

July 2023 [View this email in your browser](#)



A note from the MD



SQC has been out and about recently meeting with many of our growers, partners, stakeholders and parliamentarians. The SQC Directors met at the end of May for a Board meeting and spent an informative afternoon touring the new Barley Hub facilities at James Hutton Institute. Thanks to JHI for hosting us for the day.

We would also like to thank NFUS Lothians & Borders for the invite to their recent event at Bonnington Farm where, alongside our Certification Body, FIA, we gave a presentation on our assurance scheme. Your Chairman, Andrew Moir, and I spent two days at Royal Highland Show – attending meetings and receptions.

And next up was Arable Scotland, where Andrew was part of the final ‘Arable Conversation’ of the day entitled ‘The Changing Policy Landscape’. We also recently launched our innovative Scottish Crops Supply Chain Hub and more details on this – and more of our work – can be found below.

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.

Regards,
Teresa Dougall
SQC Managing Director



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Message from our Certification Body, FIA

Harvest is fast approaching and hopefully the glorious sunshine will return to aid a successful harvest, although I'm sure for all SQC members the recent rain has been very welcome.

The FIA team would like to thank all SQC members for their positive engagement in support of the delivery of assessments over the last three months. We are delighted with the progress and with less than 500 assessments to book we are confident that all members will be assessed and certified in time to prevent any delay in issuing passports for the current harvest year.

The issuing of passports will commence at the beginning of July, but should you have any queries relating to passports please do not hesitate in contacting the FIA Team on 0131 609 0558.

As part of our service delivery to SQC we are always keen to hear back from members in relation to their assessment experiences and contact with the FIA Team. We have been issuing feedback surveys to all members who have been certified and are delighted with the response to date and the positive comments received

What growers wanted to know

As part of our service delivery to SQC we are always keen to hear back from members in relation to their assessment experiences and contact with the FIA Team. We have been issuing feedback surveys to all members who have been certified and are delighted with the response to date and the positive comments received.

If you have not yet completed the quick survey, please do so once received as your feedback is very valuable to both FIA and SQC. If you haven't received a link to the survey, please check your junk mail and also add noreply@foodassurance.co.uk to your safe senders list.

One common response in the survey was to keep members informed of the most common non-compliances raised during recent assessments. The table below identifies the current top ten non-compliances and please remember that non-compliance is not a failure but an identification of where the standard is not being met fully and in almost all cases can be easily rectified if identified. The FIA certification team will be happy to support you where they can.

You will also note that the number of non-compliances raised over the SQC membership is low indicating a high level of compliance with the SQC Standards which demonstrates great engagement with the standards.

2.17 Annual Sprayer Test	173 19.95%
2.2 Integrated Pest Management Plan	90 10.38%
2.20 Spray Contractors Sprayer Details	50 5.77%
3.3 Mass Balance Record	41 4.73%
3.7 Biodiversity Action Plan	41 4.73%
2.14 Sprayer Operator Certificate of Competence	37 4.27%
2.16 Sprayer Contractor NTPC and CPD	34 3.92%
2.3 Spray Storage	32 3.69%
2.15 Sprayer Operator CPD	31 3.59%
2.5 PPP Stock Inventory	26 3.00%

The whole FIA Team wishes you all the very best for a successful 2023 harvest!

Launch of Scottish Crops Supply Chain Hub (SCSCH)



Our new Scottish Supply Chain Hub launched with its first meeting on 24 May to agree membership and Terms of Reference. The purpose of the Hub is to bring together representatives from across the supply chain to discuss and work collaboratively on key challenges and opportunities.

The following key aims for the Hub were agreed:

- To provide a mechanism to facilitate specialist constructive feedback in relation to the current standards across the cereals supply chain
- To identify industry issues and challenges, recommend any new topics that should be considered for standard review e.g. legislation, the economic environment and new initiatives
- To discuss standard compliance and identify ways of increasing member engagement through communications or technical solutions
- To identify potential industry opportunities which may provide additional market access / economic benefit to the grower
- To proactively support Scottish Quality Crops (SQC) acting as an interface between SQC and other supply chain stakeholders
- To commission supply chain insight and SQC / grower led research projects

Members of the group include SQC, Food Integrity Assurance (FIA), Scottish Organisation Agricultural Society (SAOS), James Hutton Institute, Scottish Agronomy, Highland Grains Ltd, Pepsico, Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS).

The Hub will next meet in August.

SQC and Sustainable Agriculture Initiative (SAI) Platform

You may recall from earlier newsletters that the SQC Assurance Scheme and Standards was being re-benchmarked against the SAI Platform Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA) 3.0. We are pleased to announce that we have maintained our Silver Status – which can enable additional access to some markets for our growers.

SAI Platform explains this as ‘a worldwide movement demonstrating commitment to promoting reliable and consistent sustainable food production’ and we are delighted that the SQC Standards continue to meet the requirements as set.

Renewable Energy Directive (RED) II and Addendum to SQC Standards

SQC continue to work with the European Commission towards maintaining standards of reliability, transparency and independent auditing required by Directive 2018/2001 for certifying compliance with the sustainability and greenhouse gas saving criteria (through their updated Implementing Regulations). This compliance allows SQC growers access to the European biofuels market.

As part of our resubmission process, we had to make a number of amendments to the text within the SQC Standards October 2022 issue. And, we are now addressing the remainder of outstanding queries – which will require an update to the Addendum. Once this is complete, the Addendum will be issued to all growers and uploaded to our website.

It should be noted, however, that there are no substantive changes required to the Standards – and the changes that have been made are to further explain and clarify statements within the current Standards.

SQC Standards Review Process

The newly formed SQC Standards Review Committee (replacing the SQC Technical Committee) met on 12 June to begin the process of reviewing the current Standards – to issue new Standards in October 2023.

This followed on from a discussion on any proposed changes with the Scottish Crops Supply Chain Hub in late May. No substantive changes to the Standards were identified. However, it has been agreed that we will undertake a full review of the wording within the Standards to ensure they are ‘fit for purpose’ and to remove any duplication.

In addition, we are aiming to remove Section 1 of the Standards – ‘About the Scheme’ – and incorporate this into a new SQC document – SQC Membership Rules. All members will be kept informed as we move towards October and through the Review Committee / SCSCCH / Co-op members, we will continue to engage and consult right across the sector.

Update on Pesticide Enforcement Officers (PEO) inspection visits

HSE announced it will be mandatory for all Plant Protection Products (PPP) stores to be inspected by PEOs from October 2023. This is to check how well farm businesses comply with their duties under PPP law.

However, these PPP store visits are carried out annually as part of the SQC assurance assessment.

Alongside NFUS, SQC is calling on the Scottish Government and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to recognise that SQC assurance already demonstrates farm businesses are complying with their duties under PPP law. Farm businesses who are SQC assured should have *earned recognition*: that they are complying with their duties under PPP law. Duplication of audit is unnecessary and an unnecessary burden.

Meetings on this continue and we will keep members informed.

Keeping you up to date – all the latest from SQC



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

Our website contains links to all scheme / farm documents (that may help when pulling together what is required for your assessment; copies of all newsletters and SQC press releases; information on SQC and all contact details for FIA. Just click [here](#) to access.

And, we would like to welcome and thank Jane Craigie Marketing who are now assisting with comms and PR – to ensure that we communicate effectively with not only our growers, but the full supply chain.



FIA can be contacted on:

Telephone: 0131 609 0558 Email: info@foodassurance.co.uk

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



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