1. **HOW DO I BECOME A MEMBER OF THE BORD BIA SUSTAINABLE BEEF AND LAMB ASSURANCE SCHEME?**

Applications to join the SBLAS can be made over the phone by contacting the Bord Bia service office on 062 54900.

1. **DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR A BORD BIA AUDIT?**

No, the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine fund the running of the BLQAS.

1. **How long will my audit take?**

On average a BLQAS audit takes about 90 minutes. With the introduction of the SBLAS it is still envisaged that the audit length will remain the same. The audit length can be influenced by how well a farm is prepared for the audit.

1. **what are the main differences between the old BLQAS and the new SBLAS?**

There are a number of differences between the schemes most of which have been introduced in response to new legislation, customer requirements and an effort to make the scheme more farmer friendly. These include the following:

* A new section on pesticides included as a result of the introduction of the Sustainable Use Directive.
* The inclusion of sustainability criteria in the standard. These criteria form part of a sustainability survey and do not impact on the score a farmer can achieve at audit.
* The introduction of a close-out model for the SBLAS. This means that where issues are identified during an audit, the farmer will have an opportunity correct these in the month following the audit and receive/retain certification.
1. **IS MY FARM STILL CERTIFIED IF I HAVE ISSUES TO ADDRESS IN THE 1 MONTH PERIOD AFTER THE AUDIT?**

Yes, if you were certifed when the audit was conducted on your farm then that certification will remain in place throughout the one month close-out period.

1. **IS THERE ANY ADDITIONAL HELP AVAILABLE TO FARMERS WHEN PREPARING FOR A BORD BIA AUDIT?**

With the launch of the SBLAS, Bord Bia will for the first time formally introduce a Helpdesk facility. This Bord Bia Helpdesk will be there to answer any farmer queries in relation to any aspect of the audit or the audit process.

1. **WILL THE BORD BIA HELPDESK ASSIST FARMERS DURING THE CLOSE-OUT PROCESS?**

Yes, one of the key functions of the helpdesk will to be maintain contact with farmers that have issues to address after their audit. The Helpdesk will provide advice and guidance to farmers that require assistance

1. **HOW DO I RETURN EVIDENCE THAT I HAVE A DDRESSED THE ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN MY AUDIT TO BORD BIA?**

There are a number of ways that farmers can do this.

1. Farmers can log on to farm.bordbia.ie using their herd number and a unique PIN number issued when they receive notification of the audit and upload the evidence directly to the Bord Bia quality assurance database.
2. Farmers can e mail evidence to the Bord Bia Helpdesk who can upload it to the Bord Bia database on the farmers behalf.
3. Farmers can text photos to the Bord Bia Helpdesk who will upload these to the Bord Bia database on the farmers behalf.
4. Farmers can post copies of close-out evidence to the Bord Bia helpdesk who will upload these to the Bord Bia database on the farmers behalf.
5. **WHAT HAPPENS IF I FAIL TO CLOSE-OUT THE ISSUES RAISED AT AUDIT DURING THE ONE MONTH PERIOD ALLOWED.**

Where the close-out deadline is not met the farm is automatically not eligible for certification. Any existing certification will be withdrawn and re certification can only be achieved by applying to Bord Bia for a new audit after a six month period.

1. **What Happens After My Audit AM i ceritifed there and then?**

Once your closing meeting has been completed with the auditor, the inspection details go through some further steps before final decision. These are as follows:

1) The audit report goes to the Inspection Body for initial review

2) On completion of this step, the audit report is forwarded to a Bord Bia Independent Reviewer for analysis,

3) Finally, the audit report, including all review stage data is sent forward to the Bord Bia Certification Committee for Certification or other decision. The farmer will receive a communication outlining the determination of the Bord Bia Certification Committee regarding your certification status. This communication may detail any areas for improvement or non-compliances and whether or not you have been successful.

However if non-compliances are identified during the audit the farmer will have a month to address the issues before the audit file goes through the review process outlined above.

1. **How Long am I certified for?**

Producers, who are generally compliant, receive an 18 month certification period. The length of certification may be shortened at the discretion of Bord Bia. Bord Bia also conduct a small number of spot audits on scheme members.

1. **WHAT ARE THE MAIN AREAS I SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON IN PREPARATION FOR THE AUDIT?**

In general the majority of problems uncovered during an audit leading to non-comliance relate to record keeping and in particular remedy record keeping. Ensuring you have a full and complete record of all medicine purchases and medicine usages prior to audit will help eliminate the non-compliances in this area.

1. **WHAT IS AN AUDITOR LOOKING FOR WHEN EXAMINING FARM RECORDS?**

Consistency. This is what auditors are trying to establish when reviewing farm records during an audit. They do this by determining the correlation that exists between the records, what is observed during the farm walk and what information is verbally communicated to them by the farmer during the farm walk.

1. **DO I HAVE TO USE THE BORD BIA FARM BOOK TO BE COMPLIANT WITH THE STANDARD?**

No, Bord Bia requires farmers to keep records in relation to remedies, feed, animal movements, etc. However farmers have a number of options with regard to where they maintain records. In some cases retention of invoices/statements will suffice, software packages may be used or any other format that allows a farmer record all the required detail as set out in the standards.

1. **DO I HAVE TO RECORD RECORDS TWICE SUCH AS IN THE HERD REGISTER AND THE FARM BOOK?**

Records only need to be kept in one location. Farmers are not expected to duplicate records, provided they are up to date with all the required headings.m

1. **WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION SHOULD MY FARM SIGN SHOW?**

Ideally the sign should contain the following statements:

* No access beyond this point without permission OR no unauthorised access beyond this point.
* A health and safety statement is available - please ask
* This is a food producing farm – please observe the biosecurity measures OR access to the dairy facilities (bulk tank and milking parlour) is prohibited unless accompanied by the farmer
1. **WILL THE AUDITOR BE TAKING PICTURES OF MY FARM?**

Photographic evidence will only be taken with the explicit permission of the farmer in advance, and as a means of sorting problems without the need for another farm visit.

1. **WHY DO AUDITORS CARRY OUT CHECKS IN RELATION TO HEALTH AND SAFETY? IS THIS NOT OUTSIDE THEIR REMIT?**

A good quality assurance scheme will incorporate more than just legal requirements and good farming practices. It will look at other areas that are intrinsically linked to the running of a farm. Management of the environment and pollution control are obvious examples. Health and safety checks also fall into this category as this is an area that can directly impact on the farmer, their family and employees/contractors and can ultimately impact on how a farm is managed.

1. **ARE THE AUDITORS PAID MORE TO FAIL ME?**

This is completely untrue. Auditors receive the same fee, regardless of outcome.

1. **Is the Quality payment Bonus Paid from the Bord Bia Levy?**

No, the Bord Bia Levy is a statutorylLevy, laid down by legislation, that part funds Bord Bia’s promotional activity throughout the world on behalf of all Irish farmers, Quality Assured or not.

1. **Who Pays the Quality payment Bonus?**

Your Meat Plant pays any Quality Payment Bonus based on commercial criteria and market conditions at time of slaughter of your animals.

1. **Why did I not get my Quality payment Bonus?**

While your farm may indeed be Quality Assured, this does NOT necessarily mean all your cattle sent for slaughter will receive a Quality Payment Bonus, as this payment is dependent on other factors, outside of Bord Bia control. It is the responsibility of the farmer to check! It is absolutely vital that you check out your particular situation BEFORE sending your cattle to the factory. Check with your factory buyer, what the exact criteria are, in order that your cattle receive a Quality Payment Bonus, i.e. Age, Number of Movements, Days Residency, Grade, Weight, etc.

1. **What Are the Residency Requirements for Cattle?**

The residency requirement for cattle to be deemed Quality Assured is that the animal must have spent the last 70 days (unbroken) in the Quality Assured Chain. What this means is that an animal could have spent 30 days on one Quality Assured farm, then moved to another Quality Assured Farm and spent a further 40 days on that farm. The animal is therefore deemed Quality Assured

1. **What Are the Residency Requirements for SHEEP?**

The residency requirement for sheep to be deemed Quality Assured is that the animal must have spent the last 42 days (unbroken) in the Quality Assured Chain. What this means is that an animal could have spent 30 days on one Quality Assured farm, then moved to another Quality Assured Farm and spent a further 40 days on that farm. The animal is therefore deemed Quality Assured.

1. **How Many Movements are Allowed?**

Bord Bia place NO RESTRICTIONS on the number of movements a bovine has had, for it to be deemed Quality Assured. Any movement restrictions applied are solely at the discretion of the Meat Plant and these restrictions may even differ between competing Meat Plants. It is the farmers responsibility to check this prior to taking your cattle to factory.

1. **WHY AM I HAVING A SPOT AUDIT, I THOUGH I WAS CERTIFIED FOR 18 MONTHS?**

The Bord Bia scheme is an internationally accredited scheme and as part of this Bord Bia are required to spot audit a minimum percentage of farms each year. The volume of spot audits conducted on an annual basis runs at less than 1% of all audits conducted.