

Guidance for Getting Started with REAL's Compost Certification Scheme

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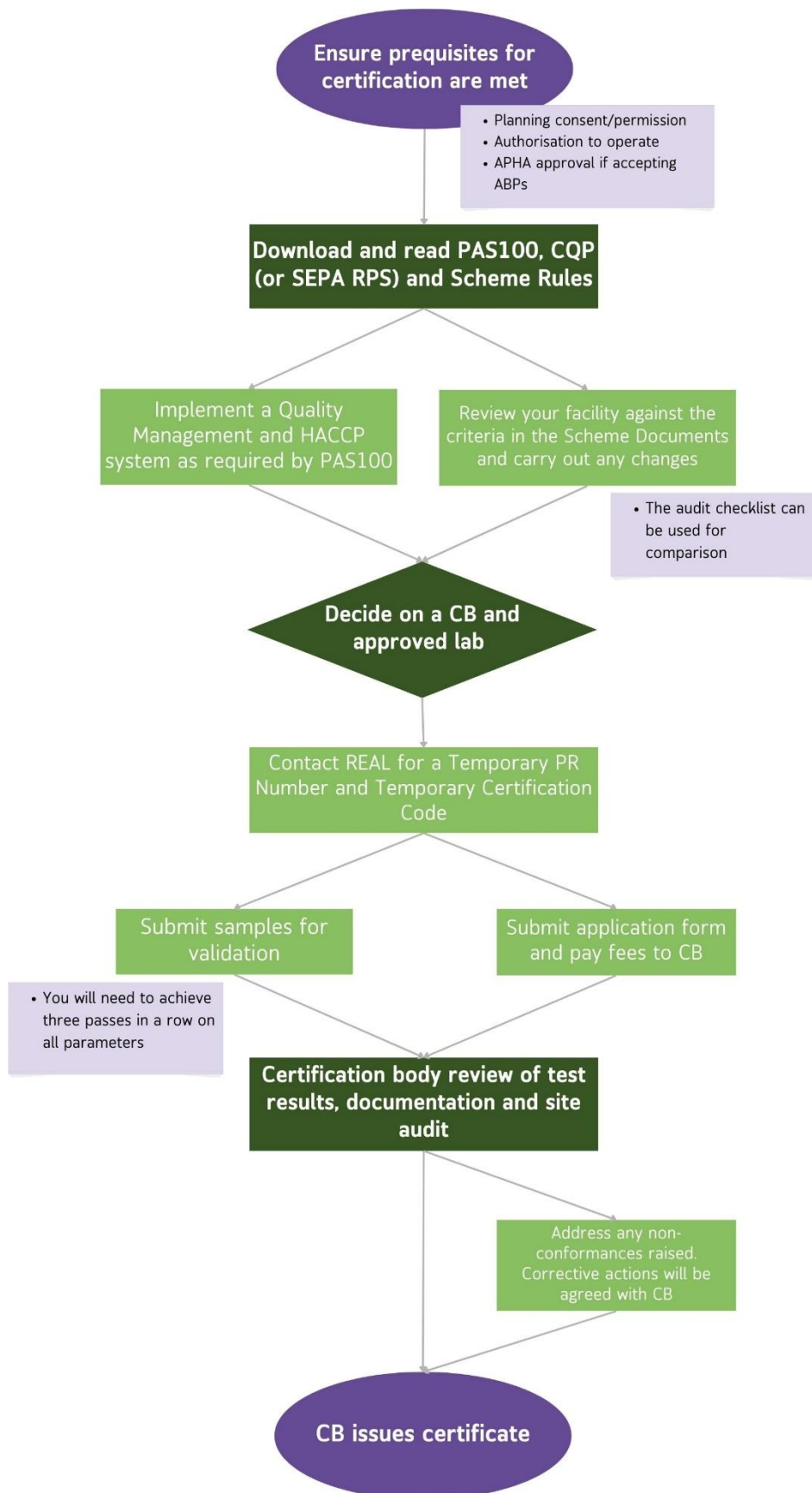
Introduction

Welcome to CCS! The Compost Certification Scheme (CCS) provides assurance to consumers, farmers, food producers and retailers that compost is safe for human, animal, and plant health.

The CCS independently assesses and certifies compost to PAS 100, the Compost Quality Protocol (CQP) or SEPA's RPS, and the CCS Scheme Rules. In being assessed as compliant with the requirements within these documents, compost reaches 'End of Waste Status'. This means that certified waste-derived compost is no longer classed as a waste and so can be spread beneficially to land without the need for an Environmental Permit, providing a valuable source of nutrients and organic matter.

This guidance document sets out the process for achieving certification, including a flow chart for visualising the process, as well as an explanation of each step. If you have any further queries that are not covered by this document, please contact info@realschemes.org.uk.

Certification Flow Chart



Ensure prerequisites for certification are met

Pre-requisites for applying for initial certification or renewal of certification are:

- The compost producer holds a planning consent/permission in respect of its compost site(s), if required by the relevant planning authority.
- The compost producer holds an Environmental Permit, issued by the relevant Regulator, or an exemption registered with the relevant Regulator.
- If the process treats animal by-products, the producer has obtained or is in the process of obtaining approval for the composting site from the Animal & Plant Health Agency or Veterinary Service to treat Animal By-Products.

For certification, compost must be produced only from source-segregated biodegradable materials and/or biowastes. For biowastes, the EWC codes must be listed in Appendix B of the CQP for allowable inputs and written supply agreements for input materials must be agreed with each supplier.

Download and read Scheme Documents

If you are supplying to **England, Wales, or Northern Ireland**

The CCS certifies against three documents:

1. [Compost Quality Protocol](#) – this sets out the End of Waste requirements e.g., acceptable inputs and permissible market sectors.
2. [PAS 100](#) - this sets out technical requirements, for example around implementing a robust Quality Management System, utilising HACCP, and testing samples.
3. [CCS Scheme Rules](#) – this document explains how the scheme operates, e.g., how the audits will be conducted. You may also want to download the [CCS Position on Technical requirements](#), which is the accompanying document to the Scheme Rules.

If you are supplying to **Scotland**

The CCS certifies against these three documents:

1. [SEPA Position Statement](#) - this sets out the End of Waste requirements e.g., acceptable inputs.
2. [PAS 100](#) - this sets out technical requirements, for example around implementing a robust Quality Management System, utilising HACCP, and testing samples.
3. [CCS Scheme Rules](#) – this document explains how the scheme operates, e.g., how the audits will be conducted. You may also want to download the [CCS Position on Technical requirements](#), which is the accompanying document to the Scheme Rules.

Implement a Quality Management System and HACCP

A Quality Management System (QMS) must be established and maintained, specific to the composting process and resulting compost. A Quality Policy must be in place and include the compost producer's commitment to achieving minimum quality. And, finally, HACCP planning must be utilised to identify and control hazards e.g., the presence of pathogens.

This is a vital part of certification and there are consultants who can advise on this. Additionally, the Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology (REA) run a HACCP for composting course, (please contact jenny@r-e-a.net to enquire about when the next course will be held).

Review your facility

At this point, it would be beneficial for you to review your facility against the requirements of PAS 100, the CQP, and the CCS Scheme Rules, making any necessary changes at your site in line with your QMS and HACCP.

To review your facility, you may find it useful to compare against the audit checklist that the Certification Bodies will later use on a visit to your site. This can be found [here](#).

Choosing a Certification Body and an Approved Laboratory

After making any necessary changes to your site, you will now be ready to choose which Certification Body (CB), and which Approved Laboratory you would like to use.

There are three Approved Laboratories on CCS, these are D&F, Eurofins Agro (formerly ATL) and NRM. It is up to you which lab you choose; you can request price lists and discuss taking samples and submitting for testing using the contact details on our website [here](#).

There are three Certification Bodies you can use: [ACL](#), [OF&G](#) and [NSF](#). It is up to you which Certification Body you choose; you can find their price list and contact details linked above.

Contact REAL for certification details

You will need to email info@realschemes.org.uk to request a Temporary PR Number, as well as a Temporary Certification Code for each compost output/grade you are looking to certify. These details will need to be entered on the CCS PAS100 Compost Analysis Request Form.

Submitting samples for validation

You are now ready to begin sampling and testing. We recommend you read through the sampling guidance available [here](#). Each final sample must be representative of the batch sampled.

You will need to submit the PAS100 Compost Analysis Request Form with your sample, filling in the details as per the 'labelling your PAS100 sample' guidance, available [here](#).

To achieve initial validation, the three most recent compost sample test results must pass the minimum quality criteria in PAS 100. Please download the PAS100 Compost Analysis Request Form [here](#).

Submit Application Form to CB

Once you have begun testing, the next step is to submit an Application Form to your chosen CB. The Application Form, as well as the CB price list, can be found for each CB on our website:

- [ACL](#)
- [NSF](#)
- [OF&G](#)

Enclose the QMS documentation, HACCP assessment, test results (if available), flow diagram, copy of Environmental Permit/Exemption, and copy of APHA licence (if relevant).

This application is reviewed by a Certification Officer (CO) to ascertain if the process is in line with the requirements of PAS 100, and if it is, then an appointment to visit the site is made. If, however, there is still work to be completed, the CO notifies the producer of the requirements, and when the changes have been made, an auditor will make a site visit.

If any non-conformances (NCs) are identified, the auditor will explain these during the site visit and corrective actions will be agreed to address them. Once corrective action has been taken, this will then be presented to the auditor to consider whether it is acceptable to close out the NC and/or whether a further site visit is required. The CO will then review the decision of the auditor. (The CO's role is to review the interpretations the auditor has made, and any evidence/corrective actions should be considered by both the auditor and CO.)

When the corrective action is accepted successfully, this means validation has been achieved, and a certificate will be issued.

Other important information

- Important aspects to consider for achieving certification include ensuring there is an appropriate mix of suitable input materials, the composting process is well-managed and effective, and a suitable process duration has been established.
- CBs are allowed to offer guidance about interpretation of the requirements of PAS 100 and the CQP but are not allowed to offer advice on how to achieve certification.
- There must be a designated market for the compost (end markets are specified in the CQP).
- Supply documentation and good practice guidance must be given to customers of certified compost (these are requirements of the CQP).
- PAS 100 is a non-statutory document so producers must also comply with all relevant existing statutory requirements and the conditions of their permit for composting the waste.