



Soil Association Organic Standards for Great Britain

Summary of standards changes – document updated 24 July 2024

Key to text changes: (~~strikethrough~~ = delete; underlined = new wording; normal text = no change)

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Key to text changes: (~~strikethrough~~ = delete; underlined = new wording; normal text = no change)

Updates made across all Soil Association Organic standards for packaging

Standards	Guidance
<p data-bbox="165 296 448 327">SA GB 5.16.1 Scope</p> <p data-bbox="165 363 985 432">These standards apply to packaging of products that you introduce into the supply chain.</p> <p data-bbox="165 472 992 571">We define packaging as all primary (retail), secondary (grouping, display) and tertiary (transport) materials used for:</p> <ul data-bbox="215 580 703 911" style="list-style-type: none"> • containing • protecting • preserving • handling • storage • delivery • labelling • marketing, and • presentation of your products. <p data-bbox="165 949 1016 1013">Note - we include bulk bins but not transport pallets in this definition.</p> <p data-bbox="557 1018 1030 1050"><i>Soil Association higher standard</i></p>	<p data-bbox="1050 296 2042 504">This standard applies to products you process, pack or label, (including on farm), or have contract made for you, (including if you're a contracted symbol user). This standard does not apply if you purchase an already certified product (for example, a wholesaler buying an already certified product). In this case you do not have to supply information on the packaging of that purchased product.</p> <p data-bbox="1050 544 2042 643">You must make sure your packaging meets all relevant legislation relating to packaging, packaging waste and materials in contact with food.</p> <p data-bbox="1050 683 1977 746">For example, for products sold in the UK and EU such legislation would include, but is not limited to:</p> <ol data-bbox="1050 754 2042 1070" style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the Defra regulations on extended producer responsibility for packaging products. 2. the European Parliament and Council Directive on Packaging and Packaging Waste (94/62/EC) 3. the European Standard for Compostable Packaging (EN13432) – if you are using compostable packaging. 4. applicable legality legislation for cellulose based materials, this means the UK Timber Regulations, in GB, and the EU Deforestation Regulations, in Northern Ireland and the EU. <p data-bbox="1050 1110 2042 1209">Environmental information claims and symbols on your packaging need to be clear, truthful and accurate. In the UK, you will need to make sure your packaging conforms to the Defra Green Claims code.</p> <p data-bbox="1050 1249 2042 1386"><u>These standards do not apply to outer packaging used to deliver the product to consumers via postal/courier service, such as postal bags/envelopes, boxes and other packaging materials used to protect contents.</u></p>

	<p><u>These standards do not apply to retail bags used by licensed operators, for example, bags for loose fruit and veg used by a retailer or farmers' market.</u></p> <p>For further information on what constitutes primary, secondary and tertiary packaging please refer to the Defra definitions of packaging class data.</p> <p>To ensure that your packaging products are as widely recycled as possible we recommend using the OPRL guidelines on labelling to communicate whether products are recyclable at kerbside across the UK.</p>
<p>SA GB 5.16.3 Paper, card and wood-pulp packaging products*</p> <p>Any paper, card and pulp packaging materials from forest ecosystems must be sourced responsibly.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Soil Association higher standard</i></p> <p>*This standard comes into effect from September 2025.</p>	<p>Adequate evidence of compliance with this standard is demonstration that packaging products carry certification from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).</p> <p>This can be done with an invoice for the products including a valid chain of custody claim from FSC or PEFC. Licensees can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • source products which carry source FSC or PEFC certification from suppliers, • obtain an independent FSC or PEFC chain of custody certificate, • establish FSC or PEFC group certification with other businesses (suitable for small businesses). <p>See the FSC website and/or the PEFC website for more information on the certification process and to obtain approved materials.</p> <p>When using recycled paper/card material your packaging must be compliant with the approved certification schemes from PEFC or FSC, for example for FSC these include 'FSC Mix' and 'FSC Recycled' labels,</p>

	<p>more information on FSC labelling is available here.</p> <p>This requirement does not apply when paper/card is derived from outside of forest ecosystems, this can include from agricultural wastes and grasses such as miscanthus. <u>Non-timber forest products (e.g. bamboo or cork) are not within the scope of this standard but we recommend FSC/PEFC certification is sought where applicable for these products.</u></p> <p>To allow licensees to use up existing stock and source compliant products, this standard will be enforced from September 2025, but licensees should look to source compliant products at the earliest opportunity.</p>
<p>SA GB 5.16.4 Plastic materials, coatings, dyes or inks containing phthalates*</p> <p>You must not use plastic materials, coatings, dyes or inks that contain phthalates.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Soil Association higher standard</i></p> <p>*The changes to this standard comes into effect from September 2025.</p>	<p>Demonstrate that you have not used these materials, for example with a packaging specification for all materials used kept on file.</p> <p><u>This restriction applies to all packaging products in scope. Until September 2025 the restriction applies to plastic materials, coatings, dyes, or inks in contact with foodstuffs. From September 2025, the restriction will apply to all packaging, whether in contact with foodstuffs or not.</u></p> <p>To avoid phthalates in packaging materials we recommend:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. avoid PVC and use plastics that do not require plasticizers for flexibility, such as polyethylene, e.g., PET, HDPE, and LDPE. b. using non-phthalate-based plasticizers which are widely available on the market, see the ChemSec marketplace for more options. c. consider whether packaging is necessary or if there are non-plastic alternatives.

New higher standards in Soil Association Organic Aquaculture standards

<p>SA GB 13.2.8 Prohibiting the use of species listed as 'threatened' by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)*</p> <p><u>For animals listed as 'threatened' on the IUCN Red List of endangered species, the authorisation to use wild-caught specimens as breeding stock or the collection of wild caught juveniles for on-growing may only be granted in the context of conservation programmes recognised by the relevant public authority in charge of the conservation effort and approved by the Soil Association.</u></p> <p><u>*This standard comes into effect 1st October 2024.</u></p> <p><i>Soil Association higher standard (EC) 2018/848 Annex II Part III(3.1.2.1)(d)(e)</i></p>	<p><u>Lumpsuckers are listed as Near Threatened at time of writing.</u></p>
<p>Why?</p> <p><u>The removal of threatened species from the wild for use in aquaculture cannot be viewed as sustainable and in line with organic principals. Therefore their use in Soil Association certified sites will not be permitted.</u></p>	
<p>SA GB 13.4.3 Organic production of salmonids in fresh water</p> <p>Includes: Brown trout, Rainbow trout, American brook trout, salmon, charr, grayling, American lake trout (or grey trout), huchen.</p>	
<p>Production system</p>	<p>On-growing farm systems must be fed from open systems. The flow rate must ensure a minimum of 60% oxygen saturation for stock and must ensure their comfort and the elimination of farming effluent.</p>

<p>Maximum stocking density</p>	<p>Salmonid species not listed below: 15 kg/m³ Salmon: 20 kg/m³ Brown trout and rainbow trout: 25 kg/m³ Arctic charr: 25 kg/m³</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(EC) 2020/464 Annex II</i></p>
<p><u>Mortality reporting requirement*</u></p> <p><u>*This standard comes into effect 1st October 2024.</u></p>	<p>1. <u>Where the level of fish mortality exceeds the threshold figures shown below, this must be recorded and reported to Soil Association Certification within 72 hours.</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Atlantic Salmon*</u> <u>Egg to 1st feed - 6% weekly</u> <u>1st feed to 5g - 3% weekly</u> <u>5g to smolting - 1.5% weekly</u></p> <p>2. <u>Mortality levels exceeding these limits must be investigated without delay and a plan approved by Soil Association Certification, detailing how you will address and reduce the number of mortalities.</u></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>Soil Association higher standard</u></p> <p><u>*Please contact the Soil Association for the reporting requirements for other salmonid species.</u></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Why?</u></p> <p><u>The Soil Association recognises that mass mortality events can occur for several reasons. Soil Association must be kept informed of any events to ensure that avoidable deaths are not occurring on certified sites, effective controls are in place and the site is suitable for production.</u></p>	

<p>SA GB 13.4.4 Salmonids in sea water Includes: Salmon, brown trout, rainbow trout.</p>	
<p>Maximum stocking density</p>	<p>10 kg/m³ in net pens</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(EC) 2020/464 Annex II</i></p>

<p><u>Mortality recording and reporting requirement*</u></p> <p><u>*This standard comes into effect 1st October 2024.</u></p>	<p>1. <u>Where the level of fish mortality exceeds the threshold figures shown below, this must be recorded and reported to Soil Association Certification within 72 hours.</u></p> <p><u>Atlantic Salmon*</u></p> <p><u>Site weight average under 750g:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>maximum weekly mortality 1.5%.</u> • <u>Maximum 5-week rolling mortality 6%</u> <p><u>Site weight average greater than 750g:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>maximum weekly mortality 1%.</u> • <u>Maximum 5-week rolling mortality 4%</u> <p>2. <u>Mortality levels exceeding these limits must be investigated without delay and a plan approved by Soil Association Certification, detailing how you will address and reduce the number of mortalities.</u></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Soil Association higher standard</i></p> <p><u>* Please contact the Soil Association for the reporting requirements for other salmonid species.</u></p>
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Why?

The Soil Association recognises that mass mortality events can occur for several reasons. Soil Association must be kept informed of any events to ensure that avoidable deaths are not occurring on certified sites, effective controls are in place and the site is suitable for production.

<p>SA GB 13.5.3 Humane harvest and slaughter</p> <p>1. Suffering of aquaculture animals, including at slaughter, must be kept to a minimum. You must only use slaughter techniques that render fish immediately unconscious and</p>	<p>Transfer of fish to the killing facility should be by a method and at an appropriate rate to avoid stress and injury but also to prevent delay prior to killing.</p>
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<p>insensible to pain. You must take into account harvest sizes, species and production sites when considering optimal slaughter methods.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(EC) 834/2007 Art. 15 1b (vi)</i> <i>(EC) 889/2008 Art. 25h (5)</i></p>	<p>All farmed fish must be stunned before killing, whether or not death accompanies the stun (as in stun/kill methods) or follows a short time after the stun but before the fish has the time to regain consciousness.</p> <p>For killing procedures that require it, the time from removal of the fish from water to unconsciousness and killing should be kept to a minimum.</p> <p>Emergency killing, including where automated stunning or other methods fail, should not be by methods considered inhumane at other times. A backup method of manual stunning, such as an appropriate sized priest, must be available in the killing facility.</p>
<p>2. <u>You must inform your certification body prior to slaughter. You must include details of animals to be slaughtered, location and slaughter method.*</u></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Soil Association Higher Standard</i></p> <p><u>*This standard comes into effect 1st October 2024.</u></p>	<p>We will refer to the FAWC Opinion on the Welfare of Farmed Fish at the Time of Killing for appropriate practice.</p> <p>The following methods of harvest and slaughter do not meet this standard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ice, except for warm water shrimp carbon dioxide suffocation, leaving stock to die in the open air exsanguination without stunning operating a rolling harvest where you starve all fish in the holding facility and selectively grade a number for slaughter on a repeated basis starving stock to modify carcass weight or quality (body composition). <p><u>If you contract out your slaughter operations, in part or whole, to a third party you must comply with the requirements set out in standard 12.4.2.</u></p>
<p>SA GB 13.5.4 Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)*</p> <p><u>CCTV must be used at farmed fish slaughter sites, with recordings saved for at least 90 days and made available for reviewing on request.</u></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Soil Association higher standard</i></p>	<p><u>Cameras should be positioned in such a way to clearly show all areas of slaughter where welfare issues could occur.</u></p>

*This standard comes into effect 1st October 2024.

Why?

Slaughter of livestock must be assessed each year. We will review harvest dates and plan our annual inspections accordingly. Where we cannot witness a harvest on the day we will review footage to assess the slaughter.

SA GB 13.9.3 Sea lice monitoring and sea lice plan*

1. You must assess and document your infestation rates of sea lice regularly. *
2. To protect wild salmonids, leading up to and during defined sensitive periods you must take regular samples. Samples must be taken at least once every 14 days.
3. Your Aquaculture Management Plan must include all necessary measures taken to reduce the risk of sea lice to wild salmonids before and during sensitivity periods. Where possible this must be written in coordination with local organisations and public authorities.
4. Where sea lice levels exceed thresholds established in your farming area, you must inform the Soil Association within 14 days of sample date. You must provide evidence of what action is taken to reduce levels.

Soil Association higher standard

*This standard comes into effect 1st October 2024.

*Sampling may be suspended for a short period to protect animal welfare and in line with exemptions detailed in national legislation. The reasons for this must be recorded in writing and be agreed in partnership with local authorities. Soil Association must be informed promptly.

- Sea lice sensitivity period is to run from 1st February to 30th June.

Sea lice are defined as both *Lepeophthierus salmonis* and episodic occurrences of *Caligus spp.*

Why?

The control of sea lice is a universal challenge of the salmon industry and threatens wild salmon stocks. The Soil Association must be able to effectively monitor sea lice controls and have insight on what is happening at a farm level.

SA GB 13.12.1 Aquaculture ~~sites~~ conversion periods

The following conversion periods for production units must be applied for the following types of aquaculture facilities, ~~including the existing aquaculture animals.~~

Soil Association higher standard

*This standard comes into effect 1st October 2024.

The conversion of aquaculture facilities may take place with aquaculture animals present. However, the origin of these animals must meet the requirements set out in standards 13.2. Currently in GB there is no allowance for non-organic juveniles to be brought onto a holding for on growing or for existing non-organic animals to convert.

Defra, the competent authority in GB, has confirmed that the conversion of the production unit can take place when the site is stocked and being managed to organic standards. This allows the animals and the site to convert to organic production ~~simultaneously.~~ Requests for a reduced conversion period must be submitted to the Certification Team who will seek approval from the competent authority.

The conversion period cannot begin until your application has been approved.

Your application will be assessed via an application review stage. The application review will cover a full assessment of your application documentation and management plans. This review will ensure that we have assessed that organic certification is appropriate for your operation, and that you are able to meet the organic standards. We estimate that the application review will take 6 weeks to complete, this is based on submission of all the required information. This timeframe may vary depending on the scope of the application.

Why?

A core principle of organic production is that the livestock has been kept to full organic standards for the duration of its life. This standard is in place to ensure that Soil Association fish are organic from start to finish.

Type of facility	Conversion period
Facilities that cannot be drained, cleaned and disinfected	24 months
Facilities that have been drained or fallowed	12 months
Facilities that have been drained, cleaned and disinfected	6 months
Open water facilities including those farming bivalve molluscs	3 months

Your conversion period may be reduced if you can demonstrate that your facilities were not treated or exposed to products not allowed in these organic standards before the start of your conversion period. You must have documented evidence of this and your competent authority must approve any reduction.

(EC) 889/2008 Art. 38a

Annex II – Cleaner fish in organic aquaculture production*	
<p>The use of cleaner fish species is restricted to wild caught and hatchery reared Wrasse (Labridae spp.), and wild caught and hatchery reared Lumpfish (Cyclopteridae spp.).</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Soil Association higher standard</i></p> <p>*This standard comes into effect 1st October 2024.</p>	
Why?	
<p><u>The use of cleaner fish is an approved method for the control of ectoparasites in organic aquaculture in order to reduce the reliance on chemically synthesised allopathic veterinary medicines. The Soil Association believes that for these animals to be used in organic production they must be protected by species-specific standards.</u></p>	
<p>1. Use of cleaner fish in organic production</p> <p>The use of cleaner fish in Soil Association organic aquaculture production must meet the requirements established in these standards and be approved by Soil Association Certification.</p>	<p><u>Your aquaculture management plan must demonstrate how you meet the requirements for the management of cleaner fish set out in these standards.</u></p>


<p><i>Soil Association higher standard (EC) 2018/848 Annex II Part II(3.1)</i></p>	<p><u>Efficacy of the cleaner fish must be monitored and demonstrated; this is most important for species of wrasse other than ballan, such as goldsinny and cuckoo.</u></p>
<p>2. Origin of cleaner fish</p> <p><u>Cleaner fish must be provided with a sufficient number and suitable type of shelters. These shelters must not be situated within the feeding zone of the primary species.</u></p> <p><i>Soil Association higher standard</i></p>	<p><u>The use of cleaner fish species will only be approved if they comply with the definition of 'locally grown species'. 'locally grown species' means aquaculture species which are neither alien nor locally absent species within the meaning of points (6) and (7), respectively, of Article 3 of Council Regulation (EC) No 708/2007 (7), as well as the species listed in Annex IV to that Regulation'.</u></p> <p><u>The use of cleaner fish from wild fisheries is a temporary allowance and will be kept under review.</u></p>
<p>3. Cleaner fish husbandry, health and welfare</p> <p>Cleaner fish must be provided with a sufficient number and suitable type of shelters. These shelters must be situated within the feeding zone of the primary species.</p> <p><i>Soil Association higher standard</i></p>	<p><u>In your aquaculture management plan demonstrate how you meet the requirements of these standards.</u></p> <p><u>We will refer to the Animal Welfare Committee's Update to the 2014 FAWC Opinion on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing for appropriate practice.</u></p> <p><u>The design and management of your aquaculture system must minimise stress on cleaner fish species. Particular attention should be paid to feed withdrawal, crowding and separation.</u></p> <p><u>The cleaning maintenance and suitability of the shelter should be covered in your VHWP.</u></p>
<p>4. Cleaner fish treatments</p> <p><u>If a health problem arises, cleaner fish must be treated.</u></p>	<p><u>Method of separation must be explained in your VHWP. The success of recapture should be recorded.</u></p>

<p><u>Cleaner fish must be separated from the primary species before they can be treated with chemically synthesised allopathic veterinary treatments.</u></p> <p><i>Soil Association higher standard</i></p>	
<p>5. Feeding cleaner fish</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Cleaner fish must be fed supplementary feed throughout the entire production cycle that is suitable for the nutritional requirement for the species at all stages of their development.</u> <u>Attention must be paid to climatic and aquatic conditions and feeding adjusted accordingly to ensure the nutritional requirements of cleaner fish are met.</u> <u>Supplementary feed must be introduced in such a way that it is not available to other species.</u> <u>Cleaner fish must be fed organic feed when available.</u> <p><i>Soil Association higher standard</i></p>	
<p>6. Humane slaughter</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> You must only use slaughter techniques that render fish immediately unconscious and insensible to pain. You must take into account harvest sizes, species and production sites when considering optimal slaughter methods. Cleaner fish must not be released into the natural environment at the end of the production cycle. Cleaner fish mortalities must be properly recycled. <p><i>Soil Association higher standard</i></p>	<p>We will refer to the <u>update to the 2014 FAWC Opinion on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing for appropriate practice.</u> <u>Please refer to standard 13.5.3 for more information on human slaughter.</u></p> <p><u>Pharmaceutical methods of slaughter should take account of dosage, exposure time, size and weight of fish, water temperature and other relevant factors to ensure a rapid and effective kill.</u></p> <p><u>Any holding tanks for live cleaner fish or bycatch (whether to be returned to site or euthanised) at harvest must have their water quality parameters regularly monitored and recorded.</u></p>

	<p><u>The welfare of the fish must not be compromised when separating from harvest stock.</u></p> <p><u>No fish must be left to die in air.</u></p>
<p>7. Record Keeping</p> <p><u>You must keep records in the form of a register which is available at all times on the premises of your holding. These records must provide the following information:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <u>The species and number of fish</u> b) <u>The origin and date of arrival</u> c) <u>Mortality</u> d) <u>Feed</u> e) <u>Use of veterinary medicines</u> <p><u>The Soil Association must be informed of any mass mortality events.</u></p> <p><i><u>Soil Association higher standard</u></i></p>	

Update to Soil Association Organic Farming and Growing Standards

<p>SA GB 3.12.17 Range quality and cover</p> <p>1. The range must be of a suitable design and actively managed to encourage birds outside and to promote full and extensive use of the range. The minimum outdoor space required for the flock must be available within the distances set out in the guidance below.</p>	<p>The distance between shelters or natural cover should be no more than 20 metres to promote full range use. For trees this can be calculated from the outer most branch of a tree. New trees should be planted no more than 30 metres apart, trunk to trunk.</p> <p>Natural cover may include trees, perennial shrubs, bushes, hedgerows, or cover crops, such as artichokes, kale, millet, fodder rape and corn. To be included as part of the 5% requirement, natural cover must be accessible to the poultry.</p>
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<p>2. Your range of shelters must provide adequate protection from the inclement weather and overhead predators.</p> <p>3. Natural cover must be provided at an area equal to at least 5% of the area available to your poultry.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a) If the natural cover does not provide cover all year round or if the natural cover is immature, you must provide supplementary cover during the period in which sufficient cover is not provided.</p> <p>4. At least one area of natural cover or shelter must be available within 20m of the pop-holes.</p> <p>5. Points 2 -4 above apply for laying chickens, meat chickens, turkeys and guinea fowl. They do not apply to geese and ducks. <i>Soil Association higher standard</i></p>	<p>Long grass does not count towards your natural cover provision because it does not encourage birds to range and can cause harm if eaten.</p> <p>Not all natural cover has to provide actual overhead protection, but it must encourage range use by providing refuge for the birds. For example, it can include brushings from trees or hedges.</p> <p>If you use deciduous trees or other forms of natural cover that only provide shelter for part of the year, you must provide supplementary cover or shelter. The supplementary shelter can be artificial, for example arcs, or natural, for example piles of brushings. The supplementary cover must make up the 5% natural cover requirement when the natural cover is not providing shelter.</p> <p>Narrow ranges which require birds to walk long distances to access a portion of the range do not encourage good use of the range. The minimum outdoor space required for the flock must be available within the following distance from the house:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>120m</u> for layers, turkeys, geese and guinea fowl • 50m for table chickens and ducks <p>Any additional space provided on the range may extend further than this limit and does not need to be included when calculating your 5% natural cover requirement. If geese or ducks are walked out to pasture, narrow paddocks or fields may be appropriate.</p> <p> A sourcing requirement applies for SA processors.</p>
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The [Sourcing Annex](#) has been updated to reflect the changes in standard 3.12.17.

Ends