



## Online quality assessment tool launched to support compost producers

A new online tool to help producers of quality waste-derived compost launches today at the Organics Recycling Conference 2014. The **Quality Protocol Checker** web tool provides an easy step-by-step guide for producers to assess whether their product meets the requirements of the relevant Quality Protocol (QP) and has achieved End-of-Waste status. As well as improving clarity around QP procedures, the tool creates a user report that documents performance and pinpoints any areas where improvement is needed.

The QP Checker tool has been developed as part of the EU Life+ funded EQual programme, an Environment Agency-led partnership project which aims to encourage quality products made from waste through smart online tools and better data. For the compost industry, the aim is to save producers time and money by providing valuable guidance and feedback before they go through the formal process of being audited against the requirements of the compost QP and PAS 100 specification. The tool can also be used as an internal audit check for established QP compliant producers and provides a template for regulatory officers to underpin a more consistent compliance regime.

Developed in close co-operation with the Organics Recycling Group, one of the EQual programme partners, the tool was launched in prototype form in Autumn 2013 for a six-month open testing phase and has met with a very positive industry response.

“This tool is a very useful aid to both new applicants to Quality Protocols and those at the renewal phase to assist in auditing their processes to ensure compliance,” says Charlie Trousdell, Planning, Estates & Licensing Manager for the Countrystyle Group.

Andy Sibley, Divisional Manager at Tamar Organics, also welcomed the tool saying:

“As a producer with four PAS 100 sites and a further two on the way, the QP Checker can be used as a regular audit exercise and is a good tool to have.”

The UK compost industry is worth an estimated £11.4m<sup>1</sup> and growing, with PAS 100 certified compost representing around 70% of the total tonnage output.

“High quality waste-derived compost not only benefits the environment, it benefits producers’ bottom line through improved profit margins,” explains Roger Hoare, Environment & Business Manager at the Environment Agency. “By supporting producers who opt for QP compliance, we hope to encourage market growth and end-user confidence. The EQual programme is also helping regulators to promote greater resource efficiency by supporting a clear and consistent regulatory framework to assist with wider End-of-Waste decision making and compliance assessment.”

The QP Checker tool was developed for EQual by Ricardo-AEA and technical director Phil White believes this type of approach is important to unlocking market growth.

“The production of safe and fit-for-purpose waste-derived products offers significant benefits, including reduced use of virgin raw materials leading to reduced cost and environmental impacts throughout the supply chain. However, if these products remain classified as waste this potentially stigmatises them, restricting market development. This is a complicated area of legislation and we are pleased to be part of this programme to facilitate and support better understanding, decision-making and compliance.”

The QP Checker tool is currently available for compost and recycled aggregates, but the intention is that industry stakeholders with an interest in other QP waste streams will take it forward and tailor it to their own needs. Work is already underway on a QP Checker for digestate from anaerobic digestion, and there is interest from other sectors including pulverised fuel ash (PFA).

The Quality Protocols programme as a whole is delivering multi-billion pound benefits to business. To date, the QPs have resulted in an estimated 21 million tonnes of materials being diverted from landfill, savings of around 40 million tonnes of virgin raw materials and approximately 130 thousand tonnes of carbon. It is estimated that by 2020 around £3.5bn in terms of increased sales and £1.5bn in terms of reduced regulatory burden will be realised.

The QP Checker web tool can be found at [www.gpchecker.info](http://www.gpchecker.info) and further information about the EQual programme [here](#).

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<sup>1</sup> *A survey of the UK organics recycling industry in 2012*, WRAP, August 2013  
(<http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/organics-recycling-survey-2012>)

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### Notes to Editors

1. **EQual** is an innovative demonstration programme, supported by EU LIFE + funding, that will encourage businesses to use more and better waste-derived material in new products. It will achieve this by providing tools, techniques and information to improve decision-making and increase confidence in waste-derived products that meet End-of-Waste status.

The Environment Agency is leading the programme with six partners: the Chartered Institution of Wastes Management (CIWM), the Environmental Services Association (ESA), Energy UK, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the Organics Recycling Group (part of the Renewable Energy Association), and Rijkswaterstaat (the Netherlands' Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment).

The **EQual** programme aims to provide knowledge and tools to help businesses to:

- make the best use of resources
- reduce the amount of waste to landfill
- reduce the environmental impact of their business
- reduce costs

It will do this by improving regulatory clarity and consistency, reducing the burden on businesses of environmental regulation and increasing market confidence in the use of these materials

The main outputs of the **EQual** programme will be:

- a Quality Protocol (QP) checker web tool (to which this release refers) to help businesses to assess whether their recovered waste product is compliant with a QP, and therefore no longer classed as waste;
  - a Definition of Waste web tool that will help businesses to assess whether a waste-derived material is a by-product, achieves End-of-Waste criteria or remains a waste; and
  - a better understanding of the environmental performance of four waste-derived products, demonstrated through a series of field trials.
2. **Quality Protocols (QPs)** set out End-of-Waste criteria for the production and use of a product from a specific waste type. Complying with the criteria in the protocols is sufficient to ensure the fully recovered product can be used without undermining the effectiveness of the EU Waste Framework Directive, and therefore without the need for waste management controls. The aim of the QPs is to provide increased market confidence in the quality of products made from waste and encourage greater recovery and recycling.
  3. The table below details the current versions of each protocol, which are subject to periodic review.

Waste type	Title	Issued/status
Aggregates	<b><u>End of waste criteria for the production of aggregates from inert waste</u></b>	Reviewed and republished October 2013
Biodegradable waste - anaerobic digestate	<b><u>End of waste criteria for the production and use of quality outputs from anaerobic digestion of source-segregated biodegradable waste</u></b>	July 2010 Reviewed and republished in February 2014
Biodegradable waste - compost	<b><u>The quality protocol for the production and use of quality compost from source-segregated biodegradable waste</u></b>	August 2012
Biomethane from waste	<b><u>End of waste criteria for the production and use of biomethane from landfill gas and anaerobic digestion (AD) biogases</u></b>	Published January 2014
Cooking oil and rendered animal fat	<b><u>The quality protocol for the production and use of diesel derived from waste cooking oil and rendered animal fat (quality biodiesel)</u></b>	June 2009 Review ongoing
Glass	<b><u>The quality protocol for the production of processed cullet from waste flat glass</u></b>	June 2008
Lubricating oil	<b><u>End of waste criteria for the production and use of</u></b>	February 2011 Review ongoing

	<b><u>processed fuel oil from waste lubricating oils</u></b>  In addition, the accompanying <b><u>regulatory position statement</u></b> provides additional information.	
Plasterboard	<b><u>End of waste criteria for the production and use of recycled gypsum from waste plasterboard</u></b>	January 2010 Review ongoing
Plastics	<b><u>End of waste criteria for the manufacture of secondary raw materials from waste non-packaging plastics</u></b>	April 2009
Poultry litter ash	<b><u>End of waste criteria for the production and use of treated ash from the incineration of poultry litter, feathers and straw</u></b>	July 2012
Pulverised fuel ash and furnace bottom ash	<b><u>End of waste criteria for the production of pulverised fuel ash (PFA) and furnace bottom ash (FBA) for use in bound and grout applications in specified construction and manufacturing uses</u></b>	October 2010
Tyres - tyre-derived rubber material	<b><u>End of waste criteria for the production and use of tyre-derived rubber materials</u></b>	November 2009 Review ongoing