



# WHY IS SAMPLING INDEPENDENCE IMPORTANT?

## SUPERVISION – AN INTEGRAL PART OF EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE

When we walk into a grocery store or into our local butcher shop we do not purchase anything based on estimated weights or volumes. All our purchases are either accurately weighed before they are wrapped and handed to us or the weights or volumes are printed on the packages or containers.

Grocer's scales are designed so that the customer and the grocer can both see the measured weight. This is a very old principle still maintained today, despite the advances in point of sale technology. It is so entrenched in our expectations that we take it for granted, without questioning why or if it is necessary.

Why this is the way things are done is very simple. It provides the customer with the opportunity to ensure that the weight being purchased is actually the weight provided. In this sense, the concept of supervision is integral to our shopping experience. Otherwise, it would be all too easy for a dishonest grocer to short-weight, and hence over-charge, on every biscuit purchased.

So aware are we of the opportunities for dishonest traders or suppliers, that modern societies have superimposed other statutory levels of supervision upon them. To minimise the likelihood of tampering with scales and other measuring equipment, we have in place legal requirements concerning the calibration and checking of such equipment by independent third parties, and a range of penalties that can be applied if tampering is detected. Legislated independent supervision occurs even in industries where pre-packaged items are sold and weights and other information declared on the packages.

Supervision in some form or other is integral to almost all of the sales transactions in which we become involved. We accept its necessity and enforcement as being fundamental to the integrity of the daily transactions we make. Imagine the outcry if customers in grocery stores were suddenly deprived of the ability to supervise the weight of items being purchased.

## IS WOOL TRADING DIFFERENT?

Why should the wool industry be any different? Indeed, given the value of the commodity and the size of the parcels involved in each transaction, isn't the integrity of the transaction, particularly the integrity of information on which the transaction is based, even more important?

In fact, in areas of the world where wool production is a serious business, the Wool Industry is not different. Almost all transactions involving the purchase and sale of wool are based on the information provided on IWTO Certificates. These Certificates generally accompany the commodity through all the transactions that occur from the point of production to when it arrives at the combing mill. Frequently, several changes of ownership occur throughout this process, and in almost every case the exchange is based largely on the information provided on the Certificates.

For this to occur, sellers, buyers and processors must have confidence in the integrity of this information. However, unlike the average shopper, they are not all able to personally supervise its gathering without incurring exorbitant costs. It is far less costly to rely upon a third party.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPERVISION OR INDEPENDENT SAMPLING

Sampling is the first and most important step in any commodity Certification system. The integrity of the samples and any accompanying information such as, in the case of wool, bale weights, brands and

descriptions, is fundamental to the integrity of any additional information obtained by analysing these samples. Integrity of Certification rests upon integrity in sampling, in testing, and in documentation, a fact that is recognised by the wool industry world-wide and formalised in its trading arrangements via regulations, contracts and letters of credit.

WTAE recognises that the integrity of its IWTO Certificates requires independent sampling. The principal reason for this is that it enables WTAE to guarantee that all aspects of sampling, testing and data processing have been conducted according to the relevant Test Methods and Regulations.

This guarantee is unequivocal because WTAE conducts all testing and data processing operations, and ensures that all sampling operations are conducted independently of the parties to the transaction.

Examples can be cited in other industries, where the exchange of ownership occurs on the basis of information declared by the vendor. Invariably such instances involve a one on one relationship between the buyer and the vendor, and the buyer usually has the capacity to verify this information, either through in-house testing facilities or via contracting testing services providers. To facilitate such arrangements in the wool industry WTAE provides services whereby the vendor or the buyer can submit samples for testing, in which case a non-certified Test Report is issued. The integrity of the sampling in such cases is guaranteed by the party submitting the sample, not by WTAE.

## THE ROLE OF WTAE INDEPENDENT SAMPLING CONTRACTORS

WTAE sampling contractors undertake a number of roles including:

- supervise or undertake the core sampling and bale weighing operations thereby ensuring that:
  - the number of cores taken from each bale is according to the prescribed schedule;
  - the cutting tips on the core tubes are replaced as required;
  - the bale weighing scales are certified as correct, checked before each period of use, and that the correct weighing and recording procedures are followed; and
  - the integrity of each sample is maintained;
- package samples for secure transport to the laboratory
- prepare documentation to identify samples for testing in the laboratory;
- supervise or conduct any grab or hand sampling operation;
- work with warehouse staff to ensure that all Regulations are followed and that the sampling equipment is performing to expectations;
- assist in training these wool store personnel to understand the importance of the regulated procedures; and
- co-operate with store management to ensure efficient sampling operations.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Tim Parkes

Unit 7, Lon Barcud  
Cibyn Industrial Estate  
Caernarfon  
Gwynedd  
LL55ZBX

p: +44 (0) 1286 678097  
f: +44 (0) 1286 678039  
m: +44 (0) 777 5755257  
e: [Tim.Parkes@wtaeurope.com](mailto:Tim.Parkes@wtaeurope.com)