



# MEMBER MATTERS

News and updates from your Red Tractor Assurance team

AUTUMN 2024



SCAN THE QR CODE

Sign up for member services to receive regular news updates from us.

## “We’re listening”

Dear Member

This is no empty promise. My primary focus as I take up the reins as interim Chair is rebuilding relationships with farmers, growers, and processors.

First comes trust, so at my first Red Tractor Board meeting, I confirmed my commitment to the role and announced my decision to step down as an NFU Council member to avoid any conflicts of interest.

Since then, I've engaged with stakeholders at agricultural shows, including the Balmoral, Cereals Event, Royal Highland Show, Royal Welsh, and National Sheep Event. These gatherings offer space for meaningful discussions and opportunities to foster more cooperation within the food and farming community. Your Sector Board chairs and I, along with the Red Tractor team, will continue to attend industry and farmer meetings this autumn.

Communication and farmer engagement were key topics at the Board meeting. I'm pleased to say we're working with an external expert to enhance transparency and accountability. Improvements will focus on conveying the value of Red Tractor to producers and streamlining audits – topics critical to our members.

As well as this, the Board is considering comprehensive proposals to future-proof Red Tractor assurance. These aim to eliminate unnecessary standards, improve the Portal experience, use data to streamline assessments, and reduce audit frequency where compliance is strong.

It was also encouraged by the Sector



Boards' openness to long-term strategy changes. Red Tractor has been tasked with refining these ideas into short-term plans for discussion with the 79 food and farming representatives on the Sector Boards, and wider industry.

NFU and AHDB representatives reported progress on the Farm Assurance Review; the Board is fully engaged with the review, and is submitting a response which shares challenges, solutions and recent work.

I know many of you will be busy right now completing this year's harvest and sowing. I hope you find this newsletter helpful, and I encourage members to explore the latest technical briefings in the Pigs and Combinable Crops sectors on the Red Tractor website, as well as to look out for upcoming briefings on Dairy and Fresh Produce next month.

Best,  
Alistair, Interim Red Tractor Chair

## LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!

If you've had an assessment recently and we have your email address, you will have received an invitation to complete a quick survey so you can let us know how it went. Make sure you fill it in – we read every response and use your feedback to shape how we do things in the future.

Since we started the survey, we've had over 3,000 responses. These tell us:

- Assessors are consistently highly rated (**4.6 out of 5 stars**)
- **Three quarters think** Red Tractor is transparent
- **85%** think Red Tractor is 'doing OK' with assessment efficiency
- **More than two thirds** think Red Tractor provides value to their business



# MEMBER MATTERS

## Red Tractor Hungarian potatoes? Certainly not!

Did you know that mislabelling incidents on Red Tractor produce are rare?

From over 850 licensee sites producing £17 billion worth of Red Tractor food in the last year, there were only four incidents.

That's because at Red Tractor, we're focused on holding the supply chain to account. In fact, we are the only assurance scheme to safeguard so comprehensively the integrity of your produce and maintain trust in our logos through a comprehensive traceability programme, which activates as soon as produce leaves the farm.

This means we take it very seriously when, on the rare occasion, an error occurs in the supply chain. Maintaining trust in the brand is essential to upholding the confidence and trust that consumers place in Red Tractor.

You may have spotted that earlier this summer, we were alerted to one product line of Red Tractor-logged ASDA potatoes which was labelled as originating in Hungary. In these instances, our response is very rapid.

Using our licensing data, the supplier was identified within 30 minutes. We launched a detailed investigation, contacted the Red Tractor-licensed packaging site in Scotland, and insisted that ASDA take the product off their shelves immediately. We also instantly sent one of our traceability challenge assessors to visit the packhouse unannounced.

Our assessor established that most of the Hungarian potatoes were labelled correctly with packaging which did not contain the Red Tractor logo. However, due to human error, a single roll of Red Tractor-logged packaging had been used for just over three hours – 09.34am to 12.37pm – on the day in question.

Following a meeting with the licensee site team and ASDA personnel, we mandated increased controls and additional training. The site will also receive an extra unannounced traceability assessment along with a further follow-up meeting.

Joanna King, Senior Technical Manager for licensing, says: "We can count on one hand the number of mislabelling cases we've had in the past year, but any one case is one too many and we take it extremely seriously.



**"There is real benefit in the Red Tractor licensing system. If packaging merely carries the Union flag and not a Red Tractor logo, the daily checks behind the**

**product claims are just not as comprehensive, and the response to any issues not as immediate."**

Joanna points out that hundreds of traceability challenges are carried out each year across all Red Tractor licensee sites. "This includes processors, packhouses, catering butchers, wholesalers, traders, food service outlets – to ensure we're testing the whole British Red Tractor chain of assurance and safeguarding the integrity of farmers' assured produce."

"However, incidents such as the mislabelled potatoes take priority in terms of resource and time. Once we've resolved the issue, we can return to our day job – to focusing on the everyday job of upholding the logo rules that protect the integrity of our members' produce using our traceability challenge programme," she adds.



**Four** labelling issues in the past year

Typically, just **30** mins to identify and contact the licensee

**10** trained traceability challenge assessors

**700** unannounced traceability assessments ever year

Over **850** licensed sites

**8** licence suspensions in the past year

## BEYOND THE TV SCREEN...

The results are in! Red Tractor's new advertising campaign to champion the best of British agriculture has been running throughout the summer.

But instead of TV, this campaign ran over digital billboards and shopping trolleys – and we've just had the results back...

Every year, Red Tractor certifies more than £17 billion worth of UK food and drink, right across the food supply chain from farming to production and packing. Our TV advertising, now in its sixth year, plays a vital role in building consumer awareness of this, and demonstrates how Red Tractor food is responsibly produced and meets rigorous standards.

And it works! Consumer research shows that Red Tractor is the most recognised and trusted food assurance scheme in the UK, with more than 7 out of 10 shoppers aware of the logo and 17 million people saying it is an independent source they can trust.

This year we've gone beyond the TV screen to test a new, nationwide



campaign close to selected Tesco stores. As the largest retailer in the country, this is where the test will get the most visibility. We have digital adverts, all within 50 metres of Tesco stores, and advertising on thousands of Tesco trolleys to put Red Tractor in front of consumers right at the point that they are making their purchase decisions in store.

This form of retail advertising is brand new for Red Tractor, so we've had independent measurement in place throughout the summer, to gauge its effectiveness – especially how it drives awareness and trust in Red Tractor assured products.

The survey compared responses from consumers who had and hadn't seen the Red Tractor retail advertising.

The results show that it has driven positive perceptions of Red Tractor. People who saw the advertising were more aware of Red Tractor and more likely to consider buying products labeled with the Red Tractor logo.

The retail advertising test continues until March 2025.

Sources: YouGov (July 2024)  
The7stars (Sept 2024)



## COOKING UP A STORM

Another part of Red Tractor's marketing strategy this year is to engage consumers with ideas, inspiration and useful information about food and drink. We can't position Red Tractor to consumers as experts in everything – but by partnering with different food experts, we can champion British food by offering insights that our busy target audience finds genuinely useful.

This approach started with a collaboration with chef Adam Gray. Adam has worked around the world running Michelin-starred restaurants and delighting customers with outstanding food. Delicious, British food that has been responsibly produced is just as important in his kitchen at home as it is in his restaurant kitchens.

Adam has been sharing some of the meals he cooks for his family at home, which we're delighted to feature on the Red Tractor website. All the recipes include easy-to-find British, Red Tractor-assured ingredients.

The recipes cover all the sectors in which Red Tractor operates. There will be a new set of recipes every season, with Autumn recipes launching towards the end of September.

**PROUD TO SUPPORT  
LOVE LAMB WEEK!**  
1-7 SEPTEMBER 2024



Red Tractor was proud to support September's 'Make it Lamb' campaign, by calling on shoppers to choose UK produced lamb by looking for the Red Tractor logo.

# RED TRACTOR ON THE ROAD...



## Addressing import equivalence

We are acutely aware of members' concerns about a lack of import equivalence for crops entering the animal feed sector – but a solution is being worked on ...

The answer is an Entry Level Standard for feed grains, which we've been working on for the past year. This will allow growers who produce grain just for feed to be assessed against standards which better reflect the requirements of that specific sector.

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 acknowledges criticism from

farmers that standards are out of step with import standards, and there needs to be a 'levelling-up.'

The new standard aims to do this by meeting legal minimum requirements for Feed Hygiene Regulations. It will give combinable crops scheme members a more accessible alternative to the Core Red Tractor standards that currently allows access to malting, milling and other premium markets for crops such as oilseeds, sugar beet and oats.

A second variation on this Entry Level Standard is also being considered to allow acceptance into the biofuels industry in line with the Renewable

Energy Directive II (RED II). Access to this vital multimillion-pound market is a significant benefit for Red Tractor cereals farmers.

A final decision on launching this standard 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 and the AHDB crops benchmarking report which will assist in informing this work. But watch this space...

## Maximum market access - minimum audit

Audit efficiency is at the heart of Red Tractor.

Philippa Wiltshire, Head of Operations, was recently invited to speak about Red Tractor farmers receiving 'lighter touch' regulation from the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

Joining an eminent panel of speakers including Professor Chris Elliot (Institute for Global Food Security), Dawn Welham (Quality Assurance Director, Aldi) and David Pickering (Trading Standards Lead Officer for Food) at the Chartered Trading Standards Institute conference in Leeds, Philippa explained that regulators inspect farms more frequently if

they are not Red Tractor assured, for example, the FSA dairy hygiene inspectors visit farms every two-to-three years, they only inspect Red Tractor farms once every 10 years.

"Red Tractor supports you through an earned recognition system," she explains. "This reduces frequency of external inspections because it 'automatically' fulfils specific compliance standards monitored by independent certification bodies.

"Put simply, it 'pre-ticks' the box required by the FSA."

She added "This arrangement



is awarded to robust schemes accredited by the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS) to demonstrate legal compliance, and so reduces the frequency of inspections from organisations like FSA and Trading Standards."

Read all the previous editions of Member Matters in full on our website: [www.redtractorassurance.org.uk](http://www.redtractorassurance.org.uk)

**E:** [memberhelp@redtractor.org.uk](mailto:memberhelp@redtractor.org.uk) **T:** 020 7630 3320

 **RedTractorFood**  [facebook.com/redtractorfood](https://facebook.com/redtractorfood)  [instagram.com/redtractorfood](https://instagram.com/redtractorfood)