

Some background information about Assured UK Malt.

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It is interesting to look back at what has been achieved by UK maltsters in producing the worlds first internationally recognised standard for delivering fully assured malt. The effort that has gone into this achievement can be judged by the timescale of the task.

The groundwork of the world's first malt assurance scheme started in 1994, when UK maltsters worked with their malting barley suppliers in Scotland to introduce the first assurance scheme for the supply of raw cereals, the 'Scottish Quality Cereals' (SQC) Scheme.

By 1995 they had encouraged, and assisted, the introduction of a similar scheme for England, 'The Assured Combinable Crops' (ACCS) Scheme. Shortly afterwards a third scheme 'Genesis' was introduced

These schemes have detailed written Standards, and use external auditors who visit and inspect every farm each year. The auditors also inspect all the required written records and verify that each farm was in compliance with the requirements of the Standard before issuing its annual certificate.

By 2003 there were sufficient numbers of malting barley growers operating under one of the three UK assured grain schemes to enable UK maltsters to announce that they would only buy malting barley grown by certified members of the schemes. The three schemes currently have a total of some 28,000 registered and certified assured grain growers.

As UK growers were becoming certified to the assured grain schemes, UK maltsters were already working on the next stage of assurance in the malt supply chain, the development of the Assured UK Malt (AUKM) Standard. In 2002 a MAGB work group of malting experts, assisted by a consultant from the Campden and Chorleywood Food Research Association, wrote the Assured UK Malt Standard, and developed its associated protocol. The scheme was able to use the detailed risk assessment work already carried out and published in the MAGB HACCP Guide for malting, to incorporate the benefits of assured grain supply and the code of practice for haulage, the latter already being covered by The Trade Assurance Scheme for Combinable Crops (TASCC).

The first version of the Assured UK Malt Standard and protocol was in place by November 2003, and notice to this effect was placed in the trade press. This early version of the scheme was predominantly targeted at Food Safety assurance, and was an MAGB administered standard, that was externally audited by world recognised experts, the Campden and Chorleywood Food Research Association (CCFRA). The scheme operated in this format for one year, with six of the largest UK malting companies successfully undergoing CCFRA audit at each of their sites to become certified AUKM suppliers. This was a useful learning time for both the scheme and its members.

From the very first it was decided that AUKM would be a dynamic scheme, it would be regularly reviewed and revised in line with customer and legal requirements. The first major change came in July 2004 when Product Authentication International (PAI) was invited to work with MAGB to develop the AUKM Standard to be fully compliant to European Standard EN45011. Version 3 of the Standard was written for that purpose, which widened the scope of the assurance to cover:

- Food Safety
- Product legality
- Good Operational Practice
- Product quality.

The revised AUKM Standard, as Version 3, was submitted to the UK Accreditation Services (UKAS) body for full recognition as a National Standard under EN45011, which also carries recognition at International level. The Standard was accepted on first submission, with no request for revision, and by February 2005 UKAS had also audited PAI and accepted that company as being fully competent to become the authorised Accreditation body for Assured UK Malt.

The full administration and audit duties of Assured UK Malt have therefore now been taken over by Product Authentication International, who will issue Certification for AUKM to any malting companies that meet all the requirements of the Standard and continue to pass their PAI audit.

The ownership of the Standard itself remains with the MAGB.

A work group of industry experts is in place to ensure that the AUKM Standard remains dynamic, and meets the requirements of legality and the marketplace.

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