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4 November 2008

Dear Guy Attenborough,

Consultation on food supply quality schemes and branding

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our views on the scope, use and financing of quality schemes and branding on AHDB sector products. Given time constraints we have been unable to provide a full response, but hope this letter will suffice.

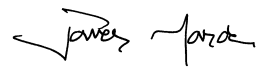
To meet today's environmental challenges it is vital that the wider role of farmers and food producers in biodiversity and landscape conservation, natural resource protection, and the provision of public access to the natural environment is recognised and encouraged.

In our response to the ADHB corporate plan in February of this year, we recommended that the potential links between food certification schemes and their accompanying logos are explored. By combining assurances of the quality and safety of products, with high environmental standards in the process of production, and an indication of origin, consumers will be able to make informed choices in purchasing products with a range of desirable attributes.

One of the options in the consultation document is to use the Red Tractor label as the common framework for marketing of quality products. We recognise that the Red Tractor scheme has an important role in providing assurance of food safety standards and as a means of traceability in the food chain. However, the schemes under Assured Food Standards have few environmental production standards over and above those required by European and national regulations, such as cross-compliance. In our response to the AHDB's consultation on its corporate plan, we recommended that the AHDB and the sector companies encourage levy-payers to be holders of Environmental Stewardship. We therefore recommend that if the AHDB's supports the Red Tractor label, the support should be conditional upon a commitment for all members of the schemes to be part of Environmental Stewardship.

If you have any queries, please contact james.petts@naturalengland.org.uk (01242-533497).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Marsden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

James Marsden
Director Policy