

## Biofertiliser Certification Scheme Newsletter August 2023



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### BCS Forum and TAC

We held the biannual meeting of the BCS Operator' Forum in May. The key topics for discussion included an update on the AQQP revision and the Research Hub, on which operators queried how research projects taken forward this year to inform the ADQP revision might fit in with the revision timelines. There was also a query raised surrounding the changing of screens and why this is viewed as a significant change to the process. REAL additionally gave a short session on compostables, seeking feedback from operators on accepting compostable packaging at their site.

An update from the forum was then presented at the June CCS/BCS TAC meeting by the operators' representative. The queries from the BCS forum on changing screens were raised with the Certification Bodies and a BCS position on this technical issue has been drafted and is currently under consultation with TAC members. The meeting

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### 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

#### Eurofins

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

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### ADQP Revision

In early 2023, the scoping exercises to assess what is necessary for inclusion in the risk assessment began. This included working groups being established to focus on comparators and quality standards. In March 2023, REAL, REA and ADBA held a webinar on proposed feedstock changes, as well as an accompanying paper, feedback from which was shared and discussed with the QP Task and Finish Group in April.

also included an update on the investigation into the relationship between VFA and RBP results, the outcomes of which will be shared at the next BCS Forum in October.

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### **Scheme Rules Revision**

REAL are in the final stages of revising the BCS Scheme Rules, having addressed all comments from consultation with the Environmental Regulators, TAC members, and operators. We hope to issue the rules in the coming months and a transition period for operators will be communicated when the Scheme Rules are issued.

The key changes in version 7 of the rules include additional information to be collected by the Scheme during the application/renewal process and inclusion of a clause allowing for scheme efficacy trails. Following the consultation independent sampling and remote auditing requirements were removed; REAL will continue discussions with the Regulators about remote auditing and the risk assessment produced between the CBs. REAL hope to take remote auditing forward the next time the rules are revised.

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### **Independent Auditor Tender**

REAL opened a tender in April this year to appoint a new Independent Auditor to audit the REAL CCS and BCS approved laboratories from the beginning of 2024. The Open University are looking to focus on other projects from next year after four years of providing independent laboratory auditing service to REAL.

REAL are currently evaluating responses to the tender, with an evaluation panel, and hope to announce an appointment in Autumn.

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## **Research Hub**

### **Ongoing Projects**

#### **Residual Biogas Potential Test Improvements and Alternatives**

*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 provide a comprehensive technical evaluation of the Residual Biogas Potential test; the only digestate stability testing regime recognised under PAS 110. Aqua Enviro were contracted for this work in early 2022, and the project is in its final stages, with the

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The Task and Finish Group next met in May to discuss the risk assessment work and the timeframe to complete this. The EA agreed to publish an interim Resources Framework, using the evidence already available relating to risks, with additional time given to complete the risk assessment in full. In July, the discussions centred around plastic limits in finished products, and inclusion of manure-based digestates within the framework.

REAL are working with the EA and other Task and Finish Group members by providing evidence and building consensus throughout the revision process.

### **Understanding PAS110 Testing Webinar**

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In April, REAL held the 'Understanding PAS 110 Testing' webinar, this webinar 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, this webinar will next be held in September. Further details can be found on our website [here](#).

### **Regulators Webinars**

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As part of the drive to strengthen engagement with the Environmental Regulators on an ongoing basis, REAL have held webinars for Regulatory Officers and the National Leads at SEPA and NIEA. The aims of these webinars are to introduce REAL and the BCS and CCS to officers, improve the awareness of the schemes amongst regulatory officers, and further open lines of communication between BCS, CCS and the regulatory officers, which were strengthened during the pandemic with the introduction of remote auditing.

final report being reviewed. The final outputs of this work will be available in the coming months.

### **Carbon Accounting for Compost and Digestate**

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

This project will evaluate the carbon accounting benefits associated with producing and applying compost and digestate to land. It also aims to develop guidance to account for these benefits under the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. AECOM have been contracted to complete this work and start up meetings have been held. This work is due to be completed in this Autumn.

### **Plastic Contamination Method Assessment**

*Evaluating current mass-based method and possible alternative methods of assessment for plastics in compost and digestate.*

This project aims to investigate the sensitivity and robustness of current methods for determining physical contaminants and to explore the use of alternative plastic assessment methods to inform future developments to PAS 100 and PAS 110. Solidsense have been contracted to complete this work and start up meetings have been held. This work is due to be completed in Spring 2024.

### **Plant Response Test Interpretation and Comparison**

*Investigating performance of the UK Tomato Plant Response Test and German Spring Barley Test on CCS Compost*

REAL put the initial version of the project out to tender in 2021 and a revised version in 2022 yet received no bids on either occasion. Therefore, REAL has decided to take the project forward through a different avenue. First, a Project Specification will be developed with input from relevant stakeholders. The Specification will outline project objectives, methodologies, timetables, and deliverables. REAL then plans to tender for an external project manager whose role will be to ensure the project is delivered to REAL's Specification.

When it went out to tender in 2022, the stated aim of the project was to assess the performance of the spring barley test on CCS composts to consider including the spring barley test (in future versions of PAS100) as a potential follow-up test to the tomato plant test. Please note this may be subject to change throughout the development of the Project Specification.

### **Future Projects**

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The first of these webinars were held in July for SEPA and NIEA and attendee feedback was positive, REAL are in the process of arranging webinars for the EA and NRW.

### **Guidance Documents for Applicants**

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REAL have recently published two new guidance documents, an updated version of the [detailed guidance for applicants](#), and a new [sample labelling guidance](#).

The BCS guidance on how to label a PAS 110 sample and prepare the relevant paperwork, which will be most useful for applicants, explains how to fill out the PAS 110 digestate analysis request form, and the importance of labelling samples for testing correctly.

The detailed BCS guidance document for applicants has been updated to further explain the procedure for achieving certification and includes a flow chart of the process. The aim of this guidance is to make the application process easier and clearer, and to update the information currently on the BCS website.

### **Applicants Survey**

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REAL have produced a new survey to be sent to applicants on achieving certification. The aim of this survey is to collect feedback on the process of applying to the scheme as well as the guidance available. The survey will also collect feedback on the services provided by the certification bodies. Feedback from this survey will be used to consider further guidance or ways to ensure the process is clear and easy for new operators.

The evaluation process is currently ongoing to select the next project to be taken forward from the 2023 Call for Proposals. The proposals include topics such as the risk assessment for the QP revision, exploring an alternative to peat control growing medium for the CCS plant response test, and monitoring contamination in feedstocks. The full list of proposals can be found on the Research Hub [website](#).

REAL will announce the project selected for 2023 in due course.

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### Contact Us



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