

Membership Rules and Governance FAQ's

Why are QMS implementing membership rules now?

Over the last 18 months as part of our continual review and improvement process, QMS has been working with members of the farming community and wider supply chain to look at how we can uphold the highest standards of integrity within the schemes, while giving transparency around, and confidence in, the decision making processes that surround appeals and assessment of incidents involving the reputation of the Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb and Specially Selected Pork brands.

What is the difference between the Certification Body's Regulations and the QMS Member Rules?

The difference between the certification regulations and the member rules is that the certification regulations govern the rules and regulations of the independent certification body who carry out the assessment and certification process of the QMS assurance schemes. Whereas the QMS membership rules cover the terms of membership that are required to be a member of a QMS assurance scheme.

What is in the membership rules?

The majority of these rules cover basic items such as how to apply to the schemes. However, one of the key objectives of these rules is to give more transparency over the appeals process particularly in the areas of 'Compliance with the law and scheme reputation'. At present, these related standards are managed via the certification process. Following significant discussions and feedback, it is our intention to remove this as a standard, and manage this through the member rules, where a greater degree of subjectivity can be applied.

What does this mean for my membership?

This will not impact your membership; it will continue provided you are not in breach of the membership rules.

What happens if I break them?

If you break them for any reason, the membership rules clearly outline what will happen and the process that will be followed.

As a contract farmer, I complete all the day to day farm management on behalf of a farmer/landowner. Do these rules apply to me?

Yes, they do still apply to you.

BORN & REARED IN SCOTLAND

Quality Meat Scotland
The Rural Centre, Ingliston, Newbridge
Midlothian, EH28 8NZ

T: +44 (0)131 510 7920
E: info@qmscotland.co.uk
www.qmscotland.co.uk



When will the new rules be implemented?

These rules will go live to members on 1st July 2023, and it is our intention to remove the standard 'Compliance with the law and scheme reputation' from our scheme standard documents from this date as this will be covered within the membership rules.

If I think the new rules affect my farming business, who do I need to contact?

If you think the membership rules will affect your farm business, please contact QMS on 0131 510 7920

What will happen if I have a pending prosecution?

If you have a pending prosecution, you should notify the certification body and it's likely a spot-check will be carried out, with the outcome being subject to the risk matrix.

How do I sign up for the membership rules?

By renewing your membership of any QMS scheme you agree to be bound by the membership rules which will form part of the relationship between you and QMS.

Section 11 of the rules refers to special conditions – what does this mean?

If an issue arises on a member's unit, additional requirements may be included within the assessment process– this could be a shorter assessment cycle, additional spot checks or closer monitoring on specific standards.

Membership rule 13.5 (xi) states that an application or certification of membership may be withdrawn if a representation, employee, or other person involved in the day-to-day management of an enterprise/holding/site/vehicle is banned from keeping livestock – does this mean that my membership will be withdrawn immediately?

No, this means that an investigation will be undertaken to establish what the issue is and what measures have been taken to rectify the particular issue, a decision will be made once the investigation is complete through our governance process.

Rule 5.5 mentions vehicles, does this mean I have to inform QMS when I change the vehicles on my farm?

No, the membership rules encompass all six assurance schemes. When vehicles are mentioned, it relates directly to the QMS Haulage scheme members.

My certificate has been suspended and I don't agree with the decision – who do I contact?

If you are not satisfied with the way your application, assessment or certification decision has been conducted you may lodge a complaint, in writing, to the Certification Body either by email to info@foodassurance.co.uk or by post: FIA Ltd, The Rural Centre, West Mains, Newbridge EH28 8NZ. All complaints and appeals will be investigated and dealt with in accordance with the Certification Body's Certification Rules and Regulations, which can be downloaded from www.foodintegrityassurance.co.uk or by requesting a copy direct from the Certification Body by phone on 0131 609 0558.

My membership has been terminated due to being in breach of membership rules, and I am not happy with the decision made, what do I do next?

Decisions taken by QMS to terminate your membership at any time are subject to a right to appeal in accordance with QMS's appeal procedure (which requires you formally submit your intention to appeal within 10 days after the date of the QMS decision).

I have a question on the membership rules, who can I contact?

For questions on member rules please contact QMS by email - info@gmscotland.co.uk, telephone - 0131 510 7920.

Or write to -
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