

General News

EU promotion of organic food

In a move, which we can't quite decide is odd or useful, the EU has launched an initiative dedicated to the promotion of organic food. Under the banner 'Organic farming – good for nature, good for you' a new website provides a wide variety of information on organic food and farming, aimed at various sectors of society, from school children to retailers and farmers.

One of the most interesting sections is 'Key messages and slogans' in the 'Toolbox' section of the site. A wide variety of marketing phrases, which the EU deems acceptable for the promotion of organic food have been listed, though whether anyone will want to use "Organic farming. Wickedly good" we reserve judgement!

Also in this section you will find marketing material, photos, even TV ads you can re-use. The site is definitely worth a look and can be found at <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic>.

Organic Study Tour, Netherlands

Abacus Organic Services Ltd is offering a unique opportunity to find out how the Dutch organic producers are dealing with rising energy and feed costs, and increasing environmental pressures. Working in conjunction with Triodos Bank and the Agricultural Travel Bureau this autumn study tour has been put together to show the best of Dutch organic businesses and a unique opportunity to spend a day at the Louis Bolk Research Institute, a private research facility dedicated to promoting and understanding organic production. For further information call Lois Philips on 0560 3189013 or www.abacusorganic.co.uk.

Summary of Rural Development funding available

The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) is a seven-year programme, worth £3.9 billion overall, jointly funded by the EU and national government. The RDPE aims to support and promote sustainable farming, forestry and food sectors and also to bring wider benefits for the economy, the environment and rural communities during the period 2007 - 2013. The Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) are working together with Natural England and the Forestry Commission to manage the funding. Each region has identified its own funding priorities, so please contact your RDA as soon as possible (contact details are given on our website), to discuss your project. They are very helpful and their aim is to discuss the proposed project with you and explain whether the project is likely to be suitable for funding before you are asked to write a detailed application. It may be that funding isn't available for the whole project but is available for capital grants, training, or marketing. It may also be that funding priorities will change over time, so your project may not be eligible for funding now, but money may become available later, your RDA will advise.

We have spoken directly to each of the RDAs and they would be delighted to receive your applications. A number of them stressed that the money is there to support rural enterprise and won't do any good until it gets used!

Technical News

Changes to the EU Regulation

The new EU Organic Regulation is due to be published in September and come into force on January 1, 2009 – i.e. uncomfortably soon.

While we still don't know all of the fine detail at the time of writing, there are a number of key changes which have been agreed and which we can share with you here. Perhaps the single biggest change is that from 1/1/2009 EU Member States will no longer be allowed to set their own higher organic standards and will have to apply the new EU Regulation as written. However, the certification bodies will be able to set higher

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standards if they wish to. Please be aware that the OF&G board of directors is currently in the process of discussing whether we will be adopting the new EU Regulations or continuing with our existing standards. Our ever-vigilant Certification Manager, Steve Clarkson, has been following developments and provided this breakdown:

NEW EU Regulation

Conversion of land:

Current UK position:

Land must normally undertake a two-year conversion period under organic management for that land to be classed as organic. A certification body may, in agreement with DEFRA, allow one of two types of reduced conversion.

1. Where field input records, a physical verification and Defra/ACOS approval confirms no inputs, a reduced conversion of up to four months can be given.
2. Where land is in an agri-environment scheme that can guarantee that no prohibited inputs have been applied or satisfactory proof can be given that land has not received any prohibited inputs for the three years prior to the start date of the conversion, the conversion of the land can be reduced to twelve months.

Currently in the UK the minimum conversion period that land must undergo is twelve months.

New EU Regulation:

Land must complete a two year monitored conversion for land to be classed as organic.

The criteria for reduced conversions are the same as the UK Regulation, however, the EU Regulation does not give any minimum time scales for conversion thus allowing a two year reduced conversion and effectively 'overnight' conversion.

Conversion of livestock:

Current UK position:

For livestock to be sold as organic they must be born into an organic system.

Cattle whose progeny is intended for meat production must be managed as organic for at least 12 weeks before calving for the calf to be born as organic.

Ewes, goats and sows whose progeny is intended for meat production must be managed as organic from mating for the offspring to be born as organic.

The non-organic cow, ewe, goat or sow does not become organic, she becomes converted for producing organic calves and/or organic milk.

New EU Regulation:

Under normal circumstances animals brought in and/or reared for meat must be born and raised on an organic farm. However, where organic animals are not available, non-organic animals may be brought in as breeding stock. These animals may be deemed organic after completing a conversion period of:

- 12 months for equidae and bovines
- Six months for small ruminants and pigs

In addition, for animals existing on the holding at the beginning of the conversion, they can be deemed organic after the land has completed the conversion and they have completed the livestock conversion periods detailed above.

Health plan:

Current UK Position:

The Animal Health plan forms an integral part of the livestock management plan. It is designed to highlight areas of concern with regard to disease incidents and, if used to its full potential, will lead to better management and less use of conventional treatments.

EU Regulation:

An Animal Health Plan is not required under the new EU regulation (however, health plans will still be necessary in most cases as a requirement of farm assurance schemes).

Derogations:

Current UK Position:

Products that farmers and growers are allowed to apply to organic/converting fields can either be used without prior approval or must be approved by OF&G before use. It is the view of OF&G that this approval process focuses the mind of the operator, reduces the risk of non-compliant actions and adds a mechanism that allows us to question the use of these products.

New EU Regulation:

Those products that previously required prior approval by the certification body (CB) will not need this approval under the new EU Regulation and can be used as long as the operator keeps a record and justification of use. It will then be the responsibility of the CB to check on the use of these products at the inspection.

This means that, without checks by the CB, products may be used that are not compliant with the standards leading to decertification etc.

Please be aware that we are currently in the process of discussing whether we will be adopting the new EU Regulations above or continuing with our existing standards.

EU Logo and Labelling Requirements:

Following something of a debacle when the planned EU 'bio' logo was unveiled (because it looked too similar to an Aldi supermarket trademark) the EU Commission has finally unveiled its plans for a replacement. Although information is still sparse, the Commission apparently intends to open up a competition for art and design students to come up with a new image. This competition was due to be launched at the end of July but, for some reason, was not.

Once designed and agreed this symbol will be required to be used on all produce packed, or packed and labelled, in the EU. To the best of our knowledge at the time of writing, the logo is to be introduced from 31 July, 2010. However, we would advise licensees not to act on this date, as it has yet to be clarified.

What is clear now is that new labelling requirements will come into force with the introduction of the new EU Organic Regulation on January 1, 2009. From this time the organic regulation will say that labels should specify whether the country of origin of the product is EU, non-EU or a combination of EU/non-EU (but not the specific country). HOWEVER, following close inspection of the draft new regulation and discussion with Defra, we have determined that the following is true: as part of transitional measures, packaging and labels need not comply with the new regulations until 1 January, 2012, as long as the product packaged does comply with the production requirements of the new regulation.

As ever this has become a fairly complex affair and obtaining clarification from the various quarters proves quite difficult. We will continue to update you as we find out more information and will continue to post updates to our website (see www.organicfarmers.org.uk/licensees/standards).

HACCP for the organic sector - principles and practice

This is a practical course in which the common sense approach to assuring food safety, embodied in the principles of HACCP, is explained with the use of case studies. Focus is on six organic sectors; namely apples, bread making wheat, field vegetables, eggs, milk and pork meat. Delegates on the course will receive a copy of the document most relevant to their area of interest.

The course programme is being delivered as part of the EU integrated research project 'Quality Low Input Food' (QLIF) project and is taking place in the UK at CCFRA (on 29th September 2008

For further information or to register an interest in attending a particular course please contact by e mail: QLIF@campden.co.uk or visit the CCFRA website at www.campden.co.uk

Eventful calendar?

Do you, as a processing enterprise, attend or show at trade events in the UK? If so OF&G would be interested in your opinion on which ones are the most useful to you and for what reasons. Please contact OF&G Development Officer Steven Jacobs on his direct line 01939 292009.

Use of nitrates and nitrites in meat processing

While we have raised this issue before, there has been a growing amount of discussion in the trade press regarding the future use of sodium nitrate and sodium nitrite in processed or cured meat products. As far as anyone can tell at the moment the matter is not up for review before the end of 2010, but the issues raised are, of course, serious and far-reaching. OF&G would urge all relevant processing licensees to provide their views on the use of nitrates and nitrites to Defra in the near future, in order for it to provide a comprehensive overview of the UK position to Europe.

Our view, based on advice from our own food scientist, Gabrielle Lanceley, is that there is no other reliable way to ensure the safety of the public from *Clostridium Botulinum*, however we may wish there were. To the best of our knowledge, even those claiming not to directly introduce nitrates and nitrites to their products have no choice but to do so indirectly, such as through the use of celery water. This still results in the presence of nitrosamines.

Sourcing ingredients

One of the areas we are most regularly asked for information on is sourcing organic ingredients. We're always happy to help and our processing department certification officers, Ruth and Joanna, are a mine of information. They are often able to make links between licensees, as well as non-licensees who may be able to supply whatever is needed (please note though that this does not mean that we can or do endorse anyone we may give details for!).

To assist further in this area, we have now added a link to the Food Manufacture Ingredients Directory to our website. This site is free to use and an excellent source of relevant information. To find the link go to www.organicfarmers.org.uk/processing and scroll down the page.

Events

Another busy season of touring the shows and other events is pretty much at an end now, but the team have very much enjoyed meeting both existing and new licensees. We are in the process of determining where we will be out and about next year and will publish this information when it's finalised.

Arable event a great success

Potential converts to organic arable production were given an insight into the opportunities and challenges of the sector at our one-day event in June, titled *Contemplating Conversion*. Held at the Barker family's Great Berwick Farm, near Shrewsbury, more than 150 delegates attended and, based on feedback, the day was extremely well received. The presentations from the day's speakers can still be downloaded from our website, where you can also view photos of the day (go to www.organicfarmers.org.uk/events). Our sincere thanks go to the Barkers for their hospitality and to the headline sponsors, including HGCA, Triodos Bank, ABP, Greenvale AP, Savills, BOCM Pauls and Nicholson Machinery.

Licensee News

OF&G licensees have, it would seem, been incredibly busy this year, with a range of award wins and nominations, not to mention many column inches and plenty of air time achieved. Below is a round-up of the ones we know about. If you have made the headlines and we missed it, please let our PR & Media Manager, Mark Waugh, know at mark.waugh@organicfarmers.org.uk.

Poultry farmers go head-to-head

David and Helen Brass, of The Lakes Free Range (Organic) Egg Co., in Penrith, earned themselves a nomination in the Farmers Weekly awards for Poultry Farmer of the Year... as indeed did Adrian and James Potter, of Yorkshire Farmhouse Eggs, in Thirsk. This puts the two licensees head-to-head for the title, with the third nominee (a caged egg producer from Aberdeenshire) also in the mix. We wish the best of luck to both and offer our congratulations for getting shortlisted in the first place – no mean feat in itself. All will be revealed at the awards bash in October.

But they're not the only ones...

Nick Baird, of Chichester, has got himself into the running for Young Farmer of the Year in the FW awards. As his write-up in the awards site explains: "Nick has a 1000ha unit producing arable crops, potatoes and pigs. He is passionate about the potato business and has a reputation for supplying top-quality products to a range of outlets." We're right behind you, Nick. Good luck!

Working for wildlife

Yet two more licensees have put themselves in the running for the RSPB's Nature of Farming awards, having made a shortlist of just four from the hundreds of entries.

Peter Davies, of Slade Farm, near Bridgend, and Henry Edmunds, of Cholderton Estate, Salisbury, make up 50% of that shortlist for their sustained and effective efforts to nurture biodiversity on their land. These nominations are the result of hard work and either of the two would be a worthy winner. We wish them all the best. You can read profiles on all the shortlisted farms on the RSPB site (here's a short link: <http://tinyurl.com/64o569>) and even vote, until September 26.

Supreme effort in business awards

The Croxton Park Partnership, of Huntingdon, topped the tables at the East of England Agricultural Farm Business Awards, taking the title of Supreme Champion as well as the award for Special Enterprise, for pioneering the re-introduction of their Oxford Sandy & Black native breed pigs to woodland. The awards recognise and celebrate the achievements and skills of local farm businesses. The pig project was also the subject of an excellent feature by the Daily Telegraph, highlighting the benefits the pigs bring to the woodland. Our congratulations to owners Alan and Joy Bowkett and farm manager, Dan Bull, who puts the plans into action!

Champion profiled again

Licensee Ian Pigott, of Thrales End Farm, Harpenden, Herts, dominated most of a page in Farmers Weekly in July as the mag launched the search for its next Farming Champion. Ian took the 2006 title and was hailed as the man behind Open Farm Sunday. Could you follow Ian as a worthy winner???

Water, water, everywhere

Licensee Geraint Davies was featured in the Daily Post as the joint winner in the young farmer category of the 2008 Royal Welsh Agri-Environment Rewards. He took the accolade for a variety of schemes deployed at his Fedwarian farm, near Bala, including creating two new reservoirs, restoring 1000m of stone walls and erecting around 10,000m of fencing to protect and enhance the farm boundaries. Congratulations, Geraint.

Putting things in focus

Tom and Catherine Rawson were unveiled in August as new contributors to the Farmers Weekly Focus section. They will be writing from time to time on the view from their 440 acres in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, where they run a 250-strong dairy herd, producing their own 'Clever Cows' brand of organic milk to shops and cafes in their area.

'Meating' demand proves the way forward

Shon and Simon Sprackling's Rother Valley Organics was the subject of a large feature in the Meat Trades Journal, in July. The piece focused on their success in building a business raising, butchering and retailing its own meat in the South Downs. The brothers set up the business in 2004 and have taken it from a small mail-order start-up to having a purpose built butchery supplying direct to their customers. Now they are not only selling their own meat, but also that bought in from up to 17 other farmers. A real success story and inspiration to others.

OF&G in the News

Please remember that our website is a good place to keep up with ongoing news from OF&G, while our blog (www.organicfarmers.org.uk/blog) deals with more general, and often light-hearted, issues.

Recently we've had good coverage for our Contemplating Conversion arable event in a variety of publications, while Natural and Organic Products picked up on our criticism of a badly argued attack on organics published in The Independent newspaper, quoting CEO, Richard Jacobs. OF&G also received a good few column inches with our response to the botched organic 'bio' logo proposed by the EU (until it was withdrawn for infringing Aldi's trademark!).

If you're a composting licensee, look out for a feature in September's Local Authority Waste and Recycling (LAWR) about the do's and don'ts of achieving PAS 100 and the Quality Compost Protocol, featuring our own Katie Owens. LAWR is the leading publication in this field.

And finally...

Have you got your supplies of OF&G branded consumables on order? Our compostable carriers are selling like the proverbial hot cakes, with most of the initial 10,000 order now being put to good use around the UK (hopefully either carrying shopping or breaking down quietly in compost heaps!). We're working on getting some more, so get your orders in now.

Don't forget we also carry a range of other OF&G branded products, including produce bags, sticky labels, bread labels and more. You can also request a bundle of our consumer-facing leaflets to put on your sales displays or include in veg boxes. These explain to your customers what organic means and why you are certified with OF&G.

To see the full list of products and grab an order form, take a look at our website (www.organicfarmers.org.uk/trading) or give us a call.

Evaluation Scheme

The following products have recently been accepted into the OF&G Evaluation Scheme as 'Product Approved for Use in Organic Systems' or 'Product Approved for Restricted Use, Derogation Required'.

Category	Name	Supplier	Telephone	OF&G Status	Cert Expiry Date
Animal Feed Additive	Hemexsan	Heaton (Export & Marketing) Limited	01422 822308	Approved	31/5/09
Compost	Fertile Fibre Organic Seed Mix	Fertile Fibre Ltd	01432 853111	Restricted	31/5/09
	Fertile Fibre Organic Potting Mix			Restricted	31/5/09
	Fertile Fibre Organic Multi Purpose Mix			Restricted	31/5/09
	Organic Coir			Approved	31/5/09
	YHS Multi-Purpose Peat Free Compost	Yorkshire Aggregates Quarrying Limited	01302 770500	Restricted	31/7/09
Disinfectant/Cleaning Agent	Jet 5	Certis	01980 676500	Approved	31/7/09
Fertiliser	Organi-Graze	Mole Valley Forage Services	0845 603 1210	Restricted	31/7/09
	Organi-Cut			Restricted	31/7/09
	TTL Plus	Nutrimate Ltd	01772 641181	Approved	31/8/09
	Organimate			Restricted	31/8/09
	Nutrimate			Approved	31/8/09
	Nutrimate Gold			Approved	31/8/09
	Kelpak	Omex Agriculture Ltd	01526 396011	Restricted	31/8/09
	Rootboost			Restricted	31/8/09
	Kelpland			Restricted	31/8/09
	Skelp			Restricted	31/8/09
	Omex Organic Foliar Feeds			Restricted	31/8/09
	Suspension Fertiliser			Restricted	31/8/09

Category	Name	Supplier	Telephone	OF&G Status	Cert Expiry Date
Ingredients	Spring Water - Still	Llanllyr Water Company Ltd	01570 470788	Approved	31/12/08
	Spring Water - Sparkling			Approved	31/12/08
Insect Control	Majestik	Certis	01980 676500	Restricted	31/7/09
	Spruzit			Restricted	31/7/09
	Cyd-X			Approved	31/7/09
	Hemexsan	Heaton (Export & Marketing) Limited	01422 822308	Approved	31/5/09
Pest Control	Ferramol	Certis	01980 676500	Approved	31/7/09
	Sluggo	Omex Agriculture Ltd	01526 396011	Approved	31/8/09
	Gard-S			Approved	31/8/09
	Gard-S Granules			Approved	31/8/09
	Garland			Approved	31/8/09
Plant Health Products	Garlic Barrier Anthyllis	Aston Horticulture Ltd	0870 350 6250	Approved	30/6/09
	Garlic Barrier Garshield			Approved	30/6/09
	Garlic Barrier Granules			Approved	30/6/09
	Garland G	Omex Agriculture Ltd	01526 396011	Approved	31/8/09
Soil Conditioner	Physiolith	Mole Valley Forage Services	0845 603 1210	Restricted	31/7/09
	Physalg 27			Approved	31/7/09
	Physalg 15			Restricted	31/7/09
	Biomex Booster, Biomex SA, Biomex Foliar	Omex Agriculture Ltd	01526 396011	Approved	31/8/09
	Biomex P			Approved	31/8/09
	Biomex Starter			Restricted	31/8/09
	Biomex Duster			Restricted	31/8/09
	Biomex FZB			Restricted	31/8/09
Vitamins and Minerals	Calsea Digest	Mole Valley Forage Services	0845 603 1210	Approved	31/7/09
	Calsea Copper			Approved	31/7/09
	Calsea Mag			Approved	31/7/09
	Calsea Zinc			Approved	31/7/09
	Calsea Phos			Approved	31/7/09
	Calsea Forage	Approved	31/7/09		
	Agri-Wise Sheep Mineral Energy Booster	Uniscope (Euro) Ltd	01460 239851	Approved	31/5/09
	Agri-Wise Cattle Mineral Energy Booster			Approved	31/5/09
	Agri-Wise Sheep Mineral Energy Booster + Trace Elements			Approved	31/5/09
	Agri-Wise Cattle Mineral Energy Booster + Trace Elements			Approved	31/5/09
Sweetlick 243 - Organic GP	Owens Nutrition Ltd	01609 881941	Approved	30/4/09	