



REAL'S CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR QUALITY COMPOSTS

Compost Certification Scheme Newsletter December 2023



Producers' Forum and TAC

We held the latest meeting of the Producers' Forum in October, which took place online. The key topics of discussion related to the progress of the Compost Quality Protocol (CQP) revision, the session during which research project ideas for the Hub were presented, the issues around contamination levels in feedstocks and Local Authority contracts, and the approach that Approved Laboratories currently take to report results following stones failures.

Comments from producers at the Forum were taken to the TAC meeting in November by the CCS Producers' Representative who raised a query on whether only the stones result should be reported in the event of a stones failure, or stones and total physical contaminants together. There was consensus at the TAC meeting on this, and REAL will update all scheme participants separately. The CCS Representative also reported on the discussions at the forum

Certification Body telephone numbers

OF&G

+44 (0)1939 291 800

NSF

+44 (0)1993 885 610

ACL

+44 (0)1984 624 989

Approved Laboratory telephone numbers

Eurofins

+44 (0)1449 721 192

D&F

+44 (0)1514 208 741

NRM

+44 (0)1344 886338

CQP Revision

We have been engaging in ongoing discussions with the Environment Agency (EA) around the CQP revision over the last several months and since the last meeting held on 22nd November.

The focus of the discussions has moved to proposals and REAL has submitted two proposals. In relation to plastic levels, the

around contamination; a suggestion arose from the TAC meeting to hold a separate meeting with the environmental regulators about this. There was also some discussion during the TAC meeting on the latest developments within the Research Hub, particularly in relation to the Hub's intended contribution to the CQP revision. More information on Hub projects can be found below.

Working Groups

Following the meetings of the Plant Response Test Technical Working Group (PRT TWG) in summer, the project specification for the PRT Research Project was finalised and submitted to the Hub, to go out for tender to appoint an external contractor. REAL CCS and the PRT TWG await the outcome of the tender process.

REAL have also been conducting market research, and meeting with relevant industry representatives, to gather information that will be used when discussing the formation of a new group next year.

Scheme Rules Revision

The final draft CCS Scheme Rules have been updated to include a new clause on certification for both End of Waste and End of Waste Scotland status if a producer is looking to supply their compost as a product to any country in the UK. REAL have also clarified and refined aspects of the rules following discussion with the CBs and environmental regulators.

REAL are awaiting UKAS' formal review, so that any necessary changes to ensure the scheme remains accreditable can be made before publication. We hope to publish the new rules early next year and will communicate this and transition times in due course.

Independent Auditor Tender

REAL opened a tender earlier this year to appoint an Independent Auditor to audit the REAL CCS and BCS Approved Laboratories from the beginning of 2024. REAL evaluated the responses and held interviews in summer. We are now finalising the new contract in discussion with the successful contractor and hope to announce this early in the new year!

Laboratory Terms and Conditions

following matters were discussed at the meeting last month:

- Whether tightened limits would lead to more failures given the certified digestate data failure rate presented in the REAL report on plastics analysis; and
- The importance of education around household waste recycling (including the call for) an EA communications strategy and a greater social media presence.

REAL will continue to contribute to any meetings held in the new year and look forward to seeing the revision process move forward.

Annual Report 2022

REAL published the annual report for 2022 in September.

The report shows that that by the end of 2022, there were 177 certified composting processes in the UK: 138 in England, 6 in Northern Ireland, 21 in Scotland, 11 in Wales, and 1 in the Republic of Ireland. 2022 saw the first producer certified outside of the UK. 111 of these were operated as open air, turned windrows, 11 as in-vessel composting only processes, and 11 as aerated static pile processes with no subsequent process step. 146 processes were composting green waste only and 31 composting green waste and ABP materials.

Collectively, producers on the CCS were producing 1.6 million tonnes of quality compost annually. The report can be read in full on the CCS website [here](#).

CCS Blog

REAL have drafted changes to the laboratory T&Cs which were circulated for consultation to the CBs and the labs in two consecutive consultation phases.

The most significant draft change is around UKAS accreditation requirements. We are adding a limit to the number of samples a laboratory can test before they achieve UKAS accreditation for standard non-scheme tests. The purpose of this is to encourage new laboratories to join the scheme, which would both benefit scheme participants, and be beneficial from REAL's perspective because it would open further opportunity for inter-laboratory trials and performance monitoring. This proposed change has been introduced as REAL have been contacted by laboratories which would like to become approved, but the UKAS requirements are a barrier due to the significant cost associated.

REAL have addressed all comments from the Approved Laboratories on the draft changes and hope to publish the new version of the T&Cs by the end of the year.

Research Hub

CCS-Specific Project Updates

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

This project aims to demonstrate to compost producers and AD operators the benefits of engaging with the GHG Protocol and to provide guidance to operators on how to account for the production and application of compost and digestate under the GHG Protocol (more details [here](#)).

AECOM was appointed as the contractor and work commenced in June 2023. A final report is expected to be published in early 2024 and will include background info on the GHGP and relevant Standards and Guidance as well as a methodology for how operators can calculate the emissions associated with these products. In November, the Hub also hosted two workshops with AECOM, covering an overview of the GHGP and how to calculate a product carbon footprint for compost/digestate, respectively. These sessions are recorded and available for CCS/BCS Participants on request.

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

REAL CCS' first blog is live on the new website.

Our first blog introduces the CCS Producers' Representative, Gregor Keenan, who has been in post since 2014. In our latest blog, he talks about how he entered the industry and his role in representing the views of producers.

The blog platform provides a space for REAL to share useful or interesting stories, research and relevant work carried out by other organisations, with our scheme participants.

You can read the blog post [here](#).

New Website

REAL launched a new CCS website in September. The purpose of the recent upgrade was to modernise and refresh the website to make it easier to navigate and find information.

Enhancement of the website includes: a simpler interface, more relevant and appealing imagery, and an added feature for the introduction of a new blog providing space for relevant contributions from individuals or companies in the sector.

The new website can be found [here](#).

Workshops & Webinars

REAL have held our first CCS Physical Contaminants & Stones Analyst Webinar for the Approved Laboratories. The CCS physical contaminant and stone (PC&S) method is labour intensive and require a high level of decision making in the identification and classification of PC&S fragments. As such, following a suggestion given in a previous WRAP report,

This project aims to evaluate current plastic assessment methods for CCS and BCS and any potential improvements or alternatives to these methods. This includes an assessment of the current mass-based method sensitivity and robustness, consideration of an area-based method, and research into methods of assessment for microplastics (more details [here](#)).

Solidsense was appointed as the contractor and work commenced in June 2023. A final report is expected to be published in 2024.

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

This project aims to assess the performance of the spring barley test on CCS composts alongside the tomato plant test (more info [here](#)).

After attempting twice to recruit a contractor for the work via the standard Research Hub procedure, we have now elected to take the project forward in a different way. Solidsense has been contracted to develop a draft Project Specification, outlining the project design including objectives, methodologies, and outputs. REAL intend to work with CCS-approved labs to deliver the laboratory work. An external Project Coordinator will then be appointed to liaise with the labs and ensure the project is delivered to REAL's Specification.

Risk assessments updates for compost and digestate to inform Compost Quality Protocol and AD Quality Protocol revision (Phases One and Two)

In July 2023, the Research Panel selected Phase 1 of this project (Risk Assessment to maintain the framework) as the main priority to be taken forward for Research Hub funding. Phase 2 of the project (Risk Assessment for digestate use in horticulture and soft landscapes) was agreed to be taken forward as a subsequent project, contingent on the completion of Phase 1.

Both projects aim to support the revision of the Compost- and AD Quality Protocols. REAL are awaiting the delivery of a scoping paper to initiate this work and look forward to getting started.

Other Developments

- September 12th – 14th the Hub attended RAMIRAN, hosted at Cambridge University. Talks were attended to inform potential future Research Hub Projects; the Research Hub's work was presented, and its network expanded.
- The Research Hub website was updated in November 2023. It now contains more information on current projects and improvements to site navigability and content.

REAL developed webinars for analysts to further give producers confidence in their results. The engagement was very positive, and REAL will be considering whether to hold further webinars or follow-up webinars going forward.

Additionally, following the successful CCS & BCS Regulators Webinars that REAL held for the NIEA and SEPA in summer, REAL held this webinar for the EA recently. The aims of these webinars are to introduce REAL and the schemes to Regulatory Officers, improve the awareness of the schemes amongst Regulatory Officers, and further open lines of communication between CCS, BCS, and the Regulatory Officers, which were strengthened during the pandemic with the introduction of remote auditing. REAL are working to schedule this webinar with the NRW for next year.

Finally, REAL have continued to hold our annual webinars for producers; we held the Sampling Guidance Webinar and the Understanding PAS 100 testing Webinar in October.

Participant and Research Hub Survey 2023

The annual Participant and Research Hub Survey was conducted in September. The results of this survey are used to assess scheme satisfaction, prioritise areas for further scheme development and to assess how producers use and interact with the Research Hub. There was a relatively low response rate of 5-10% on the scheme, but the feedback was overall very positive. REAL also received suggestions through the survey for future guidance topics and changes which could be introduced to

- We are considering hosting additional webinars in future to share the outcomes of Research Hub projects. Please let us know if you have any questions or thoughts on this.

More information about other digestate-specific Hub projects can be found on the Hub website.



Contact Us



+44 (0)207 981 0875



www.qualitycompost.org.uk



info@realschemes.org.uk

forum meetings – these will be considered by REAL.

In the survey, REAL included questions on overall satisfaction with the scheme, experiences communicating with REAL staff, whether there could be any improvement to Producer Forums, and ideas for future webinars. Additionally, the survey sought feedback on guidance topics and engagement with the Research Hub, which revealed a positive view of the Hub and called for continued promotion.

Compost Certification Scheme is part of Renewable Energy Assurance Limited.
Compost Certification Scheme, Brettenham House, 2-19 Lancaster Place, London WC2E 7EN
Having trouble reading this? [View it in your browser](#). Not interested anymore? [Unsubscribe](#) instantly.
You can read our privacy policy [here](#)