



Assured Produce

N E W S L E T T E R



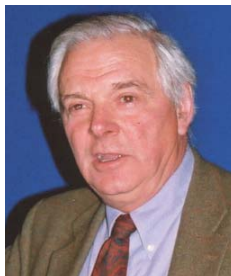
AP tackles the key issues



From the Chairman...

The last six months have been particularly busy for all of us in AP, with considerable effort going into building relationships with other assurance schemes, developing the protocols, and increasing awareness of AP amongst the industry, government departments and agencies. We have also seen substantial changes in the membership of our Sector Board, and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Though several experienced members have retired, I believe that the new team contains the kind of expertise that will stand AP in good stead for the future (see page 2).

In February 2005, Hugh Lowe (right) retired from the Board, having been a member since AP was first formed in 1997. Hugh's wise counsel and enormous enthusiasm and commitment to the horticultural production industry will be missed, and I would like to convey AP's and my personal thanks for his major contribution to the Scheme



Relationships with other Schemes

A principal objective of AP is to try to minimise the audit burden for our producer members. Thus, in 2002 we benchmarked to EUREPGAP standards, so members could obtain both AP

and EUREP membership via a single audit. The latest developments on re-benchmarking to EUREP are summarised on page 2.

We have also been working to try and streamline assurance for fresh produce growers who also produce ornamentals. The original concept was to develop, with BOPP, a 'bolt-on' ornamentals protocol for AP members. While we have not ruled this out, it now seems a more efficient route may be through a streamlined combined audit by any Certification Body accredited to audit AP and BOPP/EUREPGAP ornamentals standards – much in the same way as AP's Certification Bodies have operated in the delivery of AP plus Nature's Choice, or AP plus LEAF Marque standards.

Standards and protocols

The annual review of protocols and standards is underway. This year, we have to ensure our standards comply with new Food Hygiene regulations that come into force from January 2006. We have been helped in this by including guidance notes on potential microbiological hazards in the current year's generic protocol. In addition, in a good example of 'joined-up thinking' between HDC and AP, HDC has recently developed and released a DVD entitled Keeping it Clean, based on the AP guidelines. Other topics that will be strengthened in the forthcoming



protocols will be improved Good Agricultural Practice guidance on minimising pesticide residues.

Increasing awareness of AP

Since I joined AP in 2001, I have been keen to raise awareness of the achievements of the scheme amongst a range of stakeholder groups. The excellent standards of production of safe food achieved by AP's members, are now universally recognised in the retail sector, and increasingly in government departments, agencies and levy boards. However, there is still much more to be done such as in the public procurement sector. We are currently planning an AP workshop in October 2005 to update key individuals and organisations about AP achievements and plans for the future. Details of this meeting will be made available as soon as possible.

New look for AFS Red Tractor

A new-look Red Tractor logo (right) was launched to the industry earlier this month, ending speculation about its provenance.

The new logo will start appearing on packaging from June onwards, and a major launch to consumers will follow this summer.

- AFS is calling on all producers to report any suspected misuse of the logo to AFS directly (see back page).





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AP re-benchmarked to EUREPGAP

As the Chairman comments on page 1, one of AP's principal objectives continues to be to try to minimise the audit burden for our producer members. Benchmarking to the EUREPGAP protocol for fresh produce in 2002, so that members could obtain both AP and EUREP membership via a single audit, was a major step. The EUREPGAP Fresh Produce Protocol was revised last year and since then AP has been working with EUREP to re-benchmark our standards to this new protocol.

This re-benchmarking process has been a protracted one, but it has just been confirmed that the Assured Produce Scheme has successfully benchmarked to the new EUREPGAP Fruit and Vegetables Protocol. However, in order to retain equivalence with EUREPGAP, APS needs to incorporate some new standards and modify some of the existing ones. The major changes relate to harvesting and produce handling where it has been necessary to introduce several new standards. Details of the timing of the revised standards are under final discussion with EUREP and our Certification Bodies. Examples of the amendments and new standards are as follows:

- Pesticide residue analysis results must be traceable to the batch/production site
- An action plan must be in place to deal with the event of a maximum residue level (MRL) being exceeded
- Hygiene risk assessments need to be carried out for the harvesting and produce handling processes



- There must be access to clean hand washing facilities for harvest workers in the vicinity of their work
- Where products are field packed, into final packaging, they must be covered to prevent contamination once packed and during transport
- Reusable plastic crates must be cleaned to ensure they are free from foreign material etc
- All harvesting tools, equipment and transportation must be cleaned and maintained, according to a schedule, at least annually
- Floors of produce handling facilities should be designed with slopes and drainage channels

- Handling facilities must be cleaned and maintained to prevent contamination
- Waste storage and cleaning agents must be kept in designated areas apart from where produce is packed to avoid contamination

It should be noted that the APS Scheme goes further than EUREPGAP in providing crop-specific protocols that provide technical information on best crop production practice, highlighting integrated pest, disease and crop management systems for specific crops. Details of the latest editions of these crop specific protocols are on the facing page.

Attention all AP members in Scotland

The Land Management Contract Menu Scheme marks the first step towards introducing Land Management Contracts in Scotland over the next few years.

The introduction of the Menu Scheme was announced by Ross Finnie, Minister for Environment and Rural Development, in February at the NFUS's AGM. A wide range of options are available.

Membership of quality assurance schemes is encouraged and this is backed by a payment of 50% of membership costs up to a maximum of £150 per scheme.

Applications and comprehensive guidance notes are now available and completed applications must be returned by 16 May 2005 in order to participate in the scheme in 2005.

A copy of the Land Management Contract and Summary of Measures are posted on the Assured Produce website: www.assuredproduce.co.uk.

Full information is available from the Scottish Executive Agriculture website: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Agriculture/CAPRef/LMC/LMCMs>.

New faces on AP bodies

Sarah Pettitt replaces Hugh Lowe on AP Council. She is an active member of the NFU Board for Horticulture. Two representatives from the retail sector, Nigel Williams (Asda) and Peter Durose (Tesco), have joined the AP Sector Board. On the TAC, Dr Gavin Bailey (ex Safeway) is now chairman replacing John Foley who retired last year. Emma Garrod and Dr Mike Storey now represent the Horticultural Development Council and the British Potato Council respectively and Bill Harvey (Somerset) also joins the TAC.



Minimising pesticide residues

Two years ago, AP initiated a project to examine ways in which ICM strategies on specific crops could be adapted to reduce the level of pesticide residues on the final product without compromising crop quality or adversely affecting the environmental management of the crop. Last summer in *AP News* we reported what had happened in Phase 1 of the project which aimed to address some of the immediate ways pesticide residues could be minimised.

Phase 2 focused on some of the longer term challenges facing residue reduction. We can now report that:

- Crop authors have reviewed all 52 crops
- "Best practice guidelines" have been developed and are included in the 05-06 crop protocols. (This guidance is in section 8.9 and a tabular appendix)
- For seven crops (apples, pears, potatoes, strawberries, raspberries and lettuce – protected and field) although some initial guidelines have been given, R&D is going to be needed over the next 5-10 years to find solutions, whether for individual or multi residues
- For 15 crops, following the new protocol guidance and developing best practices should lead to any pesticide residues being minimised
- For the remaining 30 crops, either no residues occur or they are only very occasionally found. Again the need for vigilance has been stressed and guidance included as appropriate

So as a grower how can you benefit from the findings of this project and play your part in minimising pesticide residues?

Here is a FOUR STEP PLAN :

- 1 Read the Generic Guidance Notes on minimising pesticide residues (section 8.9) to understand the background to this initiative
- 2 Review the specific protocols for your crops (section 8.9 and accompanying appendix) to see the position on residues and what guidance has been given
- 3 Discuss this guidance with your crop protection adviser and plan to implement where appropriate
- 4 Record any changes that you make so a reduction in residues can be linked to your recorded changes in practice



New guidelines will help reduce the level of pesticide residues

Excerpt from Generic Guidance Notes on Minimising Residues

"A range of possible options are available to the grower to minimise residues. However an assessment must be made to ensure that yield, quality, resistance management and Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) are not compromised. These will be refined as "guidelines" for individual crop protocols from the generic options given below

- assess other techniques, cultural, mechanical, physical and biological and to use a programme containing all the appropriate options for intervention
- minimise the carry over of pests and diseases e.g. the appropriate disposal of waste vegetable material and soil.
- ensure any planting material from propagators is as clean as possible
- ensure that any spraying operation is carried out accurately
- ensure that the sprayer is regularly calibrated, maintained and has a National Spray Test Certificate (NSTS)

Options include the following

- reducing application rates nearer harvest (ensure resistance management and efficacy are not compromised)
- lengthening the Pre Harvest Interval (PHI) (ensuring efficacy is not compromised)
- reducing the number of applications to the edible crop parts by using diagnostics and prediction forecasting
- using alternating chemistry in the spray programme"

Checking approved uses not on the product label

In some circumstances pesticide product labels do not include all of the approved uses.

Growers and advisers can check the approval notice of a particular product at:
www.pesticides.gov.uk/psd_databases.asp

A search on the database for a product name will lead to a results page. A click on the product name will link to a summary of the approval information. At the bottom of the summary are links to available notices which will give the statutory conditions of use.

For products with older approval an electronic version may not be available.

Contact the PSD Information Services Branch for details of the approved conditions of use on Tel: 01904 455775
 Email: p.s.d.information@psd.defra.gsi.gov.uk

- PSD has launched a new more user-friendly searchable database of SOLAs on its website. It can be found by selecting 'PSD databases' on the home page www.pesticides.gov.uk

Red Tractor revamp

A brand new marketing strategy for the Red Tractor was launched to the industry on 5 April.

A new consumer message, a powerful new logo and a refreshed website have been created as part of the strategy.

Building on the success of the last five years and responding to both producer and consumer issues, the Assured Food Standards (AFS) team has given the Red Tractor a stronger identity with a punchier consumer message.

The new Red Tractor logo is now being presented to consumers as a trusted symbol, signifying conscientiously produced food to a rigid set of standards. A new set of guidelines and fact sheets will further spell out our message to consumers through a number of outlets, including supermarkets and the lifestyle press.

Elements of the Red Tractor logo have been updated to keep pace with various market drivers. These include:

- Replacing the word 'Farm' with the word 'Food' - allowing AFS to better explain the full scope of Red Tractor assurance to consumers.



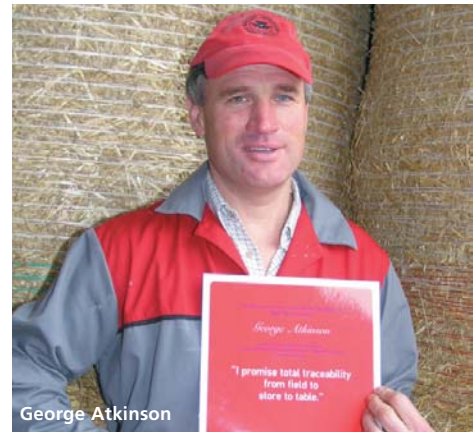
We know the average consumer responds well to the concept of 'whole chain assurance' so, now that our schemes cover all links of the food chain, AFS can use this powerful claim to its full potential.

- Replacing the word 'British' with the Union flag. This ends the speculation about the provenance of Red Tractor food once and for all. The Union flag in the logo shows that food has been produced and packed in the UK. AFS wants to make it easier for consumers to seek out British produce with a single point of reference.

- The prefix 'Little' from Little Red Tractor has also been dropped to give a stronger image.

Red Tractor website

Our new-look website www.redtractor.org.uk offers separate gateways for consumers, journalists and food chain members, providing a stronger platform to communicate with these different audiences. A number of new tools will be available. We hope these will be of value to your businesses and welcome your feedback.



George Atkinson

Summer 2005 Promise Campaign

Tens of thousands of visitors to farming and countryside shows across the country will see the Red Tractor Promise Campaign at first hand this summer.

A Red Tractor newsletter and other promotional material featuring some of the promises from the farmers below is being distributed by the NFU at its summer roadshows.

"I promise to be enthusiastic and good humoured even when the weather forecast is wrong!" Peter Haddon (sheep and cattle)

"I promise to make all the livestock in my care as comfortable as possible by providing the best food and shelter." Louise Quarton (pigs, cattle, arable)

"I promise that my chickens are free to behave as naturally as chickens can." Keith Blenkiron (broiler chicken)

"I promise that what I sell is fit for a prince and my children." Andrew Wace – (Potatoes, sugar beet, wheat)

"I promise total traceability from field to store to table." George Atkinson (sheep, beef, cereals)

AFS 'eyes and ears'

We need the industry to work together to maintain the integrity of the Red Tractor logo. No one is allowed to use the logo unless they are licensed by AFS, and we carry out regular audits of licensed premises to ensure rules are being followed.

However, mistakes can happen, and AFS wants farmers to act as our 'eyes and ears' on the ground in reporting suspected misuses of the logo. Please call Sadie Burnell at AFS on 0207 331 7658 or email sadie.burnell@assuredfoodstandards.com

Your contact will be followed up immediately.

Red Tractor 'in new markets'

With confidence in the Red Tractor at an all time high, there is growing interest from food chain partners to extend the application of the logo to new markets and sectors. New policies and technical guidelines are being explored for sectors such as composite foods, food service outlets and branded foods. AFS Sector Boards and technical committees will be closely involved in these discussions in the coming months.

useful contacts



Assured Produce

For any queries relating to AP standards contact:

APSecretariat
48-50 Ashley Road
Hampton, Middlesex
TW12 2HU
Tel: 0208 9798966
Fax: 0208 9798966
email: liz@aekerrigan.demon.co.uk
website: www.assuredproduce.co.uk

For all other Red Tractor Scheme queries contact:

Assured Food Standards (AFS)
PO Box 30773
London
WC2H 8AW
Tel: 020 7331 7660
Fax: 020 7331 7626
email: admin@assuredfoodstandards.com
website: www.littleredtractor.org.uk