

## FAQs Regarding Levy Increase and 2026/27 Plans

In 2024, after thorough consultation with industry stakeholders and QMS members, it was agreed to implement an annual levy increase in line with the Consumer Prices Index including Housing (CPIH). As a result, a 3.9% levy rate increase will take effect from 1 April 2026. This adjustment is vital to ensuring QMS remains financially sustainable, allowing us to continue supporting Scotland's iconic Scotch brands, driving promotional efforts, and advancing market development both within the UK and internationally.

**1. Why is QMS increasing the levy rate?**

The levy increase of 3.9% aligns with the Consumer Prices Index including Housing (CPIH) index as announced following our consultation in early 2024. This ensures QMS's financial model remains sustainable, supporting key activities such as marketing, market development, and maintaining Scotland's Scotch brands both domestically and internationally.

**2. When will the levy increase take effect?**

The levy increase will be applied from 1 April 2026.

**3. Why do you need this new levy mechanism?**

A small, annual inflationary increase ensures that QMS can continue to compete in an increasingly tough world market. This gradual adjustment avoids the risk of a significant increase after several years, providing the necessary funds for marketing, promotion, and other vital initiatives. The mechanism will be reviewed at the end of five years to ensure it remains fit for purpose and continues to provide value for money.

**4. Will the levy increase further?**

We do not foresee the levy going up beyond the CPIH rate unless there are extreme market conditions or high inflation. The annual 'brake' will allow for adjustments based on these factors. The full review after five years will ensure the mechanism is still appropriate.

**5. What are the benefits of the levy increase for the Scottish red meat sector?**

The levy increase enables QMS to make significant progress in areas such as:

- Marketing and reputation management.
- Livestock numbers modelling.
- Business development.
- Strategic projects on brand evolution, genetics, and eating quality.

**6. What actions has QMS taken in 2025/26?**

Key actions in 2025/26 included:

- **Record £164m export value achieved for Scottish red meat**, up 19% in value and 4% in volume, with strong demand across key EU markets.
- **High-impact marketing delivered** through the *When You Know You Know* campaign, significantly boosting visibility of Scotch brands across TV, digital and social channels.

- **Monitor Farm Scotland reached its halfway point**, delivering measurable improvements in farmer knowledge and decision-making, with 88% reporting increased technical understanding.
- **Meating Our Potential campaign launched**, supported by robust economic modelling showing increased beef production could add £281m to Scotland's economy and backed by strong political and public engagement.
- **Assurance scheme updates delivered**, including streamlined cattle and sheep standards and the launch of the new QMS Traceability Checker to improve access to assurance and PGI data.

#### 7. What are QMS's plans for 2026/27?

Plans for 2026/27 include:

#### **Marketing**

- **Delivering Year 3 of our 'When you know, you know' (WYKYK) campaign** - The WYKYK campaign has driven strong growth across all key 'brand health' measures vs the January 2024 baseline. Our tracking shows that our consistent campaign messaging is having the desired effect and consumer's likelihood to purchase the brands has increased from 63% to 77%.
- **Futureproofing Scotland's flagship pork brand** - Building on the significant positive shifts in brand awareness and consumer perceptions of Specially Selected Pork, alongside feedback from the Scottish pig industry to bring the three QMS brands 'closer together', the time is right to capitalise on this positive momentum. We have robustly researched a new brand name and logo with a nationally representative sample of consumers across Scotland, which we are currently in the process of trademarking, and hope to be in a position to announce the new brand in the spring. The plan is to continue to use all three brands together in consumer-facing campaigns for maximum reach and engagement.
- **Maintaining scheme integrity** - 2025 marked 35 years of the QMS Quality Assurance Schemes, making them some of the oldest standards in the world. Over the years, we have consistently evolved our standards (benchmarking them against others around the world) to maintain robustness and ensure continued relevance. Following the successful streamlining of the Cattle and Sheep Standards with a reduction of 15%, the Pig Scheme and Processor Scheme will be the next to be updated in 2026/27.

#### **Business Development**

- **Promoting the Scotch brands across the supply chain** - Engage with multiple and independent retailers, restaurateurs, secondary processors and food manufacturers to promote the Scotch brands and increase use across all channels.
- **Supporting processor trade development and export growth** - Support processor trade development by hosting Scottish red meat exporters at the SIAL trade show, and help facilitate a series of inward and outward missions to underpin the Scotch story with international buyers.
- **Driving genetic and performance improvement** - Play an important role in helping to guide the direction of the Scottish Government's Livestock Genetic and Performance

Improvement Group, and engage with stakeholders to further develop the genetics roadmap for Scotland's beef sector.

- **Delivering industry-focused knowledge exchange** - QMS's knowledge exchange programme brings the whole supply chain together through practical, producer-focused activity, including Meat the Market meetings, Building Better Beef & Lamb workshops, and dedicated knowledge exchange days for apprentice butchers and chefs.

### **Communication and External Affairs**

- **Expanding the Meating Our Potential campaign** - Expand the focus and influence of the successful *Meating Our Potential* campaign, in partnership with the Scottish Red Meat Resilience Group, tackling the shared challenge and opportunity of livestock supply. This will include sheep sector economic modelling, alongside an ongoing focus on cattle numbers, engaging with three key audiences: industry, political and citizens.
- **Building the environmental evidence base** - Continue to build the environmental evidence base with partners, showcasing agriculture as part of the solution to climate, nature and biodiversity targets, for example through the Environmental Baseline Pilot and the Climate & Nature Industry Leadership Group.
- **Strengthening political and stakeholder engagement** - Continue collaboration with food and agriculture partners to proactively engage with political representatives in the run-up to, and following, the May Holyrood election. This will include a series of strategic on-farm visits across key regions of Scotland and the delivery of a Scottish Parliamentary reception.

#### **8. How will QMS continue to support businesses?**

QMS will continue its business development programme, ensuring businesses are central to activities. The focus will be on building relationships with key customers and markets and addressing the specific needs of businesses in the sector.

#### **9. How does QMS plan to support the livestock sector in the coming years?**

QMS will continue its work on livestock numbers modelling, reputation management, and business development to support farmers and stakeholders. The goal is to help navigate emerging challenges and seize new opportunities for the sector.

#### **10. What role does the levy play in Scotland's red meat sector growth?**

The levy is essential for funding initiatives that maintain and enhance the reputation of Scotland's red meat brands, ensuring they remain competitive in both domestic and international markets. It supports key activities in marketing, market development, and other sector-wide initiatives that benefit all stakeholders.

#### **11. I'm a farmer with dairy, arable, beef, and sheep. How can I opt out of paying the levy?**

The levies paid to AHDB, QMS, and HCC (in Wales) are statutory and set by legislation, so there is no option to opt out. However, it may be useful to speak with a QMS or AHDB board or staff member, as they may offer opportunities for representation, advice, or resources that benefit your business.

**12. How can I be confident QMS is delivering value for money?**

QMS is committed to delivering value for money. The organisation focuses on clear targets and a transparent tracking and measuring impact process. QMS ensures its resources are used efficiently to make [Scotland the choice for premium red meat](#).

**13. How does QMS manage its costs and budget?**

QMS is highly focused on budget management and cost control, particularly during times of rising costs and static levies. QMS has successfully reduced overheads and prioritised activities. The strategy is focused on making the most significant impact with available resources, ensuring sustainable and efficient use of the levy.

**14. What will you do with the extra money?**

It will ensure we can successfully deliver the five-year strategy. This will allow us to continue to represent Scotland's iconic Scotch brands, to maintain and increase important work to drive productivity and profitability, domestic and international promotional activity plus critical market development work. A sufficiently funded sector-specific body is crucial to deliver these aims and ensure our industry's future potential is not compromised.