



Summer 2026 briefing



Julian Sturdy
Combinable Crops and Sugar
Beet Sector Chair

Dear Members

As I approach a year in post as the Combinable Crops and Sugar Beet Sector Chair, I wanted to update you on the current review of the Red Tractor standards and where our work is heading.

I am also very conscious that this has been another challenging season for growers. Farming in Yorkshire myself, I understand first-hand the pressures that variable weather, increasing input costs and market uncertainty continue to place on businesses. It reinforces how important it is that assurance works for growers in a practical, proportionate way, supporting British farmers and ensuring fairness in the supply chain - particularly in relation to imports.



**Paul McLaughlin was recently
appointed CEO of Red Tractor**

Following the publication of our priorities and objectives for the crops sector in December, work has commenced to create standards that are not only robust, but also justified, necessary, and genuinely fit for purpose.

As a board we have been committed to ensuring that the next iteration of the standards is fair and there is transparency so that assurance is meaningful to both growers and the rest of the supply chain.

Thank you for continuing to engage with us, through surveys, feedback and open and honest conversations about where the system can improve. That input is essential and will directly shape how the standards evolve.

In other news, following a comprehensive open recruitment process, Paul McLaughlin was appointed CEO of Red Tractor and joined us at the start of May. He brings significant senior experience across food and assurance. Joining at this important time, Paul will support the ongoing standards review and wider programme of work. Along with some of the team and I Paul will be at Cereals and other events over the summer, so please do take the opportunity to say hello if you see us.

Best, Julian
Combinable Crops and Sugar Beet Sector Chair

Shaping the future of Red Tractor assurance for combinable crops and sugar beet

A more tailored approach to assurance

The Board is focused on a series of priority areas designed to shape the next generation of standards. This work is including engaging directly with growers and supply chain representatives to better understand customer and market requirements exploring more flexible approaches to assurance and auditing.

Priorities in the sector are:

- Reducing unnecessary duplication and administrative burden
- Making better use of digital tools and smarter record-keeping
- Appraising if a modular system would enable a fairer option for growers

A full review of Red Tractor's standards for combinable crops and sugar beet will also focus on developing a revised set of standards aligned with Red Tractor's wider Vision and Purpose, improving how standards are presented so that requirements and their rationale are clearer, and exploring more modern approaches to demonstrating compliance, including the use of photographic evidence through the Red Tractor Member Portal.

Expert-led development through the Technical Advisory Committee

At the heart of the Standards Review is detailed, technical work being undertaken by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). This group is central to ensuring the standards remain credible, practical, and firmly rooted in real-world farming practice.

The TAC brings together a wide range of expertise and perspectives from across the supply chain.

Technical Advisory Committee

Alan King Chair	Ryan McCormack NFU Crops	Andrew Williamson NFU Crops
Brin Hughes BOBMA	James Croskell ACFM	MAGB TBC
Emma Willis AHDB	Simon Fortis UK Flour Millers	Sam Williamson NFU Sugar
Gill Barrow TASCC	Joe Hart AIC Merchants	Rodger Morris Animal Feed Manufacturer
Luke Cox NFU Crops	Charlie Curtis British Sugar	Julian Sturdy Sector Board Chair

This diverse representation ensures that each standard is tested not only against regulatory and scientific requirements, but also against practical application on farm. Members have worked collaboratively to review existing requirements, identifying opportunities to remove or simplify where possible, reduce audit burden and maintain food safety and market access.

Alan King, Chair of the Crops TAC, says:

"During what are challenging times for our industry, we are grateful for the support of our TAC members from across the crops and sugar beet supply chain for their contributions to this extensive and detailed review process."

As valued members, your feedback is a critical part of this process. We are committed to ensuring the standards are shaped not only by the TAC's technical and sector expertise, but also by the experience of those working directly in the industry.

A full draft of the revised standards will be shared later this year, giving you the opportunity to review the proposed changes in detail and provide feedback. Together, the TAC's breadth of expertise and your input as members will play a key role in shaping the final standards ahead of their planned launch in 2027.

Red Tractor Contract Farming Rules – Simplified

Contract farming varies a lot in practice. In some cases, a landowner is actively farming. In others, a contractor is effectively running the entire business. Sometimes both share responsibilities in different ways.

Because of this, Red Tractor focuses on two main questions:

1. Who is doing the day-to-day farm management?
2. Who owns the crop or receives the income from it?

The answers determine whether a full membership is needed or whether a linked “owner” membership is sufficient.



Changes in Farming Arrangements

Contract farming relationships are not always static. When a contractor changes, or when a landowner moves to a different contractor, both parties are required to inform their certification body.

In some cases, a new assessment may be triggered, particularly where:

- A new contractor is introduced into the assurance system
- Physical infrastructure needs to be checked, such as grain stores or pesticide stores

This ensures that all relevant parts of the farming operation remain compliant under the new arrangement.

Assessments

The approach to assessments is designed to avoid duplication while still ensuring full coverage. The contractor is assessed once, and it covers all farms and landowners they manage. This includes crop production systems and storage facilities linked to their operations. The contractor pays the fee for this assessment.

Landowners holding an owner membership do not receive a separate assessment. Instead, they pay a royalty fee based on the area they own or have linked to the contractor's operation. Their certification is dependent on the contractor's assessment outcome.

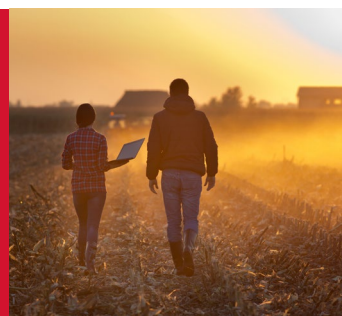
Practical Interpretation

In practice, the rules can be summarised as follows:

- If you are actively involved in farming decisions or operations, you need full certification.
- If you run the entire farm operation and receive the crop income, you hold full certification and the landowner is outside the scheme.
- If you run the farm but the landowner still receives crop income, both parties are included, but the landowner holds a linked, lower-level membership.

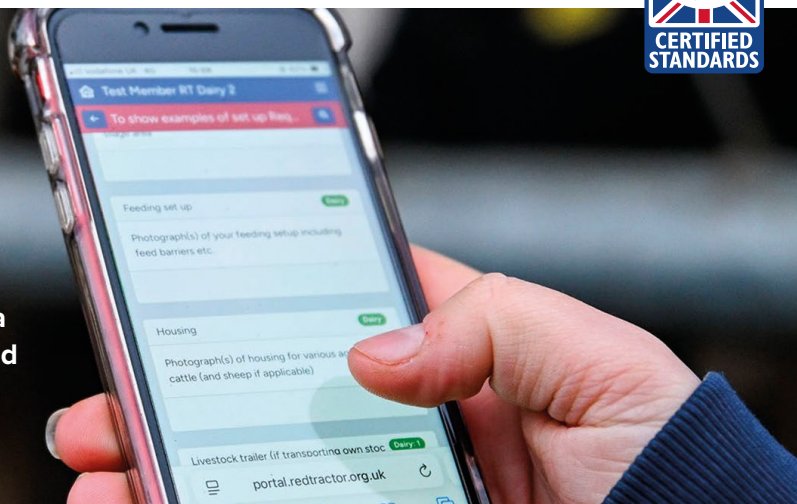
The Red Tractor rules for contract farming are designed to reflect real-world farming structures while maintaining assurance integrity. They ensure that the party controlling farm operations is fully certified and that the party benefiting from crop income is appropriately linked into the system. Plus, they ensure that certification is not duplicated unnecessarily and that the supply chain can still trace assured crops back to responsible parties

The membership rules for contract farming are available on the [Red Tractor website](https://www.redtractor.org.uk).



Improving assessment burden for farmers

In response to farmer feedback and the Farm Assurance Review, Red Tractor has introduced a range of practical digital improvements designed to reduce assessment burden, cut duplication and make compliance with standards easier to manage as part of everyday farm life.



From upgrades to the member portal that allow farmers to upload live, geo-stamped evidence from the field to new integrations with farm management software already used on farm, the changes are aimed at simplifying record-keeping, reducing paperwork and helping members stay assessment-ready year-round with less last-minute pressure.

Updates to the member portal

Developed in response to farmer feedback, recent updates to the Red Tractor member portal are designed to make demonstrating compliance simpler, faster and less paperwork heavy.

At the heart of the update is a move towards more practical, on-farm recording. Farmers can now take live, geo-stamped photos directly through the portal using a mobile phone, creating instant evidence of routine tasks such as grain monitoring checks, hygiene practices or vermin control measures.

For example, a quick photo of freshly placed bait stations or inspected traps not only shows that these measures are in use but helps build a clear picture of active pest management. Similarly, images of cleaned stores provide time-stamped evidence of biosecurity practices in action.

The approach is designed to reflect the reality that many assurance requirements are already part of everyday farm routines. By capturing evidence as tasks are completed, farmers can build a clear compliance record throughout the year rather than preparing everything immediately before an assessment.

The system automatically records the time, date and location, reducing the need for manual logbooks and streamlining evidence gathering.

Other improvements include tools that help farmers:

- Manage compliance documents more easily
- Set expiry reminders for key records
- Apply documents across multiple requirements in one step
- Use more tailored, site-specific checklists
- View all uploaded evidence in one place

Guidance on using the portal features, including 'how to' videos, can be found on the [Red Tractor website](https://www.redtractor.org.uk).



Megan Roworth,
Dairy, Beef & Sheep
and Crops farmer,
Derbyshire.

"I can't recommend using the portal enough. Being able to upload documents throughout the year as they come in or keep electronic records of things like calibration records as we do them, then having them readily available to submit all in one folder when the time comes is brilliant."

"This year our visit was about 90 minutes long because all paperwork had been submitted electronically in advance, so there were just a few additional questions followed by the farm walk around."

It fell in the school holidays and with five children in tow and the farm still to run, I was extremely grateful."



Integrating standards compliance into systems farmers already use

As part of its wider digital improvements programme, Red Tractor is also working with third-party software providers to integrate assurance requirements into systems farmers already use day to day.

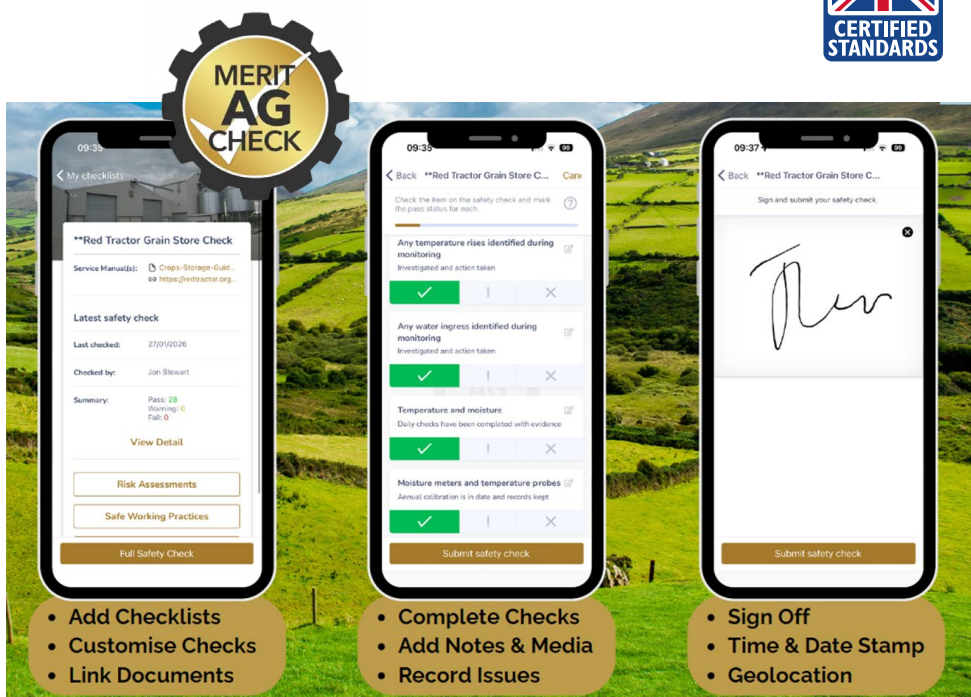
Rather than entering the same information in multiple places, farmers will increasingly be able to manage assurance records through existing farm management software.

One of the latest developments is a new set of crops checklists created with MeritAgCheck.

We want to work collaboratively with any company whose reporting systems overlap with Red Tractor assurance requirements, helping reduce duplication and make compliance easier to manage through practical digital tools already embedded in farm businesses.

Jon Stewart, Director, MeritAgCheck said:

"Having the Red Tractor requirements built directly into MeritAgCheck means farmers can capture the information once and use it for multiple purposes, including their farm assurance. The integration makes the process much smoother for our customers and ensures they stay assessment-ready without extra admin, saving them time that they can re-invest into other activities."



Stickers are distributed by your certification body, not Red Tractor. To request new stickers, contact either NSF or Intertek SAI Global.

BUT... did you know that you do not need to apply stickers onto the passport accompanying your grain? Instead, you can use our online system which allows you to create, download and print a grain passport at home, populated with real-time assurance details. The area of the passport where the stickers would normally be applied is populated with your up-to-date assurance details and grain buyers can be confident that your load is assured as the system validates all the assurance details at the point of download.

[Click here](#) to see how to register to use this service.



Make sure your business details are up to date ahead of harvest

As harvest approaches, now is a good time for Red Tractor members to take a few minutes to review the information held on the Checker and Services website. Making sure business details, trading title and grain store information are accurate can help avoid unnecessary delays or complications during a busy time of the year.

Simple steps to avoid harvest delays

- To access your information, log in to the Services page on the Red Tractor website using the same login details you use for the member portal and PDF grain passports. If you have not yet registered for the Services page, details on how to create a username and password are available on the [Red Tractor website](#).
- Once logged in, your membership details will appear on the left-hand side of the page. Clicking on your membership number will show your registered primary site, along with any additional holdings linked to the business.
- Grain store information can be checked by selecting “Register a Passport”. This will allow you to view your registered collection addresses. If you have multiple grain stores, they will appear in a drop-down list, showing whether each store is registered as a long-term or temporary store. If any information is incorrect, such as the store name or classification, contact your Certification Body with the updated details.
- If you are the primary web user for the business, you will also be able to see who else has access to the membership record and when they last logged in. Please note this is separate from the contact information held by your Certification Body for assessments and renewals, so it is important to continue checking any paperwork or emails they send during the renewal process.

Keeping your information accurate and up to date can help reduce the risk of compliance queries, administrative delays or disruptions during harvest operations. It also helps ensure smoother communication with merchants, assessors and supply chain partners, giving everyone access to the correct information when it is needed most.



Cereals THE ARABLE EVENT

Say hello at Cereals

Crops and Sugar Beet Technical Manager, Annie Rogers and the Red Tractor team will be on hand throughout both days of the event (10–11 June) to answer questions and listen to feedback from members. We’re also part of the NRoSO and BASIS Knowledge Trails, so visit our stand to learn something new and earn a CPD point!

Come and see us at the Red Tractor stand, no. 234, we are close to the NFU and British Sugar, we look forward to welcoming you!



Why fertiliser security matters and how to get it right

Growers are reminded to be vigilant when purchasing and storing large amounts of fertiliser to prevent it from falling into the wrong hands.

Superintendent Steve Fosher, Head of the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO), says:

“Regardless of how much fertiliser you store, it is important you consider measures to prevent it from being stolen and misused by potential terrorists as the threat level to the UK remains at Substantial – An Attack is Likely.”

We must all do our bit to prevent fertiliser from being stolen. Whilst there is no such thing as absolute security, there are simple measures that can significantly reduce the likelihood of theft. Storing fertiliser in an enclosed secure building or covering fertiliser with a tarpaulin in an open-sided barn may seem basic but can be effective.

Red Tractor and NaCTSO have put together a ‘Fertiliser Security Five Point Plan’:

Fertiliser Security Five Point Plan

1. Wherever possible use a Fertiliser Industry Assurance Scheme (FIAS) approved supplier.
2. Wherever possible keep in a secure area, such as a building or sheeted away from public view.
3. Carry out regular stock checks and report any loss to the police immediately (call 101).
4. Avoid leaving fertiliser in a field overnight – never leave fertiliser in a field for a long period of time.
5. Remember it is illegal to sell ammonium nitrate without the correct documentation.

This plan highlights five key areas for farmers and growers to follow when using and storing nitrogen-based fertilisers.



Everyone has a role to play

By following the advice and remaining security-conscious, growers can prevent fertiliser from being stolen, which causes a financial loss to farmers and growers, but ultimately restricts the availability of nitrate-based fertilisers for use by terrorist groups within the UK.

We all have a role to play to help prevent terrorism, if you think someone is acting suspiciously around a farm, contact the local Police or the Anti-Terrorist hotline: **0800 789 321** or

online at: ACT: Report suspicious activity.

In an emergency, always call 999.

