



Scottish Quality Langoustine(SQL) scheme

Overview and Frequently Asked Questions

Background

The SQL scheme has been developed over the last few years working closely with the industry. It has been developed to provide a credible and workable means to help the sector retain its reputation, improve product quality and efficiency, retain existing markets and open new markets for Scottish product.

The scheme standards are based on good practice and therefore, potentially accessible to all. It will operate as a Group scheme where individual vessels will register through their existing Producer Organisations (POs) and the POs, and their systems will be verified by an independent certifier. Processors will also be eligible to join the scheme, and they will be undergo a factory audit, the frequency of which will depend on any existing 3rd party food certification they already hold.

What does the Scheme cover ?

The Scheme Standards are divided into the following categories:

- Key requirements
- Food Safety requirements
- Quality Specification requirements
- Traceability requirements
- Sustainability requirements
- Training requirements

Key requirements

This includes committing to get certified within 12 months and management of customer complaints.

Food Safety requirements

This section includes reviewing how food safety hazards are managed on board, vessel and crew hygiene, and management and control of pest contamination.

Quality Specification requirements

This section includes reviewing meeting customer specifications, collaborative initiatives with customers, retaining product quality through temperature management, use of chemical treatments and product handling methods.

Traceability requirements

This section includes reviewing how product consignments are identified, the information displayed and management of catching records.

Sustainability requirements

This section includes compliance with regulatory requirements and use of good practice to manage and prevent endangered, threatened or protected species and by catch. It also involves discussion of innovations being used or planned to enhance marine sustainability.

Training requirements

This section includes reviewing how crew members are trained and how this recorded.

Frequently Asked Questions

How will the Scheme work?

It will operate as Group Scheme where your PO will manage the process with you. They will oversee each vessel in their Group, and this will ensure relevant information is uploaded into the online SQL audit portal. This allows information to be readily available and verified but without creating extra audit burdens and reduce the time that otherwise you would need to commit. The PO will be audited by the independent certifier to ensure they are complying with Scheme requirements and ensure the Scheme is credible and maintain its reputation. There will be a sample of vessels that will have a physical audit each year at shoreside. This will depend on the size of the PO Group but won't involve more than once in every 4-5 years.

Are the requirements difficult to meet?

No. The Scheme brings together all aspects of good practice that many catchers are doing already. There will be the need to demonstrate that certain records are maintained but these will often already be available and in use and if not sample templates are provided at the end of the standards booklet (and online) to help members comply.

How often will I be assessed?

Your PO will need to verify your ongoing compliance with the scheme standards involving upload and refresh of information into the audit portal once a year. Internationally recognised Group certification schemes require a sample of physical audits every year and this is based on the square root of the total number in the Group e.g. 15 vessels in Group will have 4 x shoreside audits each year; 40 vessels in a Group will have 7 x audits each year.

Will the assessment take a lot of time?

It is estimated that the gathering of information and evidence and upload onto the portal will take no more than an hour. This will include uploading certain documentation which won't necessarily change from year to year (e.g. Hazard Assessment Forms) and as such uploads in future years will take less time.

Is there lots of paperwork?

No. There are key pieces of critical documentation that are required to ensure credible operation of the Scheme including hazard assessments, cleaning records, dipping records, training records etc. but these are kept to minimum.

Who will undertake the work?

Your PO will undertake the regular evaluation work and use the audit portal to help and support you. The PO and any shoreside audits will be carried out by Food Integrity Assurance (FIA). FIA is an independent farming and food certification business, based in Edinburgh, that already undertakes assessment work with the Scottish beef, sheep, pork and venison sectors to help underpin key client's brands such as Scotch Beef.

How much will it cost?

There is no direct cost to you. Your PO will carry the cost of the SQL Scheme assessment and certification.