



# SCOTTISH QUALITY CROPS

## SQC News Updates – 17 March 2023 - Issue 5

Welcome to the latest SQC members newsletter – and our first for 2023. In keeping with past newsletters, we have our usual SQC updates, news and a couple of extra articles from key partners.

As there are a number of important messages to share from our Certification Body, FIA, a separate news update will be sent out soon with these.

As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact FIA whose details are below. Or, email me at [Teresa.dougall@scottishqualitycrops.co.uk](mailto:Teresa.dougall@scottishqualitycrops.co.uk)

Regards

Teresa Dougall, SQC Managing Director

### **FIA can be contacted on:**

Telephone: 0131 609 0558 Email: [info@foodassurance.co.uk](mailto:info@foodassurance.co.uk)

Website: <https://www.sqcrops.co.uk/> (where you will find an enquiry form) or  
<https://foodintegrityassurance.co.uk/>

### **Going with the Grain project update**

You may remember that our last newsletter featured news on a new project looking at alternatives to traditional fertilisers. And, we now have the latest on this exciting project!

Currently, 28% of arable crops greenhouse gas emissions are attributed to fertiliser manufacture. By comparison, the application of bulky organic manures (BOMs) – such as livestock manures, composts, biosolids, green digestates, and distillery effluent – can improve overall biological, physical, and chemical soil functioning and health. And in recent years, there has been increasing interest in the use of BOMs in malting barley production.

For both farmers and Scotland's whisky industry, the environmental impact of swapping nitrogen-based fertilisers for BOMs offers a clear step towards reaching net zero. And with volatile synthetic fertiliser prices, BOMs also offer a huge opportunity for farmers to reduce farm business costs and increase resilience.

A new partnership between NFU Scotland, Scottish Quality Crops, the Scotch Whisky Association, SAC Consulting, and SAOS aims to help this happen. Our 'Going with the Grain' project brings together distillers and farmers to explore the opportunities and challenges of reducing the use of inorganic nitrogen fertiliser. We will assess the barriers facing farmers who want to increase the use of BOMs, while developing an evidence base that will support distillers to make decisions about the use of organic fertilisers in malting barley production.

This work has already started. We've been in discussion with distillers about the different types of BOMs that can be used as a fertiliser in malting barley production, with particular interest in digestate produced by distilleries' AD plants. A series of questionnaires and focus groups has helped us identify current practices and policies on the use and management of BOMs, relevant reasoning and concern behind some of these policies, red lines for certain BOMs, and potential actions which may widen the use of BOMs.

Each distillery we spoke to had its own site-specific needs, but a priority highlighted by every distillery was to manage their co-products as sustainably as possible. The biggest potential for the wider use of BOMs appears to be through using farmyard manures and green digestates from AD plants. Distillers have also expressed an interest in exploring the option to pelletise digestates from AD plants, which effectively creates a standardised product that can more easily be stored, transported, and applied.

We also hope to address concerns about adopting the use of BOMs; central to discussions with distillers so far has been the need for control and confidence in feedstocks used by AD plants.

As the project continues, we'll be continuing these conversations with distillers and farmers, exploring best practice for the use of BOMs on farm, and sharing reports, case studies, and supply chain mapping to ensure that there's a clear way forward for increasing the use of BOMs in malting barley production and so making the industry more environmentally and economically sustainable.

And, all this will be shared with you as we progress!

### **SQC Website – Help with assessments – Farm Handbooks now available to download**

You ask – we listen!

Many growers were asking for copies of the Farm Handbook which contain all the documents you need to prepare for your assessment. And, it is now available to download or print from the SQC website – click [here](#) to access. We've also made available a copy of the assessment checklist – which lists documents and links you may need, along with some key questions you will be asked. It can be accessed [here](#). Or, if you just need to print off any copies of Farm Documents, a list of these is provided [here](#).

As promised, we have added a new section within Documents – entitled Technical Guidance. Over time we will build a suite of documents to assist growers on technical guidance. At the

moment there is a new Guidance Sheet on how to complete your Mass Balance Record along with example documents.

Finally, we will shortly be adding a link to all LEAF related documentation and a link to RSABI – we'll keep you informed on both of these.

If you have any suggestions on improvements, we would love to hear from you.

To view the new look website, click [here](#).

### **SQC on Twitter**

Remember, SQC are now on Twitter! Go on, give it a 'like' and a 'share' @ScotQualCrops or click [here](#) for instant access.

### **New SQC strategy hub – working on your behalf**

Invites have now been issued to technical partners for the new Scottish Crop Supply Chain Strategy Hub with an aim to hold the first meeting in May. Further updates will be issued in forthcoming newsletters – so watch this space!

### **And, other industry news.....**

- **BASIS Registration now administering the National Register of Sprayer Operators**

BASIS Registration has taken over the role of administering the National Register of Sprayer Operators (NRoSO) on behalf of the Voluntary Initiative and the two organisations are making plans to enhance the scheme and offer membership benefits.

BASIS Chief Executive Stephen Jacob stresses that the NRoSO scheme will be operated separately from existing BASIS registers. "We have recruited a dedicated team to service NRoSO and its members," says Mr Jacob. "In addition, we have a dedicated phone line - 01335 210849 - and a new website <https://nroso.org.uk/>."

"BASIS has made significant investment in digital technology to deliver benefits to its Professional Register members," says Mr Jacob. "We aim to offer the same benefits to NRoSO members, and, once the initial transfer is complete, we will be looking to develop benefits, such as the popular BASIS Classroom technology for on-line training. This will allow sprayer operators to gain CPD points at times that suit them."

BASIS is currently working through data provided during handover. In order to keep the process as smooth as possible, invoicing will be done in monthly batches. This will give the team time to allocate payments to members accounts and respond to queries.

The membership year will renew on 1 September 2023. This will mean members receiving two invoices this year. The first invoice for new and renewing members will be pro rata up to 31st August 2022; the second invoice (sent out in late July/early August) will be for membership from 1

September 2023 to 31 August 2024. A similar process will apply to members who have paid three years in advance as their current membership runs out.

Recognising many members and their employers prefer to pay by direct debit, BASIS is setting up an online direct debit mandate to allow members to logon to the NRoSO website and complete a direct debit mandate. This will remove the need for paper copies. For those members who prefer a paper copy this is currently available in the finance section of the website.

Online payment by credit and debit card is due to launch shortly. BASIS aims to get this facility up and running before processing the first batch of invoices.

“NRoSO is an important part of providing assurance to food processors, retailers and consumers that plant protection products are being used professionally. I believe the standard of sprayer operators in the UK is as high as anywhere in the world. Together with the National Sprayer Testing Scheme and IPM planning, it is a vital part of the work overseen by the VI,” says Dr Neal Evans, Operations Director for the VI.

### **SAOS Webinar – Thurs 23 March – Decarbonising Scottish malting barley**

The Scottish Whisky Industry has set ambitious targets to get to net zero whisky by 2040. Studies show 37% of the GHG emissions attributed to a bottle of malt whisky comes from the production of barley on-farm. This will require farmers to play their part and drastically cut their emissions associated with barley production – the question is how?

The webinar will share the results and learning from a recent KTIF funded project looking at the carbon footprint to produce a tonne of malting barley, the variation across a wide range of different soil types, farm systems and management practices (16 pilot farms), the sources of emissions, and potential mitigation actions.

This webinar is aimed at farmer growers, agronomists, the supply trade, maltsters and distillers – anyone with an interest in malting barley.

#### **Speakers**

##### **Robin Barron, General Manager, East of Scotland Farmers Ltd (EoSf)**

EoSf is one of the largest and most successful central grain storage and marketing businesses in Scotland. It has a turnover of £30+m and handles 80-90,000t of grain per year. Robin will present the need for the project and why EoSf and Highland Grain got involved, and what malting barley customers are looking for in the future.

##### **Gavin Dick, independent Farm and Rural Business Consultant**

Gavin is a well-known independent farm consultant and facilitator. Gavin will share the results from the carbon audits benchmarking exercise on the 16 pilot farms, soil health results, the learning to date and future project plans.

## **Kaia Waxenberg, Agricultural Systems Modeller, Agrecalc Ltd**

Kaia is one of the key modellers at Agrecalc. She will discuss the benefits of measuring a carbon audit, explain the methodology of how its calculated, sources of GHG emissions in farming, the limitations of an audit, mitigation measures, and the new updated Agrecalc v2.

### **To register to attend the webinar:**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_MKOV53M7TXKWq8HMeN5-RQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_MKOV53M7TXKWq8HMeN5-RQ) After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about how to join the webinar.

**Funding for this project was made available through the SRDP 'Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund' (KTIF), which is funded by the Scottish Government.**

## **Finally – an update from RSABI.....**

### **RSABI and former Royal Marines launch mental health first aid awareness training**

Scottish Quality Crops assessors and Managing Director were among the first to take part in a new Mental Health First Aid training initiative launched by RSABI, working with former Royal Marines.

The pioneering mental health training initiative for those working in Scottish agriculture is being delivered by RSABI in partnership with the award-winning consultancy IED Training Solutions Ltd, formed by former Royal Marines.

This training is aimed at organisations and individuals who work regularly in the front line with farmers and crofters, including those involved in assessments or inspections, consultants and advisers.

The initiative offers the opportunity for participants to gain certification in the SCQF Level 4 Award for First Aid for Mental Health Awareness and/or SCQF Level 5 Award in First Aid for Mental Health.

Carol McLaren, Chief Executive of RSABI, said the innovative training could make a significant difference in the Scottish agricultural community. “There are many synergies between the Royal Marines and farming – from working in all weathers and challenging terrain to antisocial hours, time away from family and public scrutiny,” said Ms McLaren.

“This initiative comes at a time when there are some really encouraging green shoots of change as farmers and others working in agriculture become more open about talking about mental health and the steps needed to maintain and improve it.”

Those interested in finding out more about the new mental health first aid training, including a video interview with Major Hugh Jones who is leading on the training, should visit [www.rsabi.org.uk](http://www.rsabi.org.uk) to find out more or email [mentalhealthtraining@rsabi.org.uk](mailto:mentalhealthtraining@rsabi.org.uk) to register interest in joining one of the courses.

RSABI's Freephone Helpline – 0808 1234 555 – is open 24 hours, every day of the year and a confidential webchat service is also available 24 hours at [www.rsabi.org.uk](http://www.rsabi.org.uk).