

## Briefing – Assurance Scheme Standards for Turkeys and Farmed Salmon

Around ten million turkeys will be consumed in the UK over the festive period. Smoked salmon is also frequently chosen at this time of year. For many consumers who choose to buy animal products, the welfare of the animal is an important factor in selecting products for the Christmas shopping basket. However, a lack of clear information is a significant barrier to ethical purchasing and consumer choice.

It is not surprising that consumers are confused by the labelling of animal products: Most animals farmed in the UK are reared in accordance with the standards of a farm assurance scheme and all of these schemes claim to ensure high standards of animal welfare, yet they vary greatly in their requirements for how animals are kept and cared for. Compassion in World Farming and OneKind have carried out a detailed analysis of the welfare standards of the major farm assurance schemes in England and Scotland to see how they compare to each other and to standard industry practice and minimum legislative requirements. On the basis of the detailed analysis, we have identified which labels consumers should look out for, and also those which while complying with legislation provide lower welfare standards for animals than others. These are outlined below, followed by more detailed information about the analysis and the results.

### Labels to look out for:

**ORGANIC** standards offer significant welfare benefits compared with standard industry practice. The Soil Association organic standards performed particularly well in our survey, achieving the highest scores of all the schemes analysed for both turkeys and salmon.



For **turkeys** these benefits mean free-range access, prohibition of beak trimming, provision of perches and the use of slower growing breeds. For **farmed salmon**, Soil Association organic standards mean low stocking densities, prohibition of mutilations and use of humane slaughter methods.

**RSPCA FREEDOM FOOD** standards for **turkeys** cover both indoor and free range systems. These standards offer a number of welfare benefits compared with standard industry practice, including lower stocking densities, provision of indoor enrichment and a restriction on transport duration to six hours. For **salmon**, these standards also offer a number of welfare benefits, including lower stocking densities, prohibition of mutilations and use of humane slaughter methods.



**FREE RANGE** standards are legally-defined for turkeys. Turkeys labelled as free range will often be certified by an assurance scheme such as RSPCA Freedom Food or Quality British Turkey.

### Labels that scored lower:

**QUALITY BRITISH TURKEY / RED TRACTOR** standards scored poorly in our survey. These standards offer little more than compliance with minimum legislative requirements. Unless accompanied by a free range or organic label, a turkey carrying this label is likely to have been reared intensively.



**NO LOGO / FARM FRESH / COUNTRY FRESH** – Unless accompanied by a free range (for turkeys) or organic (for turkeys and salmon) label, turkey and farmed salmon that carry no farm assurance scheme logo are likely to have been reared intensively. Consumers may be confused by meaningless labels like 'Farm Fresh' or 'Country Fresh' – such terms are not legally defined and do not give any information about how the animal was reared.

### The analysis

The schemes were analysed based on their performance on a range of criteria grouped into five sets as follows:

- Environment
- Husbandry

- Stockmanship, handling, transport & slaughter
- Genetics & breeding
- Auditing

Each set was scored out of 20, giving a total score out of 100 for each scheme. Where schemes offer significant welfare advantages compared with normal industry practice, this is recognised by ranking as follows:

**BRONZE** – Score of 50% or higher. Offers an acceptable standard of welfare, with a number of welfare benefits compared with standard industry practice.

**SILVER** – Score of 70% or higher. Offers a good standard of welfare, with many welfare benefits compared with standard industry practice, but leaves certain important issues unresolved.

**GOLD** – Score of 90% or higher. Offers a high standard of welfare.

The schemes were ranked twice: Firstly on the environment criteria only (such as stocking density and housing conditions), to give a ranking for the system. This ranking is a measure of the welfare potential of the environment provided for the animals. Welfare can be poor in any farming system if the quality of care for the animals (stockmanship) is poor. However, systems vary in their potential to provide good welfare. Even if stockmanship is good, welfare is likely to be poor in confinement systems that severely restrict freedom of movement or in barren overcrowded conditions that limit behavioural expression. Systems with high welfare potential provide for the physical and behavioural needs of the animals. Secondly, a ranking is given for the scheme as a whole. This is a measure of performance across all areas of the standards.

## Results for turkeys

The Soil Association achieved the highest score with a silver scheme classification. This scheme offers many welfare benefits compared with standard industry practice, including much lower stocking densities, provision of perches, free-range access, smaller flock sizes, prohibition of beak trimming, a requirement for on-farm monitoring of health and welfare, a restriction on transport duration to eight hours, a requirement to use slower-growing breeds (otherwise a minimum slaughter age of 140 days applies to discourage the use of fast-growing breeds) and prohibition of feed restriction of breeding birds.

The RSPCA scheme achieved the next highest score with a bronze scheme classification. The RSPCA standards offer a number of welfare benefits compared with standard industry practice, including lower stocking densities, provision of indoor enrichment, a requirement for on-farm monitoring of health and welfare including targets for key welfare indicators, a requirement for training of stockpeople and a restriction on transport duration to six hours.

The Scottish Organic Producers Association also achieved a bronze scheme classification. This scheme offers a number of welfare benefits compared with standard industry practice, including lower stocking densities, provision of indoor enrichment, free-range access, smaller flock sizes, prohibition of beak trimming, a restriction on transport duration to eight hours and a requirement to use slower-growing breeds (otherwise a minimum slaughter age of 140 days applies).

The Quality British Turkey scheme scored poorly but did achieve a bronze rating on their free-range standards. Compared with standard industry practice, the free range standards offer a number of welfare benefits, including lower stocking densities, free range access and a requirement for training of stockpeople. The indoor standards also include a requirement for training of stockpeople but otherwise they generally offer little more than compliance with minimum legislative requirements.

## Results for farmed salmon

The Soil Association scheme achieved the highest score with a silver scheme classification. This scheme offers many welfare benefits compared with standard industry practice, including much lower stocking densities, prohibition of mutilations, a requirement to anaesthetise or slaughter broodstock prior to stripping of eggs or sperm, a limit of 72 hours on the length of time fish may be starved prior to slaughter, a requirement for a sea lice monitoring strategy, stringent standards for handling fish, a requirement for training of stockpeople, stringent limits on transport duration, prohibition of inhumane slaughter methods and prohibition of triploid fish (sterile fish that suffer from a higher incidence of health and welfare problems).

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prohibition of mutilations, a limit of 72 hours on the length of time fish may be starved prior to slaughter, a requirement for on-farm monitoring of health and welfare including targets for key welfare indicators and a sea lice monitoring strategy, stringent standards for handling fish, a requirement for training of stockpeople and prohibition of inhumane slaughter methods.

The Code of Good Practice for Scottish Finfish Aquaculture standards did not achieve a bronze rating. These standards form the minimum requirements for membership of the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation. These standards offer a few welfare benefits above compliance with minimum legislative requirements, including a requirement for on-farm monitoring of health and welfare and a sea lice monitoring strategy, a requirement for training of stockpeople and prohibition of inhumane slaughter methods.

## Choosing higher welfare can cost less than you might think

A survey of prices in major UK supermarkets in December 2010 reveals that consumers can upgrade to a free range turkey for around £1 per kilo, or even less for those who are willing to shop around – for a fresh medium turkey, the cheapest free-range bird is only 72p more per kilo than the cheapest standard bird; that's only 36p extra per serving<sup>1</sup>. Upgrading to a slower-growing bronze-feathered free range turkey will cost around £2 - £3 extra per kilo (£1 - £1.50 per serving), whilst an organic turkey costs around £5 extra per kilo (£2.50 per serving). Most retailers offer free range turkeys and in some supermarkets these are RSPCA Freedom Food certified. However, many of the major retailers are not currently offering organic turkeys for pre-order. Orders can also be placed direct online with many organic free range farms around the country.

Three out of the 'big four' supermarkets offer Scottish smoked salmon certified by the RSPCA Freedom Food scheme and in all cases this is cheaper than their standard Scottish smoked salmon. On average, consumers can save around £4.50 per kilo by buying the Freedom Food version. Three out of the big four offer organically farmed Scottish smoked salmon. Upgrading to organic costs around £5 extra per kilo on average compared with standard Scottish smoked salmon, although in one supermarket the price for organic was identical to the price for the standard Scottish version. Anyone having difficulty sourcing the required standards can find many organic smoked salmon suppliers online.

	Average price (£/kg)	Price difference on average (£/kg)	Cheapest price (£/kg)	Price difference for cheapest option (£/kg)
<b>Fresh medium turkey</b>				
Standard	5.16	-	4.76	-
Free range	6.19	1.02	5.48	0.72
Free range bronze	8.41	3.25	6.98	2.22
Organic	10.19	5.03	9.99	5.23
<b>Farmed smoked salmon</b>				
Scottish	26.20	-	14.71	-
Freedom Food Scottish	21.73	-4.47	16.60	1.89
Organic Scottish	31.60	5.40	20.00	5.29

All prices as at 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010, including current special offers. Prices sourced online, from in-store Christmas pre-order leaflets or on the shelf in stores in the south of England. Where turkey prices are per item, the per kg price is calculated based on the mid-point of the weight range. Smoked salmon prices taken from the 'big four' supermarkets: Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda and Morrisons. Turkey prices taken from Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons, Waitrose and Marks & Spencer. Turkey prices were unavailable for Asda as they do not offer a pre-ordering service for fresh whole turkeys. Waitrose and M&S were included in the turkey pricing because none of the big four supermarkets currently offer organic turkeys.

<sup>1</sup> Based on a serving size of 0.5kg whole bird per person, e.g. 8 servings per 4kg bird.