategic decisions and standards development within the scheme.

**Please provide information about any planned changes to your approach to farm assurance during the next year, together with a timescale for their implementation.**

**NFU Cymru** - sees a number of important legacy areas from the UK Farm Assurance Review and some broader areas to support outcomes from members. NFU Cymru will continue to champion the role of farm assurance in Wales and will work with farm assurance schemes to deliver schemes which work for Welsh farmers and help us deliver our future vision for a profitable, progressive and productive Welsh food and farming sector. The broader themes include:

1. Advocating and lobbying for transparent and well governed purpose, value and scope in all assurance schemes
2. NFU playing an active role as a member of the Red Tractor Ownership Body to improve leadership
3. Work with other organisations to make a formal assessment(s) of changes made to Red Tractor in a timely manner but also in the context of a new CEO
4. Champion the importance of sector autonomy in delivery of value for scheme members

**NFU** - sees a number of important legacy areas from the UK Farm Assurance Review and some broader areas to support outcomes from members. At this point in time it is difficult to commit to timescales due to imminent NFU elections and the arrival of a new Director General later this year, which might impact priorities.

However, there are some broad themes, which, like NFU Cymru, include:

1. Advocating and lobbying for transparent and well governed purpose, value & scope in all assurance schemes
2. NFU playing an active role as a member of the Red Tractor Ownership Body to improve leadership
3. Work with other organisations to make a formal assessment(s) of changes made to Red Tractor in a timely manner but also in the context of a new CEO – as per recommendation 9.02
4. Champion the importance of sector autonomy in delivery of value for scheme members

**NFU Scotland** - We will continue to take part in the FAR Leadership Group discussions. We have a new policy strategy which provides for work on farm assurance and will enable us to develop this on a sectoral and strategic basis.

**UFU** - believes that the key priorities for the next phase of the UK Farm Assurance Review should include:

- reducing audit burden for farmers
- improving communication between schemes and producers
- clarifying the purpose and scope of farm assurance standards
- improving coordination between assurance schemes across the UK
- ensuring that assurance delivers clear value for farmers

The UFU remains committed to working with industry partners, assurance schemes and government bodies to ensure that farm assurance systems remain effective, credible and proportionate.

## Annex 9: List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this document:

AAS - Approved Assurance Schemes  
ABP - Anglo Beef Processors  
ACTSO - Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers  
AGM - Annual General Meeting  
AHDB - Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board  
AHIC - Animal Health Improvement Cycle  
AIC - Agricultural Industries Confederation  
AIMS - Association of Independent Meat Suppliers  
APHA - Animal and Plant Health Agency  
BEA - British Egg Association  
BEIC - British Eggs Industry Council  
BEPA - British Egg Products Association  
BFREPA - British Free Range Egg Producers Association  
BFU – British Farming Union  
BPS - Basic Payment Scheme  
BRC - British Retail Consortium  
CAP - Common Agricultural Policy (of the EU)  
CB - Certification Body  
CPD - Continuing Professional Development  
CSRD - Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (of the EU)  
DAERA - Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs of Northern Ireland  
DEFRA - Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs  
DHI - Dairy Hygiene Inspectors  
DSA - Data Sharing Agreement  
EA – Environment Agency  
EU - European Union  
EUDR - EU Deforestation Regulation  
ERPG - Earned Recognition Policy Group  
ESG - Environmental, Social and Governance  
FAR - Farm Assurance Review  
FARLG - Farm Assurance Leadership Review Group  
FAWL - Farm Assured Welsh Livestock  
FCN - Farming Community Network  
FCP - Farming and Countryside Programme  
FDE - Farm Data Exchange  
FIA - Food Integrity Assurance  
FSA - Food Standards Agency  
FFS - Food Standards Scotland  
FUW - Farmers Union of Wales  
GAFTA - Grain and Feed Trade Association  
GDPR - General Data Protection Regulations  
GHG - Green House Gas  
GLOBAL GAP - Global Good Agricultural Practices  
GLOBAC - Global Accreditation Cooperation Incorporated  
HCC - Hybu Cig Cymru/Meat Promotion Wales  
IGD - Institute of Grocery Distribution  
ISO - International Standards Organisation  
KPI - Key Performance Indicator  
LA - Local Authority  
LANTRA - Land & Training  
LCA - Life Cycle Analysis  
LEAF - Linking Environment and Farming  
LMCNI - Livestock and Meat Commission of Northern Ireland  
M&S - Marks & Spencer  
MoU - Memorandum of Understanding  
N/A - Not Applicable

NAB - National Accreditation Body  
NAP - National Agriculture Panel of the FSA  
NAP - Nutrients Action Programme (of DAERA)  
NEMAL - National Egg Marketing Association  
NFCU - National Food Crime Unit  
NFU - National Farmers Union  
NFUS - National Farmers Union, Scotland  
NFU Cymru - National Farmers Union, Wales  
NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation  
NIFCC - Northern Ireland Food Chain Certification  
NIBLFQAS - Northern Ireland Beef & Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme  
NDPB - Non-Departmental Public Body  
NI - Northern Ireland  
NRW - Natural Resources Wales  
NSF - National Sanitation Foundation  
NTS - National Trading Standards  
OF&G - Organic Farmers and Growers  
OCVO - Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer  
PRA - Pullet Rearers Association  
QMS - Quality Meat Scotland  
RABI - Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution  
RED -Renewable Energy Directive  
RSABI - Royal Scottish Agricultural Benevolent Institution  
RSPCA - Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.  
RT - Red Tractor  
SA - Soil Association  
SAI - Sustainable Agriculture Innovative (Platform)  
SAOS - Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society  
SAP - Sustainable Agriculture Programme (of DAERA)  
SECR - Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting  
SEDEX - Supplier Ethical Data Exchange  
SFI - Sustainable Farming Incentive  
SFS - Sustainable Farming Scheme  
SMETA - SEDEX Members Ethical Trade Audi  
SQC - Scottish Quality Crops  
SQCF - Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.  
SRUC - Scotland's Rural College  
STAG - Standards Technical Advisory Group  
TAC - Trade and Agriculture Commission  
TASCC - Trade Assurance Scheme for Combinable Crops  
TCFD - Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures  
TIAH - The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture  
TOR - Terms of Reference  
VMD - Veterinary Medicines Directorate  
UFU - Ulster Farmers Union  
UKAS - United Kingdom Accreditation Service  
UKFAR - UK Farm Assurance Review  
US - United States  
WG - Welsh Government  
WLBP - Welsh Lamb and Beef Producers Ltd  
WRAP – Waste and Resources Action Programme

## **Annex 10: Acknowledgments**

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It is recognised that the UKFAR has prompted much discussion and debate about how best to improve the farm assurance system, and your work on helping to implement its recommendations has continued to be important and much appreciated.

Dr David Llewellyn  
UKFAR Monitoring and Reporting Commissioner