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# SPECIFICATION

**COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 510/2006**
**APPLICATION TO REGISTER:**

**"WEST COUNTRY BEEF"**
**PGI (❖) PDO ( )**

**National file No:**

## 1. RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT IN THE MEMBER STATE: UNITED KINGDOM

**Name**: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
**Address:** Food Policy Unit
Area 7E, 9 Millbank
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17 Smith Square
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United Kingdom
**Tel:** +44 207 238 6075
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## 2. GROUP

**Name**: Meat South West
**Address** C/O The Loadstone Suite, Creech Castle, Taunton, TA1 2DX
**Tel**: +44 1823 283161
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**Email**: selma.todd@eblex.ahdb.org.uk
**Composition**: Producers/processors

## 3. TYPE OF PRODUCT

Fresh Meat - Class 1.1

## 4. SPECIFICATION (Summary of requirements under Article 4 (2) of Regulation (EC) No 510/2006)

### 4.1 Name:

West Country Beef

### 4.2 Description

West Country Beef is the name applied to carcases, sides or cuts of beef derived from cattle born and raised in the West Country region of England and slaughtered in accordance with Meat South West (MSW) or equivalent standards, in approved abattoirs within the West Country region, or outside of the area. These approved plants will have been inspected by an independent inspector to ensure full traceability and authenticity of product. The plants will be licensed by Meat South West as approved to process West Country Beef.

All livestock is reared in line with agreed, high standards of husbandry and welfare, providing assurance of its safety.

Production must meet the following minimum requirements:

- born, reared and finished within the West Country region
- fed a forage based diet
- comply with all current legislation
- possess and be aware of all relevant Codes of Practice
- ensure the health and welfare of the stock based on The Five Freedoms
- ensure that full traceability systems are in place
- ensure livestock are managed by competent stockmen and trained staff
- ensure the safety and welfare of animals during transport, marketing and prior to slaughter
- slaughter occurs in an approved and licensed facility with full traceability to ensure authenticity of product

The farms and processing plants are inspected by independent inspectors with a defined inspection protocol.

To comply with the requirements of the West Country Beef scheme, producers are required during the inspections to demonstrate the cattle are born, reared and finished within the West Country region. A feed log is required and proof provided that the cattle have been fed on a diet comprising of at least 70% forage. The scheme requires an extensive system with a very minimum of six months grazing.

The specific grass-based diet improves the chemical composition and organoleptic qualities of the meat. This is more consistently tender, giving an excellent eating experience. The natural marbling of the meat with intra-muscular fatty tissues adds flavour and succulence. The colour of the fat can be from white to yellow, but the specific diet encourages a cream colour. The meat colour varies from pink to dark red, with the maturation resulting in the meat being darker red.

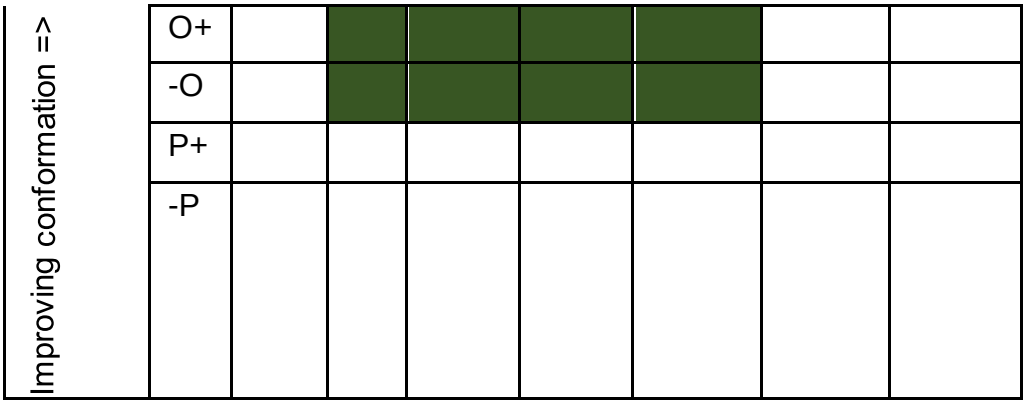
The cattle are finished, for a minimum of 60 days. The majority of stock start to finish naturally themselves – the age or weight varies as there are breed differences (a finishing weight between 200 and 500 kg dead weight is ideal).

The meat will receive a minimum of 10 days conditioning at refrigeration temperatures, a process known as maturation starting at the date of kill. During maturation the natural enzymes within the meat break down the connective tissues and thus improve the tenderness and eating quality of the meat. For cuts that are traditionally slow cooked such as brisket and shin there is no minimum maturation time. These periods may be reduced by the application of high voltage electrical stimulation or hip suspension, as these reduce the risk of cold shortening and improve the tenderness of the meat. Records are kept to show temperatures, processes and times to ensure the carcases are cooled and matured correctly.

The carcase classification specification (based on the EUROP system), to ensure optimum eating quality, is:

– Carcases classified as conformation -O or better, with a fatness of 2 to 4H.

| | Increasing fatness => | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4L | 4H | 5L | 5H |
| E | | | | | | | |
| U+ | | | | | | | |
| -U | | | | | | | |
| R | | | | | | | |




After slaughter West Country Beef is marketed to the trade in a number of forms as follows:

- Whole carcase, excluding inedible offal, hide, head and feet;
- Whole side: half of the carcase, split lengthwise;
- Hindquarter/forequarter: the whole side split between the 10th/11th ribs from the anterior (or otherwise similarly by arrangement);
- Primal cuts: produced by dividing carcases/sides into smaller, recognised parts (to satisfy customer preferences). These cuts may be presented bone-in or boneless and in protective packaging.

West Country Beef may be sold fresh (refrigerated) or frozen.

**4.3 Geographical area:**

The geographical area consists of the six counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire, which together make up the West Country region of England.

**4.4 Proof of Origin**

The supply chain is assured at all stages and verified to EN45011 standard by independent inspectorates (see 4.7 below) and national official control bodies applying specifications set by bodies that are also independent of Meat South West, which specifications have been augmented by specific requirements applicable to West Country Beef to ensure the link between the qualities of the product and its origin. Operators throughout the supply chain are subject to verification of their activities within the production and supply of West Country Beef

to ensure that they comply with the specification and that the provenance and qualities of the beef are guaranteed.

Production and inspection satisfies the standards recognised by the independent organisation, Assured Food Standards (AFS). They apply from the farm to the markets, hauliers, abattoirs and processing facilities to ensure traceability, authenticity and quality of product. Meat South West will recognise any scheme providing a similar level of assurance to ensure that appropriate standards are being met including notably guarantees of compliance with the production standards and the link to origin required by this specification.

The farms under these schemes are inspected by independent inspectors with a defined inspection protocol. AFS operates in the beef sector by:

- Setting beef assurance standards throughout the whole chain (farm, transport, markets and abattoirs)
- Licensing those standards to various Certification Bodies (who inspect and certify against them) and ensuring consistent delivery of assurance across all providers
- Maintaining a central database of all procedures and businesses certified against the AFS standards
- Promoting the benefits of assurance to both producers and businesses within the beef supply chain and to external bodies
- Encouraging producers and businesses to participate in assurance by applying to a Certification Body
- Dealing with general enquiries relating to beef assurance

It is an independent organisation set up to manage, develop and promote a consumer-facing mark (label/logo) trusted by the public, which provides assurance that food is safe, of good quality and affordable. It is an independent non-profit organisation, ensuring that it can operate objectively in the interest of the consumer, without undue influence from any organisation or link in the chain.

- It sets/recognises assurance standards that apply to various product sectors and to different links in the food supply chain.
- It manages the certification bodies that police those standards.

- It defines the usage conditions for the consumer-facing mark, i.e. it licenses the processors and packers who display it on their packs, and ultimately ensure that the mark is only seen on food that is worthy of it and properly authorised to carry it.
- It is committed to working with the entire supply chain to harmonise and strengthen the standards under a single mark.
- It is run by an independent Chairman and a Board of Directors including prominent academics and professionals representing consumers, the food production and supply chain, veterinary science, animal welfare, official control bodies and the environment.

For simplicity, the term 'MSW-approved' is used to indicate any scheme consisting of or equivalent to the AFS schemes that is recognised by Meat South West for the purposes of the production and supply of West Country Beef.

The labelling of West Country Beef complies with the Community Beef Labelling Regulations. Its specific provenance is assured and identified throughout the entire supply chain from birth through to slaughter, processing and delivering the final product.

All cattle are tagged with two tags, which are individual to the animal. Additionally, each animal has a unique passport, which shows all movements and other information relating to that individual, as required by the Cattle Identification (Amendment) Regulations 1998 (Statutory Instrument 1998 No 2969). Those details, including all movements, are recorded by the government's British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS). Thus anyone, including an auditor, is readily able to check the history of every animal, including confirming its birth and rearing entirely within the West Country of England.

All of the cattle from which West Country Beef is derived are born and reared in the West Country region of England, the specified geographical area. The majority of them are also slaughtered in that region. However, because of a shortage of regional abattoir capacity, animals from which West Country Beef is to be obtained may also be slaughtered outside the region in approved abattoirs.

The sourcing of local feed will be checked during the farm auditing process when feed records are checked. These records would log the feed, batch and source. Farmers would also present a declaration at point of sale to confirm the stock are born and reared in the West Country and fed on a 70% forage based diet with locally sourced supplementary feed at a rate of no more than 30% of the ration.

The farm where the cattle are born and reared must be accredited and inspected under a MSW-approved scheme as must any livestock market, haulier and abattoir involved in the production of West Country Beef. The MSW-approved standards control operations on the farm, in transport, at slaughter and in further processing and supply. Animals must be transported in compliance with the Welfare of Animals (Transport) Order 2006. At the point of slaughter the haulier will be inspected to ensure they are properly accredited. Livestock farmers must document all movements of livestock, including details of the haulier used. This information is provided to BCMS and can be seen on www.bcms.org.uk. Within the assurance inspection the movement books will be checked and these are also checked by the Rural Payment Agency and Trading Standards on a regular basis to ensure the legal requirements are met. This system ensures that the origin of the cattle is guaranteed from birth to the abattoir.

Once slaughtered the identification of the meat from the animal as West Country Beef is maintained until it leaves the premises. Should that identification be lost or compromised, at this or any later stage, the meat is no longer eligible to be labelled or sold as West Country Beef. The system requires the carcase and the cuts of the carcase to be fully traceable within the premises, in terms of the ear tag number, classification, weight, kill date, slaughter batch number and slaughter number within that batch, as well as carrying the abattoir identification code and the information required to fulfil the requirements of the Beef Labelling Regulations (reference number or code, country of origin, slaughtering and processing details). This information provides a link to the origin of the meat, guaranteeing its origin in the West Country region of England.

Once the carcase/side has been chilled, it may be broken down into primals, which may be vacuum-packed, in the abattoir premises or in separate cutting plants to

which the labelled carcase/side has been taken in refrigerated vehicles. The carcase/side/primal is then matured, each being marked with individual labels clearly showing the batch number. After maturation the meat is either sold in this form or further broken down into cuts and sold pre-packed.

In all cases, the meat is clearly labelled as West Country Beef, and the slaughter batch can be traced through the Beef Labelling traceability system. Additional information, e.g. the individual animal's ear tag number, may be displayed voluntarily on the final pack label in accordance with the Beef Labelling Regulations, providing enhanced traceability to the individual level. The plants record and keep details of all individual carcases within the batch. The origin and identity of the beef as West Country Beef is thus guaranteed at the point of delivery to a wholesaler, and thereafter to the consumer via retail or food service operators.

## 4.5 Method of production

### 1) On the Farm

The cattle must be born and raised entirely on farms within the West Country region of England. They are fed on a predominately grass-based diet with locally sourced supplemental feed when necessary. This feeding system is universally used in the production of the cattle from which West Country Beef is obtained.

An intensive feeding system is not used and animals are not fed on waste products. The livestock are out to grass during the summer. Summer grazing takes place traditionally from April through to November. However this is dependent on the seasons, and welfare is not compromised. Therefore if weather conditions determine early housing or late turn-out this is acceptable providing the diet still comprises of a minimum of 70% forage. The minimum grazing period is from May to October.

- During the winter months some stock are out-wintered on silage or hay, or other types of forage such as fodder beet or kale. Many animals, due to the high rainfall and soil structure in some areas, are housed and fed mainly on silage or hay.

- The livestock may be fed supplements at the weaning and finishing stage. In which case, the details of the ingredients and purchase are recorded by the farmer and checked by the assurance inspectors. The time the animal is supplemented is determined taking into account factors such as animal welfare and marketing.
- The maximum amount of supplementary feed is 30%, with forage at 70%. The supplementary feeding would be when required, such as during winter months or the weaning and finishing periods. The time of feeding is not determined within the specification, bar the maximum amount, as it is governed by marketing and welfare factors. This means that supplementary feed is provided at the finishing stage because forage alone is rarely sufficient in order to ensure that the animals meet their optimum market requirements. To ensure welfare is not compromised means supplementary feed is provided when forage is in poor supply or of poor quality, such as in winter periods or extremes, such as drought or flooding.

They are finished, for a minimum of 60 days. The majority of stock start to finish naturally themselves – the age or weight varies as there are tremendous breed differences, but a finishing weight between 200 and 500 kg dead weight is ideal. The farmer or processor determines when the animal is deemed fit for slaughter by either visual or physical assessment. The animal is assessed on conformation and fat level and when the farmer believes this to be at the optimum for the requirements of the market the animal is slaughtered.

**2) From Farm to Abattoir**

Once the animals have been selected and are ready for slaughter they are transported to the abattoir directly or via MSW-approved livestock auction markets, by the farmer or a hired haulier in a trailer or lorry. All hauliers will operate under an MSW-approved assurance scheme. Farmers who deliver their own stock will adhere to the MSW-approved standards within their farm assurance scheme.

## 3. At the Abattoir

Predominantly animals will be slaughtered in the West Country region but producers can use MSW approved, or their equivalent, abattoirs outside of the region. All abattoirs follow a clear protocol within the MSW-approved scheme stating how stock are to be treated and how the carcases are to be treated.

Only carcases that are classified in accordance with the EUROP classification scheme (or equivalent) as O+ and above, and of fat levels 2 to 4H, will be used for the production of West Country Beef. The slaughter number, date of slaughter, classification details and cold carcase weight will be recorded and attached on a label to the carcase to ensure traceability.

The meat will receive a minimum of 10 days conditioning starting immediately post slaughter at refrigeration temperatures, a process known as maturation. During maturation the natural enzymes within the meat break down the muscle tissues and thus improve the tenderness and eating quality of the meat. For cuts that are traditionally slow cooked such as brisket and shin there is no minimum maturation time. These periods may be reduced by the application of high voltage electrical stimulation or hip suspension as these reduce the risk of cold shortening and improve the tenderness of the meat. Records are kept to show temperatures, processes and times to ensure the carcases are cooled and matured correctly. West Country Beef benefits from optimum conditioning procedures in terms of temperature and length of time of conditioning, ensuring the flavour and texture are also optimised. This strengthens the effect of the organoleptic and other qualities linked to the production of the cattle in the West Country of England.

## 4. At Cutting Plants

Traceability at batch level will be maintained through the cutting plant.

The beef is normally presented to the cutting room as either a whole carcase or side or as quarters, cut usually between the $10^{th}$ and $11^{th}$ ribs. The batch system is retained throughout the cutting room. Within the cutting room the beef is divided into smaller cuts to suit the market requirements, and can be bone-in or boneless. The cutting facilities may not adjoin the slaughtering facilities, in which case the

meat is transported hygienically to the cutting premises, identification as West Country Beef being maintained. All carcases are broken down into at least primals for retailing. All meat is transported in refrigerated vehicles.

**5. At point of sale**

Consumers purchase beef in a range of traditional cuts prepared to meet their individual requirements. West Country Beef can be sold either in frozen or fresh form, either pre-packed or in service counters. The meat is described by either traditional cut names or by cooking methods.

West Country Beef may be used as the name of beef or of the beef ingredient of a beef product at retail or in food service provided that all the beef so named is West Country Beef and the term is not used and the product is not advertised, labelled or presented inaccurately or misleadingly.

**4.6 Link**

The West Country is the largest, most agricultural region in England. Its environment is one of the richest in the UK. Its farms produce an estimated 24% of beef in England and it is this, together with its 21% share of sheep production, which has helped shape and maintain the landscape and heritage of the region. The high density of livestock has encouraged the development of a large meat processing sector which creates much-needed employment opportunities in the region. Meat South West estimates the total contribution of the red meat sector to the West Country economy at £3 billion per annum and 28,000 jobs. The continuation of livestock production is essential if the region's environment and heritage are to be protected. Indeed it is that special environment that is the basis for the characteristics that are inherently developed in West Country Beef as a consequence of the source animals being raised in the region.

The West Country's combination of warm and mild temperatures, well-distributed rainfall through the year, and deep moisture-retentive soils means the grass and forage crops can be made and grazed for almost all the year. Grass grows in much of the region for over 300 days of the year. This year-round production is the norm

in the West Country and explains why livestock production predominates. In addition, over 25% of the West Country's grassland is situated either in National Parks or Areas of Natural Beauty (AONB) and the region has

over 57% of the UK's flower-rich meadows. Research undertaken by Bristol University shows that beef flavour is deeper and more liked on grass than concentrate feeding.

The West Country of England, as a result of its climate, topography, geology and the consequent lushness of grass production, imparts particular qualities to cattle reared in the region, and thence to the meat from those animals. A high proportion of its farmed area is grass, which is ideally suited to cattle production and can also be used in supplementary feed. As a result, cattle produced in the West Country have a greater access to grass and grass products than those in most other parts of Britain or elsewhere in the Community. Grass, whether fresh or conserved, is a source of α-linolenic acid, which can be converted in the animal to long chain n-3 (omega-3) polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA), valuable nutrients in the human diet. Grass also contains vitamin E and both n-3 fatty acids and vitamin E are at higher concentrations in grass-fed beef. These nutrients also affect the taste of the meat. There is therefore a strong and objective scientific case that beef produced and processed in the West Country of England has qualities that are inherently linked to that geographical area, because of the greater availability of and reliance on grass in the diet, leading to higher concentrations of n-3 PUFA and vitamin E in the meat.

The West Country of England is properly describable as a grassland peninsula. The distinction between grassland and arable farming has developed partly as the result of the different soil type. The West Country has a high proportion of gley and brown soils which support grass growth but are not ideally suited to arable farming. Arable growing areas have a higher proportion of clay and sandy soils, more easily drained. Further, the West Country has the highest average temperature and the highest minimum and maximum temperatures in the UK.

Grass growth is affected by soil type, temperature, rainfall and sunshine. A further important factor is topography i.e. altitude, with grass growth declining as altitude increases. The more favourable climate in the West Country increases the number of grass-growing days in comparison with other regions. Grass grows for more than 220 days of the year in all parts of the West Country which is not true of any other part of Britain, with parts achieving over 300 days of grass growth. There is a high reliance on fresh grass and conserved grass in the West Country. This produces a characteristic effect on meat quality and the nutritional value of beef in terms of fatty acid composition, vitamin E content and sensory quality. Scientific experiments have clearly demonstrated these effects.

They showed a difference in fatty acid composition between steers produced on a grain-based (concentrate) diet and on a grass-based diet. Those fed grass silage had higher levels of fat in muscle and the fatty acid profile was quite different. Linoleic acid and its product (arachidonic acid), both n-6 (omega-6) fatty acids, were higher in muscle of the steers fed concentrate; and linolenic acid and its products EPA and DHA, all n-3 (omega-3) fatty acids, were higher in muscle of the steers fed grass silage. The ratio of all n-6 fatty acids to all n-3 fatty acids was 9 times higher in the animals fed concentrate. The recommended ratio for the human diet is 4 or below and the grass-fed beef was more acceptable in nutritional terms.

Thus, grass and grass forage diets demonstrably produce a distinctive fatty acid profile in muscle that distinguishes them from concentrate diets. Values of >1.0% linolenic acid, > 0.5% EPA and > 0.1% DHA are said to be descriptive of grass-reared beef. This effect benefits West Country Beef. Vitamin E found naturally in grass is incorporated into muscle and fat tissue in cattle. Steers fed grass silage had at least double the concentration of vitamin E in muscle than those fed concentrate. This caused the meat to retain its bright red colour for 2 extra days during retail display.

British studies concluded that the taste of beef is better in grass-finished cattle than grain-fed cattle. The score for beef flavour was higher with grass than concentrate. The score for abnormal flavour was highest for concentrate.

The independent report commissioned by Meat South West from which the above conclusions were extracted (see Appendix) shows the special characteristics to be high concentrations of n-3 fatty acids and vitamin E.

- Linolenic acid > 1.0% loin muscle fatty acids in beef
- EPA > 0.5% loin muscle fatty acids in beef
- DHA > 0.1% loin muscle fatty acids in beef
- Vitamin E > 3.5 µg/g loin muscle in beef

These values are achieved in beef from cattle which are born, reared and finished in the West Country of England where animals have access to fresh grass for longer than in other regions because of the warm wet climate and where production systems are based on extensive production from grass. Climate changes in the future are likely to favour grass farming in the West Country even more than at present.

The report concludes that these scientific points should be added to a common perception in Britain that the West Country of England produces high quality beef because of its green image linked to the grassland landscape.

Historically the most common cattle breeds in the region have been South Devon and Ruby Red. However many native and continental breeds are also well suited to the region's landscape and perform well on the region's grasses. West Country Beef can therefore be produced from any breed of cattle.

The diversity of landscapes allows a stratified livestock industry to exist within the region's boundaries. The upland areas of Exmoor, Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor provide the breeding grounds and summer grazing for traditional beef herds, and the lowland grasslands and coastal regions, where grass continues to grow for most of the year, provides ideal finishing pastures.

**History of Meat Production in the Region**

Historically the West Country has been a pastoral region, important as a supplier of meat to London and other large conurbations, and also to ships calling at important West Country ports such as Plymouth and Bristol. The Crown victuallers in Elizabeth I's reign regarded Somerset as *"the producer of beef and mutton for the larder",* and Charles Vancouver writing in 1808 talks of *"…the district of North Devon, so justly celebrated for its breed of cattle…"* and goes on to state, that *"…the usual practice in this district, is to sell the steers, at four or five years old to the graziers in the county of Somerset, who feed them for a supply to the Bath, Bristol and London markets"*. And in 1742 Daniel Defoe, commenting on North-West Devon writes *"… here are bred those fine Oxen, in great numbers, which by the drovers of Somersetshire and thereabouts are brought up…fattened fit for Smithfield Market, wither they drive them…"*

Appreciation of the value of cattle from the West Country goes back even further. There are reports of exports of local cattle to Ireland before 1580. In 1620, West Country Beef spread across the Atlantic when the Pilgrim Fathers took red cattle from the region with them to North America, and they were sufficiently pleased that more such cattle were imported to the Americas in 1627.

One West Country cattle breed, the Devon, had such a reputation that it was the second most numerous breed in Britain by the second half of the nineteenth century.

Such appreciation of the importance of beef from the West Country remains as true today in relation to West Country Beef. A number of major retailers recognise the quality of the beef from the region and the positive association consumers make with the patchwork of small fields with grazing livestock in the labelling they apply to the beef they sell. Similarly, many small retailers, restaurateurs and other catering businesses label their beef as West Country Beef, and will benefit from being able to apply the 'PGI Seal' to the beef they supply.

## 4.7 Inspection Bodies

The following bodies are currently recognised for the purpose of verifying compliance with the specification:

1. PAI Ltd

   Lesley Hemson, Food Sector Manager - PAI Ltd

   The Inspire, Hornbeam Square West, Harrogate HG2 8PA

   Telephone: 01423 878878
   Fax: 01423 878870
   Mobile: 07968 092958
   Email: lesley.hemson@thepaigroup.com

2. Integra Ltd on behalf of NSF Certification

   David Hope, Technical Operations Manager

   Hanborough Business Park, Long Hanborough, Oxford OX29 8SJ

   Telephone: 01993 885727

   Fax: 01865 598976

   Mobile: 07920 864260

   Email: david@foodsecure.co.uk

3. SAI Global

   Kerry Futter, Senior Sales Executive, UK Assurance Services

   SAI Global UK Assurance Services Ltd, PO Box 6236, Milton Keynes MK1 9ES

   SAI Global UK Assurance Services Ltd, Regus House, Malthouse Avenue, Cardiff Gate Business Park CF23 8RU

   SAI Global Assurance Services – Ireland, 3rd Floor, Block 3, Quayside Business Park, Mill Street, Dundalk, Co Louth, Ireland

   Telephone: 02921 510186
   Fax: 08723 521605 (UK Only)
   Mobile: 07989 674157
   Email: kerry.futter@saiglobal.com

**These inspection bodies conform to the principles of the EN 45011 standard**