

Soil Association

Standards Board

26th June 2007 Summary Minutes

Present: Anna Bradley (Chair), Nigel Woodhouse, William Lana, Andrew Whitley, Jo Fairley, Jenny Usher, Charles Weston, Henry Bagenal, Simon Wright

Staff in attendance: Francis Blake, Amanda Woodman-Hardy, Ken Hayes, Isabel Griffiths, David Peace, Dawne Summersfield (part), Rob George (part), Helen Taylor (part), Peter Melchett (part).

Apologies: Russell Smart

1. Key issues from committees:

- Processing Review – agreed that the Standards Board should discuss and agree terms of reference for the review at its next meeting.
- Wild harvesting – agreed several committees have an interest in these draft standards and need to have the opportunity to discuss them before they come to the Standards Board.
- Seaweed – the new EU regulation calls for standards on seaweed for January 2009 implementation. Soil Association staff collaborating with IOGFA (?) on a first draft.
- Rehydration of ingredients and percentage declarations on labels – an issue has arisen in Health Processing which is being dealt with. There may be similar issues in other committees, so should be touched on at next Standards Board.

2. The use of derogations and permissions

Two papers had been prepared by SACL bringing information on the current use of derogations and with permissions in standards for poultry and seed. The information had been difficult to collate, but was very informative. The Standards Board agreed that:

- It would be very helpful to have such information regularly, subject to staff time and IT capability
- It needed a paper describing the various ways in which the 'with permissions' tool is used within standards so that the Standards Board can take a view about how to use 'with permissions' in the future. This would inform the periodic review of standards.
- There was a need for more analysis of the data on seed derogations and 'with permissions' to inform a further discussion.
- That a review of the poultry standards should be considered for inclusion in the 2007/8 workplan, specifically on the question of whether the standards should specify flock sizes or desired welfare outcomes for birds.

3. The Standards Board discussed the consultative responses to proposed standards amendments.

The following was withdrawn: External parasite treatment due to its coverage in GOTS

The following were amended:

- Aerial perches – agreed to amend to specify welfare outcomes rather than perch spacing
- Cephalosporin antibiotics – agreed for 2009 rather than 008 implementation, with a strong recommendation to use carefully with immediate effect
- Ethical Trade – agreed with a strong recommendation for good publicity/marketing among producers and the organic trade
- Labelling guidelines for textiles – agreed with a two year implementation, rather than immediate
- Milking cows on sale days – agreed to write in the objective of animal welfare and prevention of discomfort and specify normal milking regime
- Restricting sulphur and soft soap – agreed to make the monitoring purpose explicit.

All other amendments were agreed as consulted on.

All the above were agreed by unanimous decision, and recommendations will now go forward to the SA Council at its meeting on 19th July 2007.

4. Next steps on Governance and Accountability

The standards Board agreed a timetable and process for the consultation. This includes a consultation from late July through September. Members gave comments on the draft consultation document.

It was agreed that from January 2008 Standards Board agendas and summaries of Board meetings minutes should go on the website.

5. Increasing in-conversion feed allowances

The Standards Board discussed the new EU approach to allowing in-conversion feed as a proportion of organic feed.

The Standards Board considered that the EU provision for higher in-conversion feed percentages is addressing a shortage that does not exist, intervening in a market in a way that is not well-evidenced and which could cause damage to the organic market and has the potential to affect the reputation of SA standards.

However, the Standards Board believed there is a stronger case for licensees to use their own second year in conversion than increasing the amount they can buy in. This is because anything which encourages organic producers to establish a more mixed and self-sufficient system is consistent with organic principles.

The Standards Board therefore agreed the following:

- To allow livestock rations to comprise up to 80% home-produced in-conversion feed.
- To retain the current 30% in-conversion feed allowance for bought-in feeds

This unanimous decision is now going forward to the SA Council.

6. Communications strategy and plan

Proposals for developing the brand were welcomed and details of new website material were agreed.