

Q&A: AIC Assessment of Gatekeeper protocol within the UK

This Q&A can be used to explain the use of the Gatekeeper protocol within the feed and food assurance schemes that operate in the agrisupply industry. A position statement on this issue is also available as well as a press release and a webinar, which can be found on the AIC website.

Q: What is the Gatekeeper Protocol?

A: The Gatekeeper protocol is an assurance protocol that relies on product assurance to ensure feed and food safety of feed materials.

Q: How does it work?

A: The buyer or supplier of the materials undertakes a range of sampling and analysis i.e., pesticides, mycotoxins, heavy metals, etc, which are specified for the commodity, to ensure it meets all feed and food safety legal compliance.

Q: When is the Gatekeeper Protocol used?

A: This protocol is used where feed materials are imported into the UK to ensure feed and food safety. However, for cereals, the majority of crops are domestically produced.

Q: Is the Gatekeeper Protocol used in the UK for UK crops?

A: The Gatekeeper protocol is not currently used for domestically produced crops. In the UK, feed and food safety legal requirements are met by farm assurance standards i.e., Red Tractor Assurance, Scottish Quality Cereals etc. These requirements are stipulated by processors and end users to ensure they have product assurance they require.

Q: Why have parts of the industry asked that consideration be given to the introduction of the Gatekeeper protocol for UK grown materials?

A: A group of cereal farmers have asked for this to be considered as well as AFS and the NFU. Some consider that the Gatekeeper protocol would give UK farmers an alternative route to market, rather than using the current farm assurance schemes.

Some farmers are also dissatisfied with some elements of farm assurance in terms of the standard content and methods of auditing.

Q: Could the Gatekeeper protocol be used in the UK?

A: In theory, the Gatekeeper protocol could be used in the UK. The AIC took the proposal to AIC committees and following an in-depth assessment by the agrisupply industry it has concluded that at the current time this is both more expensive and adds complexity, with no added value. In addition, there is no evidence of end user or processor demand for such a proposal. This is the case for both the arable marketing and feed companies, as well as farmers.

Q: What areas need to be considered with farm assurance of combinable crops in the future?

A: Whilst AIC is fully supportive of UK farm assurance, some important issues have been raised by some farming groups and these need to be clearly identified with an action plan to remedy. However, the need for safe, traceable feed, food and fuel supply chains has never been greater.

Q: What is the impact of Russian invasion of Ukraine on agri-food supply chains?

A: In both the short term and medium term, a high level of uncertainty with commodity supply chains both from Ukraine and Russia exists. This will impact both availability and price for the UK and globally as other sources of commodities are sought. The resultant market reaction has seen prices rise across all product groups and a degree of uncertainty is expected to continue into the early summer and beyond.

This highlights the need for UK feed and food security, which should not be compromised in any way at this current time.

For more information, contact:

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