New QS module Soy^{plus}

New QS module Soy^{plus} regulates the sustainable use of soy in animal feed

From 1st January 2024, it will be mandatory for QS-certified companies that trade, handle or process soy to comply with the requirements of the QS Soy^{plus} add-on module. What does the new standard cover, how is it checked and who does it affect? This factsheet provides the answers:

1. What exactly is the new QS Soy^{plus} standard?

The term QS Soy^{plus} refers to soybeans that have been cultivated and certified in line with certain specifications. These are based on the Soy Sourcing Guidelines catalogue of criteria and criteria specific to QS certification. The Soy Sourcing Guidelines includes requirements pertaining to the exclusion of deforestation and conversion of valuable ecosystems such as grasslands, wetlands and swamps, as well as labour and social standards and economic issues. In addition to the certification status of the products, QS will use the QS Soy^{plus} add-on module to monitor the entire soy supply chain.

2. Which soy is allowed to be used after 1 January 2024 and which isn't?

From 1 January 2024, only soy that meets the requirements of QS Soy^{plus} may be traded, processed and fed within the QS scheme. The distribution of conventional soy will no longer be permitted in the QS scheme. This guarantees that any QS products supplied to livestock farmers will comply with the QS Soy^{plus} add-on module. However, farmers who cultivate their own soybeans and feed them to their own animals are exempt from certification.

3. How does QS monitor whether the standard is being complied with?

Feed producers and traders are monitored for compliance with the QS Soy^{plus} add-on module; auditors will check for compliance with the new requirements during the next QS audit. Monitoring primarily focuses on traceability and accurate accounting, but also on the clear labelling of all soy across the entire QS scheme. Companies are bound to purchase the certified soy from certified suppliers and to keep clear records and financial statements as proof. QS does not certify soy cultivation in the countries of origin: QS is the standard setter for quality assurance and food safety, not for sustainable soybean cultivation. As such, QS recognises internationally established sustainability standards that certify soybean cultivation worldwide. An overview of these recognised standards is attached to the QS Soy^{plus} add-on module guidelines.

4. Proof of sustainability can also be provided by purchasing certificates. What does that mean, why is it necessary and up until when can certificates be purchased?

Therefore, a transition period lasting until 31 December 2025 has been agreed within the QS scheme. During this period, feed companies are allowed to purchase, trade and process soybeans from cultivation yet to be certified as sustainable. However, to do so, they will need to purchase credits ("book & claim") as a form of financial compensation used to finance sustainable projects.

5. What proof will QS livestock farmers have to provide?

As of 1 January 2024, only Soy^{plus} products may be distributed. These will be labelled accordingly by the feed suppliers so that the livestock farmer's proof will be the same as before. Animals will not require special labels, as all QS animals will have been fed with QS Soy^{plus}-compliant soy. And no downstream production stage in the QS meat sector scheme will have to provide separate proof of sustainable soybean cultivation.

Please note, however, that livestock farmers whose feed suppliers are certified according to another QS-recognised standard will need to expressly request feed for a QS company when placing a feed order.

Anyone can use the scheme participant search function on the QS website to find which feed companies supply suitable soya. Feed containing soy that was purchased before 1 January 2024 can, of course, still be used after this cut-off date.

Scan the QR code to find out more:

Quality assurance – from farm to shop.