



REAL'S CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR QUALITY COMPOSTS

Compost Certification Scheme Newsletter July 2024



Producers' Forum and TAC

CCS held its biannual Producers' Forum in May. The CCS forum took place on 8th May and the TAC meeting on 5th June.

This forum meeting primarily discussed the progress of the Compost Quality Protocol (CQP) revision and the transition to an Interim Resource Framework published by the Environment Agency. While the Interim Framework is still being produced, the forum provided an opportunity to discuss the implementation of stricter plastic limits in line with the current SEPA limits. At the subsequent TAC meeting, the EA provided an update on the progress with the Interim Framework and gave an indication of estimated publication timings.

The forum also included an update from the Research Hub, which announced a longlist of 8 proposals for consideration by the forthcoming Research Panel. During the TAC, it was announced that 3 of the 8 proposals had been shortlisted and that the second

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NSF

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ACL

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Approved Laboratory telephone numbers

Eurofins

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D&F

+44 (0)1514 208 741

NRM

+44 (0)1344 886338

CQP revision

The Compost Quality Protocol is currently under review with the intention to transition to the new Resources Framework. In February, the Task & Finish Group met to discuss various proposals on several topics, particularly on the feasibility of lowering the existing plastics limits for certified compost. CCS proposed lowering

convention of the Panel would choose which 2 proposals will receive funding; with tenders for the proposals to be announced in Autumn.

The forum also discussed composters' negotiations with local authorities about feedstock contamination, focusing particularly on plastic and glass. Within the TAC, CCS announced that a new Working Group which is intended to focus on plastic contamination will be formed in the future. Additionally, the EA confirmed they would revisit the topic of plastic contamination in feedstock and Local Authority contractual negotiations with the REA.

The last issue raised by producers at the forum was the reliability of courier collections of lab samples for certification purposes. During the TAC, CCS and the Labs' Representative confirmed that they will collaborate to understand the courier collection issues and look at the data collected by labs on courier collection. Concurrently, the Producers' Representative agreed to check the remoteness of sites with issues and share information to aid the investigation.

New CCS Positions

CCS has finalised new scheme positions on both PAS 100 training and HACCP training. The new positions were finalised following consultation with the Certification Bodies and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). They will be published in the next version of the CCS Position on Technical Requirements document when the new CCS Scheme Rules are published.

New Independent Laboratory Auditor

A new independent laboratory auditor was appointed at the beginning of the year following an open tender in 2023.

Simon Blackhurst at SJB Quality Consulting (SJBQC) will audit the CCS (and BCS) approved laboratories to ensure conformity with their terms and conditions. This selection was made following a careful evaluation and interview process. SJBQC has started the 2024 audit round and will share audit findings in autumn.

CCS and BCS look forward to working with Simon and will continue engaging with him on any technical matters for discussion which arise outside the audits.

Labs reappointed under new T&Cs

these limits to what is currently in force in Scotland (0.06% m/m in air-dry compost).

Since this meeting, CCS has received the draft interim Resources Framework from the Environment Agency, who asked for comments from members of the Task & Finish Group. Our proposal for the reduced plastics limit in certified compost has been included in this draft. However, the transition period from the current limits to the new reduced limits are yet to be determined.

The next steps involve meeting again with the Task & Finish Group to discuss the comments made on the draft interim Resources Framework and determine which amendments should be included. It is likely this meeting will take place soon after the Election. Once the Interim Framework is finalised, it will be sent to the Environment Agency to go through their publishing process.

Other policy updates

The Government published their response to the Simpler Recycling consultation in May 2024. Following the feedback from the consultation, the Government has confirmed several key points:

- dry recycling can be co-mingled (put in one dry recycling bin)
- residual waste collections must occur on a minimum fortnightly basis.

The intention of these reforms is to provide much cleaner feedstock to compost operators to produce better quality certified compost.

There may be some level of adoption of EU Fertilising Product Regulations in the UK. As a result, CCS has been familiarising itself

Following the 2023 audit round, all three CCS approved laboratories were reappointed for 2024 under a new set of terms and conditions (T&Cs) for another year.

The laboratories which were reappointed are NRM, Eurofins, and D&F Associates. This decision to reappoint was taken by CCS after discussion with the Certification Bodies and recommendations from the previous auditor at the Open University.

The T&Cs were revised in 2023 to introduce several changes. The most significant change relates to the introduction of requirements for non-UKAS accredited laboratories. Non-UKAS accredited laboratories can be approved under CCS, but their quality management systems will be more closely audited and there is a limit on the number of routine full suite samples they can test.

CCS Research Hub

Powering research and development in the organics recycling sector.

The Research Hub has published two project reports in 2024. These projects contribute to the Hub's growing catalogue of resources to support the organics schemes and sector. More details on these projects can be found below.

Carbon accounting for compost and digestate

Carbon accounting and reporting continues to gain importance as governments, businesses, and consumers seek to understand the climate impacts of the activities they engage in and make efforts to reduce their emissions. The outcome of this project is a methodology to enable compost and digestate producers to conduct a carbon footprint assessment using established carbon accounting principles and frameworks.

Residual Biogas Potential Test improvements and alternatives

This project aims to understand challenges related to the Residual Biogas Potential Test, specified under PAS 110 and seek solutions.

We're also continuing to work on several additional projects:

Plastic contamination method assessment

This project aims to assess the robustness of the current method for assessing plastic (physical contaminants) under PAS100 and PAS110 and explore other potential methods.

with these regulations and how they regulate the compost sector in Europe. This knowledge will help in understanding how any adoption may affect the CCS.

Plastics paper 2023

CCS (and BCS) published its 2023 plastic contamination paper at the end of last year. It provides a statistical analysis of certified compost and digestate test results. The paper revealed that the levels of plastic in certified compost is significantly lower than the minimum quality requirements of PAS 100; 94% of compost samples tested between 1st January 2022 and 31st July 2023 passed against the lower SEPA limit, which is 50% of current PAS 100 as of 1st December 2019, with 98.3% passing against the PAS 100 limit. You may find information on the SEPA Guidance [here](#).

CCS takes the opportunity to express its satisfaction with these results and looks forward to working with stakeholders to ensure minimum quality requirements continue to be met.

More information may be found in the paper [here](#).

2024 Compostables Capacity Paper

An updated paper on the capacity for composting compostables in the UK was published by CCS using scheme data from February.

This paper provides a summary of the current acceptance of certified compostable packaging and liners by certified composting sites.

This paper shows there were 29 certified sites in the UK accepting certified compostables, up from 24 in 2022. In total, there were 20 processes in England, 4 in

The outcome of this project will be a report evaluating the current PAS-specified methods and any potential areas for improvement. The report will also explore the potential use of an area-based method and investigate methods to test for microplastics in compost and digestate. The final report will be published in Summer 2024.

Plant Response Test interpretation and comparison

This project aims to address challenges related to the Plant Response Test specified under PAS 100 by running Spring Barley tests alongside the tomato PRT to aid interpretation of PRT failures. REAL intend to work with CCS-approved labs and a project coordinator to deliver this project.

Risk Assessment to support QP revision

This project intends to support the revision of the Compost Quality Protocol and AD Quality Protocol by conducting a risk assessment of the industry. We are working with the relevant stakeholders to take this work forward.

Organics Recycling Research Library

We continue to keep the Research Library up to date with new information. The platform now contains more than 400 articles on composting and AD. To access this valuable repository of research on organics, please visit www.realresearchlibrary.org.uk.

To access these resources or learn more, please email megan@realschemes.org.uk.

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Scotland, 3 in Northern Ireland, and 2 in Wales. In-vessel processes still account for the largest portion of processes.

CCS compostables capacity documents are available for viewing on our [website](#).

SEPA guidance for CBs

CCS has liaised with SEPA about permitting guidance for the Certification Bodies (CBs). SEPA produced a new guidance document for the CBs and auditors aimed at providing them with a better understanding of the different permits/licenses that producers in Scotland are issued. The guidance will help the CBs with checking whether sites have the relevant authorisation in place to operate, especially given the differing permitting regimes across the UK. It was produced following discussions between CCS and the CBs, CCS and all environmental regulators at the joint REAL/regulators meeting last year.

CCS celebrating ICAW

CCS joined the rest of the world to celebrate International Compost Awareness Week (ICAW).

This celebration was aimed at highlighting the need to reduce waste to landfill and raising awareness about the environmental and economic benefits of composting. ICAW also aimed to raise awareness about the importance of using compost to enhance soil health. The theme for this year was: 'Compost ...Nature's Climate Champion.'

ICAW was celebrated with media shows, school outreach sessions, compost workshops, social media and article contributions and much more. During this week, CCS shared several social media posts and an article highlighting the

value and importance of compost
and composting.

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