Bord Bia Grass Fed Beef Standard

Revision 01, June 2020





BORD BIA
IRISH FOOD BOARD

Origin Green
IRELAND

Bord Bia Grass Fed Beef Standard

Revision 01, June 2020

BORD BIA
IRISH FOOD BOARD

Origin Green
IRELAND

Contents

Contents **3**

1 Introduction **4**

1.1 Introduction 4
1.2 General 4
1.3 Normative references 4
1.4 Responsibility 6
1.5 Objective of the Grass Fed Standard 6
1.6 Eligibility / Scope 6
1.7 Terms and definitions 7

2 Scheme Regulations **9**

2.1 Approved Farmer Supplier 9
2.2 Approved Processor (Member) 9
2.3 Approval Process 10
2.4 Control, Monitoring and Conformance 11
2.5 Unscheduled Audits 13
2.6 Approval Decisions 13
2.7 Appeals 13
2.8 Complaints 13

3 Grass Fed Beef Requirements **14**

3.1 Background 14
3.2 Grass Fed Beef: Verification 14
3.3 Grass Fed Beef Specification 14
3.4 Audit Requirement: Grass Fed Beef 15

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The beef sector in several EU Member States including Ireland, sector is rooted in grass-based production systems at farm level. In today's market there is an increasing opportunity to leverage Ireland's natural advantage of ideal climatic conditions for growing grass, coupled with farming systems which have evolved to maximise beef production from grass with little reliance other feed types to support the nutritional requirements of beef animals. Over many years management practices have been developed and adopted by farmers to improve efficiency and performance of animals in a grass-based production system.

The Grass Fed Standard for beef has been developed in response to the demands of the marketplace. Increasingly purchasers are expressing a desire for Irish beef products that can be verified as grass fed. It is no longer possible to just declare that a product is grass fed, the market requires evidence to back the claim.

This standard has been developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders from the beef sectors including the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, Teagasc, Farmers, and beef processors.

1.2 General

Bord Bia is accredited by the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) to undertake product certification for their schemes in conformity with ISO/IEC17065:2012. Bord Bia operate a series of quality assurance schemes which cover both primary production and processing for the beef, lamb, dairy, pig, poultry, egg, and horticulture sectors. These quality schemes are open to all producers of these products in all Member States provided they are registered with the competent authority and are compliant with all EU and national legislation relevant to the standard.

This standard sets out the Bord Bia specification to enable classification of beef products as 'Grass Fed'. The term "Grass Fed" for beef means that the diet of the animal was composed of at least 90% grass or grass forage (on a fresh weight basis) for every year throughout the lifetime of the animal. Certification to this standard is open to all beef processors in all Member States that are certified to the current Bord Bia meat processor standard.

Conformance with this Standard will permit the use of the Bord Bia Grass Fed logo on products included within the scope of this standard (see 1.6), and in line with the Bord Bia Logo Use Policy.

1.3 Normative references

The Sustainable Beef and Lamb Assurance Scheme Standard (SBLAS) is referred to in this document as an eligibility requirement of farmers supplying animals to be considered under this Grass Fed Beef Standard, and as the source of the data used to calculate the Grass Fed status of the animal being processed. The Meat Processor Quality Assurance Scheme Standard is referred to in this document as a prerequisite for consideration to certification for meat

processors against this Standard. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

- Sustainable Beef & Lamb Assurance Scheme, SBLAS
- Meat Processor Quality Assurance Scheme, MPQAS

1.4 Responsibility

Bord Bia has overall responsibility for the management of this Grass Fed Beef Scheme. This includes:

- maintenance of the internal quality management system;
- Inspection and certification of meat processors wishing to use the Grass Fed logo.

In order to remain certified, the approved member must maintain conformance with the standard and with the terms and conditions contained in the Bord Bia Logo Use Policy.

1.5 Objective of the Grass Fed Standard

The Grass Fed Standard has been established to:

- Facilitate the marketing of Bord Bia Grass Fed beef products, both on the domestic and international markets;
- Provide the industry with a standardised, verifiable and robust mechanism to confirm the conformity of beef and beef products meeting the Bord Bia Grass Fed requirements;
- Identify and distinguish Bord Bia Grass Fed beef products to consumers through the use of a unique logo on eligible products.

1.6 Eligibility / Scope

1.6.1 Eligible Products

Beef products eligible to be included under this standard must be processed from animals originating on Bord Bia SBLAS certified farms/herds located in Ireland or other EU Member States, and which have been processed in a MPQAS certified processing plant meeting the requirements of this standard.

The scope of this standard applies only to meat for human consumption from bovines classified as heifers, steers and cows.

1.6.2 Eligible Farms

Beef farm suppliers must be certified members of the Sustainable Beef and Lamb Assurance Scheme (SBLAS) schemes. The SBLAS scheme is open to all dairy producers in all Member States provided they are registered with the competent authority and are compliant with all EU and national legislation comparable or equivalent to those in Ireland and relevant to the standard. Information gathered during the SBLAS audits provides confirmation that the farm system meets the grass fed rules 1, 5, and 6 as listed under section 3.3 of this Grass Fed Beef Standard, and as defined in section 1.7. All farms on which cattle have resided during their lifetime, must be, or must have been, members of SBLAS within the previous three years prior to slaughter. Cattle/beef originating on these farms are eligible to be considered under the grass-fed scheme rules.

1.6.3 Eligible Processors

Processors must be current certified members of the Bord Bia processor scheme (currently known as MPQAS for beef processors) The MPQAS scheme is open to all meat producers in all

Member States provided they are registered with the competent authority and are compliant with all EU and national legislation comparable or equivalent to those in Ireland and relevant to the standard.

Processors based in the Republic of Ireland that wish to be audited to this standard must be members of Bord Bia's Origin Green Programme and those in other Member States must be involved in a sustainability programme deemed equivalent.

1.7 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

Assessment	Where used in the Standard means that data will be processed to determine to what extent an animal / herd meets the criteria set out in the Standard.
Audit	Where used in the Standard means that a qualified auditor will conduct an audit against the SBLAS Standard or the Grass Fed Beef Standard
Bord Bia	The Irish Food Board.
Certification Body	The Body / Committee to which the Bord Bia Quality Assurance Board has devolved responsibility and authority for all certification decisions with regard to membership of the Scheme.
CFU	Controlled Finishing Unit. DAFM designated status for herds that can only sell animals for slaughter.
DAFM	The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.
Farm	The land under the control of the herd owner participating in the SBLAS scheme and the farm enterprise that is operated by the herd owner whose herd is certified to the SBLAS standard.
Feedlot	A farm enterprise where, through assessment of SBLAS audit data, it is determined that animals are farmed in confined systems and whose diet consists of high levels of concentrate feeding.
Grass Fed	The term 'Grass Fed' for beef products means that the diet of the animal is composed of at least 90% grazed grass and legumes (pasture) or grass and legume forage (silage, haylage, hay) (on a fresh weight basis) as determined by the grass fed beef model.
Grass Fed Beef Model	Grass Fed quantification model for beef.as developed by Teagasc (Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority) and described in peer reviewed research papers by Teagasc, the University College Dublin and Bord Bia on GHG emissions from pastoral suckler beef cow production systems, (Clarke, 2013) (Foley, 2011)
Herd Number	A unique number assigned to the herd / holding of the keeper of animals.
MPQAS	Meat Processor Quality Assurance Scheme.
Pasture Access	Animals must have been at pasture for a minimum of the national average of 220 days per year during their lifetime. A tolerance of up to 40 days less is acceptable where weather conditions, soil type and other environmental conditions are determined as an impeding factor to grazing outdoors.
Producer	A beef farmer / herd owner with a valid herd number.
Producer Standard	This consists of the criteria as set out in Sections 1 (Introduction), 2 (Scheme Regulations) and 3 (Grass Fed Beef Requirements), of the Sustainable Beef & Lamb Assurance Scheme

Quality Assurance Board	An independent subsidiary Board within Bord Bia which has overall responsibility for policy in relation to the operation of the Bord Bia Assurance Schemes.
Quality Assurance Database (QAD)	The Bord Bia database through which data is managed and used to determine conformance with this standard.
SBLAS	Bord Bia's Sustainable Beef & Lamb Assurance Scheme
Teagasc	The Agriculture and Food Development Authority.
The Grass Fed Beef Standard	This standard.
ISO/IEC 17065:2012	International standard ISO/IEC Conformity Assessment - Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services
ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015	International standard ISO/IEC Conformity Assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems

2 Scheme Regulations

This section contains the scheme rules for eligible meat processors to be approved to use the Bord Bia Grass Fed logo.

2.1 Approved Farmer Supplier

In order to be eligible to supply product to the grass fed programme, the farmer must be a certified member of the Bord Bia SBLAS and meet with rules 1, 5 and 6 of Section 3.3 of this (Grass Fed Beef) Standard.

In order to become a certified member of the SBLAS Scheme the herd/farm whether located in Ireland or other Member State must undergo an audit and be found compliant with the requirements of the SBLAS standard. Membership to the SBLAS is voluntary and open to all beef producers who have a valid herd number. A full independent audit is carried out on the farmer's herd every 18 months. When the farmer is deemed to be compliant he/she will be considered for certification under the Scheme.

2.2 Approved Processor (Member)

As stated in section 1.6, any beef processor wishing to use the Grass Fed logo must be a certified member of the Bord Bia processor scheme, be a verified member of the Origin Green Programme and be certified to this Standard.

2.2.1 Bord Bia Meat Processor Quality Assurance Scheme (MPQAS)

In order to be eligible for certification to this standard a meat processor must be a certified member of the Bord Bia Meat Processor Quality Assurance Scheme (MPQAS). MPQAS is voluntary and open to all abattoirs, meat processors and meat packers that are approved and / or licensed in accordance with relevant National and/or EU regulations.

Each applicant is provided with the MPQAS standard prior to the audit. When deemed to have complied with the requirements of the standard, as determined by independent audit, the Processor will be considered for certification under the Scheme. The normal duration of the certification validity period is 18 months. At least one unannounced spot audit will take place within this period. Processors must be re-audited to the MPQAS standard prior to expiry of the certificate in order to maintain continuity of certification. All surveillance and unannounced audits take place on-site at the processing location.

2.2.2 Grass Fed Standard Approval

Each applicant must be able to demonstrate conformance with the requirements of this Grass Fed standard. The processor's quality management and IT systems must fully support the requirements of the program. All documentation, including records, required under the program must be established prior to approval maintained on an ongoing basis, easily retrievable and stored as per the internal records/documents storage procedure and in line with statutory requirements.

Where a scheme member ceases to be in conformance with this standard, or where there is any incident relating to Bord Bia Grass Fed product which requires a recall/withdrawal, the

processor must advise Bord Bia immediately. Depending on the circumstances, approval of the supplier may be temporarily suspended, or may be withdrawn.

Failure to inform Bord Bia of any such an incident will be deemed a violation of the conditions of approval, and an automatic withdrawal of the supplier from the program will be imposed.

2.3 Approval Process

2.3.1 Registration

Eligible processors can register to apply to the Grass Fed Scheme through the members section of the Bord Bia database. The approval process will aim to be completed within 2 weeks of receipt of the registration and appropriate fee.

All applicants will be provided with the standard and will be required to acknowledge and agree to abide by the Grass Fed scheme rules and the Logo Use Guidelines. Applicants will be given training on the requirements of the program and provided with the software required for verification of Grass Fed product. Updates to the applicant's internal IT system may be necessary to meet the requirements of the web-service provided. The cost of these upgrades must be borne by the applicant. Bord Bia will provide assistance to the IT departments where required.

2.3.2 Supplier Quality Management System Review

In order to be approved to use the grass fed logo, the processor must provide evidence that the system that is in place to confirm the grass fed status of the product functions correctly, and is verified on an ongoing basis. This will be assessed by:

2.3.2.1 Initial On-site Grass Fed Audit:

An auditor will visit the site to check the grass fed IT confirmation system in use, and to review records to confirm that previous grass fed batches dispatched met the requirements.

2.3.2.2 Surveillance Audits:

Surveillance Audits (on-site evaluation) will take place on an annual basis (see 2.4.2) and will be combined with the processor audit where applicable.

2.3.3 Membership Fee

In general, one fee per Member will apply per annum.

The membership fee will cover the cost of the on-site audit and follow up if required where necessary. The fee associated with the grass fed programme will be added to the annual processor membership fee where applicable.

The rules concerning membership will be implemented in the same way whether sites are located in Ireland or other Member State.

2.4 Control, Monitoring and Conformance

2.4.1 Control

Overall control of the program will be exercised by Bord Bia.

The decision of Bord Bia on any matter relating to the approval process, or to the control or operation of the program, is final subject to the Bord Bia Appeals Procedure (which is available upon request).

2.4.2 Monitoring (Surveillance Audits)

Monitoring of the approved Grass Fed beef supplier will be carried out through announced and/or unannounced surveillance audits by Bord Bia or its nominated agents.

After initial approval, each participant will be independently audited by Bord Bia at pre determined intervals, and where possible, the audit will coincide with Processor Scheme audits. The maximum interval between successive audits will normally be 12 months.

Participants must facilitate auditors and Bord Bia representatives by granting access to the relevant IT systems, documentation and records in the language understood by the auditor.

Participants must supply any information requested by the auditors relevant to establishing conformance with the program. Auditors are entitled to seek access to relevant audit reports or documentation to confirm conformance with the appropriate standards or legislative requirements.

2.4.3 Conformance

Each member is responsible for ensuring their full conformance with the standard. All requirements in section 3.4 must be complied with. Failure to adhere to the grass fed requirements by any one processor could mean loss of approval for the entire programme. Bord Bia maintains the right to suspend/withdraw any approved supplier to preserve the integrity of the program.

There are three finding categories that can result from the desk, or the on-site, audit:

Finding	Definition	Action
Critical	A finding where single or multiple non-conformances and/or breaches of scheme rules pose a serious threat to either product safety or programme integrity	Immediate suspension from the programme until such time as the issue is addressed. Where the issue is not addressed within the agreed timeframe the member is withdrawn from the scheme.
Full conformance	Full conformance is achieved when there is adherence with all the requirements.	Continue to monitor trends/indicators.

Minor Non conformance	Represents either a management system weakness or minor issue that could subsequently lead to a major non-conformance if not addressed.	Each minor NC should be considered for potential routes to improvement, and to further investigate any systematic weaknesses which have led to this NC, for inclusion in the corrective action program. Minor NCs must be closed out within an agreed period (no longer than 1 month).
Major Non conformance	Based on objective evidence, the absence of, or a significant failure to implement and/or maintain conformance to the requirements (i.e. the absence of or failure to implement a complete Management System clause of the standard); or A situation which would, on the basis of available objective evidence, raise significant doubt as to the capability of the Management System to achieve its intended outputs.	Each major NC(s) must be included in the corrective action program. Major NCs must be closed out within an agreed period (no longer than 1 week).

Table 1: *Conformance Categories*

2.4.4 Non-Conformance Management:

Failure to comply with, and meet the requirements of the standard, as determined by audit, obliges the Applicant/Approved Supplier to implement immediate correction and initiate corrective and preventative action within a specified period. Depending on the nature and criticality of the non-conformance, the suspension of current approved status, or a 'Not Eligible for Approval' decision may be imposed. The Auditor will specify the nature of the non-conformance and the corresponding time-scale for completion of corrective actions (see Table 1).

The Applicant/Approved Supplier must commit to resolve the issue described in the non-conformance, within the time-scale specified. Depending on the nature of the non-conformance and the corresponding response, Bord Bia may require subsequent on-site verification of the action taken. On confirmation that effective corrective / preventive action has been put in place, the Applicant/Approved Supplier can be considered for approval or renewal of certification.

Failure to provide satisfactory evidence within the specified time-scale may result in withdrawal of approval and removal from the Grass Fed register / database. This will require the immediate cessation of the use of the Grass Fed logo.

2.5 Unscheduled Audits

Bord Bia reserves the right to carry out supplementary unscheduled audits for the purpose of verifying conformance with the programme, or in order to determine that corrective and/or preventive actions submitted after audit closeout are in place.

Refusal, or repeated failure, to accept an unscheduled audit may lead to Critical Non-conformance being raised and suspension from the program.

2.6 Approval Decisions

The decision regarding approval for each applicant will be made by Bord Bia. This decision will be made based on conformance with the requirements of the standard, however, other factors (such as failure to meet regulatory requirements, food safety requirements, program history, or inability to provide sufficient or appropriate access to information) may be taken into consideration in arriving at the approval decision.

2.7 Appeals

The supplier may appeal decisions in relation to approval.

Bord Bia's Appeals Procedure will be followed and, where necessary, the matter will be referred to Bord Bia's Appeals Committee. The decision of Bord Bia's Appeals Committee is final, however, this does not affect the Participant's right to refer the issue to the Ombudsman for consideration.

Contact can be made at:

Address:	Office of Ombudsman, 18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2, D02 HE97
Tel:	01 639 5600
Email:	info@ombudsman.ie
Website:	www.ombudsman.ie

2.8 Complaints

The Applicant/Approved Supplier may make a complaint with regard to the audit or any other aspect of the operation of the Program. All complaints must be in writing and must be addressed to Bord Bia. All such complaints will be acknowledged and investigated by Bord Bia.

If a participant is dissatisfied with the result of the investigation into the complaint, they may request to have the matter referred to a higher level in Bord Bia by writing to the Quality Assurance Appeals Committee. See section 2.7 Appeals.

3 Grass Fed Beef Requirements

3.1 Background

The beef grass fed requirements sections sets out the criteria that must be adhered to for meat from individual animals to be classified as grass fed. The standard relies on the grass fed quantification model deployed in the Bord Bia Quality Assurance database to determine compliance. The standard is used to determine whether the system in place on beef farms can ensure that cattle resident on the farm can meet the criteria set out below. The grass fed figure for individual farms assessed will be based on a three year rolling average grass fed figure for that farm. Where data for an individual year is absent a default value will be entered. This default value will be determined by the figure calculated annually by Bord Bia.

3.2 Grass Fed Beef: Verification

3.2.1 Grass Fed Beef Product Eligibility Criteria

To be included in the Beef Grass Fed programme, products must only come from animals that have been resident on a farm that is a member of the SBLAS directly prior to slaughter

Using the Grass Fed Beef Model, and Bord Bia web-based software, the processor must make ongoing assessments for each animal prior to slaughter to ascertain the grass-fed status of the animal.

These assessments will be conducted by the processor on presentation of the animal for slaughter using the integrated database software (Grass Fed Beef Model) provided by Bord Bia, and prior to the animal being added to the 'batch'. This software identifies the farms whose animals can be recognised as Grass Fed. The Grass Fed status of each animal is calculated from current audit data of the herd(s) relevant to the animal being assessed.

The following conditions apply when assessing individual animals;

1. The first 9 months of the animal's life is excluded.
2. Only heifers, steers and cows will be assessed.
3. The animals' entire life must have been spent on farms where data is available in relation to feed consumption and grazing season in the SBLAS database.
4. If an animal, or animals, reside on a farm for less than 30 days, and where that farm does not meet the required grass fed threshold, this farm will be excluded from the calculation for that animal.
5. Animals presented from Feedlots as defined in section 1.7 are excluded.

3.3 Grass Fed Beef Specification

Rules 1 to 6 below are the basic eligibility requirements for Grass Fed milk.

RULE 1 Herds must be members of the Sustainable Beef & Lamb Assurance Scheme to be considered for assessment against the Grass Fed Standard.

RULE 2 Assessment of conformity must be completed using the Bord Bia approved Grass Fed Beef Model.

RULE 3 Assessment must be completed using data collected during SBLAS farm audits and stored on the Bord Bia Quality Assurance Database.

RULE 4 Data required for the operation of the Grass Fed Beef Model must be available for eligible animals for their entire lifetime.

RULE 5 Meat from eligible animals must only be classified as grass fed where the Grass Fed Beef Model determines a minimum of 90% of the feed consumed on a fresh weight basis is grass or grass forage.

RULE 6 Animals must be permitted to graze outdoors on grass for a substantial part of year (See 'Pasture Access' in Definitions).

3.4 Audit Requirement: Grass Fed Beef

The following requirements will be assessed for conformance during on-site processor audit:

a) The Processor must identify the management and supervisory staff with responsibilities for the identification, segregation and traceability of Grass Fed product.

b) There must be a documented and effective system / procedure (based on the results of the verification and as per the 6 Rules listed under 3.3) which details how the processor identifies, segregates and confirms the Grass Fed status of beef animals processed.

c) The system / procedure must permit a reconciliation to be carried out that clearly demonstrates that only Grass Fed product was sold as Grass Fed.

d) The Processor must submit complete and accurate details of each Herd Number and associated tag number for each animal within a batch to Bord Bia (to determine if that animal meets the Grass-Fed requirements).

Note: Processors are requested to use the Bord Bia Grass Fed web-service to submit this information.

e) The Processor must record the Grass Fed status of the animal (which will be returned by Bord Bia) and, where it has been determined that an animal, or animals, do not meet the Grass Fed requirements then products derived from this animal or animals, must not be mixed with any product intended to be sold as Grass Fed.

Note: Processors are requested to use the Bord Bia Grass Fed web-service to receive this information.

f) Grass Fed product must be clearly identifiable throughout the process, must not be mixed with non-Grass Fed product at any stage.

g) Labels carrying the Grass Fed logo which are being used, or have been in use, must be retained for a period in line with the requirements of S.I. No. 369 of 2006 and made available for review during audit where applicable.

h) The Processor must conduct verification checks at least twice annually on the system to ensure that it is functioning correctly. Where an issue is identified during these checks, a root cause analysis must be conducted, and corrective action implemented in

accordance with timelines listed in section 2.4.3 or where determined by the auditor carried out immediately.

i) The use of the Grass Fed logo on labels or promotional material must ensure that these are used appropriately, and in accordance with the Bord Bia Logo Use Policy on the use of the Grass Fed logo. All logo uses must be approved through the online logo approval system. Please see the Grass Fed Logo Use Policy for further information.

BORD BIA
IRISH FOOD BOARD

www.bordbia.ie