



# Annual Report 2020

Compost / Biofertiliser  
Certification Schemes

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## Introduction

Renewable Energy Assurance Ltd (REAL) carries out a range of certification and consumer protection activities. All these set and maintain high standards of operating practice, environmental improvement and consumer protection in the renewable energy and circular economy sectors, including in the areas of organics recycling, biogas, and bioenergy.

This report sheds light on the data collected during the course of the year. It also sets out REAL's work during 2020 to manage and develop the Compost Certification Scheme (CCS) and the Biofertiliser Certification Schemes (BCS). It also sets out REAL's work during 2020 to manage and develop the Compost Certification Scheme (CCS), the Biofertiliser Certification Schemes (BCS), and the Research Hub.

Set up in 2006, REAL is a company limited by guarantee with the number 05720606. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology (REA), the major trade association in the renewable energy sector.

REAL works to ensure the schemes are robust and work for all relevant stakeholders, and in so doing, protects consumers of independently certified compost and digestate, and promotes the organics recycling sector.

Data was used from the beginning of January 2021 to reflect the status of the schemes during and at the end of 2020. The CCS and BCS sections provide an overview of the certified composting and anaerobic digestion processes and a summary of the operational data available to REAL. The Research Hub section provides an overview of the governance structure, revised Project Selection Process, and updates on the first and second projects commissioned by the Hub.

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## A word from our Chair

How the landscape changed in 2020! We began the year with the trend of continued growth in the recycling of organic materials through composting and anaerobic digestion (AD), progress on several fronts to ensure quality standards were maintained, and then COVID-19 arrived!

From March onwards, we moved to an environment of very limited social contact. Meetings and other group gatherings no longer took place, but rather we 'met' from our homes using Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, and the like, with all the attendant problems of difficult internet connections and background noises of children, pets, and the ringing of doorbells with deliveries. This situation has continued and seems likely to continue in some form for the foreseeable future. These limitations apart, we have continued to discuss and make decisions on what is necessary to maintain the growth in the volumes of material processed, and to ensure that the developments to ensure the procedures for improving quality are continually reviewed.

Restrictions imposed by COVID-19 caused some problems for our scheme participants. Many local authorities had, as a result of restrictions imposed by social distancing and general concerns over health and safety, to change the patterns of green waste collection and limit public access to municipal green waste facilities. This resulted in changed patterns of delivery of green waste to some composting sites, posing logistical problems in managing throughput of materials and the storage of compost. Similarly, in the AD sector, the closure of catering outlets and the restriction on collections of household food waste reduced the availability of some significant input materials for many AD plants. These and related issues placed

major obstacles to the smooth running of our scheme participants' sites, but on the whole, these have been addressed and overcome as a result of careful management. The restrictions in relation to person-to-person contact has also imposed problems for our Certification Bodies; fortunately, with agreement from the regulatory authorities, certification has continued with a proportion of remote audits.

Early in the year, the second call for research proposals from the Research Hub occurred and after detailed consideration by the Research Panel, one proposal was selected. This project aims to develop a 'data pack' on the properties, characteristics, and content of digestate that will provide context for the development of new uses of outputs from Anaerobic Digesters.

Identifying and developing ideas from producers that might form the basis of research proposals has presented its challenges, but we hope in the future to be able to provide support for producers in formulating these proposals.

How long our lives will be controlled by the restrictions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic is unclear, but we can but hope that there will be some form of resolution and that we shall be able to return to some form of 'normal' activity.

**Professor Stephen Nortcliff (Chair of the CCS and BCS Technical Advisory Committee)**

## A word from our Chief Executive

I am delighted to welcome this 2020 Annual Report. It summarises a year of considerable achievement for both CCS and BCS despite the many obstacles thrown at us and scheme participants by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report outlines all the developments during the year. To pick just two examples I would like to draw your attention first to the full range of webinars and workshops, which we offered to make it easier for scheme participants to follow the Scheme Rules correctly. These covered topics such as sampling, interpreting test results, and the PAS 100 Safety and Quality Control System requirements.

Secondly, we introduced the Laboratory Approval Scheme in early 2020. Underpinning this Scheme, a framework sets out the respective responsibilities of REAL, the appointed Certification Bodies, and the Approved Laboratories, providing clarity for all participants. I'm sure you will agree that the schemes are becoming more robust year by year.

**Virginia Graham**





## Compost Certification Scheme

This scheme provides assurance to consumers, farmers, food producers, and retailers that *quality compost* derived from source-segregated biowaste, or source-segregated biodegradable materials is safe for human, animal, and plant health. Compost improves soil structure and health by increasing organic matter and the soils' ability to retain moisture and nutrients. Certification signifies that the compost was produced using an effective quality management system, providing assurance that the materials have a consistent quality, are safe and reliable to use, and are fit for purpose.

### Certified processes

By the end of 2020, the largest portion of certified producers fell in the category of producers processing between 20,001 and 50,000 tonnes of organic waste per annum (33% of the total). The category with the smallest number of producers was those processing between 3,000 and 6,000 tonnes of organic waste per annum (7% of the total).

total input tonnage, and the change in compost production, over the course of 2020. There was a steady fall in the number of certified processes, resulting in a small decrease by the end of the year. The annual input tonnage fluctuated throughout the year and the annual tonnage of compost produced decreased through the year with the decline in the number of certified processes, with an average of 1.94 million tonnes of compost produced per annum.

Figure 1 presents the number of processes certified under the CCS in the UK, the change in

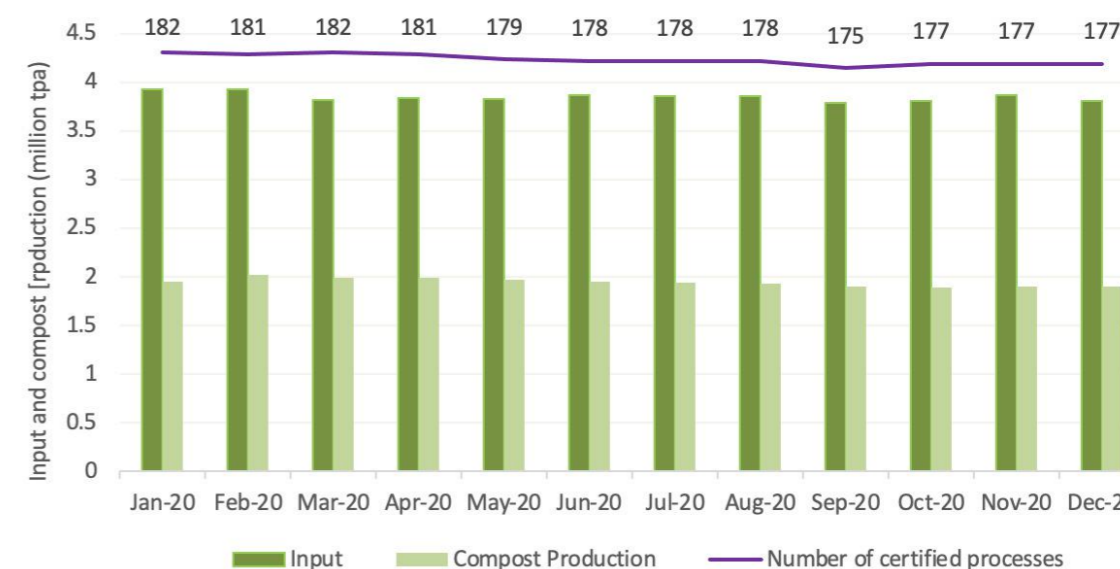


Figure 1 Total number of certified processes, input tonnage, and compost production in the UK in 2020

Figure 2 presents the number of certified processes in each country of the UK, as a percentage of the total. By the end of 2020, there were 176 certified processes in the UK: 137 certified processes in England, 6 in Northern Ireland, 20 in Scotland, and 13 in Wales.

**Proportion of certified processes (2021)**

In 2021, data was collected from the environmental regulators on the permitted/licensed compost sites in each country of the UK (excluding Northern Ireland). We used this data to calculate the proportion of certified sites at that time (March or May 2021).

In March 2021, 50% of all biowaste treatment sites with bespoke permits for composting in Wales were certified. In Scotland, 42% of sites with waste management licences (WML) and 80% of sites with pollution, prevention, and control permits (PPC) were certified.

In May 2021, 47% of all sites with biowaste treatment sector permits including composting as the FAR activity description in England were certified. These percentages are based on the table of data below. Of the remaining 140 sites in England with biowaste treatment sector permits incl. composting as the FAR activity description, 30 had permits for composting <500 tonnes in total (21%).

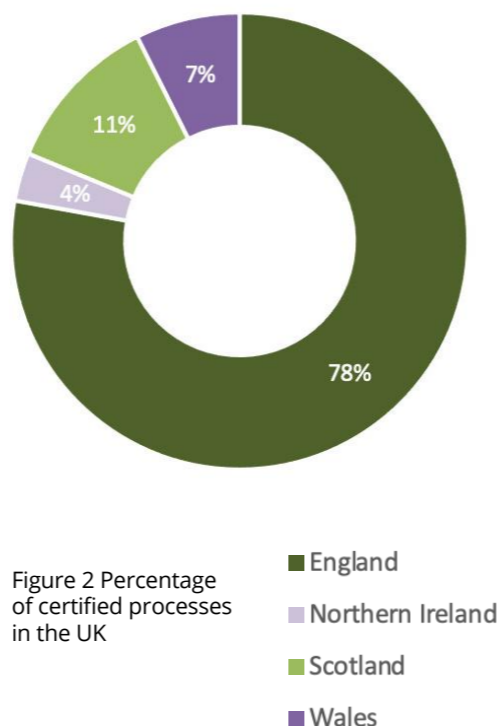


Figure 2 Percentage of certified processes in the UK

**Process types**

Figure 3 presents the proportion of different types of composting processes in the UK as percentages. 110 out of 176 composting processes were operated as open air, turned windrows. A smaller number of sites were operated as in-vessel composting only (11) or as aerated static piles with no subsequent processing step (12). Only a fraction of processes used an Eco Pod system (1 out of 176). There were 11 processes that operated as a combination of in-vessel composting with subsequent aerated static piling and 31 as in-vessel composting with subsequent open air turned windrow processing.

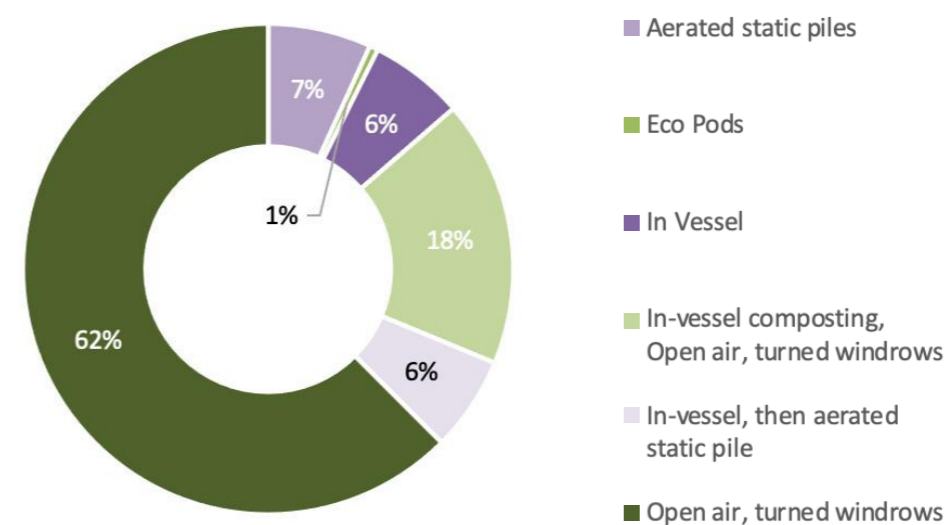


Figure 3 Percentage of certified process types in the UK

Country	Total no. of sites with permits for composting	No. of certified sites with permits for composting	No. of certified sites with other permits/exemptions
Wales	- 18 bespoke (waste or installation)	- 9 bespoke (waste or installation)	- 2
Scotland	- 12 with WML - 5 with PPC permits	- 5 with WML - 4 with PPC	- 6
England	- 265 with biowaste treatment sector permits incl. composting as the FAR activity description	- 125 with biowaste treatment sector permits incl. composting as the FAR activity description	- 14 with other permits (or biowaste treatment sector permits not incl. composting as the FAR activity description)

Figure 4 shows the percentage of different process types in each country of the UK. In each country, most certified sites employed open air, turned windrow processing.

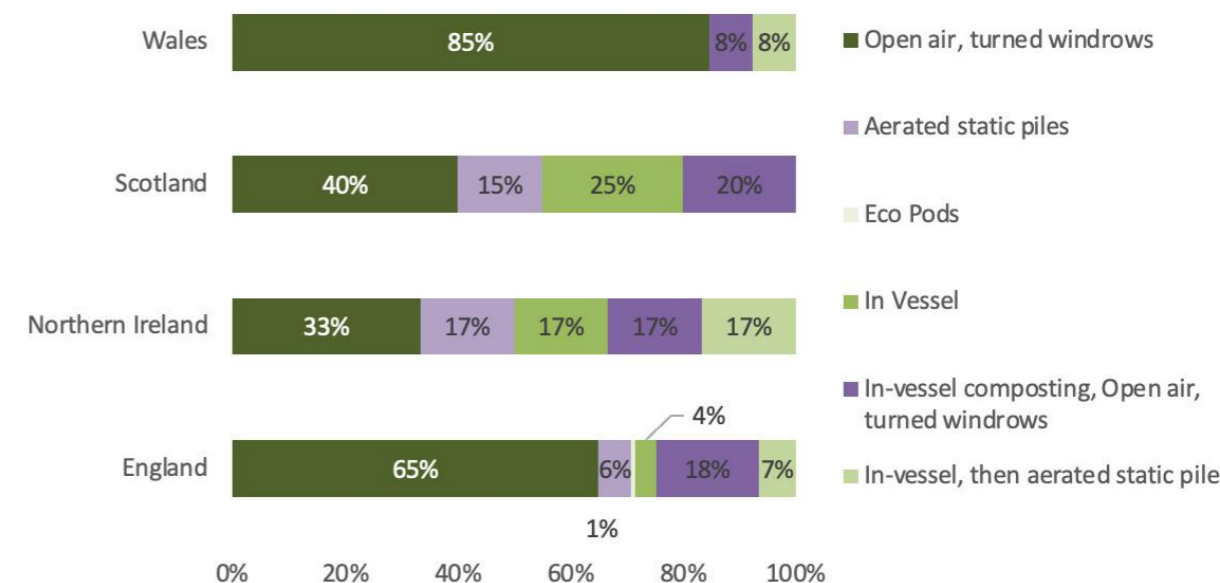


Figure 4 Percentage of certified process types per country



## Input and output

Compost feedstock varies between sites but is generally comprised of green waste (grass cuttings, flowers, prunings, hedge clippings, and leaves). Permitted industrial and animal by-product (ABP) wastes like food waste are typically processed at in-vessel composting facilities. Feedstock types are categorised as green waste only or green waste mixed with ABP materials. At the end of 2020, 143 processes were composting green waste only and 33 composting green waste and ABP materials.

Figure 5 shows the total number of processes by feedstock type per country; the majority of processes were composting green waste only. At the end of 2020, 92% of certified processes in Wales, 70% in Scotland, 50% in Northern Ireland, and 83% of certified processes in England were composting green waste only.

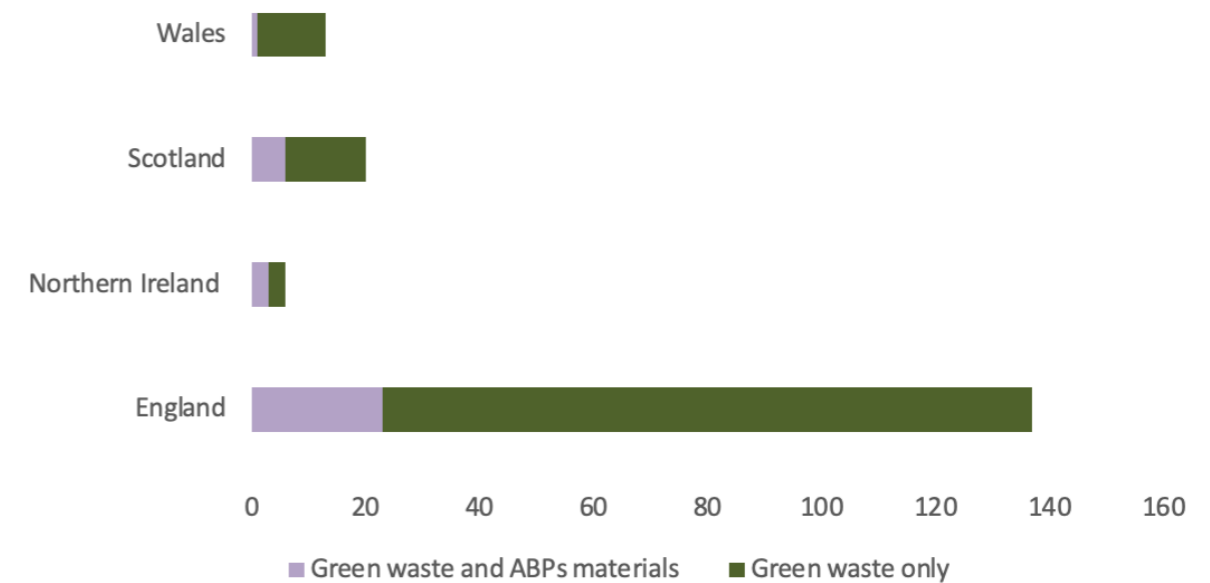


Figure 5 Number of certified processes by feedstock type per country

Figure 6 shows the input tonnage (in millions of tonnes per annum) of materials that were being processed by certified composting sites in each country on an annual basis by the end of 2020. Approximately 122,000 tonnes of green waste only were being processed by sites in Wales, 118,000 tonnes in Scotland, 15,000 tonnes in Northern Ireland, and 2,254,000 in England. Approximately 1,000 tonnes of green waste and ABPs materials was being processed annually by sites in Wales, 224,000 tonnes in Scotland, 258,000 in Northern Ireland, and 796,000 tonnes in England.

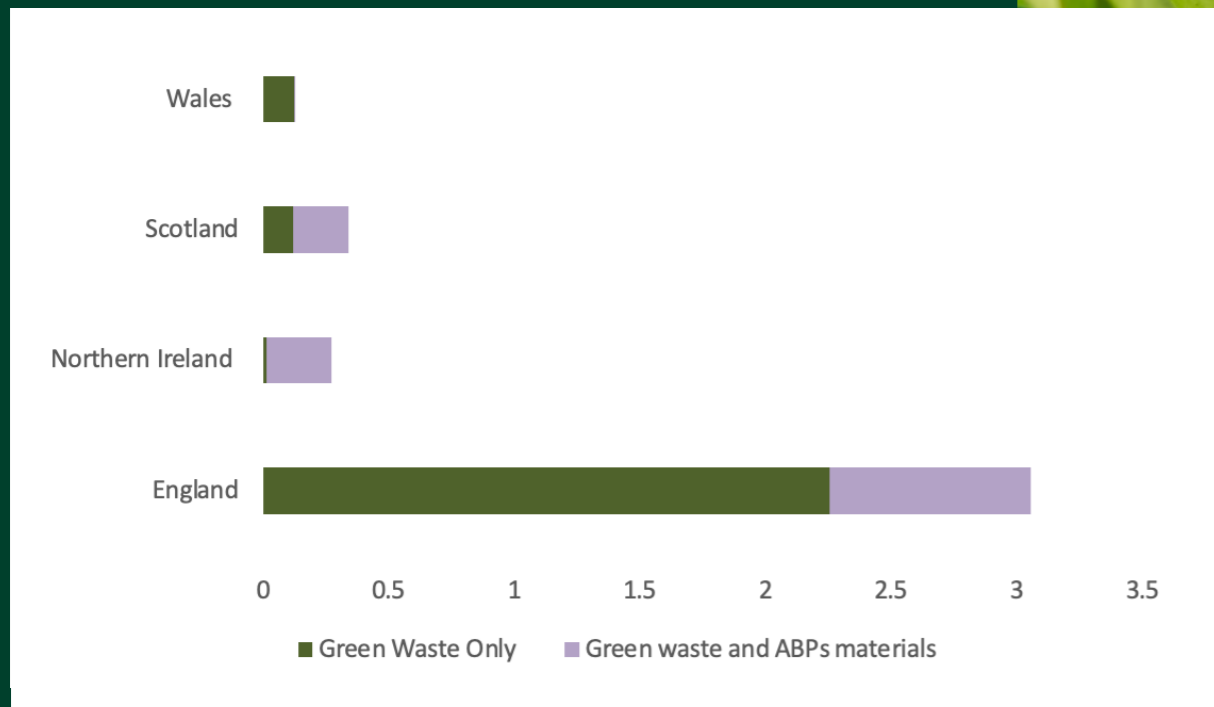


Figure 6 Annual input tonnage and input type per country

Figure 7 shows the quantity of compost which was being produced by certified sites in each country on an annual basis by the end of 2020. Approximately 57,000 tonnes of *quality compost* were being produced annually by sites in Wales, 150,000 tonnes in Scotland, 163,000 tonnes in Northern Ireland, and 1.4 million tonnes in England.

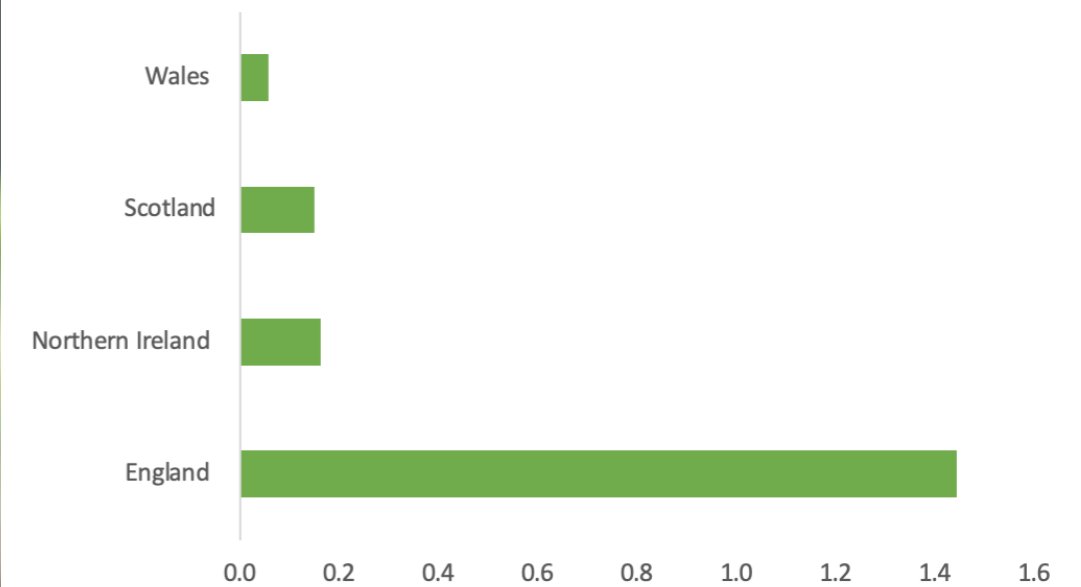


Figure 7 Annual tonnage of quality compost produced per country

Certified compost is categorised into the following product types; 'Soil conditioner', 'Manufactured topsoil ingredient', 'Mulch', 'Growing medium ingredient' and 'Landscape blend'. By the end of 2020, 95% of principal grade compost was labelled as soil conditioner, 2% mulch, 2% growing medium ingredient, < 1% landscape blend, and < 1% manufactured topsoil ingredient. Principle grade compost is the main grade size of compost produced at each site.

### Markets

The end market sectors for all certified compost processes were recorded throughout 2020. Figure 8 demonstrates that by the end of 2020, 51% of certified processes were producing quality compost supplied to the agriculture and soil-grown horticulture markets, 25% to domestic or professional horticulture, 23% to land restoration and soft landscape operations

markets, 23% to land restoration, and 1% to forestry. 85 processes were supplying compost to a single market category, 52 to two markets, 31 to three markets, and three to all four markets.

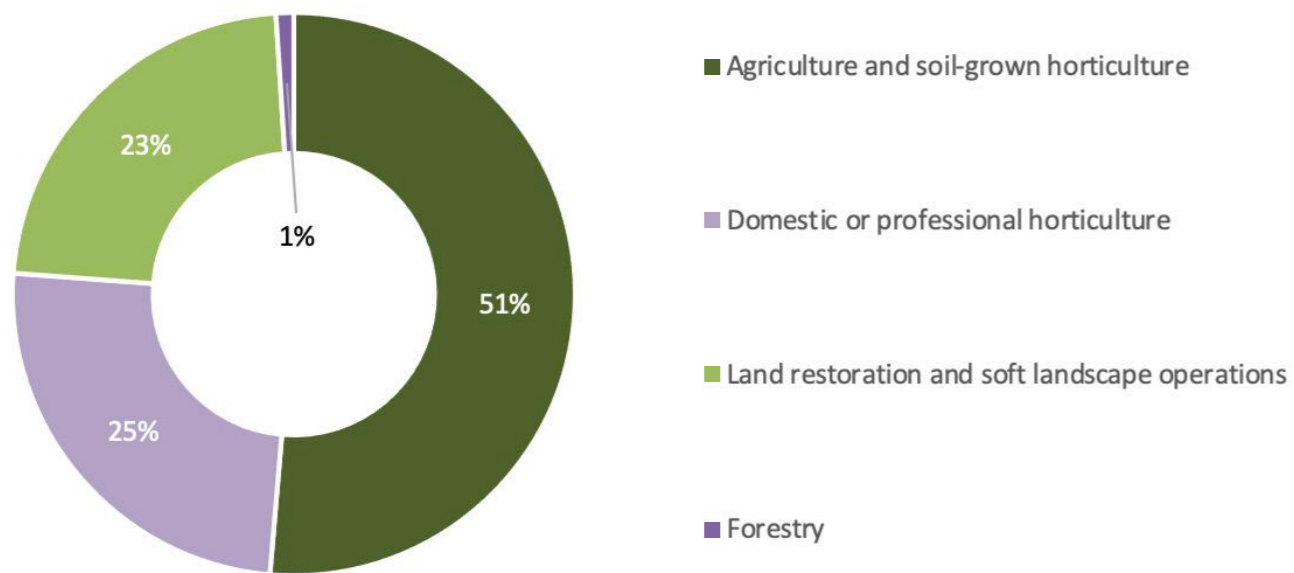


Figure 8 End markets of certified compost

Figure 9 shows the number, in percentage, of different market sectors per country that quality compost is being distributed to. If producers in a country are supplying to a single market, this will be either domestic or professional horticulture (domestic), land restoration and soft landscape operations (land), or agriculture and soil-grown horticulture (agriculture). In cases where compost was being supplied to two markets, this was a combination of land, domestic or agriculture.

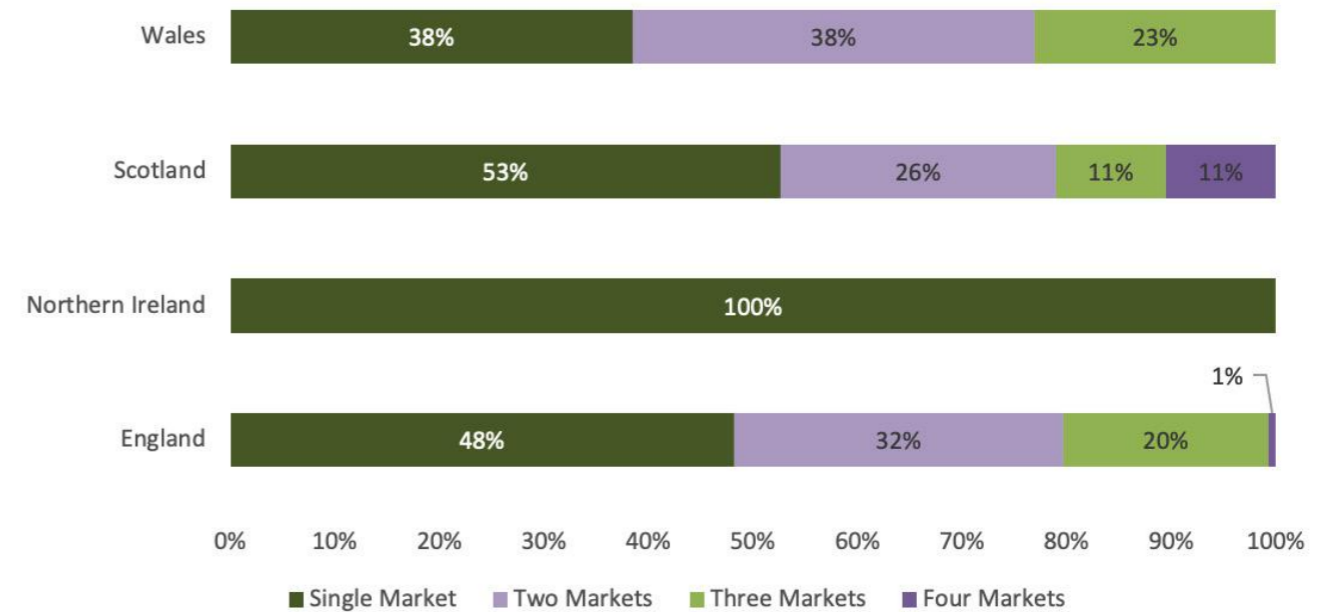


Figure 9 End markets of certified compost per country





Compost produced by each process type was analysed according to the end market it was destined for. All process types supplied compost to agriculture and soil grown horticulture, with most of the compost from each process supplied to this market. Eco pods and in vessel composting

processes supplied to the fewest range of markets. Aerated static piles and open air turned windrows were the only process types that supplied compost to all three market sectors (agriculture, land, and domestic). This can be seen depicted in figure 10 below.

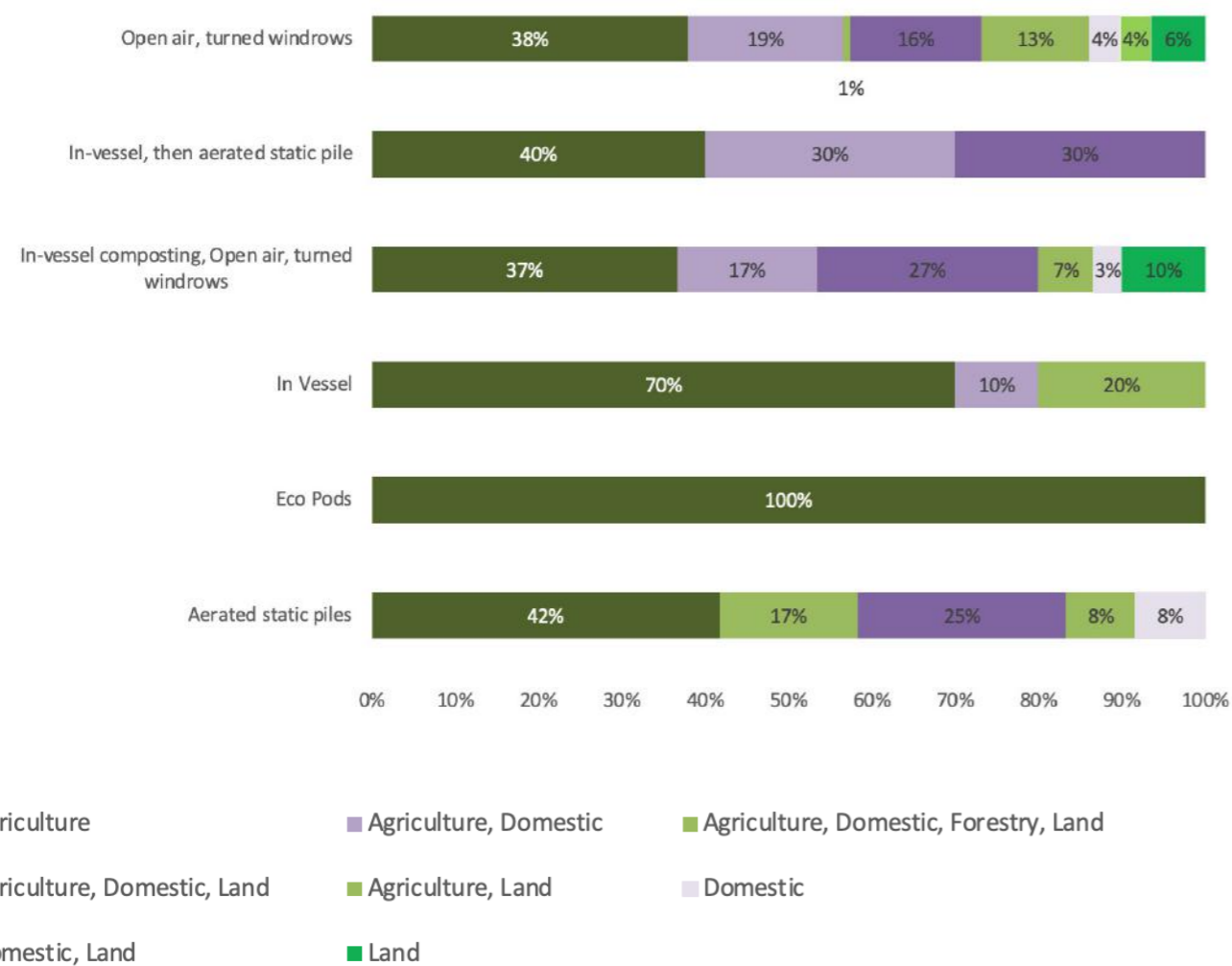


Figure 10 End markets per process type

## Biofertiliser Certification Scheme

This scheme provides assurance to consumers, farmers, food producers, and retailers that 'biofertiliser' produced from a certified anaerobic digestion process is safe for human, animal, and plant health. *Biofertiliser* is the name adopted for the digestate certified under the Biofertiliser Certification Scheme.

Digestate is a nutrient-rich organic fertiliser that can be spread to land to confer agronomic benefit to soil and improve its physical quality. Certification signifies that it was produced using an effective quality management system, which provides assurance that the materials are of a consistent high quality and are safe and reliable to use.

### Certified processes

There were 92 plants certified under the BCS by the end of 2020 with a total registered annual throughput of approximately 5 million tonnes. The largest portion of certified operators fell in the category of operators processing between 25,001 and 50,000 tonnes of organic waste per annum (31% of the total). The category with the least number of operators was comprised of those processing up to 6000 tonnes of organic waste per annum (2% of the total).

Of the 92 certified plants, 68 were located in England, five in Northern Ireland, 11 in Scotland, and eight in Wales. This is shown as a percentage in figure 11.

5 million tonnes → 92 certified plants

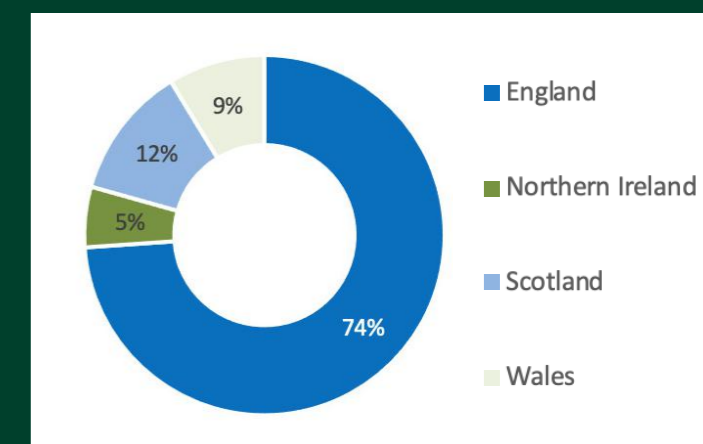


Figure 11 Percentage of certified plants per country

**Proportion of certified processes (2021)**

In 2021, data was collected from the environmental regulators on the permitted/licensed AD/biogas sites in each country of the UK (excluding Northern Ireland). We used this data to calculate the proportion of certified sites at that time (March or May 2021).

In March 2021, 50% of all biowaste treatment sites with bespoke permits for AD/biogas in Wales were certified. In Scotland, 100% of sites with waste management licences (WML) and 71% of sites with pollution, prevention, and control permits (PPC) were certified.

In May 2021, 29% of all sites with biowaste treatment sector permits including AD/biogas as the FAR activity description in England were certified. These percentages are based on the table of data below. Of the remaining 160 sites in England with biowaste treatment sector permits incl. AD/biogas as the FAR activity description, 78 had permits for on-farm anaerobic digestion of farm wastes only (49%).

Country	Total no. of sites with permits for AD/biogas	No. of certified sites with permits for AD/biogas	No. of certified sites with other permits/exemptions
Wales	- 14 bespoke (waste or installation)	- 7 bespoke (waste or installation)	- 0
Scotland	- 1 with WML - 7 with PPC permits	- 1 with WML - 5 with PPC	- 6
England	- 226 with biowaste treatment sector permits incl. AD/biogas as the FAR activity description	- 66 with biowaste treatment sector permits incl. AD/biogas as the FAR activity description	- 6 with other permits (or biowaste treatment sector permits not incl. AD/biogas as the FAR activity description)

**Feedstock and output**

Feedstock materials processed by certified plants vary. AD facilities accept input materials from agricultural, municipal, commercial, and industrial sources. They also accept a combination of ABP and non-ABP materials, products, co-products, wastes, and residues. A combination of these input materials is also commonly used.

The input materials that AD plants process are categorised under the scheme as 'farm', 'waste' or 'other'. Farm-fed plants are those processing over 50% agricultural feedstock e.g. manures and

crops, waste-fed plants are those processing over 50% waste feedstock e.g. food waste, and plants in the 'other' category are those processing over 50% non-waste/agricultural feedstock e.g. distillery by-products.

By the end of 2020, feedstock data had been collected from 88 of the 92 plants on the scheme. Of those 88, 71 plants fell in the 'waste' category, 11 in the 'farm', and 6 in the 'other' category. Figure 12 shows the percentage split of those certified plants and their input type.

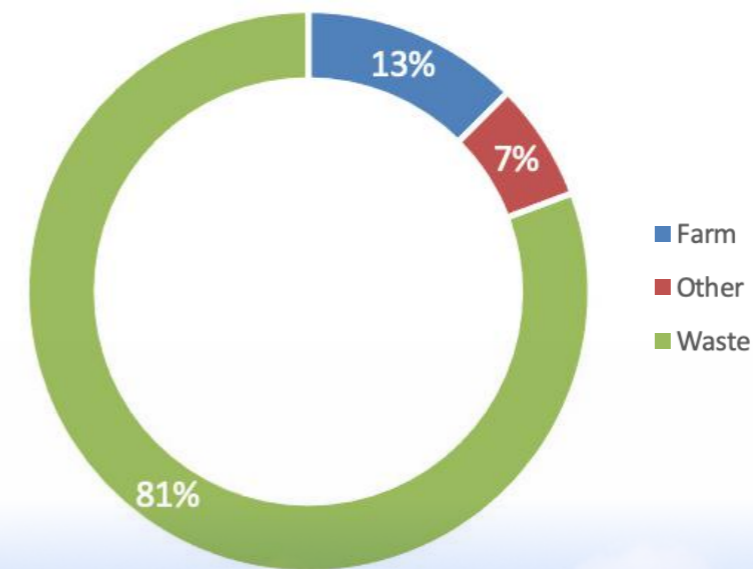


Figure 12 Percentage of plants in each feedstock type category



Figure 13 shows the total annual throughput per country. Approximately 256,000 tonnes of organic waste materials were being processed annually by certified plants in Wales, 1 million tonnes in Scotland, 181,000 tonnes in Northern Ireland, and 3.6 million in England.

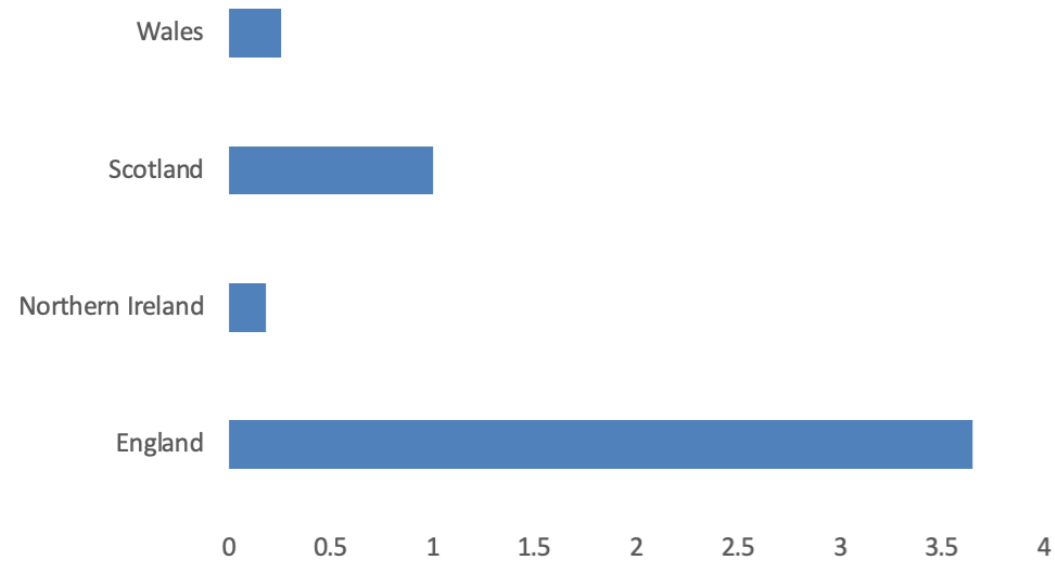


Figure 13 Registered annual throughput per country

Figure 14 shows the certified digestate outputs produced by plants, in percentages. Most facilities produced certified whole digestate and 21 plants produced more than one type of certified output. In total, 52 plants were producing only certified whole digestate, 16 producing only certified separated liquor, and only three producing certified separated fibre.

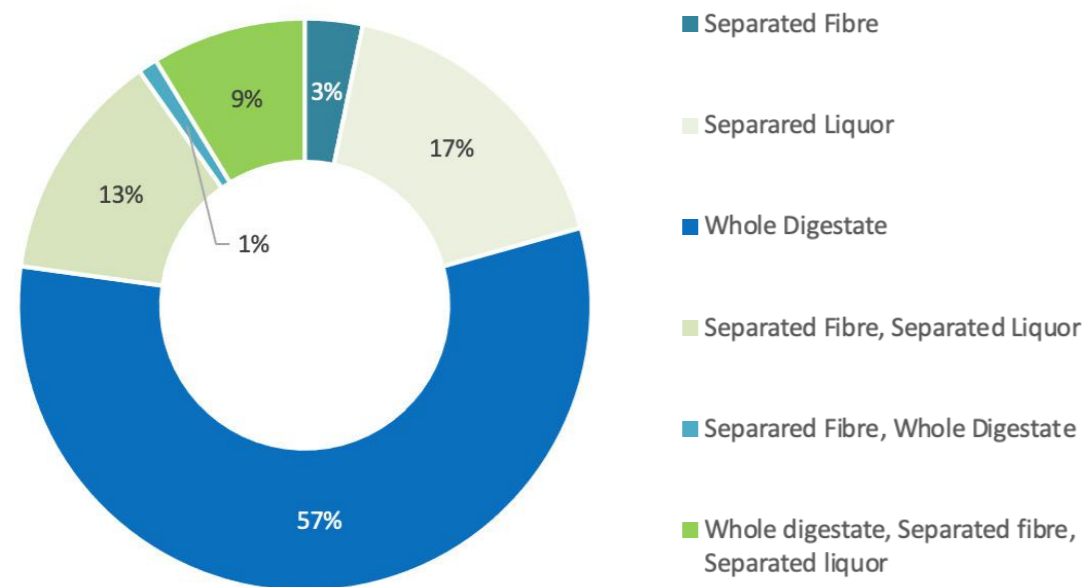


Figure 14 Percentage of certified plants producing different certified digestates

Figure 15 shows the percentage of plants producing various types of certified digestate in each country of the UK. A variety of output types were produced in each country.

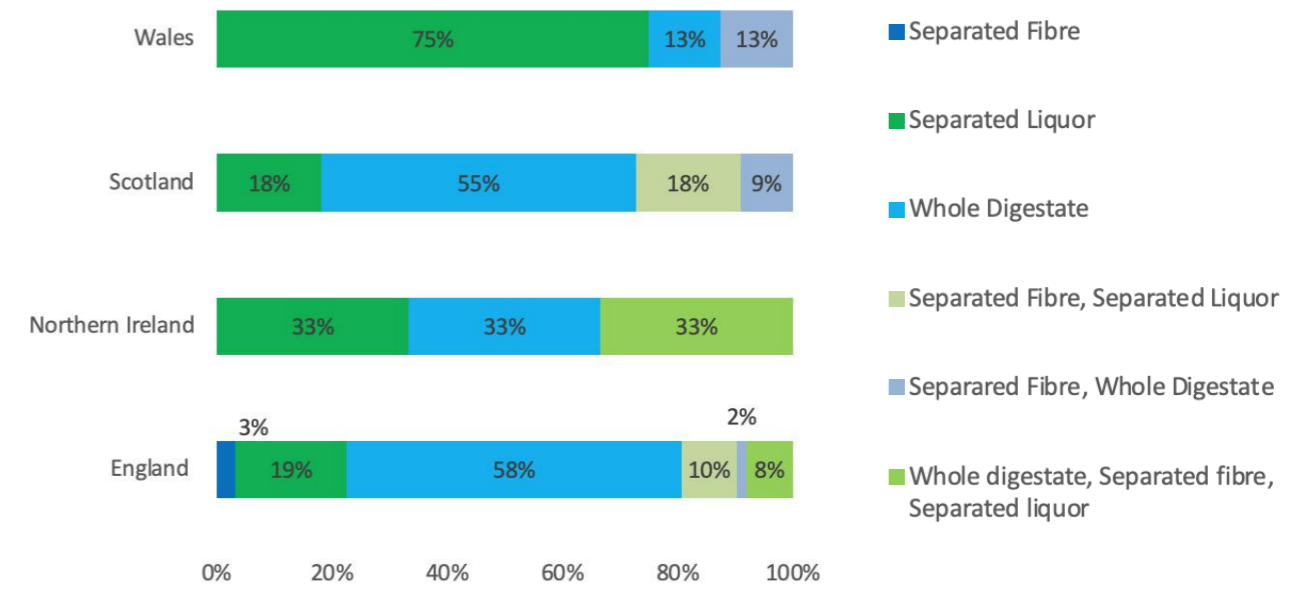


Figure 15 Percentage of certified plants producing certified digestate per country



## Scheme Developments

REAL is continuously working on the development of the schemes to ensure that they are robust and fit-for-purpose. The success of the schemes benefits all stakeholders, including scheme participants and consumers. We developed several aspects of CCS and BCS in 2020, which are summarised below.

### ADQP and CQP consultation submissions

REAL submitted a call for evidence consultation response to the Environment Agency for the ADQP and CQP reviews. The response expressed support for retaining the QPs but included information on how REAL could contribute to a revision process if the decision is taken to revise the QPs. The response also presented views gathered from scheme participants through a survey devised by REAL's Market Development Working Group.

### PAS 110 and PAS 100 reviews

Following the collation of survey results (which gathered operators' views on whether there is a need for a PAS 110 revision), discussion with the TAC and a meeting with BSI, REAL finalised the reviews of PAS 110 and PAS 100 in early 2020. The reviews concluded that it was not the right time to trigger a revision of either PAS, taking into consideration that the outcome of the ADQP and CQP reviews have the potential to inform and influence a PAS review or revision process.

### BCS and CCS Scheme Rules reviews

The BCS and CCS Scheme Rules were reviewed by REAL, and a decision was taken to revise these scheme documents. Revised draft versions were produced, addressing any comments collated since the last revision, and incorporating any changes REAL intended to make. These versions were

then circulated to all scheme participants and the TAC for consultation. Following this period, the comments were collated and addressed. This in part involved seeking technical advice from the TAC and further discussion with the environmental regulators. The revision process continued into 2021.

### Laboratory Approval Scheme

REAL developed a framework for the laboratories approved to undertake testing on the CCS and BCS. The Laboratory Approval Scheme (LAS) involves and sets out the responsibilities of REAL, the Certification Bodies (CBs), and Approved Laboratories under the Scheme. The LAS was implemented in 2020 and involved the CBs for the first time in the laboratory approval process.

Under the LAS, a new Independent Laboratory Auditor was appointed and conducted the first round of laboratory audits against the revised set of Laboratory T&C's. Following this, REAL reviewed the audit reports and findings, and invited the CBs to contribute to the decision-making process for reappointment of the Laboratories.

The Laboratory T&C's were reviewed again in 2020, involving consultation with the CBs, and were revised to introduce changes in relation to courier requirements and timeframes for corrective action.

### Plant Response Test Technical Working Group

In 2020, REAL set up the Plant Response Test Technical Working Group (PRT TWG). This group is facilitated by REAL and provides producers and the environmental regulators with the opportunity to discuss specific issues that producers experience with the plant response test specified in PAS 100:2018. It was set up as a sub-group to the CCS TAC to provide a platform for further discussion and reports outcomes of discussions to the TAC. The first meeting of the group was held in September 2020, followed by a teleconference in November. It comprised of representatives from REAL, compost producers, the Environment Agency, and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.

### UKAS accreditation progress

After five years of working together to set up specific accreditation for the CCS, UKAS and REAL launched the CCS Pilot Programme. This is the first time that any organisation was able to apply for ISO 17065 accreditation to provide certification services for CCS. REAL invited the existing CCS Certification Bodies to apply in 2020 and all three applied. It is anticipated that the Certification Bodies will successfully achieve accreditation in 2021 or 2022.

### CCS workshops and webinars

After the success of the first CCS Sampling Workshop in 2019, REAL planned to hold further workshops for producers, but these were postponed due to COVID-19. Instead, in 2020, REAL ran four CCS Sampling Webinars; three for producers and one for Certification Body personnel. Producers were encouraged to attend the free sampling webinars, as they provide a platform for discussion on the sampling requirements of PAS 100:2018.

In addition to the CCS Sampling Webinars, a CCS 'Understanding Test Results' webinar was developed and introduced for producers in 2020. This webinar delivers information on the core PAS 100 test methods. By gaining a better understanding of the methods, and how they are executed in the Approved Laboratories, we hope this will help producers better understand the results they receive. A trial webinar was held for producers that had previously attended the sampling webinars in August 2020, and the first full webinar was rolled out in November.

REAL also held the first two workshops for producers on the Safety and Quality Control System (SQCS) requirements of PAS 100:2018 in 2020. These workshops provide a platform for discussion around the implementation of the SQCS and compliance with HACCP requirements. They were held by REAL and delivered online by a HACCP expert. A guidance document was provided to all attendees following the workshops.

### BCS certification body tender

REAL ran an open tender process inviting organisations to apply for the provision of certification services under the BCS. The existing Certification Bodies were also invited to tender, which was required if they were to secure their contracts for the next two-to-three-year term. The tender process contributes to continuous improvement in the standard of services to REAL. The existing Certification Bodies submitted full tender responses which were evaluated carefully by REAL. A decision was taken to reappoint all three on updated contracts.

## Scheme Developments (continued)

### PT programme tender

In September 2020, REAL circulated an Expression of Interest (EOI) document, which was designed to help assess the technical feasibility and financial viability of developing an independently run proficiency testing (PT) programme for the scheme specific methods. The EOI document described the background to this project and asked several questions on the feasibility of running the PT programme outlined.

REAL received several expressions of interest and proceeded to open a tender with the aim to appoint a contractor to develop and deliver the PT programme for REAL Approved Laboratories. The PT programme outlined in the tender document was limited to scheme specific methods – compost stability, residual biogas potential, plant response, and physical contaminants.

### Cost comparison analysis

In 2020, the cost comparison analyses documents were updated. The documents compare the average annual costs for renewal of certification and deployment of waste composts and digestate in England. The updates included the addition of annual research fees, up-to-date assessment and testing fees, and any changes to the average costs for waste deployment.

### Remote auditing agreements

To adapt rapidly and ensure that the auditing regime remained robust, REAL led discussions with the Certification Bodies and UK environmental regulators to agree safe auditing arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic. A series of review meetings took place during 2020 between REAL and the regulators, and agreements were put in place for a temporary change in the scheme rules, allowing remote audits to take place where necessary.

### BCS sampling guidance

The guidance for sampling liquid digestates under BCS was updated and re-issued as a REAL guidance document. The BCS sampling guidance for liquid materials was produced to ensure representative sampling, in compliance with PAS 110, and provide a basis for the development of future sampling webinars.

### Scheme Participant Survey

REAL issued the first scheme participant survey to gather views from scheme participants on overall satisfaction and to prioritise areas for further development or improvement. The survey was also devised to contribute to compliance with the requirements of ISO 9001:2015. Positive survey results were collated, showing an overall good level of satisfaction with the schemes.



# The Research Hub Annual Report 2020

## About the Research Hub

The Research Hub was established in 2018, and 2019 was the first full year of its operation. The Research Hub is part of the Compost Certification Scheme (CCS) and Biofertiliser Certification Scheme (BCS), both of which are administered by Renewable Energy Assurance Ltd (REAL). REAL is a wholly owned subsidiary of The Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology. It carries out a range of certification and consumer protection activities.

The CCS provides assurance to consumers, farmers, food producers, and retailers that quality compost derived from source-segregated biowaste, or source-segregated biodegradable materials, is safe for human, animal, and plant health. The BCS provides assurance to consumers, farmers, food producers, and retailers that biofertiliser produced from anaerobic digestion is safe for human, animal, and plant health. 'Biofertiliser' is the name used for the digestate certified under the BCS.

REAL recognised that there was a need for new, accessible research to support innovation and revisions to the CCS/BCS and the standards they rely on (BSI PAS 100 and BSI PAS 110). These standards, and their associated laboratory test methods, must be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to reflect evolving legislation, the latest scientific evidence and good practice.

In view of this, in cooperation with the members of the CCS/BCS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and in discussion with industry, REAL designed the Research Hub as a mechanism for fulfilling these objectives. REAL intends that evidence generated through the funded research projects will underpin the long-term competitiveness and growth of the sector. The Research Hub is funded by contributions from CCS/BCS participants. The funds are ring-fenced.

## Governance of the Research Hub

REAL set up the Research Hub Governance Committee to review the Research Hub's development and manage the funds. The Governance Committee meets three times a year. The members of the Governance Committee are:

- **Michael Chesshire (Chair)**
- **Virginia Graham**
- **Justyna Staff**
- **Stephen Lister**
- **Toyin Owadayo**

REAL also set up a Research Panel to ensure that the Research Hub meets its objectives in an efficient and effective manner. The Research Panel is responsible for deciding which research projects the Research Hub will fund. Once selected, it is responsible for overseeing the management of each research project. The Research Panel consists of independent stakeholders with expertise in the composting and anaerobic digestion sectors, including representatives from the Environmental Regulators, Government, Trade Bodies, and the CCS/BCS participants.

# The Research Hub Project Selection Process

A clear and transparent process has been set-up for the annual selection of research projects. The Project Selection Process was reviewed and revised in July 2020, to be implemented from January 2021. The new, revised process is as follows:

- I. In January, the Hub Secretariat issues a call for research project ideas among CCS/BCS participants and the wider industry. A REAL representative attends the winter Fora Meetings to promote the call. The call runs for approximately 6 weeks.
- II. In March, the Secretariat collects research project ideas and sorts them according to similar topics and themes covered. REAL's advisor contacts organisations or individuals who submitted research project ideas to obtain further details where needed.
- III. In April, REAL's advisor pulls together a summary for each distinct research project idea. The summary contains sufficient but not excessive level of detail to allow for initial evaluation and ranking of the idea.
- IV. In May, the Secretariat runs a SurveyMonkey poll inviting CCS and BCS participants to provide a score and a ranking for each summary, together with any comments. The Research Panel meets to discuss the research project summaries, considering the results of the SurveyMonkey poll. The Research Panel uses the Phase 1 Evaluation Criteria to assess the research project summaries and shortlists those scoring the highest.
- V. In June, REAL's advisor further develops each of the shortlisted research project summaries.
- VI. In July, the Research Panel meets for a second time to decide which of the shortlisted and further developed research project summaries should go forward to tender. In taking this decision, they consider the available budget, the feasibility of achieving meaningful outcomes and the topic's relevance to the sectors. In practice, this is likely to be a minimum of one and a maximum of two research projects.
- VII. In August, the Secretariat establishes a Project Management Team for each research project selected for commissioning.

## The first project of the Research Hub

The first project commissioned by the Research Hub is entitled "*The development of a Research Library for the Organics Recycling industry*". NNFCC (The Bioeconomy Consultants) was selected to carry out the research through a competitive tender process. The Research Library will be an informative and valuable resource for both the composting and anaerobic digestion industries. Its establishment will help prevent the duplication of research in future and in this way, ensure the best use of research funds. As such, the Research Library will shape and inform the objectives of future research projects selected for funding by the Research Hub.

REAL signed the Services Agreement with NNFCC in May 2020 and the project work commenced the same month. The work is scheduled to complete in January 2021.

You can find further information on the project within the Research Hub website here:

<https://www.realresearchhub.org.uk/research-projects/project-1>

## Research Hub Funds

The total funds available for research projects in 2020 was £221,700. This amount excludes the cost of the first project of the Research Hub which was £68,674. The second project of the Research Hub will cost £57,901. The contract for the second project of the Research Hub was agreed in 2021 and therefore the total amount of funds carried from 2020 into 2021 was £221,700.

## The second project of the Research Hub

The second project selected for funding through the Research Hub is entitled "*To develop a 'data pack' on the properties, characteristics, and content of digestate that will provide the context for the development of new uses of outputs from Anaerobic Digesters.*" Following a competitive tender process, the contract for the project work was awarded to Solidsense Ltd. Solidsense is subcontracting Aqua Enviro and Cambridge Eco Ltd to assist with elements of the work. The three organisations form a consortium. The project is designed to investigate alternative markets for digestates and technologies to develop new products from digestates.

The work will build on the work of the first project of the Research Hub, and will consist of three phases:

- I. 'Data pack' on digestate characteristics
- II. Identifying alternative digestate uses
- III. Roadmap to market

The project work is due to complete in November 2021.

You can find further information on the project within the Research Hub website here:

<https://www.realresearchhub.org.uk/research-projects/project-2>



In 2019 REAL achieved certification of its Quality Management System to the ISO 9001:2015 standard.

The ISO 9001:2015 standard is based on a number of quality management principles including a strong customer focus, the motivation and implication of top management, the process approach and continual improvement. Using ISO 9001 helps ensure that customers get consistent, good-quality products and services, which in turn brings many business benefits.

The seven quality management principles are:

- customer focus
- leadership
- engagement of people
- process approach
- improvement
- evidence-based decision making
- relationship management.



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