



REAL'S CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR QUALITY COMPOSTS

Compost Certification Scheme Newsletter August 2023



Producers' Forum and TAC

We held the biannual meeting of the CCS Producers' Forum in May. The key topics for discussion included an update on the CQP revision, and a short session on compostables, during which producers shared further views on what would be useful for identifying compostable materials in feedstocks. Additionally, there was an update from the Research Hub, and discussion around feedstock contamination and permit requirements.

An update from the forum was then presented at the June CCS/BCS TAC meeting by the producers' representative. There were further comments raised regarding allowable contamination levels in local authority contracts and the challenges this creates, and the EA representative informed of work the EA and trade bodies are carrying out on permits and with Local Authorities to address this. There were additional updates given by the certification bodies and approved

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ACL

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Approved Laboratory telephone numbers

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D&F

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NRM

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CQP Revision

In early 2023, the scoping exercises to assess what is necessary for inclusion in the risk assessment began. This included working groups being established to focus on comparators and quality standards. In March 2023, REAL, REA and ADBA held a webinar on proposed feedstock changes, as well as an accompanying paper, feedback from which was shared and

laboratories, as well as discussion around a BCS-related technical issue. Updates from the June TAC meeting will be presented to producers in the October Producer's Forum.

PRT TWG

The Plant Response Test Technical Working Group (PRT TWG) met twice in June and once in July to provide comments which will aid in developing a project specification for the PRT Research Hub project.

The PRT Hub project had been put out to tender in two different forms and had not received any bids each time. Following this, REAL decided to take forward the project outside of the usual Hub procedures, as REAL view it was of value to CCS. As such, REAL have been working on a plan to take the project forward internally (see Research Hub Update below), including meeting with the PRT TWG for their input. REAL hope to deliver a further update on this project soon.

Scheme Rules Revision

REAL are in the final stages of revising the CCS Scheme Rules, having addressed all comments from consultation with the Environmental Regulators, TAC members, and producers. As CCS certificates are now UKAS accredited, the revised Scheme Rules will undergo a formal review by UKAS, which we hope will be completed in the coming months. A transition period for producers will be communicated when the Scheme Rules are issued.

The key changes in version 10 of the rules include additional information to be collected by the Scheme during the application/renewal process and inclusion of rules around use of the conformity mark. Following the consultation, independent sampling and remote auditing requirements were removed; REAL will continue discussions with the Regulators about remote auditing and the risk assessment produced between the CBs. REAL hope to take remote auditing forward the next time the rules are revised.

Guidance Documents for Applicants

REAL have recently published two new guidance documents: an updated version of the [sample labelling guidance](#), and new [detailed guidance for applicants](#).

The CCS guidance on how to label a PAS 100 sample and prepare the relevant paperwork has been updated to support applicants who

discussed with the QP Task and Finish Group in April.

The Task and Finish Group next met in May to discuss the risk assessment work and the timeframe to complete this. The EA agreed to publish an interim Resources Framework, using the evidence already available relating to risks, with additional time given to complete the risk assessment in full. In July, discussions centred around the plastic limits in finished products.

REAL are working with the EA and other Task and Finish Group members by providing evidence and building consensus throughout the revision process.

Independent Auditor Tender

REAL opened a tender in April this year to appoint a new Independent Auditor to audit the REAL CCS and BCS approved laboratories from the beginning of 2024. The Open University are looking to focus on other projects from next year after four years of providing independent laboratory auditing service to REAL.

REAL are currently evaluating responses to the tender, with an evaluation panel, and hope to announce an appointment in Autumn this year.

Regulators Webinars

As part of the drive to strengthen engagement with the Environmental Regulators on an ongoing basis, REAL have held webinars for Regulatory Officers and the National Leads at SEPA and NIEA. The aims of these webinars are to introduce REAL and the CCS and BCS to officers, improve the awareness of the schemes amongst regulatory officers, and further open lines of communication between CCS,

may not be familiar with the scheme requirements, particularly around the need to request temporary certification details before testing. Additionally, some updates were made to the text to reflect more recent changes to the scheme.

The detailed CCS guidance document for applicants, has been produced to explain the procedure for achieving certification and includes a flow chart of the process. The aim of this guidance is to make the application process easier and clearer, and to update the information currently on the CCS website.

Research Hub

Ongoing Projects

Residual Biogas Potential Test Improvements and Alternatives

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 provide a comprehensive technical evaluation of the Residual Biogas Potential test; the only digestate stability testing regime recognised under PAS 110. Aqua Enviro were contracted for this work in early 2022, and the project is in its final stages, with the final report being reviewed. The final outputs of this work will be available in the coming months.

Carbon Accounting for Compost and Digestate

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

This project will evaluate the carbon accounting benefits associated with producing and applying compost and digestate to land. It also aims to develop guidance to account for these benefits under the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. AECOM have been contracted to complete this work and start up meetings have been held. This work is due to be completed this Autumn.

Plastic Contamination Method Assessment

Evaluating current mass-based method and possible alternative methods of assessment for plastics in compost and digestate.

This project aims to investigate the sensitivity and robustness of current methods for determining physical contaminants and to explore the use of alternative plastic assessment methods to inform future developments to PAS 100 and PAS 110. Solidsense have

BCS and the regulatory officers, which were strengthened during the pandemic with the introduction of remote auditing.

The first of these webinars were held in July for SEPA and NIEA and attendee feedback was positive, REAL are in the process of arranging webinars for the EA and NRW.

Workshops and Webinars

Since December we have run two more webinars, on sampling and understanding PAS100 testing. The Sampling Guidance Webinar was held in March, and the Understanding Test Results Webinar in April. These webinars will next be held in October and producers can find details on our events page [here](#).

In March, we also held another SQCS workshop, this workshop is led by a HACCP expert and provides a platform for discussion around the implementation of the SQCS and compliance with HACCP requirements. We will hold the next SQCS workshop in 2024.

Applicants Survey

REAL have produced a new survey to be sent to applicants on achieving certification. The aim of this survey is to collect feedback on the process of applying to the scheme as well as the guidance available. The survey will also collect feedback on the services provided by the certification bodies. Feedback from this survey will be used to consider further guidance or ways to ensure the process is clear and easy for new producers.

Peat Supplier Guidance for Labs

been contracted to complete this work and start up meetings have been held. This work is due to be completed in Spring 2024.

Plant Response Test Interpretation and Comparison

Investigating performance of the UK Tomato Plant Response Test and German Spring Barley Test on CCS Compost.

REAL put the initial version of the project out to tender in 2021 and a revised version in 2022 yet received no bids on either occasion. Therefore, REAL has decided to take the project forward through a different avenue. First, a Project Specification will be developed with input from relevant stakeholders. The Specification will outline project objectives, methodologies, timetables, and deliverables. REAL then plans to tender for an external project manager whose role will be to ensure the project is delivered to REAL's Specification.

When it went out to tender in 2022, the stated aim of the project was to assess the performance of the spring barley test on CCS composts to consider including the spring barley test (in future versions of PAS100) as a potential follow-up test to the tomato plant test. Please note this may be subject to change throughout the development of the Project Specification.

Future Projects

The evaluation process is currently ongoing to select the next project to be taken forward from the 2023 Call for Proposals. The proposals include topics such as the risk assessment for the QP revision, exploring an alternative to peat control growing medium for the CCS plant response test, and monitoring contamination in feedstocks. The full list of proposals can be found on the [Research Hub website](#).

REAL will announce the project selected for 2023 in due course.

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REAL have developed a live guidance document for use by CCS approved laboratories to aid in sourcing Irish Sphagnum moss peat for the tomato plant response test. This has been produced in light of the fact that a reliable supply of peat is becoming more challenging, due to the upcoming peat ban.

Information in this guidance is based on engagement with CCS approved laboratories, online research, and engagement with suppliers. It will be updated on an ongoing basis.

Compost Certification Scheme is part of Renewable Energy Assurance Limited.
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