



Quality Welsh Food Certification Ltd.
ardystio bwyd Cymreig safonol

Welsh Organic Scheme

PRODUCER MANUAL

INTRODUCTION

The Welsh Organic Scheme has been set up to enable Welsh farmers, growers and processors to achieve organic certification status by conforming to operating standards approved by DEFRA. Quality Welsh Food Certification Ltd (QWFC), a company operating to standards recognised throughout Europe, European Standard EN45011, will monitor the Welsh Organic Scheme. QWFC will issue certificates of compliance to those producers or processors that comply with the standards.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO JOIN?

Any producer or processor in Wales is eligible to join but can only be certified if, on assessment, the farm is seen to comply with the set of standards approved by DEFRA.

WHAT IS IN THIS MANUAL

This manual contains information that you must read before you decide to join the Scheme. The procedures for becoming certified, how we conduct assessment visits, the Rules Governing Certification, and most importantly, the Scheme Standard (DEFRA Standards for Organic Food Production) are all contained in this booklet. Please be sure to read it in full before you make your application for certification.

OBTAINING CERTIFICATION

OVERVIEW

The process involves making your application to the Scheme on the QWFC Application Form provided. You must then have your first assessment visit and rectify non-compliances, if any. Once compliance with the Scheme has been verified, a Certificate of Compliance will be issued which will specify the areas of operation and their status. A Schedule will also be supplied in the case of land-based enterprises which will detail the fields and their status.

HOW TO APPLY

It is essential that you read the Scheme Standard, Scheme Rules and other information in this manual very carefully before you decide to join.

Please complete the application form fully and, if required, provide additional information on a separate piece of paper.

The annual fee schedule is included with your application form. Please complete the Direct Debit Mandate and return it with your application. Your fee will be debited from your account on or after the 28th of the month in which your membership anniversary falls.

You will be contacted within 14 days of our receiving your application to make arrangements to visit your farm. If you cannot agree a suitable date for assessment within a reasonable period of time, then we will write to you to ask you to contact us when you are ready for a visit.

PREPARING FOR ASSESSMENT

Please read the relevant sections of the Standard carefully before making your application. Some non-compliances may require a further assessment to verify corrective action and this may incur a cost to you. To avoid this, you should attend to any matters at variance with the Standard *before* assessment.

GAINING CERTIFICATION

Once your farm is found to conform to the Scheme Standard you will be sent a Welsh Organic Scheme Certificate of Conformity specifying the areas of operation and their status and, in the case of land-based enterprises, a Schedule detailing the fields and their status. This entitles you to sell your produce as assured by the Welsh Organic Scheme. You are also permitted to use the appropriate Scheme mark and QWFC logo on products, literature, stationery, and advertising.

ASSESSMENTS

We check whether or not farms are complying with the Scheme standard by a system of assessments

You will have an assessment on application and then a surveillance visit at least once every year to assess your continuing compliance with the Scheme Standard. Further re-assessments may be required to verify corrective action following non-compliances found on assessment.

ASSESSORS

Assessments are undertaken by our nominated assessor or assessment body who look for conformance with the Scheme Standard. The assessor will contact you when your assessment is due. If you are unable to agree an appointment for a surveillance or random assessment by the due date, your certification may be withdrawn pending the assessment.

ASSESSMENT

The assessor will need access to all facilities including records, buildings, equipment or stock. If the assessor is unable to access all that is required to complete a full assessment, then a further visit may be necessary which will be charged for. No certificate will be issued until an assessment has been fully completed.

NON-COMPLIANCES

If any non-conformances were found during assessment, they will be recorded by the assessor on the Non-Conformance Form and agreed by the producer, who retains one copy. This form is to provide information only and is not indicative of whether certification will be awarded.

A copy of the Non-Conformance Report plus a full assessor's report will be forwarded to QWFC, the body appointed to certify the Scheme, for consideration. We will notify you within 14 days of the results.

If QWFC requires verification of any corrective action, we will explain to you what you have to do before you can be re-considered for certification and, on surveillance assessments, the date by which the verification must be completed. In other circumstances, re-assessment may be necessary which may incur a fee, you will be contacted to agree to this before we proceed.

If you are unable to verify conformance by the due date, you must contact us immediately so that we can discuss the matter with you. **Certificates may be withdrawn if corrective action is not completed on time.**

Fees are not refundable.

Once you are found to comply with the Scheme Standard, you will be awarded your certification.

FEES

The annual fee schedule is included with your application form.

Should some members fail to submit a direct debit mandate, we reserve the right to charge higher fees to cover the higher administration costs of collecting subscriptions by cheque.

CERTIFICATION

THE CERTIFICATE

QWFC Certificates of Conformity are not transferable to another person, farm, or holding and are the property of QWFC. Certificates are valid until the expiry date stated on them, subject to the terms of the Rules Governing Certification as amended from time to time.

QWFC's certificates, marks or logos can only be used in relation to activities that are covered by the Scheme. You must not make any claims that the certificate applies to business activities or locations that were not part of your original application.

WITHDRAWAL

Your QWFC Certificate of Conformity can be withdrawn if it is found that you no longer conform to the Scheme Standard or Scheme Rules (this list is neither exclusive nor exhaustive). If there is sufficient evidence that a member of the Scheme has breached the standards or operating procedures and is bringing the Scheme into disrepute, certification will be withdrawn at our absolute discretion.

Certification withdrawal means that you cannot sell your produce as 'Organic'.

In certain circumstances you will be able to restore your certified status. For example, you may need to attend to non-compliances found at assessment and once the required verification is carried out you will once again be 'assured'.

Permanent withdrawal of certification means that you must re-apply as a new applicant if you wish to once again be assured. Your QWFC Certificate of Conformity and any scheme marks must be returned to QWFC and you must cease forthwith to make any claims that you are certified under the Welsh Organic Scheme by QWFC. In cases of serious breaches of the standard, you will have to wait three months before you can re-apply.

SUSPENSION

Situations that may require suspension of a QWFC Certificate of Conformity include when a subscription payment is not made by the due date. If no payment is received within three months, membership will be closed, your certificate will be withdrawn permanently and should you wish to re-apply you will have to do so as a new applicant.

Certification suspension means that you cannot sell your produce as 'Organic'.

You will be notified of what you must do to regain certification and the due date for the action. If you comply, certification status may be reinstated. Otherwise, your membership may be cancelled.

CANCELLATION

Upon cancellation of membership, voluntarily or following suspension, your certification will be permanently withdrawn.

CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCE

You should inform us of any change in your circumstance that may affect your conformance with the standard, including changes to facilities and management. Certificates are not transferable and a change of ownership requires a new application.

The scope of certification will only cover that activity detailed on the certificate issued. If you wish to change or increase the scope of activity, you will need to notify us immediately.

LEGAL ACTION

It is a condition of certification that you inform us immediately if you are subject to any legal action concerning food safety, animal welfare, environmental issue, trades description, or any other action relating to your operating activity. This will include prosecution by or the issue of a statutory notice from a statutory body. Your certification status may be suspended while your situation is being considered.

SCHEME RULES

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. We will however respond to queries from third parties that wish to confirm the status of any producer. The only information

divulged will be the member's name, address, number, and current membership status. No other details whatsoever will be divulged without your prior, written approval.

As a condition of your membership, you provide consent for your details to also be passed to the relevant Public Sector Organic Registrar.

APPEALS PROCEDURES

If you wish to appeal against any decision on certification, please write to us at Welsh Organic Scheme, Gorseland, North Road, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 2WB within 14 days of receiving notice of the decision. Please give your reasons why you believe the decision to be wrong. If we are unable to resolve this issue, a tribunal appointed by QWFC will consider the appeal: you will be entitled to make representations to that tribunal. The decision of the tribunal will be forwarded to you within 30 days and will be binding on both parties.

COMPLAINTS

Any complaint regarding the operation of the Certification system by QWFC should be forwarded to QWFC, Gorseland, North Road, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 2WB; we will investigate every one and inform you in writing of our response.

It is a condition of the Scheme that you record any complaints received from your customers regarding condition of produce provided or any other issue covered by your certification. This record and actions taken will form part of the QWFC assessment.

FALSE OR MISLEADING STATEMENTS

Any false or misleading statements made on an application form, during assessment, or other time will lead to withdrawal of certification and even exclusion from future participation in the Welsh Organic Scheme.

ASSESSMENT BODIES

QWFC may, from time to time, contract an external assessment body to carry out assessments. Any such body will be accredited to EN45004 or EN45011. All decisions on certification will remain with QWFC. By agreeing to the rules of the scheme, you are implying your consent to being assessed by one of these other bodies as well as QWFC assessors. If you do not consent, please notify this office in writing prior to assessment.

RULES GOVERNING CERTIFICATION

Approved Producers shall:

- At all times comply with these rules as amended from time to time;
- Comply with the requirements of the Welsh Organic Scheme. Repeated failure to comply with any of the specified requirements of the Scheme Standard will be the cause of withdrawal of the Certificate of Conformity;
- Retain a copy of the most recent Scheme Regulations and Scheme Standard;
- Give representatives of QWFC access during normal working hours to production establishments.

Producer Manual

- Nominate a management representative and one or more deputies authorised to act in the main nominee's absence (and replacement nominees as may be necessary) who shall be responsible for all matters in connection with the requirements of the Certificate of Conformity;
- Correct any deficiencies identified during continuing assessments;
- Not deliver or knowingly permit the delivery or sale of downgraded products as products conforming to the Scheme Standard;
- Use a Mark of Conformity or issue a Statement of Conformity only in respect of products which are subject to the Certificate of Conformity, produced at the address stated on the Certificate, and strictly in accordance with the conditions for its use;
- Discontinue any use of a Mark of Conformity which is outside the scope of the conditions for its use, or which is unacceptable to QWFC, and any form of statement with reference to the authority of the Producer to claim compliance with a Certification Scheme which in the opinion of QWFC might be misleading;
- Upon withdrawal of the Certificate of Conformity (however determined) forthwith discontinue use of any Mark of Conformity for which a licence has been issued and all advertising matter which contains any reference thereto. In addition, any other documents in possession of the Producer which bear reference to the Certificate of Conformity shall, if QWFC requires, be so treated;
- Not conduct operations in a manner which may affect the confidence of buyers and consumers in the reliability of QWFC's Certification Schemes.

Having regard for QWFC administrative costs, Approved Producers and Applicants shall pay:-

- the relevant annual fee for assessment and Certification;
- the cost of any additional assessment deemed to be necessary by the Board;
- the cost of any additional sampling or testing deemed to be necessary by the Board;
- any additional costs incurred by QWFC due to non-compliance with these Rules.

QWFC shall:

- Undertake continuing assessments periodically at the production establishments of Approved Producers for the purpose of verifying that the obligations defined by the Certificate of Conformity are being observed;
- Notify Approved Producers of any changes to the Standard for the Welsh Organic Scheme and give them such time as, in the opinion of the Board, is reasonable in which to adjust their processes and relevant procedures to meet the revised requirements;
- Not disclose any information concerning an Approved Producer obtained during the course of its assessment and certification activities, other than that which is in the public domain, unless otherwise required to do so by the law, or requested/permitted to do so by the Approved Producer.
- Notify Approved Producers of any complaints it received relating to products to which the Certificate of Conformity applies.

If an Approved Producer is temporarily unable to comply with the requirements of these Rules, as amended from time to time, the Board may require the Approved Producer to discontinue

any claim of compliance with the Scheme and use of any associated Mark of Conformity, with immediate effect until it is satisfied that compliance is again achieved, subject to the provisions of the Appeals Procedures above.

If an Approved Producer fails to comply with these Rules, as amended from time to time, QWFC, subject to the provisions of the Appeals Procedures, as appropriate:

- withdraw the Certificate of Conformity or reduce its scope;
- or refuse to grant a Certificate of Conformity or extend its scope.

Such decisions, and the grounds for them, shall be communicated to the Producer in writing.

QWFC may, at its sole discretion, subject to the provisions of the Appeals Procedures, withdraw or refuse to grant a Certificate of Conformity if an Approved Producer's business is likely to be disbanded and be unable to pay its debts.

These rules may from time to time be altered by QWFC. No alterations shall affect the right of Approved Producers to claim compliance with a particular Certification Scheme, use an associated Mark of Conformity or issue a Statement of Conformity unless they have been given notice in writing of such alterations by the Managing Director who will give the date by which the altered Rules come into force. This shall not normally be less than six months from the date of notification of the alteration.

A register of Approved Producers and Products shall be kept by QWFC and it shall be open to assessment at the registered office of QWFC. A list of Approved Producers and Products shall be published from time to time.

Any notice under these Rules shall be in writing and be signed by or on behalf of the party giving it and it may be served by leaving it, or sending it by pre-paid post, at or to the recipient's address for the time being. (Registered office where applicable). Any notice served by post shall, unless the contrary is proved, be deemed to have been served forty-eight hours from the time of posting; and in proving such service it shall be sufficient to prove that the notice was properly addressed and was posted in accordance with this clause

STATEMENT OF POLICY

QWFC undertake to administer the Welsh Organic Scheme and its certification facilities effectively and efficiently at all times. However, we cannot be held responsible for any losses that arise from, including without limitation, any industrial action or the failure of any machine, data, processing system, transmission link or any other event outside our reasonable control.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING THE USE OF CERTIFICATION MARKS

INTRODUCTION

The objective of the QWFC Certification Scheme is to provide for food, drink, agricultural and fisheries products produced in Wales a means by which purchasers and through them consumers can have confidence in the products of producers holding a valid Certificate of Approval issued by QWFC.

To denote their status as an Approved Producer under the QWFC Certification Scheme the producer is permitted to use the appropriate Scheme mark and QWFC logo on their product, literature, stationery, and advertising.

In addition, where the Scheme is part of QWFC's accredited scope under EN45011, the QWFC logo may be accompanied by the UKAS Accreditation Mark following approval by QWFC on its proposed use.

The following is a guide to the application of Scheme Accreditation Marks.

SCHEME MARKS

GENERAL

The Marks relative to Schemes under which QWFC provide certification and the QWFC logo may only be used in approved form. An approved producer may only use the Mark or Marks relative to the Scheme(s) for which he holds a valid Certificate of Approval and which appear on that Certificate or Certificates where more than one approval is held.

USE ON PRODUCTS

The Scheme Mark and / or QWFC logo may be applied to product packaging or labelling where the product has been produced wholly in accordance with the requirements of the relative Scheme Standard.

The producer's own business name as shown on the Certificate of Approval must also be clearly identifiable on the same package or label. Alternatively where a producer has his own brand mark for the business this may be used to accompany the Scheme Mark.

Where the Scheme Mark and / or QWFC logo is used in association with a purchaser's name or brand mark the name of the approved producer must be easily identifiable from the product packaging and/or the purchase records.

USE ON STATIONERY, LITERATURE, AND ADVERTISING

The approved producer may use the Scheme Mark and / or QWFC logo on stationery relative to the unit address shown on the Certificate of Approval. This stationery may include letterheads, invoices, despatch documents etc.

Use on literature and advertising materials must not be done in such a way as to imply approval of products or units of the business for which no valid Certificate of Approval is held. In the event of the improper use of the Mark or misleading references to certificates held, the approved producer will be required to withdraw the offending material and, if required by QWFC, publish a correction. Where no such action is undertaken the QWFC Governing Board may initiate legal action.

QWFC AND ACCREDITATION MARKS

The UKAS Accreditation Mark may only be used in conjunction with the QWFC logo.

Where an approved producer wishes to use the UKAS Accreditation Mark application must be made in writing to the Managing Director accompanied by a detailed proposal on their use. The proposal shall provide examples of the documents/labels/packages on which the marks would appear and their size and location on each.

Producer Manual

Once approved QWFC will provide masters of the Marks. The approved producer will be responsible for ensuring reproduction strictly in accordance with these masters and in single colour which should be the predominant *ink* colour of the document or, in the case of pre-printed letterhead paper, the predominant colour of the letterhead.

As for Scheme Marks incorrect or misleading use will require immediate correction and withdrawal of offending material.

Where no such action is taken the QWFC Governing Board may initiate legal action.

QWFC shall be responsible for ensuring that the use of the Accreditation Mark meets the current "Conditions Governing the Use of the Accreditation Marks for Use by Certification Bodies" URN 98/887.

CONTROL OF USE

It is in the interest of consumers, purchasers, approved producers, and QWFC to ensure that the Certification Marks are used correctly and provide confidence in the integrity of the Schemes they represent.

QWFC will therefore, as part of its continuing assessment process, audit regularly the use of Marks by approved producers.

In the event that Certification is withdrawn from a producer, that producer shall immediately cease use and distribution of any packaging, labels, stationery, literature, and advertising bearing the Scheme or Accreditation Mark.