



Red Tractor Governance Handbook

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Overview

An introduction to how decisions are made at Red Tractor

Welcome and Purpose of the Handbook

Welcome to the Red Tractor Governance Handbook, a comprehensive guide that outlines the governance structure, operational procedures, and key policies of Red Tractor.

This handbook serves as a resource for all stakeholders involved in the governance of Red Tractor, providing clarity on the organisation's governance framework and operational processes.

By adhering to the guidelines and principles outlined in this handbook, stakeholders can ensure alignment with Red Tractor's values and objectives, ultimately contributing to the organisation's purpose of promoting British produce that's safe, traceable and farmed with care.

By detailing the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, outlining decision-making processes, and providing insights into operational procedures, this handbook aims to foster a culture of good governance and best practices within the organisation.

It serves as a specific reference guide for board members, committee members, staff and in the spirit of transparency, it also provides guidance for anyone interested in Red Tractor - enabling them to navigate the governance structure of the organisation effectively.

Red Tractor was launched in June 2000 and is the trading name of Assured Food Standards – a business incorporated in 2003. Throughout this document we have used “Red Tractor” for simplicity.



About Red Tractor



Red Tractor is the UK's largest food chain assurance scheme, setting standards and ensuring compliance at every key stage of the chain, to reassure consumers that food is produced safely and responsibly.

Our standards cover animal welfare, food safety and environmental protection, and all Red Tractor produce is traceable back to UK assured farms.

Red Tractor champions high standards across the food chain, and our logo is the most trusted food mark among UK consumers.

When the Red Tractor's there, your food's farmed with care.

Our logo is only found on British food and drink products that have been certified to meet rigorous standards, from farms to pack.

This means that the food you buy has been responsibly sourced, safely produced and comes from crops and animals that have been well cared for – so it's good for you and good for British farmers.

Our History

Championing high standards in the UK food chain.

Red Tractor was founded in 2000 by the UK farming industry and food businesses to establish a single set of standards for UK food and drink.

Since then, we have grown to become a worldleading food chain assurance scheme, with over 46,000 UK farmers and over 900 food and drink operators and sites in our network.

We have and always will work closely with experts, scientists, vets, and the government to ensure that our standards are robust, relevant and up to date.

Our Vision and Purpose

Our vision is to be the pride of British food and farming, valued by consumers, supply chains and governments.

Our purpose is to deliver standards for British food that everyone can trust.

Our Impact

Red Tractor is more than just a logo.

We are a not-for-profit organisation that aims to make a positive difference to the British food and farming sector, as well as the environment and society.

By choosing Red Tractor products, you are supporting British farmers who care for their animals, crops and the countryside.

Red Tractor certified businesses throughout the farming and food supply chain also contribute to the UK economy, creating jobs and opportunities for rural communities.



We are constantly striving to ensure our standards and services meet the changing needs and expectations of consumers.

We are also committed to improving the experience of Red Tractor assurance for our farming and food chain members, using technology, data and innovation.



Who should use this handbook

This handbook is designed for all stakeholders involved in the governance and operations of Red Tractor, including:

Ownership Body Members: The six Owners of Red Tractor plus the Food & Drink Federation who sit as Observers.

The Red Tractor Board of Directors (The Board): To understand their roles, responsibilities, and decisionmaking at Board meetings and in any sub-committees they may sit in (Standards, Audit & Finance, Nominations, Remuneration).

Standards Committee Members: To guide them in those delegated responsibilities from The Board of developing and delivering standards, and scheme operation.

Sector Board Members and Technical Advisory Committee Members:

To provide clarity on operational procedures, policies, and how their work contributes to Red Tractor's wider Vision & Purpose.

Food Chain: To gain insights into Red Tractor's governance structure and standards, fostering collaboration and alignment with industry practices.

Regulators and Government Bodies:

To understand Red Tractor's governance framework and compliance with regulatory requirements. Furthermore, to understand where Red Tractor can assist government controls on food safety and production.

Governance principles

Representative: Red Tractor is the most representative UK assurance scheme. Each agricultural sector has its own board and at least one Technical Advisory Committee - the compositions of which are made up from a wide selection of that sector's supply chain.

Democratic: Every representative is treated equally at every level of Red Tractor's governance - The Board, Sector Boards and TACs. The views of all stakeholders are encouraged and considered, and decisions are made via consensus or majority.

Balanced: Achieving balance is a crucial aspect of standard setting at Red Tractor. This is why each sector board will have equal representation of farmers & growers, processors and retailers.



By catering to a diverse audience of stakeholders, this handbook aims to promote a shared understanding of Red Tractor's governance principles and operational guidelines, fostering collaboration and alignment across the food chain.



Who decides at Red Tractor?



Each layer of Red Tractor’s governance serves a purpose.

THE OWNERSHIP BODY

NFU, NFU Scotland, Ulster Farmers Union, AHDB, Dairy UK, British Retail Consortium.
Food & Drink Federation (observers)

Provides the ‘limited by guarantee’ (£1) to Red Tractor – Appoints Directors and Chair –
Amends the Articles when necessary



Delegates all responsibility for the management of Red Tractor to the Directors
who may exercise all the powers of the Company

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS (THE BOARD)

Brings insights and experience across the supply chain to inform and develop the
organisation’s Vision, Purpose, Business Plan, Strategies and Objectives

Standards Development and
Scheme Operation



STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Review overall technical
strategy & delivery, particularly
for cross sector issues

6 SECTOR BOARDS

Determines technical
strategy by sector

8 TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES (TACs)

Determines technical
standards by scope

Delegates Corporate Governance



AUDIT & FINANCE

Review overall technical
strategy & delivery, particularly
for cross sector issues

RENUMERATION

Determines Director &
CEO remuneration

NOMINATIONS

Recruits Directors

Implementation of the plan



PERMANENT STAFF

Led by the CEO, implements
the Vision, Purpose,
Business Plan, Strategies,
Objectives and manages
and delivers day-to-day
operations

Ownership Body



About: Red Tractor is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee (£1).
The Ownership Body (or “the Owners”) represents the entire supply
chain that Red Tractor provides assurance for.

Composition: There are six owners - Agriculture
and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB), The
National Farmers Union (NFU), NFU Scotland, The
Ulster Farmers Union (UFU), Dairy UK, the British
Retail Consortium (BRC).

There is also one observer, the Food and Drink
Federation, which sits as an observer at the
meetings, bringing the insights from the
branded food manufacturers.

Roles and responsibilities: The Ownership
Body provides the guarantee, appoints the Chair
and Directors and, where necessary, the Owners
can amend the Company’s Articles of Association.

It is required to meet once a year for an AGM. In
practice, the Owners typically meet twice a year
and delegate all responsibility for the management
of Red Tractor to the Board of Directors, who may
exercise all the powers of the Company.



The Red Tractor Board of Directors

About: The Red Tractor Board of Directors are the principal decision makers at Red Tractor. They play a crucial role in providing oversight, strategic direction, and ensuring Red Tractor adheres to its vision and purpose - of ensuring UK produce is safe, traceable and farmed with care.

The Board’s Roles and Responsibilities

The Board brings insights and experience across the supply chain to inform and develop the organisation’s Vision, Purpose, Business Plan, Strategies and Objectives:

Governance oversight - ensuring Red Tractor operates according to its governing documents, legal requirements, and governance best practices.

Strategic planning - contributing to the development and implementation of strategic plans aligned with the organisation’s mission and goals.

Financial stewardship - overseeing financial management, budget approval, financial reporting, and risk management.

Risk management - identifying and mitigating risks that could impact operations, reputation or stakeholders.

Stakeholder engagement - engaging with members, partners, regulators and the public to promote transparency and accountability.

Implementation - The Board of Directors delegate responsibility for implementing the business plan to the permanent staff of Red Tractor, who are led by the CEO.

The Directors

Chair

Sector chair directors

Beef & Lamb
Dairy
Crops & Sugar Beet
Pigs
Poultry
Fresh Produce

Independent directors

Farmer & Vice Chair
Vet
Consumer
Finance

Industry directors

Farm Unions
AHDB
British Meat Processing Association
British Retail Consortium
British Poultry Council

CEO of Permanent Staff

Please visit the website to see the full list of Directors



The subcommittees of the RT Board of Directors, meeting attendance & frequency

Standards Committee

Role: Reviews overall technical strategy & delivery, particularly for cross-sector issues.

Attendance: Chair, All Sector Chairs, Independent Directors, Red Tractor Permanent Staff

Frequency of meetings: 6 a year

Technical Advisory Committees

Role: Advise on technical wording of proposed standards

Attendance: TAC Chair, representatives from farmers and agricultural organisations

Frequency of meetings: ad hoc

Sector Boards

Role: Determines the technical strategy for the sector that contributes to the Vision & Purpose

Attendance: Sector Chair, TAC Chair, representatives from the food chain, Red Tractor technical managers

Frequency of meetings: 3 a year

Remuneration

Role: To consider remuneration of CEO & Directors (except Chairman which reverts to Ownership Body)

Attendance: Chair, Industry Director, Sector Director, Independent Director. By invite: Head of Finance

Frequency of meetings: once a year

Audit & Finance

Role: Strategic oversight of income & expenditure, minimum reserves, internal accounting, future finance, facilities and risk register

Attendance: Chair, Industry Director, Sector Chair, AFS Chair, CEO and Head of Finance

Frequency of meetings: minimum 2 a year

Nominations

Role: Oversight of appointments - Sector Boards membership, Industry and Independent Directors, VC and CEO

Attendance: Chair, Vice Chair, Sector Director, Industry Director.

By Invite: CEO

Frequency of meetings: ad hoc



Red Tractor Sector Boards & TACs

Representing all UK food and farming

Sector representation at Red Tractor

Sector Boards

Sector Boards are Committees of The Board and are made up of experts and representatives from the sector.

Their purpose is to advise on the development of the technical strategy for the sector and to take it forward with the engagement of all stakeholders, such that it contributes to the Red Tractor Vision & Purpose.

Technical Advisory Committees

Each sector with responsibility for farm standards also has a Technical Advisory Committee. They are responsible for the on-going maintenance and development of Red Tractor standards.

For details of current sector board and TAC members, please visit our website.



Appraisals

Promoting continuous development of those involved in Red Tractor's governance

Appraisal Processes

Red Tractor conducts various appraisal processes throughout its entire governance structure to ensure Board, committee and individual effectiveness.

Who is appraised?

- The **Board's** collective performance is appraised by the Board Directors.
- The **Chair's** performance is appraised by the Board Directors.
- All **Board Directors** are appraised by the Chair.
- **Sector Board Chairs** are appraised as part of a survey of Sector Board members.
- The **CEO** is appraised by the Chair
- The **Permanent Staff** undergo a performance management process, including mid-year reviews and an annual appraisal



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These appraisal processes
will occur annually.



Code of Conduct

Key purposes and expected behaviours of those involved in Red Tractor's governance

Key Purposes

The Board Code of Conduct aims to assist Directors in their roles and fulfil their legal responsibilities to Red Tractor, including:

Promoting Trust and Confidence in Red Tractor: By adhering to a clear code, directors demonstrate their commitment to responsible decision making and transparency, promoting trust and confidence among donors, volunteers, beneficiaries, and the public served by the organisation.

Protect Red Tractor's Reputation: The code helps ensure that directors act in the best interests of Red Tractor, safeguarding its financial resources and reputation.

Ensure Effective Governance of Red Tractor: The code defines the essential duties and responsibilities of directors, promoting an efficient and well-functioning board.

The Board Code of Conduct must be followed by all Directors of Red Tractor.

Fulfilling Red Tractor's Fiduciary Obligations: Directors have a legal duty to act in the best interests of Red Tractor. The code reinforces those obligations and provides guidance for upholding them.

The principles of the Board Code of Conduct should also be followed and adhered to by other non-directors involved in Red Tractor's governance structure, including Sector Board and TAC members.



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What are the expected behaviours and ethical standards for board members?

The expected behaviours and ethical standards for board members outlined in the Code of Conduct include:

Conflicts of Interest

- Disclose any potential conflicts of interest at the point of appointment and engage constructively with discussions and collective decision making.
- Avoid using their position for personal gain or benefiting entities with which they have a conflict.

Confidentiality

- Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information obtained through their role as a board member.
- Agree with the Chair or CEO before sharing any confidential information with members of the press or other third parties.
- Respect the privacy of staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries.

Time Commitment

- Attend board meetings regularly, and actively participate in discussions.
- Dedicate sufficient time to fulfil their responsibilities.

Fiduciary Duties:

- Always act in the best interests of the organisation and its purpose and vision.
- Apply due care and diligence when overseeing the organisation's affairs.
- Ensure responsible financial management and utilisation of resources.

Communication

- Communicate openly and honestly with fellow board members, staff, and shareholders.
- Be respectful and professional in all communication.

Compliance with Laws and Regulations

- Adhere to all applicable laws, regulations, and the organisation's policies.
- Report any suspected illegal or unethical activity to the appropriate authorities.

Enforcing the Code of Conduct

Enforcement of the Code of Conduct involves taking disciplinary action for violations, conducting investigations into alleged breaches, and ensuring regular reviews and updates to maintain the Code's effectiveness.

Violations of the code are enforced through the following measures as outlined in the Code of Conduct:

Disciplinary Action:

Violations of the code may result in disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the board.

Investigation Process:

The Board will establish a process for investigating alleged violations of the code, ensuring fairness and due process.

Periodic Review and Update: The Board will periodically review and update the code to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness.



**ASSURED FOOD
STANDARDS
BOARD CODE OF
CONDUCT**

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Reviewed and updated April 2025



Red Tractor's Policies

Health & Safety | Data Protection | Whistleblowing





Assured Food Standards
Whistleblowing Policy

Reviewed and updated July 2026

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Assured Food Standards
Data Protection Policy

Reviewed and updated July 2026

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Assured Food Standards
Health & Safety Policy

Reviewed and updated July 2026

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Appendices

Articles of Association
Nominations Committee Terms of Reference
Sector Boards Terms of Reference
Technical Advisory Committees Terms of Reference
Policy on Standards Development



Articles of Association

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Nominations Committee Terms of Reference

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Sector Boards Terms of Reference

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Technical Advisory Committees Terms of Reference

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Policy on Standards Development

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Thank you for reading **Governance Handbook**

If you have any questions about this document,
please contact us on enquiries@redtractor.org.uk

