

# BPEX: Traceability of UK pork

**Following extensive research and two years of development and rigorous testing, BPEX has introduced a scientifically-based system to enhance the integrity of provenance and traceability of Red Tractor pork.**



It is designed to confirm that pork is indeed British if it says so on pack. It is believed to be the first time the system has been applied in the food industry in the UK.

The new system will not only deliver increased trust throughout the supply chain, it provides consumers with an additional layer of confidence in Red Tractor pork at a time when they are more concerned than ever about the integrity of the meat they buy. It means that Red Tractor pork will benefit from one of the most comprehensive traceability checks available to consumers in the UK.

Known as SIRA – Stable Isotope Reference Analysis – the method links pork to its geographical area of production. It has proved to be so robust in trials that it has now been incorporated into the quality assurance schemes operated by the British Meat Processors Association (BMPA). The BMPA assurance schemes are used as part of the Red Tractor standards for pork and pork products.

The SIRA system is founded on a database of four stable isotope ratios extracted from pork samples from known locations throughout the UK. It works by analysing retail samples of pork which can then be compared with the BPEX SIRA database to determine whether they originate from the UK. The probability of each sample matching the database and thus originating in the UK is calculated to provide a probability score on provenance. Any pork labelled as British that has a low probability of matching the database is then subjected to a detailed traceability audit.

By overlaying an innovative scientific-based system such as SIRA on to the already reliable audit trail used by the BMPA, producers, processors and retailers alike can have greater confidence in the integrity of the pig meat supply chain while UK consumers benefit from an enhanced traceability system.

It is intended that 30 randomly-selected products will be tested and that such tests will take place four times each year. SIRA testing will be applied in the retail pork sector initially, before being extended to include bacon and ham products and subsequently rolled out into the foodservice sector.

Mick Sloyan, director of BPEX, commented: "By embracing the SIRA system, the UK pig industry has again demonstrated its willingness to employ the latest techniques to ensure that consumers can have every confidence in the quality and integrity of Assured Pork."

Protocols have been established with the BMPA and Red Tractor to ensure the robustness of the system while minimising any disruption to normal business.

Source: **BPEX**

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