

Help us with the further development of the Digital Assistance Scheme

Opportunity for traders and technology specialists to work with Defra to develop digital interfaces between Defra and industry systems for the movements of food from Great Britain (GB) to Northern Ireland (NI)

Defra has been working with a broad range of businesses to establish the critical challenges presented by the process of moving agri-food goods from Great Britain (GB) to Northern Ireland (NI). This process currently involves several different IT systems, high levels of paper documentation and substantial manual entry of information.

To simplify this process, Defra and DAERA – our counterparts in the Northern Ireland Executive – have introduced the Digital Assistance Scheme (DAS). DAS aims to support the continued movement of agri-food goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland by digitising the certification and verification processes required to move these goods.

In March, we presented the outcomes from a series of requirements-gathering workshops to 230 in-house technology specialists in agri-food businesses as well as other technical providers at the technical briefing sessions. You can find out more about the workshops and briefings later in this message.

During these briefing sessions, we outlined three ways that we wanted to work with organisations to further develop DAS. We're now inviting organisations to take part in the first of these three opportunities: the development phase for the EHC Online (Export Health Certificate Online) Application Programming Interface (API) and integration with agri-food trader systems. It's the first step in the API's development, which we're aiming to extend to other types of agri-food certification and GB-EU exports over the coming months.

What will the EHC Online API provide for agri-food traders?

The API will provide a way for software systems used by traders to be integrated with Defra's EHC Online service, so that Export Health Certificate (EHC) applications can be submitted digitally and in an automatic way. It will reduce the amount of manual re-keying of information, which will help simplify and speed this key element of the certification process and reduce the likelihood of manual error.

Why we're contacting you

We're launching a DAS API Forum. This will be the development community for this work, and we're keen for traders, technology providers and systems integration providers to play a big part of this.

The DAS API Forum is being launched with two events where we'll share further information on the API we're introducing for the EHC Online system, which will enable EHC (Export Health Certificates) to be submitted digitally.

We will also be demonstrating how organisations can connect to and use the EHC Online API and provide information on how organisations can access the tools they need to achieve this.

As mentioned earlier, we're planning to extend the use of API to other types of agri-food certification and GB-EU exports over the coming months, so we're keen to extend the scope of the DAS API Forum community to ensure that more traders can be involved. Even if you're not specifically interested in the EHC Online API at this stage you can still join the DAS API Forum. Alternatively, we'll let you know when we'll be aiming to extend the API's capabilities and you can join at a later stage.

Who should attend the DAS API Forum?

This DAS API Forum is targeted at in-house technology specialists within agri-food traders who want to extend their own systems; alongside external technology providers and systems integration providers who may want to use the API to extend existing software solutions or develop new offerings for a market worth some £2.1bn pa (GB supply to NI) and involving a vast range of retailers, suppliers, producers and manufacturers.

What will the API Forum cover?

We're launching the DAS API Forum at two separate events to ensure we can give as many organisations as possible the opportunity to learn more about the EHC Online API and understand how they can get involved. At each API Forum we will:

- Provide an overview of the DAS programme and the phased introduction plans
- Demonstrate how organisations can connect with the EHC Online API
- Show how organisations can access the tools they need to connect
- Explain the next steps for getting involved and the support available to you.

How to join the API Forum events

We will be running the online API Forum events via zoom. The 60-minute events are open to any trader, technology provider or systems integration provider, and places will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis. You can sign up for an API Forum event by clicking on one of the links below.

- **API Forum 1:** Wednesday, 21 April – 2-3pm, [click here to register](#)
- **API Forum 2:** Wednesday, 28 April – 2-3pm, [click here to register](#)

These events are taking place a week later than we originally planned owing to the period of national mourning following the sad news of the death of His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh.

Review our work to date on developing DAS

We mentioned that we recently completed a series of workshops and technical briefing sessions with agri-food traders, trade associations and technology providers, which have helped identify the pain points and enabled us to build the foundations for the design and development work. We wanted to thank everyone who attended

and provided such useful insight and feedback, which has enabled us to make such good progress with the DAS design.

We published the slides, narrative and video recording of the initial workshops on our [GB-NI Trader Showcase site](#) and we've now supplemented this with the slides and narrative used for the recent technical briefing sessions, so you can keep up to date on the work we're doing around DAS. We've also now published an FAQ document, which we'll be updating regularly.

Finally, we would like to thank you for your interest, and we look forward to discussing this work with you. If you have any questions about the information in this message, please email us at das@defra.gov.uk.