



NORTHERN IRELAND BEEF & LAMB FARM QUALITY ASSURANCE SCHEME (NIBL FQAS)

PROCESSOR MEMBERS' STANDARD

As part of the programme to highlight the credentials of the Northern Ireland beef and sheep meat industries, processors seeking to participate in FQAS are required to meet the codes as detailed in this Standard. It is believed that this Standard, which goes beyond statutory requirements, does not represent a significant hurdle to any Northern Ireland processor. Northern Ireland processors have historically been fully committed to the principle of maintaining the highest standard, which positions them very satisfactorily against competitive processors elsewhere. (The term “Processor” in this document applies to processors at all stages of the supply chain; some of the codes below apply only to the abattoir sector).

1. The Processor Member’s premises must be either situated in Northern Ireland or elsewhere in the EU, UK or ROI servicing their business of processing Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assured Beef or Lamb, and conform to the requirements as described in Annex 1 of the EEC directive 64/433EEC as amended.
2. The Processor Member (Abattoir) must comply with the BRC Global Standard for Food Safety and Red Tractor Meat Processing Scheme. The Abattoir must be inspected against these Standards on an annual basis by a UKAS approved Certification Body, operating to a European Standard (ISO17065). Certificates must be retained as evidence of these audits. The Abattoir must have a mechanism in place for verification of “Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assured” claims on an annual basis. Evidence must be provided on application/renewal of FQAS Processor Membership.
3. The Processor Member (Secondary Processor) must comply with the BRC Global Standard for Food Safety. If the Secondary Processor is processing/packing product carrying the Red Tractor logo then it must also be audited against the Red Tractor Meat Processing Scheme. The Secondary Processor must be inspected against these Standards on an annual basis by a UKAS approved Certification Body, operating to a European Standard (ISO17065). Certificates must be retained as evidence of these audits. The Secondary Processor must have a mechanism in place for verification of “Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assured” claims on an annual basis. Evidence must be provided on application/renewal of FQAS Processor Membership
4. All “Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assured” claims must be verified annually. The FQAS Standard Setting Committee agreed in July 2015 that the following options are permissible as evidence of verification of “Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assured” claims:
 - a) Independently verified by a 3rd party UKAS accredited Certification Body as part of the Red Tractor Meat Processing Scheme audit (**Recommended**)*
 - b) Independently verified by a 3rd party UKAS accredited Certification Body with the NIBL FQAS Voluntary Beef Labelling Scheme as part of its Schedule of Accreditation. (**Recommended**)
 - c) Independently verified by a 3rd party UKAS accredited Certification Body that does not have the NIBL FQAS Voluntary Beef Labelling Scheme as part of its Schedule of Accreditation.

**Where sites have an annual Red Tractor Meat Processing Scheme audit, evidence can be provided where it clearly demonstrates that the “Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assured” claim has been verified as part of the traceability exercise.*



5. In view of the increasing EU emphasis on animal health and animal welfare, the Processor Member (Abattoir) must ensure that lairage and abattoir staff adopt practices that ensure humane treatment of all livestock which minimises stress during unloading, holding in lairage, and up to and including stunning. At least one member of the lairage team must have attended the Bristol University “animal welfare at slaughter” programme (or a recognised equivalent). If not already in place, a lead in time of one year should apply after which it becomes a requirement.
6. The Processor Member (Abattoir) will use an agreed common carcass dressing specification.
7. The Processor Member (Abattoir) must ensure that SRM regulations are implemented and regulated by DAERA.
8. The Processor Member (Abattoir) must agree to classification of all carcasses to the EU standards (currently the EUROP grid).
9. The Processor Member must have approved traceability systems in place which satisfy EU Beef Labelling Regulations, and in sheep plants meet the FQAS ‘lamb verification form’ procedures for sheep traceability, and be validated by independent audit which covers all traceability requirements from raw material source to finished product and from finished product back to raw material source.
10. The Processor Member must have an independently certified, basic level, plant hygiene audit. (Note: It is considered that because of the high standard of livestock production under an ISO17065 scheme at farm level, the final process in the chain should have some level of independently verified hygiene standard).
11. The Processor Member must have a fully documented and operational HACCP system in place. (If not in place at application then six months to comply).
12. The Processor Member must have a training policy in place appropriate to staff development, a minimum to include induction, hygiene, health and safety.
13. The Processor Member must establish and implement a system of microbiological sampling of carcasses as previously discussed and agreed by the Food Standards Agency. TVC and coliform testing must be done as a minimum.
14. The Processor Member must differentiate payments to their farmer suppliers who are in FQAS membership against non-members.
15. The Processor Member must pay the appropriate fee on application, and must pay any renewal fees by the due date. If the renewal fee becomes overdue, an increased overdue fee is payable. Fees, once paid, are not subject to refund. Fees are set by mutual agreement between FQAS and NIMEA, and are detailed on a separate “Fees Sheet”. Failure to pay fees may lead to suspension and removal from APHIS of the FQ status of animals entering the offending plant.
16. Any retailer or a processor/retail packer on behalf of a retailer, wanting to use the NIBL FQAS logo on meat or meat products must apply to LMC for permission to use it. FQAS Processor Members must agree to comply with the rules listed in this standard.



17. Whilst a lot of farm products are sold as “primary foods”, many more are sold in foods that include a mixture of ingredients. These guidelines have been drawn up for the use of NI FQAS beef and lamb which may form part of a multi-ingredient product.

The criteria are as follows:

- 1) The main ingredient being promoted must be named in the product
 - 2) It must come from the usual assured chain
 - 3) It must be at least 65% of the total product
 - 4) All of the named ingredient must be assured e.g. Even if, for example 65% of the beef in a sausage is assured, the product cannot contain any additional beef from another source as all the named ingredient must be assured
18. The NIBL FQAS logo is a protected by trade mark and its use on retail meat and meat packaging is controlled by a system of licences. It must not be used in this way without a licence.
19. Because of the visual representation of all that a logo stands for, which has to be distinctive and easy to spot and recognise, the logo must be reproduced in its “official” colours on a white background, or the NIBL FQAS logo may be used in a single colour of black on a light background or white on a dark background. The accompanying words are an essential part of the logo, and the logo must not be reproduced without them under any circumstances.
20. The colours of the NIBL FQAS logo are green for the image and blue for the words. The correct Pantone numbers are for the green 355, and for the blue 540. An electronic copy will be sent to either yourself or your printers when your application for FQAS Processor Membership has been approved
21. It is suggested that the logo is printed onto the pack label or printed on round self-adhesive labels which can be applied to pre-prepared retail packs or to the wrapping of loose sales.
22. Correct use of the logo is a contractual obligation.
23. Careless or knowing misuse of the logo, or if no action is taken by the user after attention is drawn to innocent misuse, can be grounds for withdrawal of the licence to use the logo.
24. If for any reason, the licence is withdrawn, you must immediately cease using the logo and where necessary withdraw any material carrying the logo.
25. Continued use of the logo in such circumstances will result in legal action being taken by LMC.
26. It is permissible for a retailer to continue to use a superseded NIBL FQAS mark for a reasonable time. If a logo is amended, the updated logo must be used when labels are reprinted.