



Summary Notes from the joint meeting of the Oversight Panel for the Biofertiliser Certification Scheme and the Technical Advisory Committee for the Compost Certification Scheme

Wednesday 12th June 2019, 11.00 – 15.30, REAL, London

Attendees:

Professor Stephen Nortcliff (SN) – Chair; Justyna Staff (JS) – REAL; Georgia Phetmanh (GP) – REAL; Olivia Fursedonn (OF) – REAL; Molly Rogers (MR) – REAL; Thomas Aspray (TA) – REAL; Gregor Keenan (GK) – CCS Producers' Representative; Jo Chapman – BCS Operators' Representative; Sophie Arguile – NSF; Roy Lawford (RL) – Organic Farmers & Growers (OF&G); Nicholas Johnn (NJ) – Aardvark Certification Ltd (ACL); Duncan Rose (DR) – Labs' Representative; Fiona Donaldson (FD) – Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA); Alison McKinnie (AM) – Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS)

Teleconference:

Kathy Nicholls (KN) – Environment Agency (EA)

1. Welcome and apologies

- SN welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies from UKAS, NIEA, NRW, Red Tractor and NFU, as they could not attend.
- SN advised that there should be more frequent telecom meetings following the success of the last one. Another call will be scheduled for next spring.

2. Scheme updates - REAL:

- The winter newsletters contained updates on the certification marks of quality assurance.
- OF informed that there were currently 174 certified processes on CCS and 85 plants on BCS.
- REAL will shortly publish the revised CCS position document for operators. It was noted there was a typo in paragraph regarding test failures within the CCS position doc. GP to correct this error as sentence currently contradicts the rest of the paragraph.
- CCS sampling guidance and training was discussed. There are plans to hold a workshop for sampling within CCS, which would be a half day on a compost site. SN noted that it was unlikely to have one sampling workshop for all sites based around the UK (due to geographical limits). The guidance will be released prior to the workshop. Discussions took place on the potential for a video of the workshop to be taken. Potential for a WEBEX was raised. Comments raised

concerns regarding H&S – REAL cannot be responsible for H&S so must take this into consideration with on-site sampling.

- BCS sampling training for separated fibre discussed. Concerns that this might not work in the same way as the CCS workshop, but there ought to be workshops for operators producing separated fibres.
- For interpretation of test failures, operators should refer to the CCS guidance. Questions about the limits of test failures need to be ironed out.
- The ADQP review and gap analysis timeline will influence the decision for a PAS 110 review, as once this is complete, information from ADQP review will feed into PAS 110. REAL will then engage with operators and industry regarding the PAS 110 review.
- FD noted that there are updates to be made to PAS 110. This is being considered by REAL. REAL confirmed that test methods can be updated outside of any PAS 110 revision process.
- Terms of Reference are to be revised by REAL to represent any changes to the role of TAC and industry stakeholders. TAC suggestions to include PAS 110 review/MDWG/Research Hub.
- REAL to provide an updated framework of additives for BCS. Draft guidance should be re-written to incorporate framework and to merge documents.

3. Update on the Research Hub – REAL

- Questions raised by the operator representatives regarding the structure of the fees for the Research Hub. This structure was clarified by JS - the research fee and certification process have adopted the same model. The fee for the research hub is additional to the certification fee. This was agreed to be communicated back to operators.
- The CCS response following the Research Hub survey monkey showed that operators wanted justification of why projects were accepted or rejected.

4. Update from the Certification Bodies

- Roy provided an update on a product complaint related to digestate contamination and a lagoon. Ruled out one plant located up the road. OF&G will send report to EA and land team. There are two sites in Aylesbury implicated but still not certain which site.
- NSF to investigate operators regarding discharge of liquor to sewers in plants that primarily produce gas. These plants are using PAS 110 for the wrong reason – they are potentially using PAS 110 to secure inputs and produce biogas.
- ACL presented an issue concerning ‘invalid’ test results and the inhibition of inoculum resulting in negative gas production. Ammonia stripping is part of the process. TAC advised that the operator samples from the primary digester to test it before final sampling.

5. Update from the Approved Laboratories

- Discussion around the possibility of receiving online test results as one email.
- REAL/CBs are currently receiving two emails (one with pdf certificate and one with test results in csv format). The option of uploading and receiving multiple files in one email is being investigated by REAL.
- GP and DR to discuss sample type data and timelines for implementation.

6. Update from the CCS Representative

- Gregor questioned whether operators can put forward a list of waste codes for QP review. Kathy responded that this framework is on the REA website. Codes can be put forward but there should be consideration of contamination risk assessment - waste should be fully characterised with all components listed. Potential for a 'negative' list of waste to give operators a better idea.
- Producers forum questioned the timescale of the decision-making tree and what the lag time between query and response from CBs is. SN noted that there should be a timescale set for a first response, but a detailed response may require more effort and investigation by CBs - there can be no set timeframe.
- Reassessment criteria for bagged compost discussed. There should be a list of on-site expectations to satisfy auditor. Discussion on 6-month quality test necessary.

7. Update from the BCS operator's representative

- Operators had several questions regarding the research hub including CCS/BCS project weighting and allocation of funds for BCS research.
- Main action taken is operators can submit research proposals as and when they want throughout the year, with project weighting described for each shortlisted proposal.

8. Technical Issues

a. Use of additives under the BCS

- Questions raised regarding the regulation of additives under BCS and synthetic chemicals. Quality products and plant response is not in PAS 110. There should be more information regarding justification for additives in some products. PAS 110 should provide this guidance. JS noted that REAL is in the process of assessing the list of approved material. Environment Agency draft document refers to chemical management and limits.
- TA advised that operators in Scotland are to set limits on plastic and additives

b. Sub-sampling/splitting samples

- KN and TA to discuss compost sub-sampling based on proposal. It is currently not permitted.

c. Plastics in compost windrows

- Additional/stricter requirements, in order to reduce plastic in compost windrows, discussed.
- NSF suggested if the assessor on site was unhappy with the quality of the product, they should request a retest and additional sample.
- FN advised that SEPA report on plastic is likely to be released in July.

d. Separation / screening of digestate

- REAL to update BCS Position document regarding separation/screening. Additional screening on a regular basis may be necessary to test if the screen is damaged.
- This document will be circulated to TAC for final comments.

Close

Summary of Key Actions

- REAL to correct typo in CCS Position and disseminate to scheme participants
- REAL to consider materials for sampling guidance/training
- REAL to consider opening CCS sampling workshop to BCS operators producing fibre
- DR and GP to liaise about timescales for uploading sample type data and PAS 110 test results
- REAL to wait for Agency's timescale for ADQP review and gap analysis
- REAL to update ToR with suggestions and circulate to TAC
- KN and TA to discuss compost on-site sub-sampling based on proposal
- NSF to find out more information from operators regarding discharging of liquor to sewers
- REAL to consider assessment process and document of approved additives for BCS
- REAL to continue looking at PSD data and guidance for CBs
- REAL to find new contact at LARAC and continue to invite to TAC meetings
- REAL to update BCS Position on separation/screening and circulate to TAC