



What AFS Harmonisation means for you

Please be reassured that harmonisation of the AFS schemes is nothing to worry about. One of the main reasons given for harmonisation of the AFS standards is to



“reduce the number of inspections that farmers have to undergo” and part of this is to bring assurance schemes together so they can be delivered on the same visit.

We have always recognised that our members expect and deserve an efficient service and we have been delivering combined assessments for nearly 10 years. However, the process was still quite inefficient because the assessors literally had to juggle separate checklists for each scheme and there was often repetition of questions. To overcome this, we introduced our CMi Dataquest assessor system, which ensured that where the same question occurred in different schemes it appeared only once in the assessor’s checklist and where questions between schemes were similar they were automatically grouped together. The new system achieved a high level of harmonisation of the various schemes at the point of delivery.

Nevertheless, the current AFS harmonisation exercise has resulted in some small technical changes to scheme standards. These are summarised in the AFS newsletters and the detail can be found in the scheme standard. Both of these documents are enclosed and it is important that you read these before your assessment so you can fully understand any implications to your business.

If you still have any queries or concerns about the changes, please do not hesitate to contact us on 01993 885610 or enquiries@nsf-cmicertification.com

Tim Green
Agriculture Director

Keep Calm and Carry On

The harmonisation of the six Assured Food Standards (Red Tractor) farm assurance schemes will come into effect on 1 April, 2010.



One of the major areas of change to the AFS standards has been the harmonisation of the scheme rules and way the schemes must be run. The most significant change for many will be that evidence

of corrective action for non-conformances must be sent in within 28 days of the assessment. This requirement has been in place for many years in the beef & lamb, chicken, pig and produce schemes, but its effect will be felt more keenly in the dairy and cereal schemes where the deadline for receipt of evidence of corrective action has now been reduced quite dramatically. The other change affecting cereal farmers is the ending of harvest specific stickers and instead, as in the beef and lamb scheme, stickers will be issued at membership renewal time and have an expiry date 12 months hence.

What should I do next?

Keep calm and carry on as normal. Review the technical changes to the standards by referring to the summaries in the AFS newsletter enclosed. The new standards manuals can be downloaded from the NSF-CMi website at www.nsf-cmi.com

The two key things to remember are:

- Your certification status will be affected if you do not send documentary evidence of corrective actions of non-conformances within 28 days of your

assessment. **You can send these in by email, fax or post to the numbers and addresses shown inside the front cover of the scheme standards manual.**

- Your certification status will be affected if you do not renew your membership within 28 days of your renewal date. If you don't already, why not sign up to pay by direct debit? **NSF-CMi offers a £5 discount to those that pay by direct debit and it will ensure that your membership will not lapse due to forgetting to pay within the 28 days stipulated. Alternatively you can pay by cheque or make a card payment over the phone.**

AT A GLANCE – significant scheme rule changes

- Scheme membership terminated if payment not made within 28 days of renewal date. (You can re-apply but must start the certification process from scratch as a new member.)
- Certification/ stickers will be renewed for the following year on payment at renewal time.
- Certification suspended if evidence of corrective action not received within 28 days of assessment.
- Scheme membership terminated if evidence of corrective actions is not received within 3 months of the date of suspension. (You can re-apply but must start the certification process from scratch as a new member.)

Good Bio-security is the key to reducing incidence of bovine TB

NSF-CMi Certification has recently been working with the North Wales bTB Eradication Board (set up as a result of the Health Check Wales TB programme) on their risk measurement and quantification project. This two year project involves a survey of on-farm bio-security practices on more than 100 farms with cattle in the Wrexham area.

The so-called 'Wrexham Intensive Treatment Area' was chosen because, up until recently, bovine TB has been relatively uncommon there and the disease is not as firmly established as in other parts of Wales, such as the South West or the border with England. Good herd bio-security can reduce the risk of clean herds becoming infected and given the TB history of the area, it was felt that improvements in bio-security would have a greater impact to reduce incidence of the disease than they might in areas where the disease had already become endemic.

The participating farms were selected by veterinary practices with clients within the

Intensive Treatment Area, with the vets undertaking the survey and providing advice on where improvements in bio-security could be made. NSF-CMi Certification managed the process, using expert opinion, to generate the content for the survey questionnaire that included the following points:

- Maintaining a closed herd where possible
- Preventing contact with neighbouring herds
- Minimising contact between cattle and badgers
- Preventing access of badgers to cattle housing and feed stores.

In addition to managing the creation of the questions, NSF-CMi Certification provided the vets with the software and handheld computers to undertake the survey, trained them in the use of the software and undertook initial analysis of the results. The survey will be repeated again in 2010 and the two sets of results compared.

Health and Safety for Farms

NSF-CMi has launched a new Risk Assessment service for farms which is designed to help farmers manage Health and Safety for their business and has been developed with expert input from both the Health and Safety Executive and leading Insurers.

In a world of increasing legislation and litigation there has never been more need to protect yourself and your business. This service may be of interest to you if you employ staff, family or contractors on the farm, manage their hours and provide them with the equipment and materials they use, have areas of public access over your land or have diversified into non-farming activities such as tourism, livery or light industrial units.



Ultimately, only you can be responsible for the Health and Safety of your business, but we can help you with that process by offering you:

- Independent overview of employer and public liability exposures on farm
- Risk survey using our unique software system to identify and measure sources of risk
- Clear and succinct report highlighting identified risks and how to address them
- Optional support in setting up an effective ongoing management programme
- Procedures to facilitate your own on farm risk assessments.

To find out more about this service, how it can help your business and to obtain a no obligation quote, please contact us at NSF-CMi Risk Services **01993 885717** or riskservices@nsf-cmi.com



Regulatory Compliance and Farm Assurance: Increasing Overlap

When we last undertook our NSF-CMi Insight reader survey (see back page for our latest survey), the top two items of concern were UK/ EU legislation and red tape. This is not surprising as on average around 8-10 pieces of new legislation are published each week in the UK. Some of this legislation will require additional policing and this will tend to add to the number of inspectors visiting farms. In theory at least, there has always been the opportunity for industry schemes and commercial certification bodies to deliver some of the regulatory compliance activity. Now, the conditions are right for this to increase apace because farm assurance is increasingly seen as a competent way of the industry policing itself and also because of the great likelihood of cuts in government spending as it attempts to reduce the overall indebtedness of the country.

An area where the industry scheme is already used in lieu of regulatory



inspection is the Food Hygiene Regulations in the cattle and sheep sectors. For example, the regulatory compliance audit can be delivered by the certification body as an optional bolt-on for Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) in the

poultry and pig sectors.

Dairy hygiene, is a further example of regulatory inspection activity that, in the near future, is likely to take account of farm assurance scheme participation.

What does Sustainable Agriculture mean to you?



In the UK, talk about the challenges facing the agricultural industry tends to focus on issues such as farm gate prices, the crisis in the Dairy industry and the ever increasing EU legislation. There are, however,

other issues that are driving forward the standards agenda and those are the ethical, environmental and social concerns of our customers, or put another way 'sustainable agriculture'. This is set to have the biggest influence on the shape of the global food industry over the next 20 years. The world is facing a food shortage. By the year 2050 the population will have exploded from the current 6.5 billion to over 9 billion. Global warming will impact on agriculture with changing weather patterns meaning that farmers will encounter problems they have never experienced before. Estimates predict that in some regions crop yields could drop by 30% in 20 years. This, coupled with the reduction of land available for food production (due to increasing urbanisation to cope with increasing populations and the growth of crops for bio-fuel production) is going to mean huge challenges to farmers if we are to continue to feed the population.

The response of some of the wealthier nations has been to buy or lease agricultural land from the developing world. South Korea, for example, has acquired 700,000ha of land in the Sudan, whilst others are sourcing food from those developing countries leading to concerns over ethical trading, sustainability and food safety. As a result of this the Food Standards Agency is

proposing to implement the EU regulation introducing increased controls for 'high risk imports' from 25th January 2010.

So what does all this mean for UK farmers? To stay ahead of the game in the future of food production, farmers will need to be able to demonstrate their ability to keep on top of the issues, manage their exposure to the risks and exploit opportunities to support their customers' corporate responsibility requirements. Ultimately retailers will depend on partners who can support the development of innovative, convenient food products without risk to their customers or their brand. This will create opportunities for high quality producers who are able to play their part in creating customer confidence in the safety and sustainability of their food supply.

Farm assurance, as we currently know it, will need to evolve further to provide this confidence by being able to demonstrate a risk based approach to food safety and environmental management. NSF-CMi is already working hard in this area to help your business further develop to meet the requirements of the exciting but challenging times ahead, and looks forward to introducing you to the way forward for farm assurance in the near future.

A Reputation for Excellence

In addition to having state of the art on-farm data capture, NSF-CMi Certification ensures that you get the best service possible by employing a team of qualified professionals recruited from within relevant parts of the farming industry.

Our rigorous approach to assessor selection and training has enabled us to develop and maintain an international reputation for practical industry experience and in-depth knowledge across all sectors of the

food supply chain. NSF-CMi Certification is an Assessment Centre for NPTC and all its assessors are required to achieve and maintain the Certificate of Competence in Farm Inspection, as demanded by AFS schemes in the combinable crops, beef & lamb and pig sectors. The NSF-CMi Certification field-based team of Operations Managers and Assessors is also supported by dedicated technical and administration teams.

Fertiliser Security

Following customer demand, NSF-CMi is proud to launch its Fertiliser Security Standard. This scheme provides companies involved in the fertiliser supply industry with a credible alternative to the FIAS scheme, thus providing some much needed competition in this area. The standard is currently awaiting approval from DEFRA.

This standard will dovetail nicely with GTAS

(GAFTA Trade Assurance Scheme) enabling companies who are already GTAS assured to add Fertiliser Security to their certification process and therefore take advantage of the savings in both cost and time that this can bring.

For more information on the scheme please contact Paul Adams on 07775 575829 or paul.adams@nsf-cmicertification.com

GTAS

The GAFTA Trade Assurance Scheme (GTAS) for combinable crops and animal feed is now in its third year and has increased its market share to some 200 UK and international members from the Isle of Wight to Inverness and Finland to the Ukraine.

GTAS covers post farm gate assurance for Transport, Storage, Merchants, Laboratories, Cargo Superintendents and Fumigators, has full mutual recognition with TASC and is in the process of gaining recognition with the Belgium Ovocom scheme and the Dutch PDV scheme. It is the only scheme that



covers the whole spectrum of post farm gate activities on an international basis.

NSF-CMi prides itself on providing a professional service at a very competitive rate, offering true value for money in difficult economic times. This is especially true for customers who operate in more than one scope or in both pre and post farm gate activities where attractive cost savings can be made with multiple audits being carried out by the same assessor.

For more information on the scheme please contact Paul Adams on 07775 575829 or paul.adams@nsf-cmicertification.com. Alternatively go to the NSF-CMi website www.nsf-cmi.com to download scheme standards and application form.

Enter our survey and win a case of wine!



Your views are important to us and from time to time we like to test the temperature in UK Agriculture, to help us provide a better service to you in the future. In an attempt to bring some good cheer to this cold and miserable time of the year NSF-CMi is giving away 5 cases of wine to our readers.

Simply go to www.nsf-cmi.com and click on the link to 'UK Farmer Survey' on the home page. Answer a few simple questions and you will be entered into a prize draw. We will notify the winners personally by email and publish the results in the next issue of Insight. You will also be able to choose whether you would prefer to receive future issues of Insight and other communications from NSF-CMi by email.

Closing date: 26 March 2010