

Standards Board and Standards Committees Terms of Reference

Standards Board

Purpose and responsibilities

- To generate trust and confidence in the Soil Association organic standards.
- To safeguard the integrity of the standards.
- To develop the strategy for Soil Association standards and best practice and oversee its implementation.
- To appoint standards committees.
- To ensure open and wide consultation with stakeholders on standards and a framework for best practice.
- To make recommendations to Soil Association's Council for the formulation and development of the Soil Association organic standards.
- To carry out duties in keeping with the organic principles and the organisational strategy.

Reporting structure

- To the Council.

Composition and appointment

- Independent/lay chair (open recruitment).
- All standards committee chairs, who are recruited from among the committee members, licensees and SA members
- Up to three representatives of Soil Association producer groups: Organic Trade Board, Farmer and Grower Board.
- Up to three lay members (open recruitment).
- One Council member (if not already represented on the Standards Board)
- All appointed by the Council.
- Four year term renewable but limited to only two consecutive terms at a time.

Functioning

- The Standards Board generally meets three times per year.
- The Standards Board conducts its work as it thinks fit and as delegated by the Council.
- The Standards Board may appoint task groups to address specific cross-cutting issues.

- The quorum is 6.
- The Standards Board is quorate without a Council representative.
- Approval needs majority of Standards Board member votes present including at least two lay member votes.
- Standards Board members must declare any conflicts of interest and sign a confidentiality form.
- Chairs of other committees/working groups/taskforces will be invited to attend when discussing relevant standards issues.
- Relevant Soil Association and SACL staff attend meetings but do not vote.
- The Soil Association pays expenses according to its expenses policy.
- Standards Board members who are also licensees must inform the chairman of any critical non-compliances they receive from SACL. Their resignation is at the discretion of the chairman.

Person specification for Standards Board members

- A commitment to organic principles.
- Experience of working on boards/committees.
- Experience of working to find collective solutions.
- Ability to represent an interest or expertise, but not act as a representative.
- Ability to assess technical information from other disciplines.
- Expertise in a related area e.g. organic farming or production, standard setting or regulation, environmental or development policy.

Standards Committee

Purpose and responsibilities

- To assist the Standards Board by making recommendations for amendments and additions to the Soil Association standards
- To approve the consultation plan for standards amendments
- To guide and influence the activities of the Soil Association, particularly with regards to marketing, policy and campaigns.
- To act as an advisory group and resource for Soil Association Certification in relation to sector business development.
- To provide industry insights in order to keep the Soil Association's activities innovative and in line with best practice.
- To advise and assist the Soil Association in responding to consultations
- To feed into and work to tasks and timetables agreed by the Standards Board
- To carry out duties in keeping with the organic principles and the organisational strategy.

Reporting structure

- To the Standards Board.

Composition and appointment

- Appointed by the Standards Board.
- Appointments ensure a broad spread of relevant expertise and interests, including consumer representatives and ordinary Soil Association members.
- Standards committee members join the committee as individuals, not as representatives of a company or other interest (except the consumer representatives).
- Four year term but the Standards Board may reappoint.
- The Standards Board may terminate an appointment if it considers a member's conduct (or their certified operation, if a licensee) brings the Soil Association into disrepute (or if their licence is withdrawn in the case of a licensee).

Functioning

- There will be at least one meeting in person per year; other meetings may be conducted by telephone conference call. Additional communication is generally by electronic means.
- The quorum is 6.
- Committees may form working groups to consider specific issues or areas, defining their brief and appointing the chairman.
- Members must declare any conflicts of interest and sign a confidentiality form.
- Committees may invite experts to join specific meetings or parts of meetings as they think fit.
- Members are expected to show commitment to the committee and attend meetings. Missing two successive meetings without reasonable notification or explanation will trigger a re-evaluation of their continuation on the committee.
- Relevant Soil Association and SACL staff attend meetings but do not vote.
- The Soil Association pays expenses according to its expenses policy.

Person specification for standards committee members

- Relevant technical, practical or professional expertise.
- Experience of working to reach collective decisions on committees.
- A commitment or empathy with organic production.

Ends.