



SEED CERTIFICATION INFORMATION



SEED CERT 6/20
4th April 2020

COVID-19 UPDATE – Seed Certification in England and Wales

To: All Licensed Companies/Crop Inspectors/Licensed Samplers/Licensed Seed Testing Stations

Cc: AIC, BSPB, NFU, NAAC, NIAB, PHSI, Devolved Administrations

Defra, the Welsh Government, APHA and NIAB are working with stakeholders, including seed companies, to do all that we can to ensure seed can be certified in England and Wales with limited changes to the process. We will be supporting the industry in maintaining seed supply this autumn in light of COVID-19 and are coordinating our actions with the certification authorities in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Our priority is the safety of APHA, NIAB and seed industry personnel and to ensure that work is done within the government's COVID-19 guidance.

As an immediate step, we have decided to cancel all training and assessment of crop inspectors due to be held at NIAB in May and June. APHA will contact individual inspectors shortly to defer re-assessment until next year. Other participants will be provided with further information shortly.

Defra and the Welsh Government are prioritising other certification activities in line with the availability of personnel and the latest government COVID-19 restrictions and guidance.

- **Certification applications** – please continue to enter seed lots and crops, preferably online through ESP as NIAB are now working from home where possible. Paper forms will take longer than usual to process.
- **Licensed crop Inspections** – we are working on the basis that seed companies can continue to carry out inspections while following the government's COVID-19 guidance. Please inform APHA if you anticipate significant difficulties with this.
- **Official crop inspections** - NIAB and PHSI will treat inspections of pre-basic and basic seed crops as a priority.
- **Check Inspections** – PHSI and NIAB will maintain the programme as far as possible, but this is a lower priority than inspection of crops where official inspection is required for approval.
- **Control plots** - NIAB are drilling control plots as usual and are adapting working practices to carry out assessments at the appropriate time.

- **Control sampling** – PHSI will continue to take samples at the point of sale provided inspectors are available and where this can be done in line with government COVID-19 guidance.
- **Seed company audits and licensed seed sampler assessments** – PHSI will carry these out remotely by phone or video link if PHSI resources are available.
- **Licensed seed sampler training and exams** – there is no training scheduled in the next three months. Future training events will be reviewed nearer the time.
- **Seed analyst training** – there is no training scheduled in the next three months. Future training will be reviewed nearer the time.

We appreciate that NIAB, APHA and seed companies are making every effort to maintain normal certification processes while protecting their work force. However, this may be difficult if COVID-19 has an impact through the summer and autumn peaks for certification work. We must also be aware of the possibility of further restrictions.

We are keeping the situation under constant review. Please be reassured that we will keep you fully informed of any further developments.

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