



REAL'S CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR QUALITY COMPOSTS

Compost Certification Scheme Newsletter December 2022



The Compost Certification Scheme has been established as a robust and reputable quality assurance and end-of-waste scheme. In this newsletter, you will find various ways in which it has been developed over the past six months, accompanied by related industry news.

Producers' Forum and TAC

We held the last meeting of the Producers' Forum in October, which was held wholly online. The key topics of discussion at the meeting included: the progress of the CQP revision, contamination of feedstocks and Local Authority requirements within tenders on contamination levels, and the proposed changes to the size of the certification mark in the CCS Scheme Rules.

Comments from Producers were then taken to the TAC meeting in November by the CCS Producers' Representative, where

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Approved Laboratory telephone numbers

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D&F

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NRM

+44 (0)1344 886338

Media platforms

Twitter

@compostcert

Producers Twitter

@CCSProducers

For enquiries

Our 'Decision Making Tree' enables scheme participants to

contamination of feedstocks was discussed at length and several actions arose in relation to this, in particular for the Producers' Representative to share footage of contamination in feedstocks with Local Authorities. Additionally, at the meeting, REAL sought advice from the TAC on technical issues relating to the revision of the CCS Scheme Rules; in particular, around the minimum size requirement for use of the certification mark on packaging or bags, and the introduction of remote auditing post-pandemic.

Working Groups

The PRT TWG submitted a proposal to the Research Hub earlier this year. This project was selected and a tender opened for this work in Autumn. Unfortunately, no responses to this tender were received, so REAL will be considering next steps with the group further.

In addition, REAL will be considering the future directions of the working groups in general. Next year will mark four years since the MDWG was created, and three since the setup of the PRT TWG. REAL will be discussing potential future areas of focus, updates to the Terms of Reference, and considering if new working groups need to be set up to focus on specific areas in the existing groups' stead.

Scheme Rules Review and Revision

Following the annual review early in 2022, the decision was made to revise the CCS/BCS Scheme Rules. REAL drafted in various changes or proposals and the draft versions were sent out for consultation to all scheme participants and TAC members on the 22nd of August. The consultation period lasted 6 weeks. The key changes for consultation included the introduction of independent sampling, the introduction of remote auditing, and additional questions for gathering data through the audits.

REAL have reviewed all responses to the consultation alongside feedback from the TAC on specific technical issues. REAL is currently finalising the requirements around a specific proposal in discussion with the certification bodies and environmental regulators, with the aim to issue the new versions of the scheme rules in early 2023. A transition period for operators will be communicated when the scheme rules are issued.

Workshops and Webinars

identify a point of call (organisation) if they have a scheme related enquiry. The tree can be found on our website [here](#).

CQP Revision

The Environment Agency's Task and Finish Group held their first meetings on the 5th of September. The scope of the revision and evidence available to date were considered, with the focus on risk assessment. The group met again on the 7th of November, in which the timeline for this work was discussed in further detail. Further meetings will be arranged in due course to discuss specific subjects and in smaller focus groups.

REAL shared the recently published report on plastic contamination in compost and digestate with the members of the Task and Finish Group. The research will be considered when discussing plastic limits in the future end of waste framework. (See more information on paper below).

REAL will continue to contribute to these meetings in the new year and look forward to seeing the revision process progress.

Plastic Paper Published

REAL have published a paper sharing recent data on plastic contamination in compost and digestate independently certified to end-of-waste criteria in England.

The analysis in the paper shows 98.5% of compost samples and 98.1% of digestate samples tested were within the limits for physical contaminants.

The results provide conclusive evidence that the levels of plastic contamination in compost and digestate that has been independently certified to end-of-waste criteria in England are lower

Since August REAL have run two more webinars, on the CCS sampling guidance and understanding PAS 100 testing, as well as another SQCS workshop. The feedback on these webinars has been positive and REAL have been seeking further comments through the forums and participant satisfaction survey, which will feed into discussions on the development of future webinars. REAL are also working towards a return to on-site sampling workshops in Spring 2023.

Research Hub

Project Updates

Evaluation of the potential for the improvement of the Residual Biogas Potential test and investigation of alternative test procedures for PAS110 biofertilisers

This project aims to undertake a comprehensive technical evaluation of the Residual Biogas Potential test, the only digestate stability testing regime currently recognised under PAS 110 (more details [here](#)).

Aqua Enviro was appointed as the contractor in early 2022 and work commenced in April 2022. The work is projected to be completed in June 2023.

How the benefits of applying compost and digestate to soils can be accounted for under the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol

This project aims to evaluate the carbon accounting benefits associated with producing and applying compost and digestate to land. The project also endeavours to develop guidance to account for these benefits under the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (more details [here](#)).

REAL opened a tender for this project in November 2022, which closed on 9th December 2022. Following a thorough evaluation of all bids submitted to the Research Hub and discussions with the Project Management Team, REAL will appoint a contractor in January 2023.

Evaluate possible alternative area-based methods of assessment for plastics in compost and digestate

This project aims to assess whether the current mass-based analytical methods for determining physical contaminants levels on materials greater than 2mm are fit for purpose. Further, this project seeks to determine whether there are robust area-based methods

than those required by the standards.

Compostables Paper Published

REAL have also published a paper titled "Composting compostables in the UK: Capacity for the composting of certified industrially compostable materials at certified industrial composting facilities in the UK." This paper has been produced to share data collected through CCS to date (as of September 2022), presenting a picture on the number of industrial composting processes in the UK that are both certified by CCS and accept independently certified compostable materials.

The paper shows that there are 24 CCS certified sites in the UK which confirmed they accept and feed compostables into their process. The paper further breaks this down by country and the type of compostables accepted. This paper can be read on the CCS website [here](#).

Laboratory Terms and Conditions

The new T&Cs for approved laboratories on the BCS/CCS were issued this month. The new T&Cs are the result of our annual review and revision process carried out in consultation with both certification bodies and approved laboratories. A significant legal review was undertaken alongside the usual technical review further strengthening this important scheme(s) document.

Participant and Research Hub Surveys

In September REAL conducted the annual participant satisfaction surveys, combined with the Research Hub feedback survey. The purpose of these surveys is to

available which might be applied to the determination of plastic contamination levels under PAS 100 and PAS 110.

REAL will be opening a tender for this project shortly. To stay updated on this project and tender opportunity, please routinely check the Research Hub's [News](#) page, or contact the Research Hub Manager, Megan Muller-Girard, to request to be added to the Research Hub mailing list.

Plant Response Test Interpretation and Comparison: Investigating performance of the PAS-Specified Tomato Plant-Response Test and Spring Barley Test on Quality Compost

This project aims to assess the performance of the spring barley test on CCS composts to consider including the spring barley test (in future versions of PAS 100) as a potential follow-up test to the tomato plant test (more info [here](#)).

Unfortunately, no bids were received for this project. REAL is currently considering alternative options for taking this project forward in 2023.

Submit a Research Proposal in 2023

The REAL Research Hub will run a Call for Research Proposals starting in January 2023. During this time, we encourage anyone with an idea for a research project to submit a proposal to the Research Hub. More information on submitting research proposals to the Hub can be found [here](#).

Utilise the Research Hub's Resources

The Research Library

The Research Hub's Organics Recycling Research Library (the Research Library) is an online platform that collates published research on the composting and AD industries. The Research Library currently contains 381 articles and is regularly updated with new research; more than 100 articles have been added to the platform since its initial launch in Jan 2021. To access the Research Library, visit www.realresearchlibrary.org.uk and log in with your unique login details.

Digestate Data Pack and Valorisation Report

In 2021, the Hub commissioned two technical reports exploring digestate characteristics and potential alternative uses for AD outputs. The Digestate Data Pack contains data analysis of key digestate characteristics, and the Valorisation Report provides a comprehensive examination of viable alternative uses for digestate.

help REAL assess scheme satisfaction amongst producers, prioritise areas for further development, and to assess how producers use and interact with the Research Hub. REAL also sought feedback on any new guidance documents or webinars that scheme participants or applicants would find beneficial.

The feedback we received indicated that overall, there was a positive view of the work being carried out by REAL and highlighted some useful additions we could make to our webinars. The Research Hub survey indicated that operators' view of the Hub is positive, but that more could be done to promote the outputs of Hub projects which are available to operators.

2023 Events Calendar

Following discussions at the forums around a lack of awareness of scheme events, REAL updated the CCS and BCS websites to include an events page. This page has now been updated with all the confirmed events for producers/operators taking place in 2023 and will continue to be updated, the page is available [here](#).

All Research Hub outputs are available free of charge for all CCS and BCS participants and for a fee to all other parties.



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