

Bord Bia Scheme Member Charter for Farm Audits

Introduction

Bord Bia operates accredited Quality Assurance schemes at farm and processor level. These schemes are all voluntary and while Bord Bia encourages participation, no farmer or processor is obliged to participate.

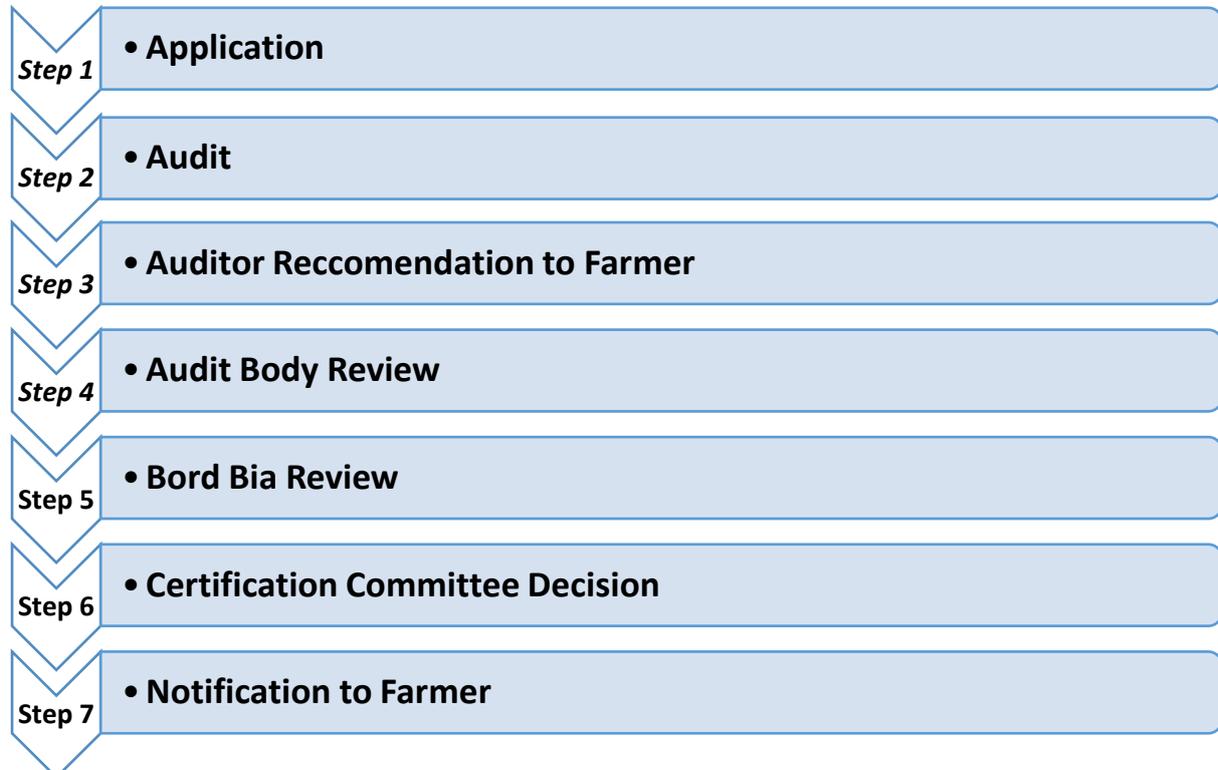
The Quality Assurance schemes operated by Bord Bia have all been devised by a Technical Advisory Committee, (TAC) that includes representation from right across the relevant sector. The committee members include but are not limited to representatives from farm organisations, industry, regulatory authorities and government agencies.

The aim of this document is to clearly describe the level of service farmers can expect when they participate in Bord Bia quality assurance schemes and during the audit process. This document will also clearly describe what is expected of farmers or their nominees when interacting with [auditors, agents, or](#) Bord Bia staff, when they participate in Bord Bia quality assurance schemes. This Charter has been developed specifically for members of the Sustainable Beef and Lamb Assurance Scheme, (SBLAS) and the Sustainable Dairy Assurance Scheme, (SDAS)

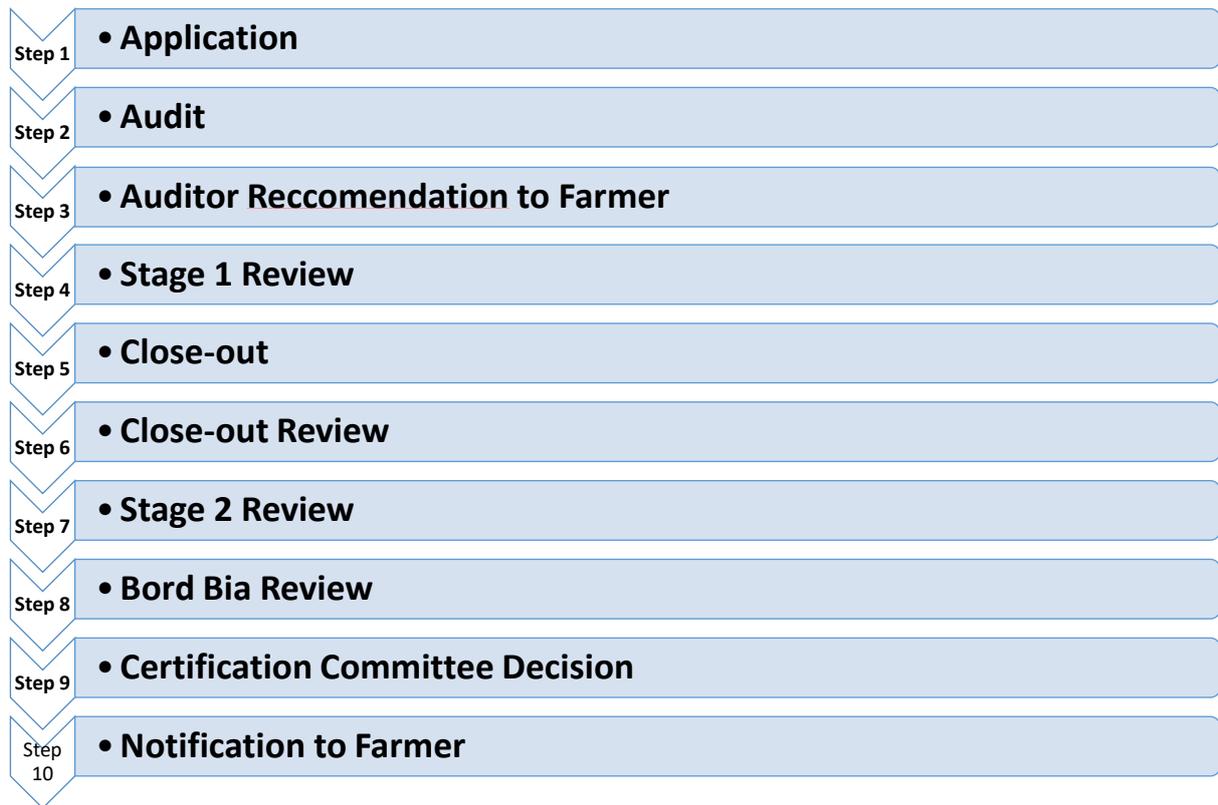
Steps to Achieving Certification

There are a number of stages that must be completed between application to join Bord Bia's quality assurance schemes and receiving certification for your farm. These steps are detailed in the diagram below.

Audit Process Flow – No Closeout Required



Audit Process Flow – Closeout Required



Notice for Inspections

Audits should be arranged by agreement between the farmer and the auditor. Auditors will text farmers 2-3 days before the audit to remind farmers of the scheduled date and time.

Postponement/Abandoned Audits

If the audit needs to be postponed to another day for a specific valid reason, the farmer and the auditor can agree on the new date. This needs to be done prior to the date the audit is scheduled with as much notice as possible provided. If the auditor arrives on farm and the audit does not take place, it is considered that the audit is abandoned. Where the farmer is not present the audit will not take place and the audit is considered abandoned. The farmer will need to contact Bord Bia to set up a new audit. Where audits are abandoned any existing certification will be withdrawn.

Force Majeure may apply where an audit does not go ahead or is not completed due to valid and unforeseen circumstances, eg: bereavement and unavoidable and unexpected absences on the day of audit. Where Force Majeure applies Bord Bia will not treat the audit as an abandoned audit and any existing certification will remain in place.

Communication

On introduction at the farm, the auditor will provide photographic ID to confirm who s/he is. All auditors will adopt a positive farmer friendly approach, which is respectful and courteous to the

farmer throughout the entire process. It is essential that all farmers are treated in a fair and considerate way at all times, recognising their professionalism, regardless of the issues that arise. Likewise, farmers must recognise and respect the professionalism of the auditor and their role. Auditors must not be subjected to any form of verbal or physical attack or intimidation as they conduct their work. If this does happen, auditors have the right to discontinue the audit and leave the farm immediately.

Length of Time of Audit

Auditors will aim to complete audits on average in 90 minutes from start to finish for SBLAS audits and an average of 2 hours for SDAS audits and 2 hours 45 minutes for dual SDAS and SBLAS audits. Farmers should be aware that the level of preparedness for the audit can significantly impact on the time required to complete the audit. Farmers can complete the sustainability survey that forms part of the audit in advance of the farm visit on www.farm.bordbia.ie or in hard copy posted to farmers in advance of the audit.

Results and Certification

Following an audit, the auditor will confirm their recommendation to the farmer at the end of the audit. The auditor will explain in detail the recommendations and contents of the Audit Exit Card to the farmer before s/he leaves the farm. A report will be sent to the farmer within 3-5 working days again confirming non-compliances raised during the audit (if any) and outlining clearly the corrective actions discussed on the farm. Once a farmer is certified, s/he will be sent a text message to confirm this. Farmers should be aware that the time allowed to address non-compliances is 30 days from the date of audit. Evidence that clearly demonstrates that non-compliances have been addressed in full must be returned to Bord Bia before the deadline date.

Length of Certification

Certification is normally awarded by the Certification Committee for a period of 18 months. Where a renewal audit has been conducted prior to an existing certification expiring, the certification period resulting from a certify decision by the Certification Committee will not commence until the existing certification period has been completed

For example; if a farmers current cert expiry date is the 1st of June and that farmer has their renewal audit on the 1st of March and is certified again as a result of this audit, the 18 month certification period for the March audit will not start until the 2nd of June.

The Certification Committee reserves the right to reduce the period of the certificate to less than 18 months. This will be based on the following;

- An existing member who has given declarations to rectify issues identified in previous audits but has consistently failed to do so.
- Non-compliances raised at audit which are a repeat of non-compliances from a previous audit.

Spot Audits

The period of notice for spot audits is up to a maximum of 48 hours and will take into account the nature of the business. Unless unavoidable due to the audit scope, Bord Bia will not conduct spot

audits at particularly busy times of the year on farms, e.g. calving season. Spot audits will not be conducted on weekends or during the Christmas period.

As set out in the scheme standards, Bord Bia is entitled to carry out unannounced/spot audits on scheme members. Where a farmer refuses to accommodate the spot audit they will be suspended from the scheme until such time as conformance to the standard can be confirmed through full re-audit. The farmer will be made aware of this by the auditor when trying to schedule the audit. Where the farmer has a legitimate reason why the audit cannot go ahead within 48 hours, e.g. bereavement, the auditor with the approval of Bord Bia shall postpone the audit.

Bord Bia Help Desk

Bord Bia will provide a Helpdesk service to scheme members and new applicants. The help desk staff will be fully aware of what the scheme and audit involves and will provide advice to assist farmers with compliance issues both pre and post audit as necessary. The Helpdesk can be contacted on 01 5240410

Training

Auditors are fully trained to conduct the farm audit and interact with the farmer in a positive farmer friendly manner at all times. Auditors receive training on an ongoing basis through the audit bodies that recruit and manage auditors on behalf of Bord Bia. Where there are revisions to the scheme standards, Bord Bia will bring those revisions to the attention of the audit bodies. Audit bodies conduct regular debriefing sessions with auditors to upskill them in particular areas of importance and relevance.

Photographs

Auditors will only take photographs on the farm with the prior permission of the farmer and only strictly in circumstances where it will assist the farmer under the close out procedure.

Inspection of Livestock

Bord Bia do not require assembly of livestock for Bord Bia audit. The auditor will inspect livestock in the fields or sheds.

Health and Safety Procedures

Farmer should make auditors aware of health and safety requirements specific to the farm they are on. Auditors must remain mindful of these and fully observe such requirements throughout the audit.

Feedback

Bord Bia will provide a system whereby farmers confidentially rate the service/auditor. The intention is to do this on the new farmer website, www.farm.bordbia.ie The survey will be available to complete once the certification decision has been made. The option to complete the survey over the phone will be made available through the Helpdesk facility.