

## Biofertiliser Certification Scheme Newsletter December 2022



The Biofertiliser Certification Scheme (BCS) has been established as a robust and reputable quality assurance and end-of-waste scheme. In this newsletter, you will find various ways in which it has been developed over the past six months, accompanied by related news.

### BCS Forum and TAC

We held the last meeting of the Operators' Forum in October, which was held wholly online. The key topics of discussion at the meeting included: the progress of the ADQP revision, the relationship between VFA and RBP results, and the variability of digestate prices.

Comments from Operators were then taken to the TAC meeting in November by the BCS Operators' Representative, in particular, the relationship between VFAs and RBP results was raised, and actions noted for further discussion at upcoming scheme events. In addition,

### Certification Body telephone numbers

#### OF&G

+44 (0)1939 291 800

#### NSF

+44 (0)1993 885 610

#### ACL

+44 (0)1984 624 989

### Approved Laboratory telephone numbers

#### NRM

+44 (0)1344 886338

#### ATL

+44 (0)1449 721 192  
(Chemistry) / +44 (0)1449 721  
637 (Microbiology)

### Media platforms

#### Twitter

@biofertcert

#### Operators Twitter

@BCSOperators

### For Enquiries

Our 'Decision Making Tree' enables scheme participants to identify a point of call (organisation or individual) if they have a

other key topics raised at the TAC included BCS specific test methods and CCS specific issues. Additionally, at the meeting, REAL sought advice from the TAC on technical issues relating to the revision of the BCS Scheme Rules, specifically around the introduction of remote auditing post-pandemic.

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### **Scheme Rules Review and Revision**

Following the annual review early in 2022, the decision was made to revise the BCS Scheme Rules. REAL drafted in various changes or proposals and the draft versions were sent out for consultation to all scheme participants and TAC members on the 22nd of August. The consultation period lasted 6 weeks. The key changes for consultation included the introduction of independent sampling, the introduction of remote auditing, and additional questions for gathering data through the audits.

REAL have reviewed all responses to the consultation alongside feedback from the TAC on specific technical issues. REAL is currently finalising the requirements around a specific proposal in discussion with the certification bodies and environmental regulators, with the aim to issue the new versions of the scheme rules in early 2023. A transition period for operators will be communicated when the scheme rules are issued.

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### **Working Groups**

REAL will be considering the future directions of the working groups in general, early in the new year. Next year will mark four years since the MDWG was created (and three since the setup of the Plant Response Test TWG for CCS). REAL will be discussing potential future areas of focus, updates to the Terms of Reference, and considering if new working groups need to be set up to focus on specific areas in the existing groups' stead.

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### **Understanding PAS110 Testing Webinar**

In November REAL held the 'Understanding PAS 110 Testing' webinar, renamed from the 'Understanding Test Results' webinar, to better reflect the content. The webinar is designed for operators to gain an insight into the test methods used under BCS; it covers minimum quality criteria, how the tests work, why operators can have confidence in the lab results, and touches on how to better interpret result failures. REAL have been seeking comments on the webinars

scheme related enquiry. The tree can be found on the website [here](#)

### **ADQP Revision**

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The Environment Agency's Task and Finish Group held their first meetings on the 5th of September. The scope of the revision and evidence available to date were considered, with the focus on risk assessment. The group met again on the 10th November, in which the timeline for this work was discussed in further detail. Further meetings will be arranged in due course to discuss specific subjects and in smaller focus groups.

REAL shared the recently published report on plastic contamination in compost and digestate with the members of the Task and Finish Group. The research will be considered when discussing plastic limits in the future end of waste framework. (See more information below).

REAL will continue to contribute to these meetings in the new year and look forward to seeing the revision process progress.

### **Plastic Paper Published**

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REAL have published a paper sharing recent data on plastic contamination in compost and digestate independently certified to end-of-waste criteria in England.

The analysis in the paper shows 98.1% of digestate samples and 98.5% of compost samples tested were within the limits for physical contaminants.

The results provide conclusive evidence that the levels of plastic contamination in digestate and compost that has been independently certified to end-of-waste criteria in England are lower than those required by the standards.

through the forums and participant satisfaction survey, which will feed into discussions on the development of future webinars.

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## Research Hub

### Project Updates

#### **Evaluation of the potential for the improvement of the Residual Biogas Potential test and investigation of alternative test procedures for PAS110 biofertilisers**

This project aims to undertake a comprehensive technical evaluation of the Residual Biogas Potential test, the only digestate stability testing regime currently recognised under PAS 110 (more details [here](#)).

Aqua Enviro was appointed as the contractor in early 2022 and work commenced in April 2022. The work is projected to be completed in June 2023.

#### **How the benefits of applying compost and digestate to soils can be accounted for under the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol**

This project aims to evaluate the carbon accounting benefits associated with producing and applying compost and digestate to land. The project also endeavours to develop guidance to account for these benefits under the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (more details [here](#)).

REAL opened a tender for this project in November 2022, which closed on 9th December 2022. Following a thorough evaluation of all bids submitted to the Research Hub and discussions with the Project Management Team, REAL will appoint a contractor in January 2023.

#### **Evaluate possible alternative area-based methods of assessment for plastics in compost and digestate**

This project aims to assess whether the current mass-based analytical methods for determining physical contaminants levels on materials greater than 2mm are fit for purpose. Further, this project seeks to determine whether there are robust area-based methods available which might be applied to the determination of plastic contamination levels under PAS 100 and PAS 110.

REAL will be opening a tender for this project shortly. To stay updated on this project and tender opportunity, please routinely check the Research Hub's [News](#) page, or contact the Research Hub

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## 2023 Events Calendar

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Following discussions at the forums around a lack of awareness of scheme events, REAL updated the BCS and CCS websites to include an events page. This page has now been updated with all the confirmed events for operators taking place in 2023 and will continue to be updated as REAL become aware of other relevant industry events.

The page is available [here](#).

## Annual Report 2021

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REAL published the 2021 Annual Report for the Biofertiliser Certification Scheme in September. The report gives an overview of the data collected during 2021. By the end of 2021, there were 100 certified AD plants in the UK (72 in England, 7 in Northern Ireland, 13 in Scotland, and 8 in Wales).

For the first time, the Annual Report also includes information on macronutrient content of digestate calculated from REAL's test results database. The report details that on average, the mean phosphorus and potassium content of digestate sampled in 2021 was 1731 mg/kg and 3142 mg/kg, respectively.

The 2021 Annual Report is available [here](#).

## Laboratory Terms and Conditions

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The new T&Cs for approved laboratories on the BCS/CCS were issued this month. The new T&Cs are the result of our annual review and revision process carried out in consultation with both certification bodies and approved laboratories. A significant legal review was undertaken alongside the usual technical review further

Manager, Megan Muller-Girard, to request to be added to the Research Hub mailing list.

### **Plant Response Test Interpretation and Comparison: Investigating performance of the PAS-Specified Tomato Plant Response Test and Spring Barley Test on Quality Compost**

This project aims to assess the performance of the spring barley test on CCS composts to consider including the spring barley test (in future versions of PAS 100) as a potential follow-up test to the tomato plant test (more info [here](#)).

Unfortunately, no bids were received for this project. REAL is currently considering alternative options for taking this project forward in 2023.

### **Submit a Proposal in 2023**

The REAL Research Hub will run a Call for Research Proposals starting in January 2023. During this time, we encourage anyone with an idea for a research project to submit a proposal to the Research Hub. More information on submitting research proposals to the Hub can be found [here](#).

### **Utilise the Hub's Resources**

#### **The Research Library**

The Research Hub's Organics Recycling Research Library (the Research Library) is an online platform that collates published research on the composting and AD industries. The Research Library currently contains 381 articles and is regularly updated with new research; more than 100 articles have been added to the platform since its initial launch in Jan 2021. To access the Research Library, visit [www.realresearchlibrary.org.uk](http://www.realresearchlibrary.org.uk) and log in with your unique login details.

#### **Digestate Data Pack and Valorisation Report**

In 2021, the Hub commissioned two technical reports exploring digestate characteristics and potential alternative uses for AD outputs. The Digestate Data Pack contains data analysis of key digestate characteristics, and the Valorisation Report provides a comprehensive examination of viable alternative uses for digestate.

*All Research Hub outputs are available free of charge for all CCS and BCS participants and for a fee to all other parties.*

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strengthening this important scheme(s) document.

### **Participant and Research Hub Survey**

In September REAL conducted the annual participant satisfaction surveys and Research Hub feedback survey. The purpose of these surveys is to help REAL assess scheme satisfaction amongst producers, prioritise areas for further development. REAL also sought feedback on any new guidance documents or webinars that scheme participants would find beneficial.

The feedback we received indicated that overall, there was a positive view of the work being carried out by REAL and highlighted some useful additions for the webinars. The Research Hub survey indicated that operators' view of the Hub is positive, but that more could be done to promote the outputs of Hub projects to operators.



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### Contact Us



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