



# All you need to know to market seeds: a guide for Scotland

## Step 2: Certifying a variety

### Introduction:

If you want to market the seeds of the main varieties of agricultural crops or vegetables in Scotland, you must:

- **must be registered as a Seed Merchant, Seed Processor or Seed Packer**
- have successfully applied to **have your seeds certified** - this shows that they meet EU quality standards

You can also market seeds which another licensed person has had certified. You're considered to be marketing seeds if you're doing any of the following:

- holding or keeping them before sale
- offering them for sale, eg by advertising
- giving them to someone else

The Official Seed Testing Station for Scotland (OSTS), inside the Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA) division of the Scottish Government Agriculture and Rural Economy Directorate, is the principle centre for seed testing and seed quality information in Scotland.

### Steps:

1. **Check** a list of the [agricultural and vegetable seeds](#) you must have certified before you can market them

### BEFORE CERTIFYING:

2. **Check if your varieties of seed are listed** (A variety is a sub-category of any species of seed) You can't get seeds certified unless they're a variety which is on the [UK national list](#) or the [EU common catalogue](#). You can also [apply to have a new variety added to the national list](#).

**For organic seeds production:** if you want to produce organic seeds you first must check if the variety you want to produce is available organically on [OrganicX](#) list (if web access is not available then variety availability can be checked by calling the Organic Food Federation 01760 720444). If the variety you are searching for is on the list you must obtain your seeds from the supplier that has the seeds you want to produce. Otherwise, in the following cases you can apply for a derogation to use non-organic seeds in order to obtain organic seeds (and produce) in the future:

- No varieties of the species, which I want to use, are registered in the UK organic seed database.
- The seed supplier is unable to deliver the seed or seed potatoes before sowing or planting despite ordering the seed or seed potatoes in reasonable time.
- The variety, which I want to use, is not registered in the database and I can demonstrate that none of the registered alternatives of the same species are appropriate for my production (you will need to indicate the reason they are not appropriate).
- For research purposes:
  - To test in small scale field trials
  - For variety conservation purposes.

Application for derogation are held by official bodies such as [Soil Association](#) and [Organic Food Federation](#).

### 2.a. Certification categories

You may be able to apply to enter your seed in the following categories, depending on the stage your seed is at in the multiplication process (see below for more info): pre-basic (PB) | basic (B) | certified seed (CS) | certified seed of the first generation (C<sub>1</sub>) | certified seed of the second generation (C<sub>2</sub>) | certified seed of the third generation (C<sub>3</sub>) (only flax or linseed can be certified in this category) | commercial seed (only annual meadowgrass, Hungarian vetch, sainfoin and black mustard can be certified in this category) | standard seed (you can only market vegetable seeds in this category).

Standard vegetable seeds must meet analytical and varietal purity and germination standards before you can market them.

- **What stage is your seed at?**
  - **Basic seed:** means seed
    - which has been produced under the responsibility of the breeder according to accepted practices for the maintenance of the variety;
    - which is intended for the production of seed of the category certified seed;
    - which has been found by official examination to satisfy the above mentioned conditions;
  - **Certified seed:** means seed
    - which is produced directly from basic seed or, if the breeder so requests, from seed of a generation prior to basic seed which can satisfy and has been found by official examination to satisfy the conditions laid down in Annexes I and II for basic seed;
    - which is intended mainly for the production of vegetables;
    - which has been found by official examination to satisfy the aforementioned conditions;
    - which is subject to official post-control by check inspection to verify its varietal identity and varietal purity;
  - **Standard seed:** means seed
    - which has sufficient varietal identity and varietal purity;

- which is intended mainly for the production of vegetables;
- which satisfies the conditions laid down in Annex II; and
- which is subject to official post-control by check inspection to verify its varietal identity and varietal purity;

### 3. SEED TESTING AND CERTIFICATION:

The sale of most agricultural and horticultural seeds is controlled through a series of seeds regulations dealing with cereals, fodder crops, oil and fibre crops, beet seeds, and vegetables respectively (these regulations are part of an EU-wide framework which ensures that seeds meet the same quality standards wherever they are sold in the European Union). The standards which must be met by most kinds of seed include varietal purity (trueness to type), analytical purity (a measure of gross contamination), freedom from weeds and germination. There are many other standards such as moisture content or freedom from a particular disease which apply to individual kinds of seed. All seeds subject to the regulations (except vegetables, which can be sold as Standard Seed) have to be officially certified and can only be sold in labelled containers which preserve the integrity of the seed inside. The certification process requires that the seed needs to be tested to ensure that it meets all the standards that apply to it. Some of these tests are made on the crop and some are made on the harvested seed. Many of the tests are carried out by members of the seed industry who are licensed for this work by Scottish Ministers.

Certification of cereal seed is the responsibility of Cereals Section (see below). All other kinds of seed eg fodder crops, oilseeds etc are dealt with by the Herbage and Vegetable Section (see below). The Official Seed Testing Station (OSTS) is responsible for testing harvested seed, both for the various certification schemes and for the information of farmers and growers. All three of the Sections provide training for licensed persons such as crop inspectors, seed samplers and seed analysts. For further information on farm saved seed please visit the British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB) website or download the BSPB FAQs document.

- **For Beet, Fodder, Oil & Fibre and Vegetables:**

- SEED CERTIFICATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF SEEDS REGULATIONS:

- An OSTs section is responsible for the certification of seed of all species covered by the Beet, Fodder, Oil and Fibre, and Vegetable Seeds Regulations in Scotland. The main crops grown for seed in Scotland include Field Peas, Field Beans, Timothy, Perennial Ryegrass, Oil Seed (Swede and Turnip) Rape and various other Brassica species. For further information contact [George Campbell](#).

- SEED SAMPLING: TRAINING AND LICENSING

- The section organises seed sampling training courses for the seed trade and the Scottish Government officials, and it administers and maintains the register of licensed and official seed samplers in Scotland. For further information contact [Russell Thomson](#)

- **For Cereals Certification:**

- Crop Certification Schemes exist to protect farmers buying the seed, to ensure that the product they receive meets certain quality standards. The current UK Cereal Scheme incorporates several quality control mechanisms, including official testing to ensure that the seed meets prescribed standards for germination, freedom from weeds, and varietal identity and purity.

SASA is the Certifying Authority for Scotland, and cereal seed certification in Scotland is managed by the Cereals Section and other species, such as grasses and oil seeds by the Herbage and Vegetable Section.

The EU requires that all cereal seed that is marketed for growing as crops must meet the standards in Directive 66/402/EEC. This in turn is incorporated into UK (and now Scottish) law through the Cereal Seed (Scotland) Regulations (see the Office of Public Sector Information OPSI).

Please see the following:

- The Cereal Seed (Scotland) Regulation 2005 SI No. 2005
- The Cereal Seed (Scotland) and Fodder Plant Seed (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulation 2006 SSI No. 448
- The Seeds (Scotland) (Amendments for Tests and Trials Etc.) Regulations 2007 SSI No. 224
- The Seed (Registration, Licensing and Enforcement) (Scotland) Regulations 2006 SSI No. 313

There are electronic copies of some of the [Forms](#) that are required for the certification process, together with guidance notes for their completion.

Paper copies can be obtained from [Bob Sunter](#), and should be returned to:

Cereal Certification  
SASA  
Roddinglaw Road  
Edinburgh  
EH12 9FJ

- **Cereals National Listing:**

The National List system was adopted in 1973 following the UK entry into the European Community. It applies to the main agricultural and vegetable species and ensures that no seed of a prescribed species may be marketed in the UK unless the variety is on a UK list or the EU Common Catalogue. Follow this [link](#) for more information.

### **3.a Official Seed Testing Station (OSTS)**

The Official Seed Testing Station for Scotland (OSTS), SASA is the principle centre for seed testing and seed quality information in Scotland. The OSTS is accredited to both the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) and UKAS to ISO 17025:2005.

The OSTS offers a wide range of laboratory tests that provide practical and reliable information for seed processors, merchants and growers on the quality of seed intended for sowing. Tests are made in carefully controlled conditions by trained and experienced analysts, using internationally approved methods.

### **3.b. Submitting Seed Samples**

Seed samples for certification testing must be drawn by official or licensed samplers. Correct completion of the form SDG5 submitted with the sample will ensure all required tests are completed.

All other seed samples submitted for testing should be representative of the lot or bulk from which they are taken or the test result will not relate to the quality of the whole lot or bulk. To take a representative sample, select a number of small samples from several bags, or from different parts of the bulk. If it is a very large bulk then it is better to sub-divide in to smaller lots and take a representative sample from each lot. Do not keep seed samples in warm or damp conditions prior to testing.

The OSTs can provide detailed information on seed sampling procedures and equipment.

[Seed Sampling Courses](#) are held each year at SASA.

Pre-addressed sample bags for non-certification tests can be supplied on request.

Contact: [Seedtesting.Enquiries@sasa.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Seedtesting.Enquiries@sasa.gsi.gov.uk) or telephone 0131 244 8908.

### **3.c. Seed Certification**

The OSTs undertakes some of the official testing of seed intended for certification.

Legislation allows for private seed testing laboratories to carry out official tests for certification provided they meet the licensing requirements defined in Seeds Regulations. The OSTs monitors all official tests made in licensed seed testing stations.

SASA is the Certifying Authority for seed produced in Scotland. Prior to certification, seed of most crop species must be officially tested to ensure that certain minimum standards are met. In the UK these standards are defined in Seeds Regulations. In Scotland there are five sets of Seeds Regulations covering Cereal, Fodder, Oil & Fibre, Vegetable and Beet seeds. These regulations define both the minimum standards and Higher Voluntary Standards that apply in the UK. Seed testing requirements are dependant on crop and category. Most seed must meet standards for species purity, germination and other seed content. Some may also have moisture or disease standards. The Tetrazolium test can only be used as an alternative to the full germination test on cereals seed. The OSTs undertakes some of the official testing of seed intended for certification and also supervises all official tests made in licensed seed testing stations. In this way, the high quality of Scottish certified seed is maintained.

Sampling seed for certification purposes must be done by either a Licensed sampler or an Official sampler following approved sampling procedures.

Please remember that most kinds of agricultural seeds cannot be sold unless they have been officially certified.

### **Price Lists**

- [Certification Seed Testing Fees](#)
- [Advisory Seed Testing Fees](#)