

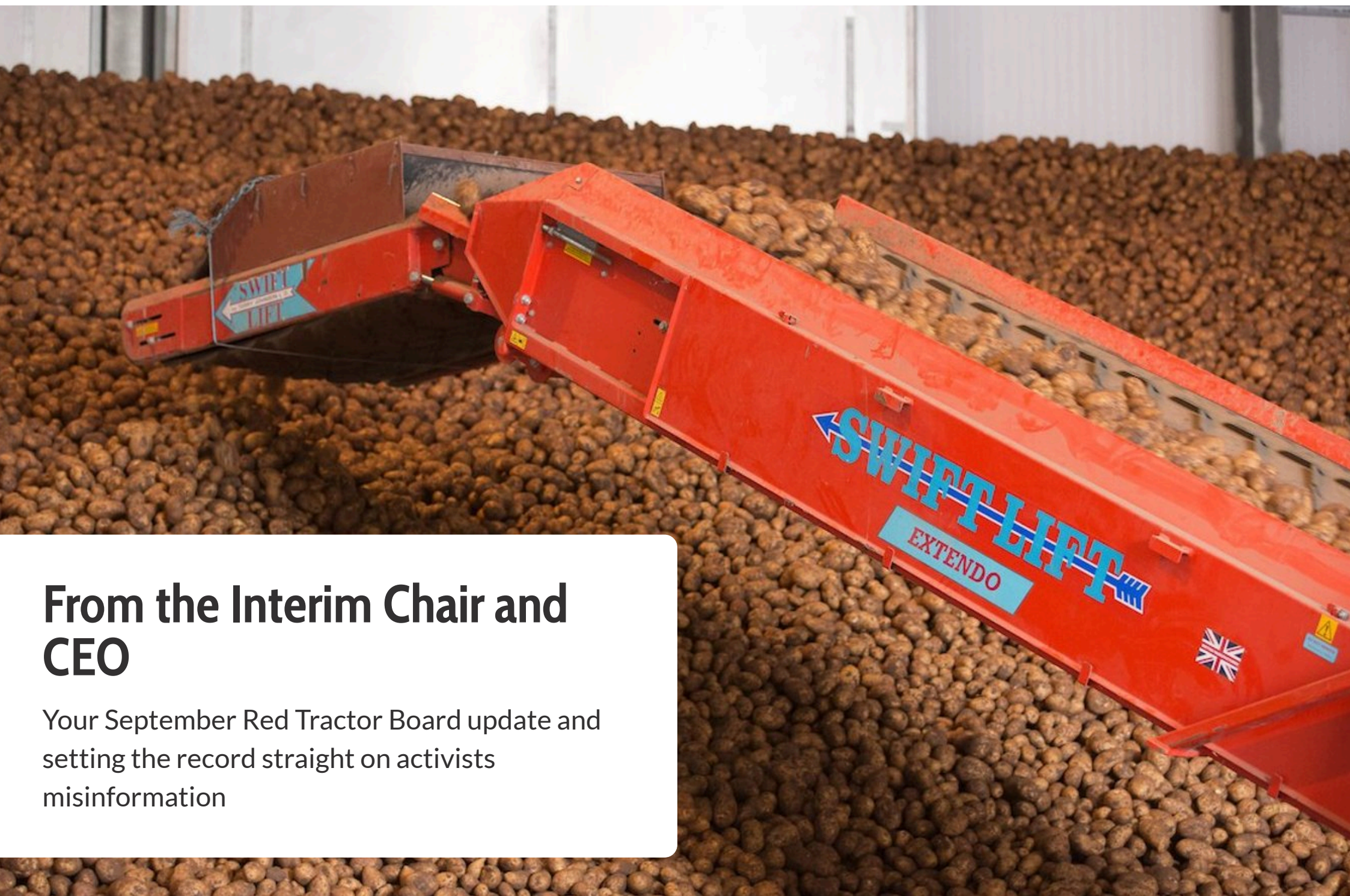


Member Matters:

# October 2024

All the latest from Red Tractor





## From the Interim Chair and CEO

Your September Red Tractor Board update and setting the record straight on activists misinformation

Welcome to your October 2024 edition of Member Matters. We'll cover the latest discussions of the September Board meeting and take you behind the scenes of our assessor engagement days, which are designed to ensure you receive a consistent & high quality audit. And in case you missed it, there's still time to have your say in the [Red Tractor Annual Survey](#).

## The Report

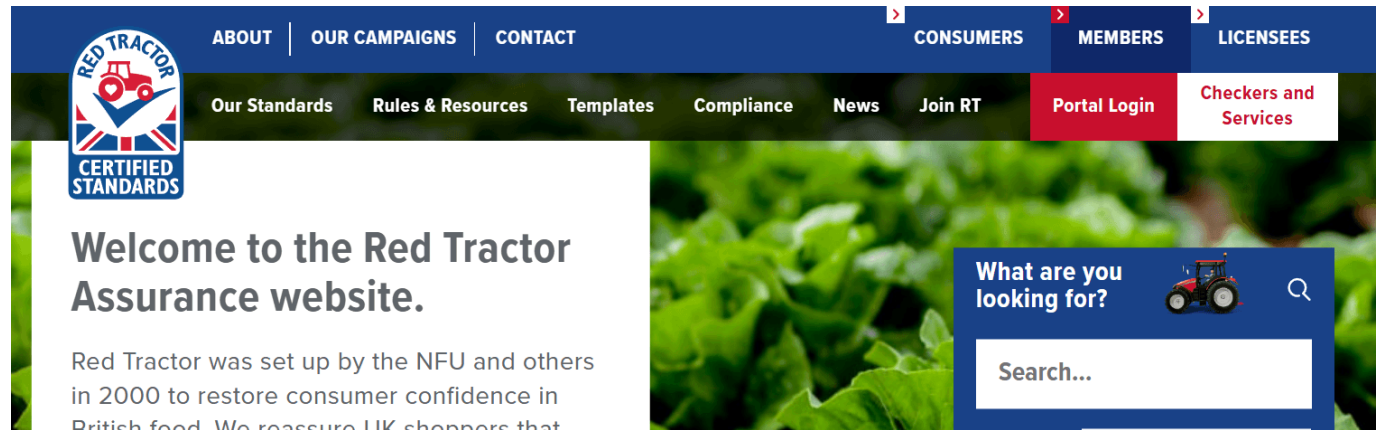
Your latest update on discussions at the Red Tractor Board by Interim Chair, Alistair Mackintosh

**Our priority focus continues on improving the experience farmers have during audits, and making standards easier to understand and more transparent.**

### Audit efficiency is a priority

In my [July Board meeting update](#), I explained the excellent work of our Sector Boards in building a new future for Red Tractor assurance.

Now we're making progress on improvements to



Watch this space: Assurance Hub coming soon

the [Portal](#) for farmers and assessors, which will be critical in not only saving time and effort, but also improving rigour.

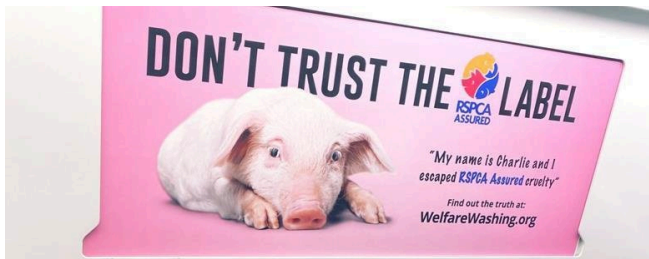
This work sits alongside developing a new 'Assurance Hub'. This a digital tool to help members

access and filter standards and compliance information relevant to them, and – in the longer term – explain why certain standards exist. The Assurance Hub is being tested with a group of farmer volunteers, and will be launched on our website later this Autumn.

## Addressing activist pressure

Last month's Red Tractor Board agenda was wide-ranging, focusing not just on the above priorities, but also recent activist activity, and our potential role in supporting the export of British-produced food and drink.

With RSPCA Assured currently under scrutiny, the Board discussed the pressures exerted by activists on the farming industry and assurance schemes. The importance of Red Tractor continuing to protect members who adhere to standards was reiterated, as well as maintaining compliance to safeguard the industry's reputation.



An activist's advertising campaign against RSPCA Assured, currently running on the London Underground

## Listening and taking action



Alistair at NSA Sheep Event

Since my appointment, my focus has been on listening to and strengthening our relationships with farmers, growers, and processors. This included attending the NSA Sheep Event, where I talked with fellow sheep producers about the

challenges facing the sector, such as ensuring assurance delivers value to sheep farmers when non-retail markets – such as ethnic and export customers – don't require it. Direct communication with farming bodies in the devolved nations is also critical. I had a positive meeting with the NFU Cymru Welsh Council in September, while my colleague and Dairy Sector Chair Tim Lock reported on his visit to Belfast to meet the Ulster Farmers Union Milk Committee. A recurring theme from all is the need for audit efficiency and value from Red Tractor.

More feedback will be forthcoming from our annual farmer survey, which has been running throughout October, which will offer us valuable insights into improving engagement. If you haven't already, please take this opportunity to make your feelings known by [completing the survey](#).

**WE'RE LISTENING: CLICK HERE TO COMPLETE THE RED TRACTOR SURVEY BY SUNDAY 27 OCTOBER**

## Supporting British food exports

Our vision is to be world-leader in food chain assurance at home and abroad. A survey of 4,500 people across nine countries indicates that in many major export markets, consumers appreciate the added reassurance of Red Tractor, particularly where food safety is uncertain and assurance schemes are lacking.

For example, the likelihood to purchase British food increased by 13 percentage points if it had the Red Tractor logo as well as the Union flag. On the back of this, the Board has begun discussions on how Red Tractor could complement and support existing efforts by AHDB and processors in establishing overseas markets for assured British food.

## Other news

The Board approved the completion of all actions from the Campbell Tickell Governance Review, including updates to the Risk Register and a Governance Handbook, which is now available to all on [our website](#). This and all our current activity

on the future of assurance have been reported to the Commissioners of the farm assurance review, which is expected to report in December.

## And finally...

I understand how tough the recent unpredictable and extreme weather has been for everyone in the farming community, with Bluetongue adding extra stress and uncertainty.

As we move into autumn, I sincerely hope the impacts on your business are minimal. Rest assured, we'll keep you updated on Red Tractor's efforts and initiatives to support you during these challenging times.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the team on [memberhelp@redtractor.org.uk](mailto:memberhelp@redtractor.org.uk).

**Best wishes,**

**Alistair Mackintosh,**

**Red Tractor Interim Chair**

## Setting the Record Straight - A response to the SMF report

*The Social Market Foundation should leave their desks and visit a farm - they might be pleasantly surprised to see what they find.*

These are the thoughts of Red Tractor CEO Jim Moseley in his latest blog addressing some of the claims made about Red Tractor recently.

A recent report by the Social Market Foundation (SMF) on animal welfare inspections included a lot of misinformation about animal welfare and assurance in this country,

Jim has robustly challenged the claims.

[Read more on our website.](#)



# Technical updates

Driving assessor consistency - Strengthening Trust & Transparency | Getting ready for winter

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## Driving Assessor Consistency - Strengthening Trust and Transparency

Kate Cross, the Compliance Manager at Red Tractor, often hears the need for assessor consistency from members, and addressing this issue is a primary focus for her team.



Kate Cross, Red Tractor Compliance Manager

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She says "Ensuring consistency is a fundamental objective of Red Tractor, and I know how critical it is to maintain the trust of both farmers and consumers."

Red Tractor's Assessor Academy plays a key role in achieving this objective, providing training and testing assessors on their understanding of the standards. We accompany assessors on farm visits to observe their interactions with members, and investigate any individual feedback received from members. In addition to these measures, Red Tractor works with our Certification Body partners in facilitating Continuing Professional Development (CPD) events, such as a recent session held specifically for pig assessors.



(Image credit: Tim Schrivener)

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Consumers and retailers need confidence that every farm certified under the Red Tractor logo adheres to the same rigorous standards, ensuring the integrity of the UK farming industry. At the same time, farmers expect audits to be fair and consistent. We know that any discrepancies in how standards are

interpreted or applied can lead to confusion, frustration, a lack of trust, and a sense of unfairness among farmers.

Maintaining this consistency requires ongoing training and open communication between Red Tractor and its assessors. This allows us to

align on the interpretation of standards, address ambiguous scenarios, and provide clear guidance on both existing and updated requirements.

At the recent engagement day with our pig scheme assessors, we had the chance to update them on upcoming minor changes to standards for early next year and discuss our plans to improve audit efficiency and reduce duplication in the pig sector. Assessors engaged in valuable discussions about how standards should be interpreted in various on-farm situations, with the goal of achieving greater consistency in audit practices.



Pigs Technical Manager Georgina McDowell (third left) with pigs assessors working for NSF

We are striving to ensure that audits are fair, proportionate, and transparent across the board.

Some assessors identified key areas where they would benefit from

further guidance, and we will be sharing these insights with pig scheme members to ensure that everyone is clear on expectations. Additionally, hearing directly from assessors about their on-farm

observations provided valuable insights into how the pig standards are being implemented and assessed in practice.

Through these efforts we aim to

ensure that all assessors share a unified understanding of what is required on Red Tractor farms, ultimately promoting a more consistent and transparent audit process across the entire scheme.



# EA advice on your winter preparations

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As winter approaches, we'd like to highlight the Environment Agency's (EA) support for farmers regarding slurry storage.

They recently published a helpful blog which you may want to look at: [Helping](#)

[Farmers Get Ready for Winter with Slurry Storage Support.](#)

Additionally, they've released a case study featuring a farmer from Cornwall, discussing their approach to slurry storage: [Getting Winter Ready: A Case Study.](#)

There is help available if you need to improve your slurry storage capacity. The EA stresses that their officers are available to collaborate with you, helping you find practical solutions tailored to your specific needs.



Watch: [Getting winter ready](#)

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Fresh Produce members: check your inboxes next week

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## Look out for the New Technical Briefing – Fresh Produce Members

We will be issuing a technical briefing for Fresh Produce members very soon.

It includes important information about Red Tractor's benchmarking with GLOBALG.A.P. IFA Fruit & Vegetables standards, bringing Red Tractor's standards in line with theirs, preventing members from needing an additional farm audit.



# On the Road

GLOBAL G.A.P. Summit | Biofuels behind the scenes

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# Behind the scenes of biofuel production

Red Tractor Combinable Crops members enjoy access into the European biofuels market through the Renewable Energy Directive without the need for additional audits.

Our team spend a lot of time making sure that the compliance aspects of this earned recognition relationship is maintained. And in return our members get additional value as confirmed by the recent [AHDB market insights](#).

Our expertise often focuses on ensuring members meet these standards for market access. However, the technical and operational details of how agricultural products, such as feed wheat, are transformed into biofuels, essential for compliance with biofuel sustainability criteria, are outside our daily scope of work. This month, our Crops Technical Manager Annie Rogers took the

opportunity to meet with the team at Vivergo to gain valuable insights into the biofuel production process.

Understanding the scale and complexity of the operation, such as Vivergo's ability to produce bioethanol equivalent to 1 billion bottles of spirits

annually, helps us appreciate the significant market opportunities for Red Tractor members. Plus, it is crucial that we stay current with both technical advancements and legislative changes, ensuring Red Tractor members can continue to access valuable markets like the European biofuels sector.

**Our commitment: market access for minimum audit**



**Annie Rogers, Combinable Crops and Sugar Beet Technical Manager (far right) at Vivergo**

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## Industry developments shape Red Tractor standards



GLOBALG.A.P. Summit 2024

For Red Tractor, staying informed about industry developments is crucial when setting and updating standards.

Awareness of current trends, technological advancements, and regulatory changes enables Red Tractor to develop standards that are not only relevant but also forward-thinking and aligning with the latest industry and member expectations. This means that Red Tractor can ensure that its standards support farmers in meeting evolving market demands, enhancing their competitiveness whilst at the same maintaining

consumer trust in the Red Tractor logo and championing the best of British Food.

This is why Sam Trevey, Red Tractor's Fresh Produce Technical Manager attended the recent GLOBALG.A.P. Summit 2024 in Warsaw, Poland. As scrutiny around transparency and accountability grows, producers, suppliers, and buyers are under increasing pressure to meet consumer expectations and comply with emerging supply chain legislation. Topics covered included advancements in artificial intelligence, precision farming, and remote sensing technologies, and

their transformative impact on agricultural practices.

Discussions also underscored the rising importance of green claims, certification, consumer trust, and product labelling as strategies to enhance brand loyalty and secure robust pricing for producers. Additionally, the summit highlighted opportunities to improve traceability and transparency within supply chains, stressing the need for production processes that meet heightened sustainability standards.



Fresh Produce Technical Manager, Sam Trevey

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