

Compost Certification Scheme

Notes from the Producers' Forum Meeting – 29th April 2014, Bristol

1. Introduction of compost producers

The second meeting of the Compost Producers' Forum was held on 29th April in Bristol. There were 6 compost producers represented at the meeting. Although a small number, they represented a range of technologies, processing various feedstocks and producing compost to different end markets. The meeting started with a quick roundtable introduction.

2. Legislation / Regulation updates

The update considered only the most relevant areas of legislation and regulatory changes.

- EU Fertilisers Regulation – This was going to be reviewed and planned to include End of Waste criteria that would impact on the UK's current positions on compost and digestates. Whilst the review has temporarily been dropped from the EU Commission's programme, there has been strong indication from Defra that it is likely to be included in the proposals soon to be launched in the Circular Economy package. The previous proposals were a concern for UK compost (and digestate) producers for a number of reasons, but a major issue identified was regarding treatment under the Animal by-products regulations. The proposal was that for making an EU fertiliser product, the treatment process for producing composts and digestates made from Animal By-Products will be restricted to the Standard Transformation Parameters laid down in the EU ABP regulations (i.e. not the national catering waste standard). The implications of this were discussed and some clarification on this point is needed, particularly around plants processing to EU standard but alternative treatment parameters. It was also questioned why compost is being aligned with artificial fertilisers.
- Quality Meat Scotland – The standard has been published and the CCS has drafted some guidance (available on the CCS website) for compost producers supplying to QMS members.
- BREF and BAT – The EU Best Available Technique Reference Document (BREF) is under revision and a technical working group has drafted chapters on composting and AD. The latest updates can be found on the [ORG website](#). SEPA have published a draft BAT for Composting document for consultation and are currently working through the responses.
- WRAP projects – There are a number of WRAP projects (either finished or coming to a close) that are of interest to composting. These include: compost stability; developing a laboratory proficiency framework; sampling and testing for physical contaminants in compost and digestates; screened out side streams from composting and AD operations; specification for quality compost for use in growing media; and the Renewable fertiliser matrix. All project reports will be made available once published and the group is keen to see the final reports. Comments regarding the projects focussed on if the stability project made any link between

odour and stability and if there is any distinction between odour on site and spreading of compost. It was also questioned if stability testing is likely to be an absolute requirement from the regulator for any quality standard.

3. Scheme Update

Justyna gave an update on the size of the scheme. There are currently 180 sites certified with an input tonnage of 3,313,698 tonnes and producing 1,711,022 tonnes of quality compost.

Developments in the scheme include the launch of the new database which will be updated on a daily basis. The plant response test is currently being reviewed, and a comment was made that any way to reduce the time for this test would be hugely beneficial to producers. The work around lab monitoring is ongoing and terms and conditions have been developed, independent auditors have been appointed (Heriot Watt University) and plans are in place for another inter-lab trial later this year.

The notes from the last Technical Advisory Committee meeting are available on the CCS website ([HERE](#)). REAL have discussed the importance of the recognition of the certification mark and will take steps to broaden its recognition in the horticultural market.

Gregor Keenan, the producers' forum's representative at the TAC meetings then gave his feedback from the last TAC meeting. There was discussion about the reliability of the stability test and its relevance for the end use of the compost and also about what a potential review of PAS100 should include.

4. Discussion

This part of the meeting was an open discussion with all present. The main focus of the discussion was around the need for a review of PAS100 and what parameters various producers felt needed to be reviewed.

Summary of comments:

- There was a general feeling that PAS100 does need to be reviewed (it is overdue and better to make all the changes at one time), although the Fertilisers Regulation could impact on the EoW position. There may still be a roll for PAS100 as a market specification though so better to get on with a review.
- Further information is need on the likely costs of a review and then can think about funding options to cover this.
- Careful consideration is needed as to how the review process is governed and who should lead on this. An independent organisation such as WRAP would be preferable to lead the review.
- The first step of the review should include developing a list of issues to be considered and then gathering of evidence to support any proposed changes.
- It was suggested that the Producers' Forum writes to REA to encourage them to initiate a review, but this proposal should be circulated to all producers for feedback prior to taking action.

- The stones limit needs to be considered as part of a review, particularly for compost used in agriculture. Changing the size limit for stones would be helpful and feedback from markets would be useful.
- The need for the *e.coli* test was discussed and the timing of taking the sample. This is duplication for sites taking ABP and if used as an indicator test, would something else be more appropriate?
- What is classed as a virgin comparator for compost? Is this really peat? Possibly different for different markets
- There may be a need for market specific limits within the PAS, i.e. one limit for a particular market and a different market may require a different limit for various parameters.

Promotion of the Producers' Forum was also discussed with those attending the meeting finding it very useful. More needs to be done to increase awareness of the group and promote to all producers on the CCS scheme.

5. Future plans for Producers' Forum

Virginia Graham of REAL gave a brief update on the plans for the Producers' Forum. The TAC considered the contributions from the forum to be very valuable. They also suggested that it would be beneficial to have a single representative from the forum attend a few TAC meetings for consistency. The current representative is Gregor Keenan and he will attend the next few TAC meetings before the position will be open to nominations from the producers.

6. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is likely to be in Scotland in September. Birmingham was suggested as a location for the subsequent meeting.

Close

Summary of Key Actions

- Feedback to REA re Fertilisers Regulation – more clarity needed regarding the review process and on the ABP treatment requirements.
- Highlight to WRAP the usefulness of the ASORI and encourage them to include composting every 2 years to help monitor long term trends.
- REAL to liaise with WRAP regarding publication of the final reports from the finished projects that are of interest to composting
- Find out the likely costs for reviewing PAS100 and the various options (remain as PAS100, full British Standard etc). Further discussion needed on how the review should be governed.
- Get more feedback from other producers not present at the meeting regarding their thoughts on the need for a review of PAS100.
- Promote the Producers' forum more to CCS members and through ORG.