

**PROPOSAL TO RECOGNISE ASSURED DAIRY FARM STATUS IN
SETTING THE FREQUENCY OF OFFICIAL ON-FARM INSPECTIONS IN
THE DAIRY SECTOR IN ENGLAND AND WALES**

**SUMMARY REPORT OF RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION
FROM STAKEHOLDERS**

The proposal to recognise Assured Dairy Farm status in setting the frequency of official on-farm inspections in the dairy sector in England and Wales consultation was issued 17 March 2010 and closed on 9 June 2010.

The overall objective of the proposal was to reduce the burden of official controls on dairy production holdings in England and Wales by recognising, where applicable, the hygiene aspects of the results of audits carried out by Assured Dairy Farms, while maintaining consumer safety.

- 1 The FSA is grateful to those stakeholders who responded and a summary of responses received is set out in the table below.
- 2 The key proposals on which the consultation sought views were:
 - Dairy farms classified as Category 4 (lowest risk) at their last AHDH inspection and which had ADF status would have their official inspection frequency reduced. For these farms inspection would take place at least once every 10 years, as opposed to once every 19-24 months at present.
 - Dairy farms classified as Category 3 at their last AHDH inspection and which had ADF status would be subject to official inspection at least once every five years as opposed to once every 13-18 months.
 - In order that the above changes could be implemented, certain measures would be put in place to ensure that there was good co-operation between the FSA, AHDH and ADF.
 - Consideration had been given as to whether changes could be made to the inspection frequency for higher risk category farms (Categories 1 and 2). It was considered that evidence from the FSA's analysis did not support a similar approach for AHDH higher risk farms at the present

time. However, a further analysis and review of the potential to extend these changes to Category 2 farms will be carried out after the new procedures have been in operation for 12 months.

- 3 The Food Standards Agency's responses to stakeholders' comments are given in the last column of the table.
- 4 A list of stakeholders who responded can be found at the end of the document.

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GROUP – Enforcement bodies

Respondent	Method of Response	Comment	Response
Trading Standards Institute	Email	<p>Supports the aims of the Government Whole Farm Approach strategy. Proposals set out in this consultation should go some way to reducing the number of official inspection carried out on dairy farms. Trading Standards have been operating a similar scheme for a number of years relating to the inspection of Primary Producers. TSI see the proposed arrangement as a positive step to show the farming community that official inspection agencies can work with Assurance Schemes to reduce the inspection burden on farmers.</p> <p>Consider this proposal (to reduce official inspection frequency on lower risk dairy farms) is a first step in reducing the much publicised “inspection burden” placed on farms. If compliance can be achieved by cooperation between Animal Health Dairy Hygiene and Assured Dairy Farms then this will a positive move.</p>	Noted.

Respondent	Method of Response	Comment	Response
Animal Health Dairy Hygiene	Email	<p>Considers unannounced, operational and risk based inspections work much better than pre-arranged audits in identifying actual and potential food contamination. Farmers will clean up their premises in anticipation of scheduled visits, thereby giving a false impression of cleanliness and may become adept at giving responses geared purely to ticking the necessary boxes thereby skewing the results. Whilst the ADF scheme has a role to play in marketing milk and consumer safety, it is highly speculative that ADF audits ensure consumer safety since they are preannounced and therefore give food business operators time to clean up.</p> <p>In practice, there is actually much less duplication than is perceived. ‘Inspection’ and ‘Audit’ are <i>not</i> the same and there is no guarantee that consumer safety will be maintained by an audit alone.</p>	Proposals as issued have been drawn up, in co-operation with AHDH and ADF and in addition take into account the findings of an independent study of comparative outcomes of the two approaches.

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	<p>Assurance audits in their current form are generally perceived to be far more burdensome on farmers than inspections. Evidence for this is, however, largely anecdotal. We believe that very few farmers will be aware of the existence of this consultation and are thus precluded from expressing their individual views.</p> <p>Inspection frequency Up to 2000 we used to leave the very good farms for up to 5 years. Following a European audit the auditors thought that 5 years was too long and recommended reducing the interval to a maximum of 2 years.</p> <p>Category 3 farms should have a milking time inspection before extending the interval to 5 years.</p> <p>Experience and evidence in dairy hygiene has shown that the longer the interval farms are not inspected the higher the chance that hygiene conditions on the farm fall. The assumption that the number of cat 4 farms will increase is therefore in our opinion flawed. It is more likely that the numbers of cat 3 and 4 farms will decrease over a 5 year period.</p> <p>Review of new system should be after 2 years in order to give sufficient time to identify any issues raised and before conditions on the farms deteriorate to an unacceptable level.</p> <p>Co-operation Welcomes proposal for better co-operation between FSA, AHDH and ADF – it would reduce the impact on farmers, inspectors <i>and</i> auditors considerably if a coherent and evident system were in place.</p> <p>If enforcement action for poor hygiene is being taken by AHDH against a producer then ADF should cancel the producer’s assurance.</p> <p>Raw milk criteria Currently, AHDH is not routinely furnished with the results of milk testing carried out by purchasers. It is essential that any results which exceed the set food safety parameters are promptly forwarded to ensure swift and informed action can be taken.</p>	<p>Since publication of the consultation further work has been carried out on the risk based approach to dairy hygiene inspection. In particular this compared the current approach to risk based regimes for dairy hygiene in other UK administrations, and to risk based inspection frequencies in other food sectors. The FSA is intending to issue revised proposals shortly.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p>
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	<p>Costs and cost savings Cost to AHDH of amending each farm record (£4k).- The cost to AHDH has been considerably under estimated and will be closer to the £56K originally stated.</p> <p>The cost savings are bases on inaccurate assumptions as follows: The saving of £319k is based on the calculations on averages in relation to mark forward visit intervals. These have never been achieved due to a lack of resources hence a build up of overdue farms.(Detail provided)</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
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GROUP - Industry Representative bodies

Respondent	Method of Response	Comment	Response
<p>British Cattle Veterinary Association</p>	<p>Email</p>	<p>Consider a reduction in inspection frequency to lower risk dairy farms to be an improvement on the current situation, as it reduces the number of inspections and administrative burden on dairy farmers. It also creates an incentive for farmers to reduce risk.</p> <p>Remit of ADF inspections covers all aspects of AHDH inspections, in particular milking hygiene. There is a need for additional training of ADF inspectors to cover this area.</p> <p>There is a mechanism for identifying farms with milk quality or food safety problems. These are likely to be identified initially by the milk buyer. There needs to be a reporting method that keeps all parties informed so appropriate risk-based action can be taken.</p> <p>The status of farms may well change due to staff changes, changes in farm policy or the installation of new equipment. Again there needs to be good liaison between milk buyer, ADF and AHDH to maintain food safety and consumer confidence.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Under the EU Hygiene Regulations, food business operators are required to notify the competent authority if milk exceeds permitted levels re SCC, plate count or antibiotics residues.</p> <p>Noted – also under hygiene regulations responsibility rests with the dairy farmer, as a food business operator, to ensure the</p>

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			safety of the food they produce. This duty includes controlling the risks arising from changes in their business activities
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Respondent	Method of Response	Comment	Response
Dairy UK	Email	<p>Dairy UK fully supports the principle of recognizing the farm assured status of dairy farms when determining the risk prioritization of the inspections undertaken by the AHDH. The essential duplication of activity between the ADF and the AHDH is a source of great frustration to dairy farmers. This will save public funds and reduce the inspection burden on farmers. We therefore welcome efforts by the FSA to work towards this end.</p> <p>However, we do not believe that the proposals go far enough in exploiting this opportunity. FSA being far too cautious in its approach. We would strongly urge the FSA to take a bolder approach and seize the opportunity to achieve meaningful gains in resource efficiency whilst fully safeguarding public safety.</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>The FSA is intending to issue revised proposals shortly which will take into account these and similar views.</p>

Respondent	Method of Response	Comment	Response
Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers	Posted letter	<p>Fully supportive of the measures that are set out in the consultation proposal. Believe not only will it assist in reducing the admin and inspection burden on dairy farmers in E&W but will also benefit them through reduced costs. Reduced costs also beneficial to government.</p> <p>Benefits will occur if either option 2 or 3 were implemented in the first instance, however the RABDF feel that implementing option 2 with the aim to implement option 3 after the review would be acceptable.</p>	Noted.

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Respondent	Method of Response	Comment	Response
<p>NFU</p>	<p>Email letter</p>	<p>Fully supports the objective of this proposal to take into account the audit results (hygiene aspects only) of farms that have ADF status in order to reduce the burden of official inspection, while at the same time maintaining consumer safety. The frequency of official inspections on farms that have ADF status and are considered low or medium risk by AHDH will be reduced benefiting the FSA, the dairy industry and ultimately the consumer.</p> <p>The proposals in their current format do not go far enough in recognising the low food safety risk status of British dairy farms. The FSA should also either consider reducing the inspection frequency on Category 2 farms within these proposals or review AHDH risk classification to ensure it is more evidence based, giving a more accurate picture of the risk status of British dairy farmers. Believes that the most beneficial option for dairy farmers and the FSA is Option 3.</p> <p>European food hygiene legislation allows for the recognition of private quality assurance programmes in the risk prioritisation of official controls. Whilst this has already happened in other agricultural sectors, this proposal is the first step in dairy. Government will be seen to consider dairy farmers as “higher risk” producers if the inspection burden is not reduced as it has been done for beef and sheep producers.</p> <p>Remains concerned that there remain discrepancies between the way in which ADF and AHDH classify risk on dairy farms, we are hopeful that changes to AHDH risk classifications in 2009 (which were not used in the initial comparison) and the inclusion of milk hygiene and quality standards within the scope of ADF inspections will in future mean that farm risk classification are more comparable.</p> <p>Strongly believes the rationale for recognition of assured status in statutory inspection of farms should be evidence based, not purely logistical or politically expedient. The FSA has not been able to demonstrate that dairy farming is a special case in terms of food hygiene legislation compared to other primary</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>The FSA is intending to issue revised proposals shortly which will take into account these and similar views.</p>

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		<p>production sectors</p> <p>The ultimate ambition should be to remove the AHDH and bring dairy farms in line with other primary production sectors as inspected through Local Authorities. There is still no evidence that this would compromise consumer safety and the current government budget constraints bring this goal into sharp relief. Furthermore, the fact that farms are being independently inspected to standards that are similar or of a higher standard than those demanded by the FSA ought to render FSA inspections covered by farm assurance protocols, redundant and unnecessary.</p> <p>No issues with the costs and benefits as they were laid out in the consultation.</p> <p>The NFU does not envisage that there should be extra costs caused by increased audit durations, additional equipment inspection and auditor training. These can be incorporated into the current system at minimum cost. However, in supporting the concept of reducing official inspection frequency the NFU is keen to ensure that no additional costs or charges are imposed to ADF inspections and that any additional requirements to ADF audits are kept to a minimum and do not become overly burdensome to farmers.</p>	
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GROUP – Assurance/Certification bodies

Respondent	Method of Response	Comment	Response
Assured Dairy Farms	Email	<p>Wholly support the principles being proposed in the consultation and are willing to work closely with the FSA and AHDH to ensure a smooth implementation as soon and as possible but believe that there is potentially much more to be achieved from this overall arrangement than is covered by the preferred Option 2. This could be delivered by either extending arrangements to Category 2 farms as indicated in Option 3 and/or having a greater proportion of dairy farms allocated to the lower risk Categories 3 and 4.</p> <p>The proposal for 'low risk' farms to move to a statutory inspection once every ten years is acceptable and recognises the high standards that they consistently operate to.</p> <p>The proposal for moving Category 3 farms to a statutory inspection every 5 years is acceptable as an initial step.</p> <p>Having engaged with FSA in the statistical study that was feasible with existing datasets, ADF acknowledge that the evidence to include all Category 2 farms within the initiative was inconclusive. Thus ADF understand why these farms have not been included from the outset. However, the commitment of the FSA to undertake a further statistical comparison after 12 months is noted. With the change in the structure of the ADF standards, effective from 1 April 2010, this will allow a clearer comparison to be made with the outcome of AHDH inspections in the future.</p> <p>Whilst ADF would hope that there are relatively few farms within the scheme that fall within this category, it is firmly believed that these 'high risk' farms should remain under the spotlight of the FSA / AHDH with regular farm inspections. It is highly likely that these farms are also the subject of enhanced monitoring by their milk buyer and/or Certification Body.</p> <p>ADF acknowledges, following discussions with the FSA / AHDH and verified by</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>The FSA is intending to issue revised proposals shortly which will take into account these and similar views.</p>

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	<p>the University of Reading study, that the closer inspection of milking equipment currently undertaken by AHDH was a point of difference between the two organisations.</p> <p>However, it should be noted that the more regular (typically weekly) milk test results, are arguably a better outcome measure and indicator of plant hygiene and overall management practices on farm.</p> <p>ADF agrees that the principles of how the two organisations will operate together should be fully documented and formally agreed. This would include an agreement on which are the ADF standards covering the legislative aspects of milk hygiene. For the record, initial discussions on this particular aspect have already commenced.</p> <p><u>Monetised Costs</u> ADF agrees with the calculation methodology used to determine the number of inspections saved and the associated costs. It also right to recognise the direct time-saving to the producer, with the figures used representing probably the minimum quantifiable cost.</p> <p>To balance that position, it would be fair to suggest that there will be some on-cost for producers with the need for farmers to familiarise themselves with the new regime and the latest version of the ADF standards.</p> <p><u>Non-monetised Costs</u> ADF has identified two areas – Assessor Training - ADF has indicated to the FSA / AHDH that it would be appropriate for assessors to be provided with some additional training to ensure consistency in approach when undertaking the closer inspection of milking equipment.</p> <p>Consumables - Linked to the closer inspection of milking equipment, ADF assessors will require a supply of consumable items such as disposable rubber gloves and swabs for checking for residues inside pipes or liners. Ideally, these would be funded via the FSA from savings made elsewhere.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>The FSA would be unable to pay for ADF consumables from public funds.</p>
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Respondent	Method of Response	Comment	Response
NSF-CMi Certification	Email	<p>In principle believes the proposal to be a sensible and logical move forward.</p> <p>Consider that Option 2 is the appropriate initial step allowing assessors and certification bodies alike, the opportunity to fully understand the expectations and implications of implementing the proposal. The sensible approach to this will be to have direct contracts with the relevant certification bodies as the service providers and ADF as the standard owners and perhaps the final data providers.</p> <p>The proposal refers to a 17 month audit interval; this interval became a maximum of 18 months for audits taking place after April 1st 2010.</p> <p>A plan which is clearly communicated needs to be provided to the Certification Bodies involved in order that they fully understand the implementation of the programme and any IT programming requirements, management system amendments and auditor training needs.</p> <p>The real costs of delivery by the Certification Bodies and their assessment teams must to be accurately and fairly considered and a mechanism established to recompense for additional time taken in delivering this proposal.</p> <p>There are cost implications referred to as 'key non- monetised' in the Summary Analysis and Evidence Table. This cost is likely to be a minimum of £10 per farm inspected given the amount of additional time to audit to the proposed level.</p> <p>Other potential costs associated with this include auditor training, equipment used including gloves etc, management time and IT programming costs. This is not likely to be recoverable from First Purchasers and the Certification Bodies will not be able to stand the cost without recouping it. An approximation of the annual additional time taken by an assessor as a result of the changes can amount to as much as 50 unpaid audits a year. Clearly the cost implications and a method for recompense must be reviewed and discussed directly with the Bodies involved.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Agree this is important – this will be for ADF, the assurance scheme operator , to coordinate.</p> <p>These will be considered as part of the revised proposals.</p>

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ACTIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED:

- Revised proposals are expected to be issued for further consultation shortly.
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List of Respondents:

1. Trading Standards Institute
2. Animal Health – Dairy Hygiene
3. British Cattle Veterinary Association
4. Dairy UK
5. Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers
6. NFU
7. Assured Dairy Farms
8. NSF-CMi Certification