

Guidance for Getting Started with REAL's Biofertiliser Certification Scheme

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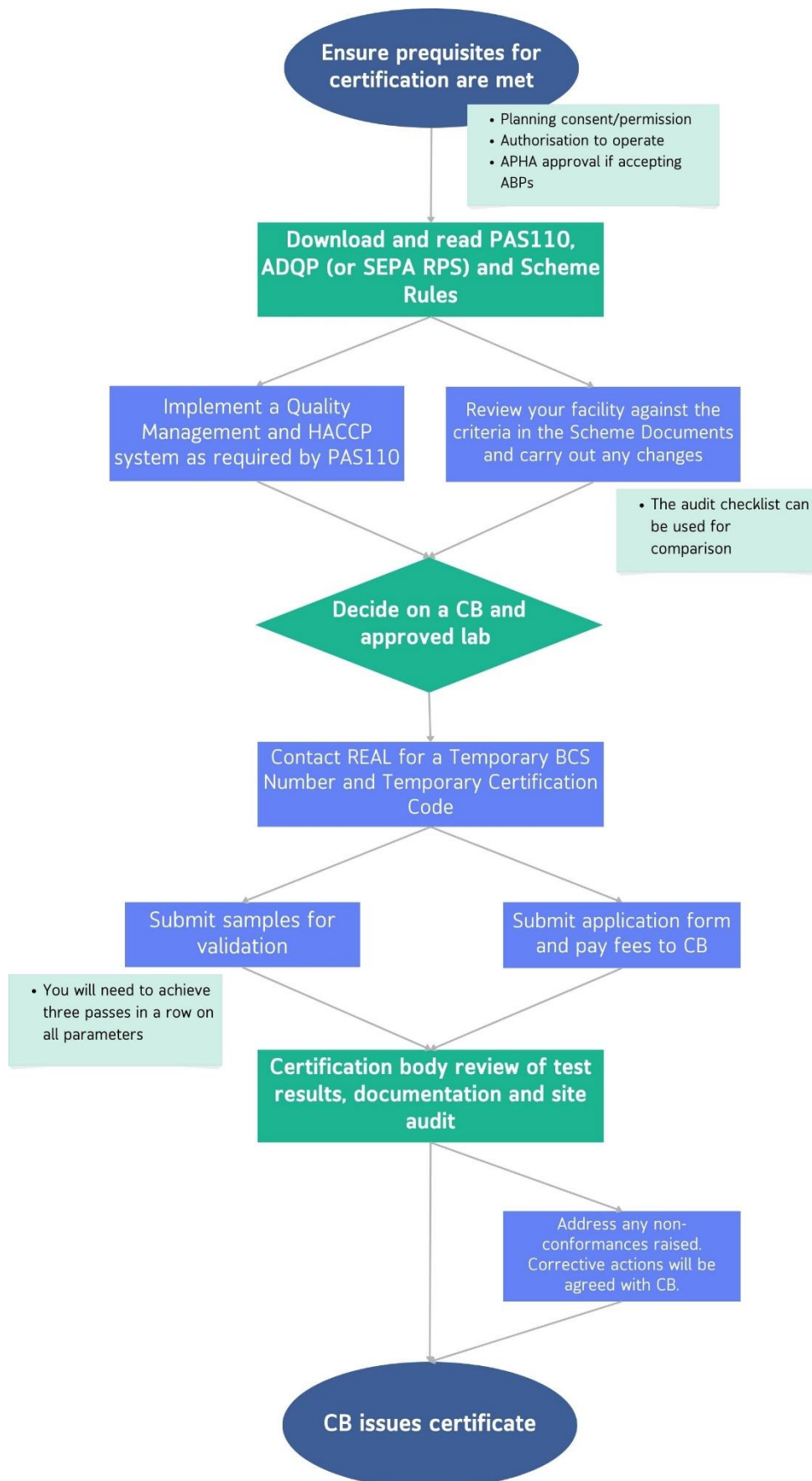
Introduction

Welcome to BCS! The Biofertiliser Certification Scheme (BCS) provides assurance to consumers, farmers, food producers and retailers that digestate is safe for human, animal, and plant health.

The BCS independently assesses and certifies anaerobic digestate to PAS 110, the Anaerobic Digestate Quality Protocol (ADQP) or SEPA RPS. In being assessed as compliant with the requirements within these documents, digestate reaches End of Waste Status. This means that certified waste-derived digestate is no longer classed as a waste and so can be spread beneficially to land without the need for an Environmental Permit, providing a valuable source of organic, carbon-free fertiliser.

This guidance document sets out the process for achieving certification, including a flow chart for visualising the process, as well as an explanation of each step. If you have any further queries that are not covered by this document, please contact info@realschemes.org.uk.

Certification Flow Chart



Ensure that the prerequisites for certification are met

Pre-requisites for applying for initial certification or renewal of certification are:

- The Operator holds a planning consent/permission in respect of its anaerobic digestion site(s), if required by the relevant planning authority.
- The Operator holds an Environmental Permit issued by the relevant Regulator, or an exemption registered with the relevant Regulator.
- If the process treats animal by-products, the Operator has obtained or is in the process of obtaining approval for the anaerobic digestion site from the Animal & Plant Health Agency or Veterinary Service to treat Animal By-Products.

For certification, digestate must be produced only from source-segregated biodegradable materials, and/or biowastes. For biowastes, the EWC codes must be listed in Appendix B of the ADQP for allowable inputs and written supply agreements for input materials must be agreed with each supplier.

Download and read Scheme Documents

If you are supplying to England, Wales, or Northern Ireland

The BCS certifies against three documents:

1. [Anaerobic Digestate Quality Protocol](#) – this sets out the End of Waste requirements e.g., acceptable inputs and permissible markets.
2. [PAS 110](#) - this sets out technical requirements, for example around implementing a robust Quality Management System, utilising HACCP, and testing samples.
3. [BCS Scheme Rules](#) – this document explains how the scheme operates, e.g., how the audits will be conducted. You may also want to download the [BCS Position on Technical requirements](#), which is the accompanying document to the Scheme Rules.

If you are supplying to Scotland

The BCS certifies against these three documents:

1. [SEPA Position Statement](#) - this sets out the End of Waste requirements e.g., acceptable inputs
2. [PAS 110](#) – - this sets out technical requirements, for example around implementing a robust Quality Management System, utilising HACCP, and testing samples.
3. [BCS Scheme Rules](#) – this document explains how the scheme operates, e.g., how the audits will be conducted. You may also want to download the [BCS Position on Technical requirements](#), which is the accompanying document to the Scheme Rules.

Implement a Quality Management System and HACCP

A Quality Management System (QMS) must be established and maintained, specific to the anaerobic digestion process and resulting digestate. A Quality Policy must be in place and include operator's commitment to achieving minimum quality. And, finally, HACCP planning must be utilized to identify and control hazards e.g., presence of pathogens.

This is a vital part of certification and there are consultants who can advise on this. Additionally, the Association for Renewable Energy and Clean Technology (REA) run a HACCP for composting course, (please contact jenny@r-e-a.net to enquire about when the next course will be held).

Review your facility

At this point it would be beneficial for you to review your facility against the requirements of PAS110, the ADQP and the scheme rules, and make any necessary changes to your site in line with your QMS and HACCP.

To review your facility, you may find it useful to compare against the audit checklist that the Certification Bodies will later use on a visit to your site. This can be found [here](#).

Choosing a Certification Body and an Approved Laboratory

After making any necessary changes to your site, you will now be ready to choose which Certification Body (CB) and which Approved Laboratory you would like to use.

There are two Approved Laboratories on BCS, these are [Eurofins Agro](#) (formerly ATL) and [NRM](#). It is up to you which lab you choose; you can request price lists and discuss taking samples and submitting for testing using the contact details on our website [here](#).

There are three Certification Bodies you can use: [ACL](#), [OF&G](#) and [NSF](#). It is up to you which Certification Body you choose; you can find their price list and contact details linked above.

Contact REAL for a certification details

You will need to email info@realschemes.org.uk to request a Temporary BCS Number, as well as a Temporary Certification Code for each digestate output type you are looking to certify. These details will need to be put on the BCS PAS 110 Analysis Request Form.

Submitting samples for validation

You are now ready to begin sampling and testing. We recommend you read through the sampling guidance available [here](#) (for separated fibre, please use the compost sampling guidance [here](#)). Each final sample must be representative of the batch or portion of production sampled.

You will need to submit the PAS110 Analysis Request Form with your sample, filling in the details as per the 'labelling you PAS110 sample' guidance available [here](#).

To achieve initial validation, the three most recent digestate sample test results must pass the minimum quality criteria in PAS110. Please download the PAS110 Digestate Analysis Request Form [here](#).

Submit Application Form to CB

Once you have begun testing, the next step is to submit an Application Form to your chosen CB. The Application Form, as well as the CB price list, can be found for each CB on our website:

- [ACL](#)
- [NSF](#)
- [OF&G](#)

Enclose the QMS documentation, HACCP assessment, test results (if available), flow diagram, copy of Environmental Permit/ Exemption, and copy of APHA licence (if relevant).

This application is reviewed by a Certification Officer (CO) to ascertain if the process is in line with the requirements of PAS 110, and if it is, then an appointment to visit the site is made. If, however, there is still work to be completed, the CO notifies the operator of the requirements, and when the changes have been made, an auditor will make a site visit.

If any non-conformances (NCs) are identified, the auditor will explain these during the site visit and corrective actions will be agreed to address them. Once corrective action has been taken, this will then be presented to the auditor to consider whether it is acceptable to close out the NC and/or whether a further site visit is required. The CO will then review the decision of the auditor. (The CO's role is to review the interpretations the auditor has made, and any evidence/corrective actions should be considered by both the auditor and CO.)

When the corrective action is accepted successfully, this means validation has been achieved, and a certificate will be issued.

Other important information

- Important aspects to consider for achieving certification include ensuring there is an appropriate mix of suitable input materials, the AD process is well-managed and effective, and a suitable hydraulic retention time (HRT) has been established.
- A pasteurisation step is required by PAS 110 (with some exemption clauses depending on specific scenarios).
- CBs are allowed to offer guidance about interpretation of the requirements of PAS110 and the ADQP but are not allowed to offer advice on how to achieve certification.
- There must be a designated market for the digestate (end markets specified in ADQP).
- Supply documentation and good practice guidance must be given to customers of digestate (requirement of the ADQP).

- PAS 110 is a non-statutory document so producers must also comply with all relevant existing statutory requirements and the conditions of their permit for digesting the waste.