

Bord Bia - USDA Process Verified Program

Information for Farmer Suppliers

Revision 01

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# Introduction

## General

The Bord Bia Process Verified Points (PVP) Program facilitates the Irish meat industry to market beef in the United States using clearly defined, implemented and transparent process points (claims) that have been independently verified by a qualified AMS[[1]](#footnote-1) auditor. Bord Bia, as the program owner/facilitator, is responsible for the establishment, the implementation and the management of the program and must ensure that it and the approved industry members remain compliant with the requirements of the USDA QAD1001 procedure.

The Bord Bia Quality Management System (QMS) supports the processes required to ensure effective implementation of the PVP program. The processes are monitored and analysed in order to confirm that they are fit for purpose, they achieve planned results and ensure continual improvement of the system.

The quality management system of each approved industry member must be compliant with requirements of the program as laid out in this quality manual and in the supporting procedures.

Bord Bia is accredited by the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) to undertake product certification for their schemes in conformity with ISO/EC17065:2012. In addition, the QMS is certified to ISO 9001:2015.

## Responsibility

Bord Bia has overall responsibility for the management of the PVP program. This includes the PVP quality management system, auditing of farmer suppliers, the approval of meat processors, supply and validation of PVP software, software process validation, data management and protection, approval for the use of the PVP labels and liaising with the USDA.

## Program Structure and Operation

There are 5 function levels within the Bord Bia PVP program.

1. Bord Bia Meat Division
2. Bord Bia Quality Division
3. Supplier Farmer
4. Approved Suppler (Meat Processor)
5. Customer (US Market)

The meat division, in collaboration with the New York Bord Bia office, is responsible for brand awareness/promotion and client (US Customer) liaison in relation to the Bord Bia PVP program.

The Quality Division manages and implements the PVP quality management system. Supplier farmers supply the quality assured animals to the Approved Supplier for processing.

The Approved Supplier processes and labels the beef product and dispatches it to the US.

US Customer receives the product and markets it on the US market. The following flow diagram illustrates the interaction between these parties.



## Eligibility / Scope

**Background Information**

The PVP QMS is underpinned by the Bord Bia Quality Assurance Schemes both at farm and at processor levels. Certification to the Sustainable Beef and Lamb Assurance Scheme (SBLAS) [formerly the Beef and Lamb Quality Assurance Scheme (BLQAS)] or Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme (SDAS) standards confirms that the farmer produces live animals that meet with the required market, food safety, animal welfare and environmental standards. Carbon foot-printing and sustainability surveys are carried out under this scheme. Certification to the Meat Processors Quality Assurance Scheme (MPQAS) confirms that the processor conforms to the requirements of the processor standard including criteria regarding traceability, segregation, residue testing etc. Certified members undergo an independent audit every 18 months and are deemed to be compliant with the standards. All members are subject to unannounced spot audits to ensure ongoing compliance with the standards.

Supplier approval to the Bord Bia PVP Program is open to all USDA approved Irish meat processors involved in exporting beef to the US market. Participants must be listed under ‘Ireland’ on the USDA FSIS website under Eligible Foreign Establishments (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis>).

In order to be eligible to supply product under the PVP program the farm(s) and the processor must be certified members of the Bord Bia SBLAS (formerly BLQAS) and MPQAS schemes respectively.

# Supplier Approval Rules

This section provides information on the PVP program to farmers supplying cattle to PVP Approved Suppliers.

## Approved (Farmer Supplier)

In order to be eligible to supply product under the PVP program the farmer must be a certified member of the Bord Bia SBLAS (formerly BLQAS).

Membership of the SBLAS (formerly BLQAS) Scheme is voluntary and open to all beef producers who have a valid herd number.

## Approved Suppliers (Meat Processors)

Supplier approval to the Bord Bia PVP Program is open to all USDA approved Irish meat processors involved in exporting beef to the US market. The processor must be a certified member of the MPQAS in order to apply for approval.

database information. All product released under the program is lodged on the Bord Bia PVP dispatch database. This permits full trace back and claim validation exercises to be conducted on PVP product put on the US market.

**Figure 1: Bord Bia PVP Organisation Chart**

# Process Verified Points

There are eight process verified points which are outlined in detail in the subsections below.

1. More than 80% Grass Diet
2. At Pasture for More than 6, 7, 8 Months per Year
3. From Farms Participating in Origin Green Sustainability Scheme
4. Raised on Family Farms
5. Raised Without Use of Growth Hormones
6. Responsible Use of Antibiotics
7. Full Farm to Fork traceability
8. From Quality Assured Farms and Processing Systems

All process verified points (claims) are verifiable, repeatable, auditable, feasible and factual. There are two levels of verification.

## Farm verification

The Bord Bia Sustainable Beef & Lamb Assurance Scheme (SBLAS) audits identify the herds that can be included in the PVP program. There are over 154 quality assurance criteria assessed at every audit for every farmer. Failure to comply with any of these criteria will prevent any animals residing on that herd from meeting any of the claims under the PVP program.

## Animal verification

Each animal is assessed for eligibility into the program at the time of slaughter by the meat plant operator using the integrated database software provided by Bord Bia. This software identifies the animals that can be included in the PVP program for each claim. In order to be eligible the animal must have resided on quality assured farms throughout its whole life-time. Once the lifetime quality assurance status is confirmed the system is further interrogated to establish which of the 8 claims the animal meets. The results are used to identify conforming product and the specific claims that can be made on final product.

## CLAIM: More than 80% Grass Diet

### Description

In Ireland, grass (grazed and preserved grass, e.g. hay/silage) on average makes up 80-95% of animal’s diet. While animals can receive, grain based feeds over the winter or finishing periods, in general this does not exceed 20% of daily intake during any life stage (weanling/store/ finishing). Our rich soils produce grass where dairy cows have the freedom to graze outdoors for up to 300 days a year.

80% of Ireland’s agricultural land is devoted to grasslands, with a yearly grass growth rate that exceeds the European average by more than a third.

### Documentation/Verification

In order to meet this claim the animal must meet the following requirements

**SBLAS Requirement 3.5.a** Cattle and sheep must derive the bulk of their feed throughout their lifetime from grass and grass-based forages and this must be demonstrated through records (e.g. Own Farm Feeds record in Farm Book).

**SBLAS Requirement 3.5.h** The types of feeds produced on the farm and fed to the animals must be identified.

**SBLAS Requirement 3.1.b** The producer must provide information/data on harvest dates and DMD of grass-based forages (where available) used on farm AND the types and quantities of concentrate feeds used during the year.

**Sustainability Survey Part 3** Farmers are required toprovide detailed information on Indoor Feeding (when housed in winter) and Outdoor Feeding (additional to grazing) for each animal category.

At each farm audit the auditor will review the evidence which proves compliance to requirement 3.5.a, 3.5.h and 3.1.b. This evidence includes feed purchase records, own farm feed records, animal health plan, animal condition and farmer interview etc.

Farmers are required to maintain records on feeding rates. These are recorded at audit by the auditor and assessed on an ongoing basis. From this information, the diet of grass / grass based forage for each farm is calculated which is then used to calculate the total grass based diet for each animal.

### Proofs

**RULE**  All farms relevant to each animal slaughtered must be in full compliance with SBLAS Requirements 3.5.a, 3.5.h and 3.1.b. (i.e. certified to SBLAS during full residency of animal).

**RULE** At least 80% of each herd’s diet must be grass or grass forage based on calculations from the Bord Bia / Teagasc Carbon Footprint Assessments, during residency period of animal.

## CLAIM: At Pasture for More Than 6, 7, 8 Months Per Year

### Description

Cattle are raised on a pasture based system and spend as much time at grass as weather and ground conditions allow. As weather conditions deteriorate over the winter period and ground becomes too wet, animals are housed for purposes of animal welfare and to avoid soil degradation.

### Documentation/Verification

The following documentation is available for verification of this claim:

**SBLAS Requirement 3.1.b** The producer must provide information/data on turnout and housing dates for all groups of animals.

**Sustainability Survey Part 1** Farmers are required toprovide detailed information on Average Turnout and Average Housing date for each animal category on their herd.

Farmers are required to maintain records on housing/turnout dates which are recorded at audit and assessed on an ongoing basis. From this it is possible to calculate the average days at grass for each animal.

### Proofs

**6 Month Rule** The full-time days at pasture must be more than 185 for all farms relevant to each animal slaughtered.

**7 Month Rule** The full-time days at pasture must be more than 215 for all farms relevant to each animal slaughtered.

**8 Month Rule** The full-time days at pasture must be more than 245 for all farms relevant to each animal slaughtered.

## CLAIM: From Farms Participating in the Origin Green Sustainability Scheme

### Farms

Farmers certified to the Sustainable Beef & Lamb Assurance Scheme have taken part in the Origin Green sustainability program. During the audit auditors record the relevant data required to assess each farm’s production system. They use smart hand-held technology to collect data on carbon footprint to waste management, from traceability to biodiversity; and from output levels and daily live-weight gain, to fertilizer and nitrogen use

In addition, the carbon navigator, a tool developed in a joint venture by Bord Bia and Teagasc, the national body providing integrated agricultural research, advisory and training services, is used by advisors to measure and improve carbon efficiency on Irish farms across 5 key efficiency measures:

* Length of the Grazing Season
* Improved Genetics and Breeding (increased EBI)
* Improved Nitrogen Efficiency
* Improved Manure Management
* Energy Efficiency

The information gathered by each auditor is combined with data from two other national livestock databases: the Animal Identification & Movement (AIM) database and the Irish Cattle Breeders Federation (ICBF) database. Following each audit, the farmer receives notification of the results via mail after 2-3 weeks, with reassessments every 18 months.

For more information see: <http://www.origingreen.ie/farms/measuring-sustainability-on-our-farms/>

#### In summary

* All SBLAS audits include the sustainability audit
* Certified members must take part in the Sustainability Survey
* Detailed performance feedback is given to individual farms
* Availability of Carbon Navigator Tool to reduce carbon emissions & increase efficiency/€ Benefit

## CLAIM: Raised on Family Farms

### Description

The farming family unit forms an integral part of the Irish beef sector; and is a tradition that is handed down through the generations. The relationship that exists between the farmer and his animals is unique; and succeeds as a result of the life skills that are learnt and passed on. A network of small family farms is central to maintaining the traditional Irish rural landscape and society.

### Documentation/Verification

The auditor records and verifies at audit whether the holding is a family farm or another type of enterprise (e.g. institution, limited company, etc.). This audit response is used as proof of the Family Farm claim.

**Sustainability Survey Part 12** Farmers are required toprovide detailed information on the ownership structure that best describes the farm.

### Proofs

**RULE**: “Family Farm” categorisation in the SBLAS Sustainability Survey for all herds.

**Definition:** Family farm (The owner and/or family members are involved in the day to running of the farm)

## CLAIM: Raised Without Use of Growth Hormones

### Description

The use of growth hormones is strictly prohibited and regulated under national legislation at farm and factory level. During the audit of the farm the auditor inspects the site and the animal remedy store to ensure that none of the products on site fall within this category. The farmer is legally obliged to maintain full and complete Animal Remedy Purchase and Usage Records. All animal remedies must be purchased from an approved source, used according to prescriptions/labels and all animal remedies used must be authorised by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) and carry an official VPA number. All of the above is verified during the audit.

### Documentation/Verification

In addition, the following documentation is available for verification of this claim:

**SBLAS Requirement 3.4.a** Only authorised remedies that carry a VPA, EU or other official approval number that were purchased from legally approved sources are permitted.

**SBLAS Requirement 3.5.i** Producers who carry out on-farm mixing, and are incorporating products identified on the delivery documentation or on the label as ‘additive’ or ‘premix of additives’, must have a current licence for this activity from DAFM and must be approved under the Bord Bia Feed Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS).

**Note**: Pre May 2017 the BLQAS was in operation and the same verification above is applied to audits that were conducted under this scheme.

### Proofs

**RULE** All farms relevant to each animal slaughtered must be in full compliance with SBLAS Requirement 3.4.a and 3.5.i (i.e. certified to SBLAS during full residency of animal).

### Legislative Requirements

Usage of growth promoters is prohibited in national legislation in Ireland and the EU. There is a national residue testing programme at factory level as well as random testing on farms of records, medicine stores etc.

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/animalhealthwelfare/veterinary/veterinarymedicines/2015NRPReport150716.docx>

**Note:** DAFM Legislation - All Qualify. Testing programs in place at meat plant level.

## CLAIM: Responsible Use of Antibiotics

### Description

The use of antibiotics on farm is strictly controlled and only used when prescribed by a veterinarian for the treatment of sick or injured animals. During the audit of the farm the auditor inspects the site and the animal remedy store to ensure that all antibiotics are purchased from an approved source and carry an official VPA number. In addition, the herd must be under the routine care of a veterinary surgeon all antibiotics prescribed. The farmer is legally obliged to maintain full and complete Animal Remedy Purchase and Usage Records. All the above is verified during the audit.

### Documentation/Verification

The controls on this are defined in section 3.4 of the SBLAS and concern purchase, administration and recording of information on the remedy use, including withdrawal periods.

The following documentation is available for verification of this claim:

**SBLAS Requirement 3.4.a** Only authorised remedies that carry a VPA, EMEA or other official approval number and that were purchased from approved sources are permitted.

**SBLAS Requirement 3.4.b** The herd or flock must be under the routine care of a veterinary practitioner.

**SBLAS Requirement 3.4.c** All the remedies purchasing information (including name and address of supplier, date of purchase/receipt, authorised name of the animal remedy and quantity) must be recorded.

**SBLAS Requirement 3.4.d** Label instructions and prescriptions with respect to target species, class of livestock, dosage rates, treatment duration and withdrawal periods must be observed and this must be demonstrated in the animal remedy usage record.

**SBLAS Requirement 3.4.e** An up-to-date register of remedy usage, on an individual animal or group basis, must be maintained.

**SBLAS Requirement 3.4.f** The records maintained must demonstrate that animals were not sold for slaughter before the date of end of the remedy withdrawal period. This also includes animals sold at mart or directly to another farmer; in these cases the Producer must advise of any remedy treatments if sold within the withdrawal period

### Proofs

**RULE** All farms relevant to each animal slaughtered must be in compliance with SBLAS Requirements 3.4.a, 3.4.b, 3.4.c, 3.4.d, 3.4.e.and 3.4.f (i.e. certified to SBLAS during full residency of animal).

### Legislative Requirements

Residue testing by the DAFM at factory level gives a further level of policing of this claim.

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealthwelfare/veterinarymedicinesresidues/informationforfarmersaboutanimalremedies/>

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/foodsafetyconsumerissues/veterinarymedicines/>

## CLAIM: Full Farm to Fork Traceability

### Description

All animals are fully traceable from birth to processing. Animals are identifiable through their double-eartags, unique passport and the national computerised Animal Identification and Movement System (AIMS) traceability system. Traceability of the carcase continues through processing, manufacturing and packing.

The Animal Identification and Movement (AIM) database, is managed by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in Ireland. This online real-time database provides a full profile of every animal in every herd. It shows full details of births, deaths, sales, and purchases and accurately records the length of time each animal has spent on the farm.

### Documentation/Verification

Each farm is audited against the following legal requirements and evidence required includes the herd register, matching eartags, passports, knackery dockets, etc. The audit results are used for the verification of this claim:

Each Producer must have a system for recording bovine movements that meets the regulatory requirements:

**SBLAS Requirement 3.3.c** There must be a current listing of all bovines on the holding and all cattle births, deaths and movements on and off the farm must be recorded and records retained.

**SBLAS Requirement 3.3.d** All cattle on the farm aged 20 days or more must be tagged with two matching tags and registered on AIM within 7 days of tagging in accordance with the legal requirements. However, where tags have been lost, the DAFM approved replacement procedure must be followed .

**SBLAS Requirement 3.3.e** There must be a valid passport (or approved alternative) available for each animal within 40 days of birth.

**SBLAS Requirement 3.3.f** All cattle sold for slaughter as quality assured animals must be resident on a Bord Bia certified farm (or farms) for a minimum of 70 days prior to slaughter and this must be recorded.

**Note**: Pre May 2017 the BLQAS was in operation and the same verification above is applied to audits that were conducted under this scheme.

### Proofs

**RULE** All farms on which each slaughtered animal resided must be in compliance with SBLAS Requirements 3.3.c. 3.3.d, 3.3.e and 3.3.f. (i.e. certified to SBLAS) in order to meet this claim.

**RULE** All approved suppliers must be in compliance with MPQAS Requirements 3.18.e and 3.18.f. (i.e. certified to MPQAS) in order to meet this claim.

### Legislative Requirements

More information can be found on the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM) AIMS (traceability) System by following the link below:

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealthwelfare/animalidentificationmovement/cattle/>

## CLAIM: From Quality Assured Farms and Processing Systems

### Description

Farms and processing facilities in Ireland are independently audited and certified to the Bord Bia relevant Quality Assurance Scheme (QAS). Each scheme is accredited by the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) to ISO17065 and includes key aspects such as food safety, traceability, environmental protection and welfare.

**Bord Bia Beef Quality Assurance System**

<http://www.bordbia.ie/industry/farmers/quality/pages/beefqualityassurancescheme.aspx>

**Bord Bia Meat Processor Quality Assurance System**

<http://www.bordbia.ie/industry/farmers/quality/MPQASDocuments/Meat%20Processor%20Quality%20Assurance%20Standard%202014.pdf>

### Documentation/Verification

All SBLAS Members / Applicants (farmers) are audited every 18 months (at a minimum) against all the requirements of the SBLAS.

All MPQAS members / applicants (meat processors) are audited every 18 months against all the requirements of the MPQAS and given at least one unannounced audit in every audit cycle.

### Proofs

**RULE** All farms on which each slaughtered animal resided must be, or must have been, certified to SBLAS on day of movement and on day of slaughter to meet this claim.

**RULE** The approved supplier/meat processor slaughtering and further processing the animal must be certified to the Bord Bia Meat Processor Quality Assurance Standard (MPQAS) to meet this claim.

# Use of the USDA Process Verified Shield and Statement (Promotional Shield)

Approved suppliers may use the claims (process verified points) or the USDA Process Verified Program Shield on labels or promotional material on the product.

To do this they must ensure that they are used appropriately in accordance with the Bord Bia Policy on the use of the “USDA Process Verified" shield and/or term by Approved Suppliers. All uses must be approved through the online logo approval system.

1. Agricultural Marketing Service: a division of the USDA that administers the PVP program [↑](#footnote-ref-1)