Briefing Document: Scottish Quality Langoustine (SQL) Scheme

Overview: The Scottish Quality Langoustine (SQL) scheme has been developed through the Scottish Nephrops Programme to improve product quality within the langoustine industry. The scheme was created on the back of feedback from several market reports carried out within Europe. This initiative, which has received support from the Scottish government post-Brexit and Covid, aims to enhance the reputation of Scottish langoustine by promoting a quality assurance framework. The scheme is industry-owned through Producer Organisations (POs) and focuses on increasing product consistency and traceability across the supply chain.

Key Objectives:

1. **Brand Promotion & Differentiation:** Position Scottish Langoustine as the premium product in the marketplace by highlighting its superior quality.

2. **Market Protection & Expansion:** Protect existing markets while simultaneously working to secure new markets for Scottish Langoustine.

3. **Supply Chain Efficiency:** Reduce waste and increase operational efficiency, benefiting all stakeholders in the supply chain.

4. **Innovation Support:** Encourage the uptake of innovative practices within the sector to enhance efficiency and product quality.

Benefits of the Scheme:

- **Brand Protection:** Ensures the langoustine retains its reputation for quality and reiterates provenance.

- **Consistent Quality:** Guarantees that consumers receive high-quality, traceable, and safe products.

Key Standards: The SQL scheme operates based on several key standards, including:

- **Food Safety Requirements:** To ensure the langoustine is safe for consumption.

- **Quality Specifications:** Defining the characteristics that guarantee the product's quality.

- **Traceability Requirements:** Allowing full traceability throughout the supply chain.

- **Training Requirements:** Ensuring that all involved parties are properly trained to maintain high standards.

Scheme Operation:

- SQL will operate a group certification system for POs and processors. Members will be required to comply with SQL standards, and evidence of compliance will be submitted via an online portal for independent auditing.

- Each PO will ensure the compliance of its vessels through annual verification. A sample of vessels will be audited annually by the independent auditing partner.

- Processing sites will be audited annually, with the audit scope reduced if the site holds third-party certifications (e.g., BRC or SALSA).

Scheme Establishment and Governance:

- SQS has been formed as a company, with governance overseen by a small Board of Directors representing its members.

- The Board will be responsible for setting the scheme standards, reviewing them periodically, and working with Seafood Scotland to promote the scheme.

- An independent auditing partner will be appointed to oversee the day-to-day operations, ensuring compliance with the scheme's requirements.