

News Release

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*For immediate use*

**Celebrating 30 years of Quality Assurance in Scotland**

The Scottish red meat industry’s Quality Assurance Scheme - the longest established scheme of its kind in the world – is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year (2020).

Established in 1990, the scheme which aims to provide the industry and consumers with total assurance that animals, produced for the food chain, are reared to a stringent set of standards covering all aspects of animal welfare, food safety, traceability and the environment, boasts over 10,000 members across the red meat industry.

“Scotland was the first in the world to introduce quality assurance schemes to underpin our standards of red meat production and we are very proud of what the industry has achieved,” said Kathryn Kerr, Head of Brands Integrity at Quality Meat Scotland (QMS).

“More than 90% of Scotland’s breeding cattle population, over 80% of the breeding sheep flock and almost 100% of significant pig farming businesses are currently covered by QMS quality assurance.

“It’s an incredible achievement for the Quality Assurance Schemes and QMS to celebrate 30 years of working with farmers, hauliers, markets, processors and feed merchants to deliver our ‘whole chain’ consumer assurance programme which underpins the integrity of our world-class Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork brands,” added Ms Kerr.

Currently, just under 10,000 farms in Scotland operate under the scheme – but it wasn’t always the case. Like anything revolutionary, it required cultural change and a transformation of the thinking for the entire industry.

John Morison, who has been a Quality Assurance Assessor for cattle and sheep farms for over 25 years, said that his first role was to speak at industry events to inform and explain to farmers the benefits of operating under the new framework.

“In the early days, there was resistance to the standards with farmers unsure of the benefits. I think it was fear of the unknown. When Quality Meat Scotland took over the scheme and started putting in place whole chain assurance, farmers started to see the benefits and willingly came on board.”

John believes that the Quality Assurance Standards, which have not been dramatically changed in 30 years, is a testament to the success of the scheme.

“There have been small amendments here and there to the standards, but the reason that there haven’t been any dramatic changes to the standards in the 30 years is because they got it right from the start. Farmers were at the forefront of the decision-making process and as a result they are practical and attainable for any farm to achieve.

“Assessments are in place to help farmers and other members of Scotland’s red meat industry ensure we keep our world-class status. We aren’t there to trip farmers up or find faults, we’re there to ensure best practice and that the facilities and administration are kept to the standards they need to be.

“Over the years, and from speaking to farmers across Scotland, I feel that the assurance assessments have helped farmers in particular adapt to the increase demand of record and book keeping and eased the burden when inspected by other organisations as it is covered in their assurance documents,” said John.

With Brexit looming, John notes that it is important to be part of a scheme with world-class status.

“Although it’s a voluntary scheme, and with Brexit in sight, it’s key to keep the assurance scheme going now more than ever to continue to promote Scotland’s world-class welfare, environmental and traceability credentials.”

Over the coming months, QMS will be releasing a series of features and case studies covering the whole chain assurance schemes and highlighting the important role they play within the industry. For further information on any of our schemes please email [info@qmscotland.co.uk](mailto:info@qmscotland.co.uk)

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**Notes to editors:**

* QMS is the public body responsible for promoting the PGI labelled Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb brands in the UK and abroad and also promoting Scottish pork products under the Specially Selected Pork logo.
* Please note that the use of the word Scotch in the Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI brands is correct and should not be substituted for an alternative such as Scots or Scottish. The history of the use of the word Scotch in this way, traces back to the 18th century.
* QMS also helps the Scottish red meat sector improve its sustainability, efficiency and profitability and maximise its contribution to Scotland's economy.
* The quality assurance schemes run by QMS cover more than 90% of livestock farmed for red meat in Scotland. They offer consumers in the UK and overseas the legal guarantee that the meat they buy has come from animals that have spent their whole lives being raised to some of the world’s strictest welfare standards.
* Scotland’s beef, lamb and pork producers make an important contribution to the country’s economic, social and environmental sustainability, contributing over £2 billion to the annual GDP of Scotland and supporting around 50,000 jobs (many in fragile rural areas) in the farming, agricultural supply and processing sectors.
* For more information visit [www.qmscotland.co.uk](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk) or follow QMS on Facebook or Twitter.