

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board

Consultation on Food Supply Chain Quality Schemes and Branding

Response by John Godfrey

I am a Director of RJ & AE Godfrey and Elsham Linc Ltd as well as being a Director of BPEX Ltd and am responding to your consultation. RJ & AE Godfrey and Elsham Linc Ltd are substantial levy payers (paying over £300,000 per year) to five of the six levy boards now part of AHDB and I am now responding on their behalf.

QUESTION 1

Should AHDB invest levy payers money to promote the quality and standards of its sectors products?

AHDB should not invest levy payers' money to promote the quality and standards of its sectors' products. It should be the decision of each sector board to decide if and how much to invest in promotion. AHDB should only provide services to the various constituent sectors.

QUESTION 2

Does there need to be a rationalisation of existing quality marks?

We believe it would be beneficial to rationalise the existing quality marks but it must not be at the lowest common denominator. The quality standards must be whole-chain and audited throughout that chain.

QUESTION 3

Should AHDB invest levy funds to promote uptake within the industry, police the proper use of a mark and build consumer awareness about the quality and standards of all sector products? (The cost of this is estimated to be about £0.5m. per annum to AHDB and would be apportioned back to AHDB sector organisations).

We agree that if we are to have a quality standard for all sectors that its use should be promoted to increase uptake within the industry and the sector boards should be policed to ensure the proper use of a mark but raising public awareness should be left to the sector boards.

QUESTION 4

If levy payer money was to be invested, should AHDB:

- a) Create a new scheme?
 - b) Adopt the RTL scheme as it is now? or
 - c) Integrate existing standards in the beef and sheep sector into the RTL scheme?
- (Note: pig sector standards already integrated)**

There is no need to create a new scheme the existing standards can be the starting point for any integrated scheme, but great care must be taken to ensure that the various sector schemes are robust enough to guarantee, as far as possible, that a failure in one will not discredit all the other schemes. If the standards are robust enough we believe that AHDB should take over RTL and get clearance from Brussels to use the RTL with a national flag underneath the logo.

Question 5

In your sector, which products or market segments do you believe would most benefit from the promotion of quality characteristics (either general quality characteristics common to your sector and other sectors or ones specific to your sector)? Would you support levy payers' money being invested in this promotion?

In the pig sector we already promote welfare as a differentiation. In the other sectors where produce is marketed to the consumer then local and freshness would be points of difference.

Question 6

If in your view, no products in your sector would benefit from promoting such a scheme (beyond a baseline investment outlined in paragraph 21), would you accept other AHDB sectors working together at a sector level on such a scheme through AHDB?

As already stated I do not believe that AHDB should be spending money on promotion, but do believe that each sector should decide whether to spend its own money on promotion. This promotion would help to reinforce a quality standard mark that could be used on all products that meet the required standards.

Question 7

Do you support levy-funded investment even though this will mean that EU guidelines for promotion would need to be observed by all parties participating in the scheme throughout the supply chain even where private funds were invested?

Again I would support levy funded investment by each sector and I fully realise this would require EU approval and a need to follow their guidelines.