

HM Government

Review into the Integrity and Assurance of Food Supply Networks

Note of Meeting with Dr Kristian Moeller of GLOBALG.A.P.

Location: Teleconference

Date: 1 May 2014

Attendees:

Dr Kristian Moeller – GLOBALG.A.P.

Professor Chris Elliott

David Foot – Assistant Secretary, Secretariat, Review into the Integrity and Assurance of Food Supply Networks

1. Introduction

Professor Elliott (CE) provided brief background to the review and said that he was interested to get a view from GLOBALG.A.P. on his proposals for a modular approach to food industry audits. His aim was to reduce the number of audits and to improve the quality of the audits and auditors.

2. Discussion

Dr Moeller (KM) welcomed the review. He agreed there was a need to improve the quality of audits and reduce duplication. GLOBALG.A.P.'s scope is limited to on-farm audits dealing with agricultural products and feed processing. It was created to help reduce duplication between audits with the aim of a single auditor going on-farm. It deals with around 130 audit bodies.

UK retailers wanted good levels of assurance about standards on farms. NFU was in a good position to negotiate with the retailers around a harmonised approach. GLOBALG.A.P. were brought on board to look at ways to replace the various retailer requirements, and also for imports to the UK, as there was a problem that standards set in the UK could not be used outside the UK. GLOBALG.A.P. provides an international standard.

KM explained that benchmarking is used to help harmonise various standards and reduce duplication. GLOBALG.A.P. has an open and transparent approach to its benchmarking methodology. He said that there were four pillars to how GLOBALG.A.P. ensured the integrity of standards:

- The content of the checklist used

- The General Rules applied
- Use of a central IT database
- An integrity programme looking at quality assurance across the entire system

The aim was to bring standards together, not to reduce the number of national standards owners. That would limit the market and local adaptation which is of particular relevance for agriculture. GLOBALG.A.P. used its own standard checklist to do a line by line translation to link to other standards. Challenges arose because already 20 different languages were involved. There needed to be a single global core checklist as reference point. There was a need for better use of IT to improve audit reporting.

KM explained that there had been recent developments in the UK as GLOBALG.A.P. had just re-benchmarked the Red Tractor Scheme. The GLOBALG.A.P. approach to benchmarking is, in addition to the line-by-line comparison, a review of what the certification body delivered and to look to get the same result by doing a GLOBALG.A.P. audit on an assured farm covered by the Red Tractor Scheme. The GLOBALG.A.P. approach had flexibility to allow for add-on modules for individual retailers.

KM said that GLOBALG.A.P. provided for a Chain of Custody Standard, a Certificate which was intended to ensure the integrity of the supply chain by aiding traceability, maintaining separation between certified and non-certified produce, including mass balance checks. The Chain of Custody audits were designed to be a modular add-on to IFS and BRC audits. GLOBALG.A.P. would be consulting publicly on revising the Standard. It was agreed that KM would pass a copy of the consultation document to the review secretariat.

KM said that there would be a GLOBALG.A.P. conference in Abu Dhabi in October 2014. A proposed key outcome would be development of a Declaration on global food security through Good Agricultural Practices. One of its elements would address the need of global collaboration to reduce audit duplication. The key elements would include:

- A requirement for unique operator numbers to identify farm production levels to aid global traceability;
- Providing an incentive to buy produce from assured suppliers by offering opportunities for food businesses to report how much they were purchasing from assured sources;
- Move towards a unique master checklist for GAP criteria, publicly available open source and hosted by the International Trades Centre (ITC) which is an agency of the United Nations created to help companies become more competitive in global markets.

Although the Declaration would seek a harmonised approach there would be no intention to try to harmonise the rules on auditing in order to maintain competition and different forms of verification. The ultimate outcome would be that an open stakeholder platform of Governments and private operators as well as certification schemes with consumer labels would sign up to a Declaration.

KM said that when considering how a modular approach to audit might be introduced it was important for CE to focus on the checklist to be used, not the audit rules.

3. Conclusion

CE thanked KM for his time and said he would take account of GLOBALG.A.P.'s experience in developing his proposals. It was agreed that KM would send further information about GLOBALG.A.P.'s activities and initiatives.

5 May 2014