

Introduction of the Gatekeeper protocol into the UK

AIC was asked to consider applying the Gatekeeper protocol for combinable crop assurance in the UK as an alternative to farm assurance that currently operates. This is on the basis that a group of UK combinable crop growers believe that the relatively small amount of imports arriving in the UK are at lower standards and are looking for a 'level playing field' rather than having to access the same market by becoming farm assured.

The Gatekeeper protocol provides the feed and food safety assurance required for imported crops but far more testing and analysis of the crops are carried out to achieve this, which results in higher costs.

This review process commenced in earnest from April 2021 where extensive discussions were held with AIC Members and trade assurance participants. We are all aware that since the invasion of Ukraine by Russia on the 24 February 2022, the world's priorities have changed. This is particularly relevant for AIC Members who are now prioritising the smooth running of the agri-supply chain for UK farmers and the agri-food supply chain in these uncertain and turbulent times. Food security and safety are now of paramount importance.

Proposal for Gatekeeper protocol

The current proposal of introducing a Gatekeeper protocol would impact the entire agri-food supply chain but specifically for AIC this would impact the AIC feed sector and merchanting companies.

The feed sector is the recipient of combinable crops, whereas the merchants are in the middle of facilitating trade for suppliers (farmers) and buyers (customers) of grain. Merchants will respond to any market requirements from customers but no signals have so far been given regarding the use of the Gatekeeper protocol.

AIC position on Gatekeeper protocol

AIC was asked to look at introducing the UK Gatekeeper protocol by Red Tractor, the NFU, and a group of farmers. Over the past year AIC has consulted with relevant committees on this issue, as well as speaking

with some processors and end users. To date there have been no market signals that there is any demand for a UK Gatekeeper protocol to be introduced at the current time.

For these reasons the industry has concluded that the introduction of this protocol would not be taken up in the market. In addition, its introduction would bring in new friction to trade as well as additional costs and administrative burden to the industry.

Both the trade and farmers have to constantly review costs and assurance requirements along the supply chain. Introducing a new system where demand is not signalled would not add value to any part of the supply chain at this time.

AIC is supportive of the current suite of recognised farm assurance schemes within the UK as being the most cost-effective way of ensuring feed and food safety for the agri-food supply chain at this time.

To summarise, based on the assessment carried out within AIC, it is the sector's view that due to the reasons outlined i.e., no discernible market demand, additional cost, administrative complexity, and no added value, the introduction of the UK Gatekeeping protocol does not fit well into the current agri-food supply chains for the UK.

Future assurance schemes

AIC is fully aware that assurance schemes develop in line with market requirements and will consider any alternative assurance scheme at farm gate, and further up the supply chain, should these be developed in the future. AIC also works with the current suite of farm assurance schemes to advise on any supply issues that are felt relevant.

However, the pressing needs of AIC's Members to procure agri-inputs for UK farming to ensure UK food and feed security since the invasion of Ukraine by Russia will remain of the highest priority for the foreseeable future. Without these inputs the consequences for the agri-food supply chain would be far reaching and undermine feed and food security in the UK.

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