

A close-up photograph of a black and white cow's head in a barn stall. The cow has a white blaze on its face and two yellow ear tags. The background shows other cows and wooden stall bars.

Member Matters - August 2024

All the latest updates from Red Tractor





Your Board Update

From the Interim Chair, Alistair Mackintosh

Red Tractor's July Board Meeting update

Dear Member,

At my first Red Tractor Board meeting as interim chair, I confirmed my commitment to the role, and advised the Board that I'd taken the difficult decision to step down as an NFU Council member to make sure there's no perceived conflict of interest.

I made it clear that my first priority is to rebuild relationships with our farmers, growers and processors. I had already attended very useful meetings at the Balmoral Show in May as Vice Chair but have since stepped up this activity: agricultural shows are great places to meet farmers, their representatives, and processors from across the four nations. The result is we also had helpful discussions at the Cereals

Event and Royal Highland Show in June, and at the Royal Welsh and National Sheep Event following the Board meeting. I am pleased some of my fellow Directors joined the team at these and that all support my aim to

achieve more collaboration across all stakeholders.

Improving farmer engagement

A key focus of the Board meeting was communications, and understanding and improving engagement with farmers and growers was a major discussion point. In line with the Campbell Tickell review, we are working with an external specialist to

identify how and where we need to improve our communications. She presented plans for improving transparency and accountability around Red Tractor's activities, including increasing communication of our work in the areas our members care most about: the value gained from being Red Tractor producers, and how audits are being streamlined and improved – more on that in a moment.



Your update from Interim Chair Alistair Mackintosh

The Board acknowledges the importance of fostering trust. To this end, many sector chairs, along with myself and the Red Tractor team, will be attending industry and farmer meetings this autumn.

Returning to audits, I recognise this is a critical issue in our relationship with farmers and growers. I'm pleased to let you know that at the meeting, the Board received a comprehensive report on the future of Red Tractor Assurance. We have 79 independent farmers, processors, vets and food chain specialists on our sector boards, and they have been working hard in recent months to develop extremely ambitious proposals.

While there are existing plans to increase transparency around why

different standards are included, and strip out all unnecessary or duplicated standards and audit points as we did in the Beef, Lamb and Dairy Sectors last year, these ideas go a lot further. They include significantly improving farmer and assessor experience of the portal, to more radical changes such as using data and technology to move away from traditional assessments, and even reducing visit frequency where there's evidence of good compliance.

Open to change

The Board was struck by how open the sector boards had been to deep-seated, longer term change, which gives us an excellent start to developing a longer 5 -10 year strategy. The Board has asked the Red

Tractor team to turn these ideas into specific proposals, particularly those for the short term, for the next meeting. We continue to work with Sector Boards and will keep you updated on progress in this area, as we know it's really important to our members.

NFU and AHDB representatives reported on progress in the Review of Farm Assurance, and the Board confirmed its full support to engage with the Commissioners and share the recent work from the sector boards and Red Tractor team, mentioned above.

Independent Director Chris Goodwin, chairman of our Audit and Finance Committee, reported the results of the annual audit and end of year accounts. Red Tractor is a not-for-profit company, and as its Directors, we take our responsibilities seriously in ensuring the company is financially

sound and uses its money responsibly for the benefit of those in the Red Tractor supply chain.

Finally, the new Governance Handbook which is being developed in light of the Campbell Tickell Governance Review was discussed, and is almost completed.

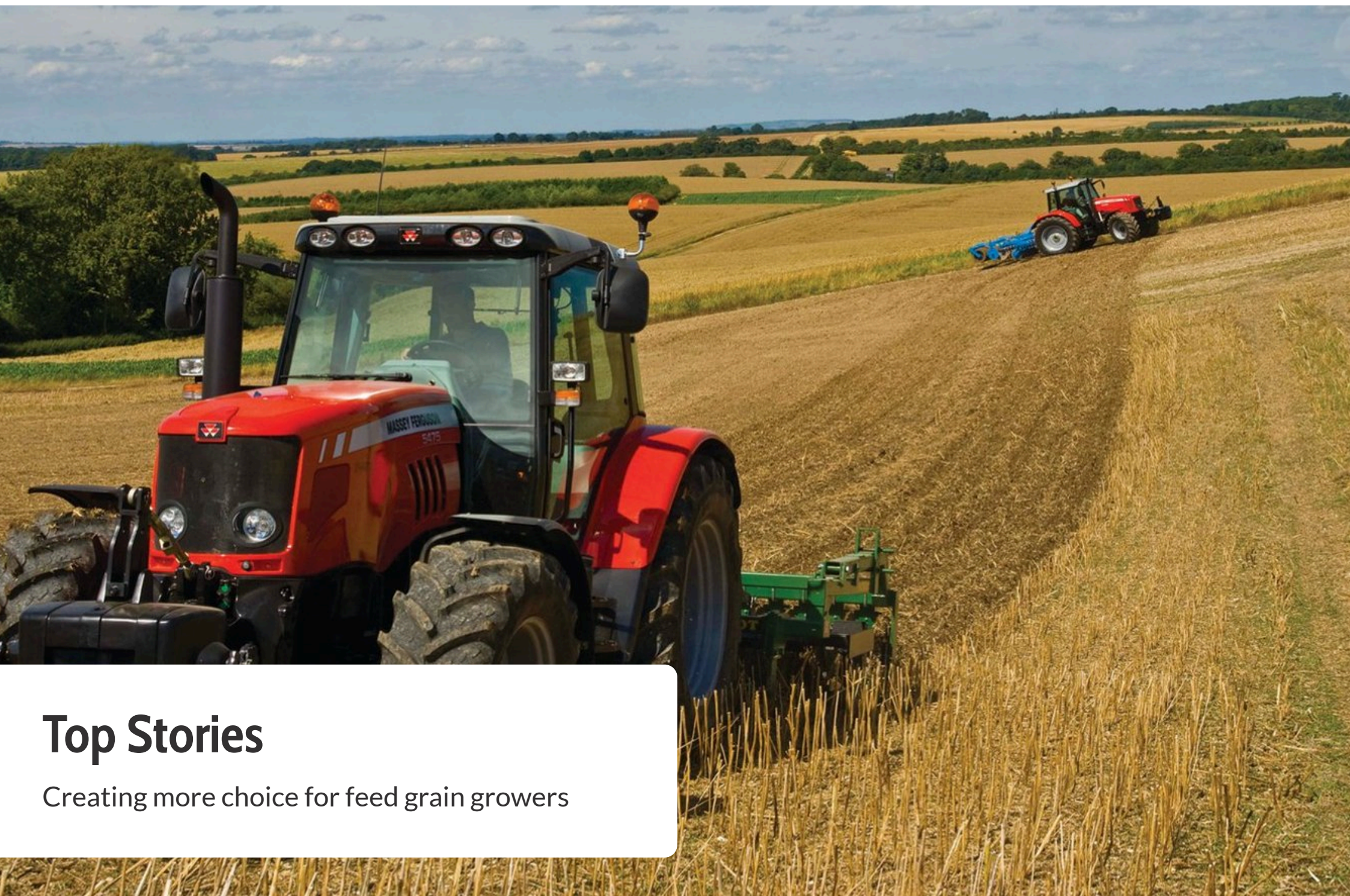
I know it's a busy time for many of you, so I wish you a successful harvest. We'll keep you updated as we move forward together.

Best wishes,

Alistair Mackintosh, Interim Chair



READ MORE ABOUT THE PROPOSALS DISCUSSED AT THE RECENT ROUND OF SECTOR BOARDS IN YOUR SECTOR CHAIRS REPORTS



Top Stories

Creating more choice for feed grain growers

New Entry Level Grain Standard in development

Red Tractor has been continuing its work in creating an Entry Level Standard for feed grains, allowing growers who grow just for feed a bespoke assessment to reflect their farming enterprise.

The new standard aims to meet legal minimum requirements for Feed Hygiene Regulations and will give combinable crops scheme members an alternative to the Core Red Tractor standards that grants access to the premium malting and milling sectors, as well as for oilseeds, sugar beet, oats, and other sectors outside of animal feed.

The inclusion of additional standards to allow for acceptance into the biofuels industry in line with the Renewable Energy Directive II (RED II) is also being considered.

Currently, UK growers must be members of a farm assurance scheme recognised by the Agricultural Industries Confederation (AIC), such as Red Tractor Assurance Crops or Scottish Quality Crops, to supply feed mills in the UK under the Universal Feed Assurance Scheme (UFAS). Red Tractor has faced criticism from farmers that its standards are out of step with import standards, and farmers have called for a levelling-up.

A final decision will not be made by the Red Tractor Combinable Crops & Sugar Beet Sector Board until further

discussions have been had with the supply chain, FSA, AIC, and farming bodies. We will also need to consider the conclusions of the wider

independent review into UK farm assurance which will assist in informing this work.



Watch: RT Crops Chair, Kit Papworth, speaks to Philippa Wiltshire at Cereals about import equivalence and the mass balance

Kit Papworth, Red Tractor Combinable Crops & Sugar Beet Chairman, commented in his recent [Sector Board update](#) that the new standard will provide more options for Red Tractor crops members.

Former Chair's reflections

Christine Tacon stepped down as Red Tractor Chair earlier this summer following her appointment to the Co-op board.

I applied for the job because I wanted to stay close to the farming industry. I'm fortunate to have broad experience – including running the Co-op's farming business and regulating retailers as the Groceries Code Adjudicator. I saw Red Tractor as a very good 'pulling together' of my skills.

Looking back, highlights included farmer meetings and experiencing on-farm audits first hand. I also very much enjoyed working with the Board. They're a supportive group – some from farming, others bringing science, consumer or supply chain expertise.

However, I feel I have left a job half-finished.

There are achievements I'm very proud of – for example, our focus on simplifying audits. My objective from the start was to remove two standards for every new one introduced. While achieving that will be a stretch, I'm pleased that streamlining audit efficiency is an ongoing and pressing priority.

Red Tractor's traceability is unique

I am also extremely proud of Red Tractor's uniqueness: not only is it an assurance scheme, but you only find it on British food. Almost every other



competitive scheme can be used

on imported food. I am concerned that if Red Tractor does not keep up to date, retailers, processors and food service will use alternative schemes

and we will lose that British identity on pack.

It is the Red Tractor team's job to listen to market demands and look at international competition, as well as



developments in the market. Raising standards might not be popular, but is indicative of where the market is going – and where producers must get to eventually, though I accept the speed with which we addressed this was too fast.

So whether it's food safety, treatment of employees, animal welfare or managing the environment, the supply chain needs assurance. Red Tractor has always had these in its

remit and if it doesn't audit, others – possibly many others – will. There is still too much duplication that needs eliminating.

I want to thank the producers who have been hugely supportive of Red Tractor and see the need for it. I am also grateful for those on our boards: people, many in unpaid positions, who have had to do way more over the past 12 difficult months than we led them to expect.

I also wish everybody in Red Tractor the best: it's a small team and they have been so resilient and committed despite what has been a very negative atmosphere around us. I particularly want to thank Jim for his strength in managing the team through a very difficult year. We've faced some major staffing setbacks including the death of one team member, who we will not forget for his dedication and his character. These personal tragedies have placed business issues and

industry politics in a very sharp perspective.

I hope the current independent review will explain the relevance of assurance and guide Red Tractor on what it must do better. Armed with these findings, I believe widespread producer trust in Red Tractor can be achieved again. I wish Alistair Mackintosh, the interim chair, all the best over the next few months and look forward to news of the appointment of a permanent chair to carry forward the work longer term.

Best Wishes,

Christine Tacon, Former Red Tractor Chair

THIS ARTICLE FIRST APPEARED IN FARMERS GUARDIAN ON JULY 4.



On The Road

Cereals Event | NSA Sheep Event | Royal Welsh Show | Royal Highland Show | CTSI Conference

Red Tractor at NSA Sheep Event

Red Tractor was excited to participate in the NSA Sheep Event this July.

The premier gathering for sheep farming professionals gave us a valuable platform to engage directly with our farmer members, industry experts, and other key stakeholders.

Red Tractor interim chair Alistair Mackintosh said, “By coming to the event and having open dialogue we hope to foster stronger relationships, transparency, and collaboration with the sector. I am confident this will help build a sense of trust between Red Tractor and the sheep farming community.”

He added, “The team were particularly eager to listen to the insights and feedback from members,

with whom we have a shared purpose of ensuring the sector has a strong future. We are committed to staying attuned to the real-world challenges and opportunities they face.”



Alistair Mackintosh speaking to farmers at NSA Sheep Event

Meeting Members at Cereals Event

Crops Chair Kit Papworth met with hundreds of members at this year's event.

At the Cereals Event at Newham Farm, Hertfordshire in June we welcomed visitors from all over the country to the Red Tractor stand. Red Tractor was again included on the NRoSO knowledge trail with visitors taking a quiz to learn how our standards cover the use of PPPs to obtain a NRoSO point.

Our crops sector Chair Kit Papworth was on hand both days, speaking to many members about their concerns over the issue of imports given the

anticipated smaller UK harvest.



Kit Papworth talking to members at Cereals

Date for your Diary: Cereals 2025, 11-12 June, Roy Ward Farms, Leadenham, Lincs.

Engaging at the Royal Highland Show

Red Tractor speaks with Scottish agriculture stakeholders at annual show.

Engaging with members, farming bodies and stakeholders in Scotland was the focus for Alistair Mackintosh, Red Tractor interim chair and Philippa Wiltshire, Red Tractor Head of Operations on their visit to the Highland Show in June.

The Highland show is one of the premier events that brings the agriculture industry together. They managed to meet with the NFU



Scotland, Quality Meat Scotland, Scottish Quality Crops, several meat processors and lots of farmers. These conversations are extremely important as we navigate the challenges of delivering farm assurance across the devolved regions of the UK.

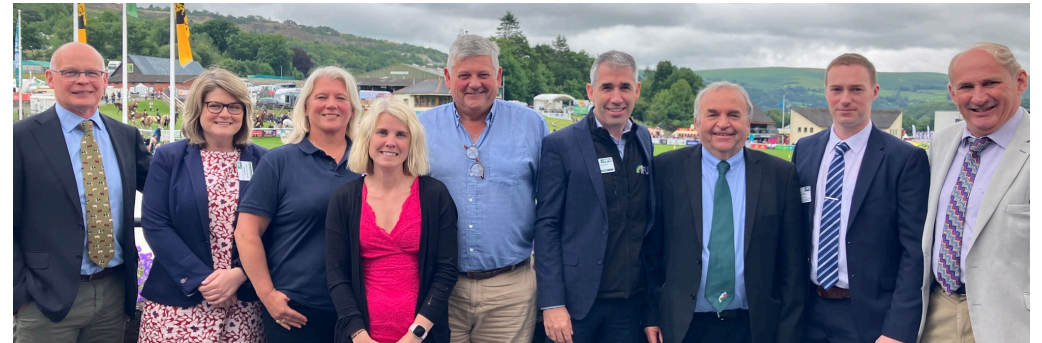


Red Tractor at the Royal Welsh Show

Members of the Red Tractor team were pleased to speak with members and organisations from across the Welsh farming sector at the 2024 Royal Welsh Show.

Tim Lock, Dairy Sector Board Chair, Philippa Wiltshire, Red Tractor Head of Operations and Jemma Holden, Dairy, Beef and Lamb and Post Farm Gate Technical Manager were pleased to meet with the NFU Cymru

commodity chairs and staff. It was also a great opportunity to meet with representatives from FUW, retailers and the The Farm Assured Welsh Livestock Beef and Lamb Scheme (FAWL).



Red Tractor Dairy Chair, Tim Lock (centre) and Red Tractor Team meeting with NFU Cymru commodity chairs and staff

Future of food safety regulation

Red Tractor's Head of Operations speaks to the Chartered Trading Standards Institute

Philippa Wiltshire, Head of Operations joined a platform of speakers including Professor Chris Elliot (Institute for Global Food Security), Dawn Welham (Quality Assurance Director Aldi), David

Pickering (Trading Standards Lead officer for Food) to speak to an audience of trading standards inspectors at the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) conference in Leeds.



Red Tractor's Head of Operations, Philippa Wiltshire, speaking at the conference

Philippa spoke about the work of Red Tractor and the earned recognition arrangements with the Food Standards Agency. Earned recognition is a key element of value provided to farmers from being Red Tractor certified.



Earned recognition at Red Tractor

The Red Tractor supports its members through an earned recognition system, which reduces the frequency of external inspections by fulfilling specific compliance standards monitored by independent certification bodies.

This arrangement, recognised by regulators like Food Standards Agency (FSA), is awarded to robust schemes accredited by the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) to demonstrate legal compliance.

[Read more here about earned recognition agreements.](#)



Technical Updates

Ergot and eMB reminders | Technical Briefings
for Pigs and Crops members

New technical briefings: Pigs and Crops

In the past few weeks, we have issued technical briefings for our pigs and combinable crops members.

If you missed them CLICK below to get the latest technical news and advice from the Red Tractor team.



Click: Pigs Technical Briefing



Dear Members

I am delighted to be introducing another update for crops members with news and advice from the Red Tractor team.

I want to acknowledge the incredibly challenging season growers have already faced, with the anticipated smaller UK harvest bringing the issue of imports to the forefront for many farmers.

We are currently exploring an alternative entry-level animal feed enterprise for Combinable Crops and Sugarbeet Scheme members. This new standard aims to meet legal minimum requirements and offer more options for farmers focusing solely on grain for the animal feed market. We have made considerable



progress in drafting the standard and have engaged in consultations with industry stakeholders.

However, we recognise that our feed assurance scheme partners at AIC and their merchant members need to carefully consider the proposals.

Additionally, I am eagerly awaiting the publication of AHDB's independent review of the farm and trade assurance processes, which will shed more light on the impact of imports on the UK market.

Better communication with you is crucial, and my team and I are committed to being more transparent about our efforts on your behalf. Delivering on audit efficiency and demonstrating the value Red Tractor

certification brings to your business are our top priorities. I want to reiterate that Red Tractor will not introduce a 'green' module unless explicitly requested collectively by the industry. Nonetheless, other organisations are making strides in carbon footprinting and related initiatives, some of which offer direct financial benefits to participating farmers. This raises an important question about Red Tractor's role in improving the efficiency of new environment-related audits for farmers, and we will take our cues on this from the industry.

Thank you for your continued support for our scheme. We look forward to continuing to work alongside all of you.

Kie Papworth
Red Tractor Crops Sector Chair

Say hello to Kit at Cereals

We look forward to seeing as many members as possible on our stand (no. 238). Red Tractor is part of the NROSO knowledge trail, so by taking part in our quiz you can pick up a NROSO point.



E: memberhelp@redtractor.org.uk T: 020 7630 3320

Click: Crops Technical Briefing

Pigs Farmers: Your eMB reminder

Have you submitted your Q2 antibiotic usage data to the eMB yet?

The deadline for uploading your quarter two (Apr to Jun) antibiotic usage data to the e-medicine book is Sunday 11 August.

When you submit your data, you will notice a benchmarking feature. This enables you and your vet to see whether your unit(s) falls in the top 5% or 10% of antibiotic use for your holding type.



New Soya Sourcing Regulations

New UK and EU regulations on responsible soya sourcing are set to affect farmers. Here's what you need to know and how Red Tractor is looking after your best interests.

Key Regulatory Changes:

- UK's New Rules: The UK Forest Risk Commodities Regulation (UKFRC) will require major businesses to prove their soya, palm oil, cocoa, and cattle products aren't linked to illegal deforestation.
- EU's Approach: The EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) takes effect next year. It differs from UK rules and will impact UK supply chains, including cattle producers exporting beef to the EU.

Impact on farmers and wider UK food industry:

- These regulations primarily target large businesses, but will indirectly affect farmers using soya in animal feed.
- Specifics and timelines remain unclear. We advise staying alert for updates.
- Retailers are pressing the government for clearer guidance amidst market uncertainty.

Red Tractor takes action:

We recently hosted a webinar for our



Beef & Lamb, Dairy, Pig, and Poultry sector boards. Efeca experts briefed attendees on upcoming legislation, the UK Soy Manifesto commitments to tackle deforestation and implications the changes could have for members.

Following the webinar, our sector boards met to discuss sustainable soya armed with this new knowledge. Each sector board has committed to closely monitor this evolving policy area. We'll continue to facilitate these

types of discussions and keep you informed on any important developments.

Within the UK Soy Manifesto group Red Tractor has also been highlighting the need to keep any future reporting requirements for farmers simple, urging the supply chain to utilise existing reporting and verification mechanisms where possible to avoid unnecessarily burdening farmers.

Ergot Reminder

AHDB has encouraged farmers to be familiar with how to spot the signs of ergot and fusarium and the potential risk to livestock.

This year early indications are that fusarium and in particular, ergot (*Claviceps Purpurea*) levels are once again at a level whereby many members will experience rejections this coming season.

Ergot presents a toxic risk to both the human and feed supply chain and AHDB have recently published guidance to farmers who feed grain direct to livestock and the early signs of poisoning.

As the results of ergot poisoning can be so acute, few processors are willing

to accept contaminated grain and although grain cleaning can remove sclerotia post-harvest it is costly, usually shouldered by the grower and is not always 100% effective at removing ergot alkaloids.

Currently the grower is disadvantaged at all stages of production; the tolerance of ergot presence in seed, the lack of agronomic treatments available, the cultural move and reward for min till/ direct drill systems and incentives for wildflower margins etc

Red Tractor has been a part of a working group on ergot and welcomes AHDB issuing a call for applications for a review and update of ergot guidance. This is to identify UK knowledge gaps and where research would be advantageous to the UK farmer. For more information, visit AHDB's website: [Updating UK management guidelines for the ergot pathogen, *Claviceps purpurea* | AHDB](#)

UK Grain Testing Network seeks bulk samples for testing

The UK Grain Testing Network is a membership organisation for those interested in the analysis of barley, wheat, oilseed rape, oats, and beans, with the common objective of achieving the best possible accurate results from their instruments. The membership includes growers, merchants, and end users (millers, maltsters, and distillers for example).

To achieve the best results possible, they standardise the equipment for their full members and run monthly ring checks throughout the year. To do this they require bulk samples of each commodity, which are normally supplied by their members. UKGTN members who send samples would receive a rebate from next year's membership.

This year they have been finding it difficult to source bulk samples for oats and beans (60kg for oats and 40kg for beans), so are requesting bulk samples from the wider community of farmers and growers.

[Visit UK Grain Testing Network's website for more information.](#) Sacks to fill are provided.

Thank you for reading

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If you have any questions, please contact the Red Tractor team
directly on memberhelp@redtractor.org.uk / 020 7630 3320

