



Assured Produce

Newsletter

Steady progress towards a safe haven

The Safe Haven Certification Scheme is the scheme instigated by BPC with the support of the NFU, NFU Scotland and other trade and industry bodies in response to a number of isolated outbreaks of the serious potato disease Ring Rot (*Clavibacter michiganensis* subsp. *Sepedonicus*).

The aim of the scheme is to prevent any further outbreaks of Ring Rot occurring in Britain, as these could be potentially devastating particularly to the British seed potato export industry. The scheme was officially launched in October last year and since then there has been a steady stream of seed growers applying to sign up.

To date approx. 35% of British seed potato growers



have applied to join the scheme and while this is encouraging, Iain Dykes, Seed Manager for the BPC is keen to see the remainder of the industry signed up to the scheme as soon as possible. He said "we always expected the scheme to take two seasons to get fully up and running but the more growers

we can get into the scheme at an early stage the greater benefit there will be for the whole industry.

"The feedback we have had so far from growers who have signed up is that they have been pleasantly surprised at how straight forward the process has been. Growers who are already members of Assured Produce can have their Safe Haven audit carried out at the same time with very little in the way of extra cost and effort."

With seed customers starting to take notice of the scheme and one major packer already sourcing all of their seed from Safe Haven certified growers the message to seed growers seems to be, 'as soon as the harvester is back in the shed get on the phone to your certification auditors.'

From the Chairman

I must first say what an honour it is to be taking over from someone of the stature of Chris Payne who devoted nearly all of his energetic career to many aspects of horticulture. He has done much to progress the Assured Produce Scheme and is a difficult act to follow, but I am delighted to be joining you as your Chairman and look forward to working closely with all of you to take the Assured Produce Scheme forward.

I wish to use this letter to introduce myself to you. I am a research entomologist by training with interests aimed mainly towards improving integrated pest management systems. I have applied this research in both horticultural and agricultural crops during a 30-year career working much of that time at Rothamsted Research and then Horticulture Research International. In my latter years at HRI I was more involved with research management and was the Research Director responsible for Sustainable Horticulture and the

Environment. Most recently I have been working as an independent consultant to science based organisations in horticulture and agriculture. I believe this background is very complementary to the ethos of the Assured Produce Scheme and Assured Food Standards more widely.

I have been aware of AP, and particularly its individual crop protocols, for many years. These protocols were very valuable to me during the eleven years at HRI specialising in IPM as they provided me with a very practical understanding of the complexity of production of individual commodities. The crop protocols also provide a practical route to implement useful research findings that are so important if the industry is to continue to be innovative and competitive.

I was brought up, and now live, in a farming community and believe that British growers produce high quality food, but this is not always recognised and appreciated by the consumer. Our rural

Mark Tatchell



communities and our countryside are dependent upon a successful farming industry and its associated food

chain for a sustainable future. By working with you in AP I hope I can do my little bit to help keep British growers competitive through supplying quality and safe food through a diversity of retail outlets to an increasingly appreciative consumer.

In my first few weeks as Chairman I have been talking to growers, processors, retailers and the NFU to understand more about the issues that concern them and their ideas for the future. I am very keen to hear from anyone so I understand fully the issues and these are considered appropriately while developing the strategy for the future. Please do contact me via the Assured Produce office email: liz@aekerrigan.demon.co.uk or Tel: 01932 589800. I hope I shall meet many of you in the future.

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A R E D T R A C T O R S C H E M E



Waste – you can handle it

The new agricultural waste regulations came into force on 15 May 2006. The regulations affect whether or not you can burn, bury, store, use your waste on the farm or send it elsewhere.

It is no longer permitted to burn any plastics or other materials that give rise to pollution and/or harm. There are different ways to manage waste, for example:

- Reduce the amount of waste that is produced by working with suppliers to prevent unusable material coming on to the farm.

- Look for ways to reuse or recycle materials – see Defra’s Waste Minimisation Manual ‘Opportunities for saving money by reducing waste on your farm’
- Separating and storing waste in a secure place
- Identifying contractors and sites where your waste can be sent for disposal or recovery see www.wasterecycling.org.uk

Decide what exemptions or waste management licenses you need or would like to benefit from, contact the Environment Agency on 0845 603 3113
As expected the most common activities being

registered are for waste plant material. Other common activities are disposal of ditch dredgings and reusing or recovering waste such as tyres on silage clamps.

You have until 15 May 2007 to comply with the new rules and to register for any waste exemptions. These exemptions will be FREE of charge for agricultural waste and you only have to register them once.

For an Exemption Pack, call the agricultural waste help-line on 0845 603 3113.

Minimising pesticide residues – Phase 3 “We need your help!”

Over the last 2-3 years, the AP crop protocol authors have given growers guidance on how pesticide residues can be minimised. We believe the time is now right for us to see what actions growers and their advisors have been able to take to ensure any residues are kept to a minimum.

Two approaches are being adopted –

- Firstly there will be some simple questions in the generic audit just to ensure everybody is aware of the project, understands the issues and has taken appropriate action.
- Secondly, for those crops AP needs to give most support to (apples, pears, potatoes, strawberries, raspberries, field and protected lettuce), a specific confidential questionnaire will be sent to growers at the beginning of November. The questions fall into 3 categories. Firstly to understand what changes within the conventional crop protection programme growers have been able to make. Secondly, what non-pesticide techniques have been adopted to minimise any residues. Lastly, the crop authors have asked some simple questions about the specific crops.

So if you are a grower of one of these crops please complete this short questionnaire. It is extremely important for AP to understand what growers have been able to implement and achieve, so we can use the findings to promote the activities of the UK fresh produce and potato industries.

Fertiliser storage competition

Every farm is affected by the issue of security risks of storing fertiliser, and every farmer has a duty of responsibility to keep his fertiliser stocks from getting into the wrong hands. Farmers Weekly is running a competition to provide farmers with the opportunity to provide the solutions to the problem and provide practical ideas on how to store fertiliser safely without spending much money rather than having regulations imposed upon them.

Standard competition rules will apply which will include eligibility of entrants, e.g. farmers, farm workers and contractors. Entries must be workable solutions and entrants are encouraged to send in diagrams, photos, etc.

For those not interested in entering the competition, the website www.secureyourfertiliser.co.uk set up by the National Counter-Terrorism Security Office has been set up on this subject. This website contains useful background information on the threat and basic principle of secure storage.

New Assured Produce website

The AP web site is being restructured and enhanced to provide a vital resource for the industry and will be launched on 27 November 2006. The new creative design will deliver this resource in a fresh, clean, easy-to-use format.

Across the site, all services and information are targeted at key industry persona: AP members; industry buyers; consumers; certification bodies; crop authors; AP Board and Secretariat.

You will be able to visit the AP members’ area for access to a range of new tools for producers:

Member libraries: You will be able to browse all the latest industry information, including: ADLib; audit guidance; standards; useful downloads.

Self-assessment audit: There will be a complete and online version of the Assured Produce generic and crop specific audit with comprehensive guidance linked to each question.

Scheme record: The primary contact for a membership will be able to view membership details, certificates, enterprises, assessments and other scheme information.

How to register: You will be able to register for instant online access to the members’ area by entering key scheme information: Certification Number, Postcode, Email Address. If the information matches the database, you will be sent a username and password. Be sure to provide your certification body with an up to date email address in order to gain access. Existing members’ area users will be able to continue to use their current username and password.



ADLib and Assured Produce

The Agricultural Document Library (known as ADLib) is an online resource (www.adlib.ac.uk) that aims to provide the agricultural and horticultural industries with the information they need to push forward the sustainability of the industry, in line with public desires and legal demands. The contents of ADLib covers England, Scotland and Wales and works across the industry for farmers, advisors, retailers, educators, policy and planning organisations.

Building on the library produced for the award winning Environmental Management for Agriculture (EMA) software, ADLib's ever expanding resource contains around 1300 documents (as of September 2006). These documents include Government codes of practice, industry guidelines, information and topic sheets, legislation summaries, glossaries, photograph galleries and a contacts directory. The majority of the documents are available in HTML and PDF formats and are cross-linked. There are also extensive searching and bookmarking facilities, including a new keyword search facility that will search down to individual pages.

ADLib already underpins many well-known and new initiatives. ADLib provides the advisory library and help system for Defra's whole farm approach (www.defra.gov.uk/farm/wholefarm/). People who are members of FACTS can access a nutrient management library supplied by ADLib as part of their website (www.factsinfo.org.uk). There is also the Environmental Management for Agriculture (EMA); Cross Compliance; Crop Nutrition and Soil Management; and Pest and Disease Management libraries available directly from ADLib (for a subscription of £25-50 – see Figure 1). Finally, ADLib will shortly be providing support to the new Assured Produce (AP) website.

In 2005 a 3-year Defra funded project was started to strengthen the chain for knowledge transfer for



FIGURE 2

members of the AP scheme. The aim is to deliver information on a 'pull down' basis (ie on request of the grower) by accessing documents relevant to the land-use industries via ADLib. This saves time and money for growers and increases the uptake of appropriate best practice information. At the same time the AP website has been undergoing redevelopment, including the creation of a new online version of the self-assessment audit/checklist. The new website will be available shortly. This audit is constructed in such a way that when presented with a conformance question, the user will be presented with links to the most up-to-date relevant information in ADLib. For example, a crop protection question might have links to a specific section in the code of practice for using plant protection products and/or a link to an HDC or BPC fact-sheet on how to control a particular disease (see Figure 2). In so doing the user will have access to the most appropriate information for the issues they are considering during the self-assessment. All the documents that are linked to within the AP self-assessment audit will also be available in the form of an online library, also available to members via the AP website. People who are also members of HDC and/or BPC will also be able to access bespoke HDC and BPC libraries that have also been developed as part of this Defra funded project, with the support HDC and BPC. ADLib has been developed jointly by the Agriculture and Environment Research Unit (AERU) at the University of Hertfordshire and TLR Eversyte Ltd, as a primary electronic resource for the industry. It is managed with a strict set of protocols that ensure all the information is regularly reviewed and updated. This ensures that users can readily obtain access to the most up to date information available.

For further information please contact: info@adlib.ac.uk or visit www.adlib.ac.uk.

Liaison with Defra and law enforcement officers

It is the view of Assured Produce that assurance inspections should not be seen as duplicating the inspections by regulatory authorities. AP is committed to ensuring that assurance is recognised by Defra and relevant law enforcement bodies. The aim is to demonstrate that regulatory bodies should regard assured businesses as being 'low risk' when planning their inspections. AP has supported AFS in promoting the concept that assured producers should be targeted for inspection (significantly) less frequently than non assured producers thereby allowing more efficient use of regulatory resources and 'adding value' to assurance. Assurance assessments already provide government with solid evidence that legislation is complied with.

AP has focused on liaison with Defra, the Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD) and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) with regard to cross compliance and minimising pesticide residues. AFS has undertaken discussions on the implementation of the General Food Hygiene Regulations with FSA and Local Authority Co-ordinator of Regulatory Services (LACORS). These efforts are helping to persuade those organisations which are involved in law enforcement to consider the approach advocated and recognise the importance of assurance.

Discussions are continuing with respect to the information that the regulatory bodies will need in order to put the proposed approach into practice and this includes the need for regulatory inspectors to be able to identify assured producers in order to treat them differently.

Assured Produce will be amending the scheme rules to allow it to reserve the right to release information from its database about the certification status of a member to a person or organisation with a legitimate interest in knowing that information if proof of certification might be in the member's interest. AP will not be sharing any other information with the regulatory authorities.



FIGURE 1

Bystander exposure to pesticides

The government has responded to the recommendations made in the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution [RCEP] report on crop spraying and the health of residents and bystanders. Some of the report's recommendations could have had significant impact on farming practices had the government accepted them, but because of farm assurance schemes and the requirements within them, the government was able to point to the industry policing itself.

For instance the report recommended that all spraying practices be brought into line with the Green Code [PPP code] and that "appropriate monitoring arrangements and sanctions for non-compliance" are introduced. The government's response to that was this:-

Around 80 per cent of spray events in England are performed on land managed as part of one of the crop assurance schemes and this is increasing. The Government believes that these schemes provide a level of scrutiny and sanction for non-compliance that is appropriate and that continuing to support the take up of these schemes will be the most effective means of ensuring the aspirations of the PPP Code are met

The report also recommends that the NSTS and NRoSO become compulsory under legislation. In both instances the government was able to respond that these are now included in farm assurance schemes

and that - it would be premature to legislate until the benefits of a voluntary approach have been fully evaluated.

However, the issue has not gone away. The Government is currently considering what the farming industry can do to improve the perception of pesticides and how communications can be improved between those who use pesticides and their non-farming neighbours.

It is too early to say what will emerge but some key points are these -

1. In the great majority of cases there is not a problem between farmers and their neighbours
2. Most neighbours who ask questions about pesticide use are genuinely interested and are not trouble makers.
3. Where there is a problem it tends to be local so we should treat local problems with local solutions.
4. If a problem does arise, it can usually be resolved by talking the issue through with your neighbour.

The farming industry will be producing some information such as a "Good Neighbour Guide" containing some dos and don'ts and a "Cab Card" listing the key points about safe spraying to remind the operator.

IN BRIEF...

Public procurement

AFS are working with the NFU to produce a leaflet for public procurers outlining the benefits of buying Red Tractor and farm assured food and how to source it. The information for public procurers has been produced to coincide with the revised public procurement buying guidelines which now refers to Red Tractor and farm assured food. The leaflet will be available from October and will be part of a larger communication plan for the public food sector. **For information contact Catherine Muckle on 020 7630 3328.**

BBC Good Food Show

Building on last years success, Red Tractor will be exhibiting at this years BBC Good Food Show in Birmingham with BPEX, NABIM/HGCA, MDC, the British Carrot Growers Association and the Yes Peas Campaign. Red Tractor and partners will also be sponsoring the Great British Food Theatre that will have demonstrations from celebrity chefs including James Martin, Brian Turner and Anthony Worrall Thompson.

Blueberries

Assured Produce is pleased to announce the addition of a new crop protocol to the 48 crop specific protocols already produced. Blueberries have increased in popularity over the last ten years and we feel that there is now sufficient interest for Blueberries to have a protocol of their own. We are delighted that David Trehane of The Dorset Blueberry Co. has agreed to write the protocol. David and his family have been growing blueberries in Dorset since 1949.

Red Tractor wins Gramia award

Red Tractor Day was applauded by marketing industry professionals at the Gramia Awards this month, where the activity received a top Golden Gramia for Trade PR.

The Gramia Awards (Grocery Advertising and Marketing Industry Awards) recognise creative excellence across key categories and are one of the highest accolades in the marketing industry.

Red Tractor Day also succeeded in reaching 7.7million urban consumers through press, internet and broadcast, and was strongly supported by Tesco in particular who placed Red Tractor Day stickers onto Red Tractor foods in stores across the UK.



Massey Ferguson sponsors this newsletter as part of its continuing support of British agriculture and commitment to the Red Tractor Scheme.

useful contacts



Assured Produce

For any queries relating to Assured Produce standards contact:

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