

AIM TO SUSTAIN GAME ASSURANCE – Q&A

What is Aim to Sustain (A2S)?

Eight organisations¹, with GWCT as the scientific advisor, are working closely to protect and promote sustainable shooting, biodiversity and the rural community.

What is assurance?

Assurance is a state or condition of confidence, certainty, or guarantee about a particular matter or outcome. It involves providing reassurance or a level of certainty that something will be achieved, upheld, or delivered as expected.

Within game shooting, assurance is a tool through which lowland pheasant and partridge shoots, grouse moors and game farms can say with confidence that they are abiding by best practice.

Why do we need assurance?

We need widespread implementation of assurance to show those who want to regulate us that we are adhering to the highest standards. The decision to licence Scottish grouse moors, the Welsh consultation on game bird releasing and the Defra review into releasing gamebirds show there has never been a more important time to pull together and show that we can self-regulate and we follow best practice.

There are two key benefits to joining an assurance scheme: the evidence (externally validated) that you follow best practice and have high standards, and the opportunities to show you provide assured game meat. Independently-audited assurance underpins both benefits, providing peace of mind to Government and the general public, game stockists and food retailers alike.

Is there still a lowland shoot standard and is it changing?

Yes there is still a lowland standard. It is the first standard that has been reviewed and will go live when the scheme is transferred in mid-November 2023. It has simplified the standards and the evidence gathering during the audit to ensure scheme members can prepare as easily as possible. This will ensure members can have confidence in the value of the scheme, as a robust, credible and effective tool.

Is there still an upland standard and is it changing?

Yes there is still a moorland standard, it is currently undergoing a review to bring it in line with the lowland standards that have been reviewed. There is some more work to complete before these are published in early 2024.

Is there still a game farming standard and is it changing?

Yes there are still standards for game breeding, hatching and rearing. They are undergoing a review this winter to bring them in line with the lowland standards and will be rolled out early next year.

¹ The 8 partner organisations are: BASC, BGA, CA CLA, GFA, MA, NGO, SLE.

Why is assurance transferring?

It was always expected that assurance would be taken on by the wider shooting organisations and developed by Aim to Sustain as part of the wider promotion of self-regulation.

What is the plan for transferring the assurance infrastructure?

The assurance infrastructure built by BGA will be transferred to Aim to Sustain. This transfer will enable the member organisations to equally share the responsibility for the success and running of assurance.

If I am currently a member of the BGA assurance, will I need a new membership for the A2S assurance scheme?

No, your membership and renewal dates will be carried across into the new scheme.

Will the transfer of assurance to Aim to Sustain affect the current processes and procedures of the scheme?

The transfer of assurance to Aim to Sustain will streamline and consolidate the standards and admin processes. Members will be able to get support and guidance on audit preparation and what to expect from each of the Aim to Sustain partner organisations, the GWCT and the auditors. While the transition may involve some administrative changes, the goal is to ensure continuity and effectiveness of the scheme without significant disruptions.

Will the transfer of assurance to Aim to Sustain affect the current scheme design and price?

We will use this opportunity to relaunch and simplify the scheme standards and compliance evidence while remaining focused on high standards and best practice. There has not been a price rise for nearly five years, so there will be a new price structure for all the scheme standards – lowland, upland and game farming standards as they are refreshed and rolled out. We will also be providing enhanced support to members from Aim to Sustain, the partners and the auditors in the new scheme.

When is the full transfer of the scheme expected to be completed?

The aim is to complete the full transfer of the scheme in November 2023. Intertek-SAI Global will continue to be the scheme's audit partner and administer the scheme.

How will the administration of the assurance scheme be managed once it is transferred to Aim to Sustain?

The administration of the assurance scheme will continue to be managed by Intertek-SAI Global after the transfer to Aim to Sustain. This ensures a smooth transition and allows for the consistent application of the scheme's processes and procedures without disrupting the day-to-day operations. Intertek-SAI Global is an accredited assurance assessor with a strong reputation in this field and it brings significant experience and value to the scheme.

What will BGA focus on after transferring assurance to Aim to Sustain?

BGA will rebrand to Eat Wild and will concentrate its efforts on creating more demand for and marketing game. The retail market for game meat has grown significantly, and BGA aims to capitalise on this by continuing its successful game meat marketing operation.

How will the marketing of game meat under Eat Wild contribute to the success of assurance?

The marketing of game meat plays a crucial role in promoting the value and desirability of game meat to consumers. By raising awareness, increasing demand, and creating a sustainable market for game meat, it supports the long-term viability of shooting activities and indirectly contributes to the success of assurance by encouraging responsible practices.

Where can I find more information about Aim to Sustain Game Assurance?

There will be information on all the A2S partners' and GWCT websites. The A2S website will also have assurance guidance and there will be links to the Intertek-SAI Global website where applications for membership can be made.