

Can certification encourage organic operators to become better organic operators?

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Introduction

- ☉ Since the 1970's the organic sector has been characterised by a system of private standards.
- ☉ Peer review was replaced through a formalised third party certification system
- ☉ Now part of the standards and governmental and international regulations
- ☉ Control manuals
- ☉ Accreditation of control bodies

Weaknesses of organic certification

- ☉ lack of risk orientation in control and inspection
- ☉ lack of consumers knowledge
- ☉ lack of harmonised procedures
 - ☉ penalties and follow up related to irregularities & infringements
 - ☉ approval and surveillance of CBs
- ☉ **weak emphasis on operator responsibility for organic integrity and working in line with principles**

Source: Padel et al. (2009) The European regulatory framework and its implementation in influencing organic inspection and certification systems in the EU

Certification requirements

- ☉ Operator are inspected mainly on minimal requirement for being organic
- ☉ Most are zero-tolerance criteria similar to failing a driving test or an exam
- ☉ Further achievement is not rewarded and thus not encouraged

Could the organic standard be an improvement standard?

- ☞ Aiming for continuous development of the systems
 - ☞ HACCP aims for reduction of food safety risks through setting objectives for improved management and continuous training
 - ☞ Geographical Indication and ICS Group certification also emphasises high quality in small holder production

Examples of a progress standard:



☞ Related to human resource management

☞ Improving business performance

☞ Three fundamental principles

☞ Plan

☞ Do

☞ Review

☞ Gold, Silver & Bronze award



Animal welfare and organic

Principles (EU regulation):

Management systems that enhance the health of soil, water, plants and animals,

respect high animal welfare

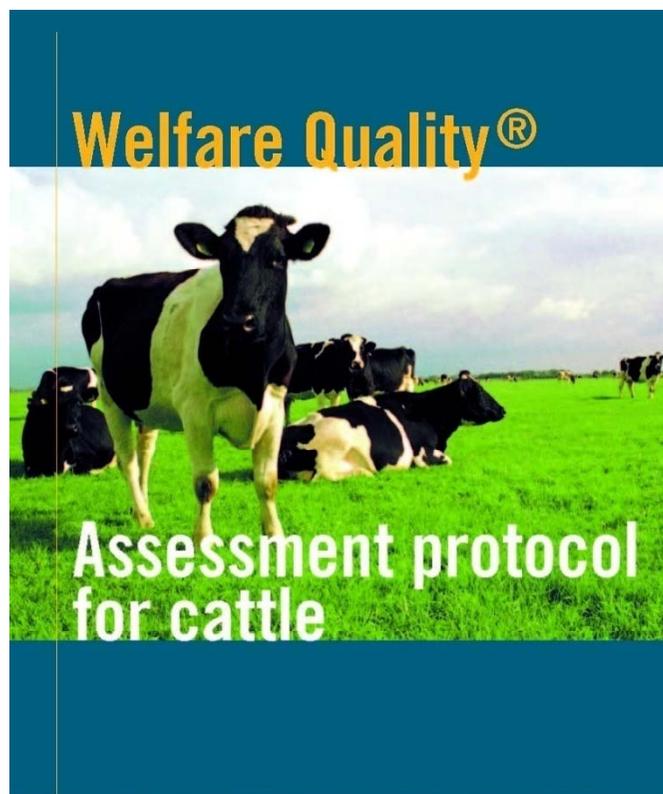
and are aimed at producing products of high quality” (Art 3 of EC/834/2007)

Certification criteria for livestock

(based on Article 76, Regulation (EC)
889/2009)

- ☞ Description of holding
 - ☞ Buildings, pastures, open air areas
 - ☞ Installations and storage of manure
- ☞ Management plan and records
- ☞ Identification of stock
 - ☞ Arrival, conversion, veterinary records, leaving date
 - ☞ Losses
 - ☞ Feed materials and diet
 - ☞ Date of treatment, diagnosis, drugs used
- ☞ Does not address animal welfare outcomes

Exploratory case study UK welfare



- From resource based indicators of welfare (such as amount of space per animal)
- To animal-based (outcome) measures (such as the presence of visible skin lesions)

Changes in the inspection visit



- ☞ Soil Association has included some animal based indicators
- ☞ Subset of those in the Bristol Welfare Assessment Programme (BWAP) (Leeb et al.,2004).
- ☞ 20 animals at random
 - ☞ cows: lameness, swollen hocks, cleanliness and body condition
 - ☞ Layers: feather loss, comb colour, abnormal beaks, soiling of feathers and normal behaviour (dustbathing and ranging)
- ☞ Inspectors attend a two day practical training course before beginning the assessments on certified farms
- ☞ Farmers are given the results in their inspection report
- ☞ At present no direct impact on certification outcome

What have we done?

- ☉ Interviews with 18 farmers (10 dairy/ 8 poultry) certified by the Soil Association (August and September 2011)
- ☉ Inspection included welfare assessment
- ☉ Response to increased emphasis on welfare during inspection

Results farmers

- ☉ 6/10 dairy farmers and 2/8 poultry farmers had not noticed any change but the practise has now been in place for several years
- ☉ Some were not aware of having received feedback
- ☉ Contrasting views whether inspection should include animal observations

From “None of their business !”

“Yes, certification has to include welfare; it's claimed that welfare (on organic farms) is better, or that's what people believe”.

“Is the inspector competent to do it?”

And the inspectors?

☞ The system is helpful

- ☞ Allows better standardisation

- ☞ Possible to observe improvements over time

- ☞ or the emergence of problems

Potential for progress element?

“Drawing a conclusion on one day is not it. Isn't it better to say there's progress?”

“ .. monitoring on a monthly basis shows how these (health) aspects are progressing”

- ☉ This suggests there is potential for target-based assessments
- ☉ Has the monitoring lead to any improvements?

And, what if there are problems?

“I feel a bit out on a limb”

“you need to be able to get advice from the inspectors who are out on the farms seeing how it is done”

☞ Requires access to support to put things right through information, through training and advice?

Discussion

- ☞ Not clear that operators share the need for welfare assessment (poultry more so than dairy)
- ☞ Willingness to engage is important

Advantages of progress element in the standards

- ☞ Allows operators to demonstrate willingness to tackle problems (Schmid 2010)
- ☞ Individual goals and monitoring criteria taking the specific circumstances into account
 - ☞ Likely to lead to improvement and strengthen personal responsibility
 - ☞ Allows control bodies/standard setters to gain more experience with monitoring criteria in new areas of standard development

Conclusions

- ☞ Animal based assessment could allow a progress element to be included in certification
- ☞ Impact on time spent for certifications needs to be considered
- ☞ No likely to fully replace existing minimal requirements
- ☞ However, a mixed approach with some improvement elements and some minimal requirements could be envisaged

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 **Thank you for listening**