

# Technical Newsletter

## General News

### We've moved....

By now you are hopefully aware that OF&G has moved into its new home. We've been highlighting the new address details and contact numbers at every opportunity. If you have missed this, the details are on this newsletter.

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We're very pleased to be settled now in The Old Estate Yard. The move was achieved with the minimum of disruption and we are now enjoying the benefits of a countryside location. The new base is just a few miles north of Shrewsbury and has been refurbished to provide a modern office environment for our team. Certification Officers are now located together in an open plan space and our admin teams are close together, allowing for smoother day-to-day working.

Buying the new premises was an important step for OF&G and we expect to be settled here for many years to come, with currently unused space available should we need to expand further. We look forward to welcoming those of you who have cause to pay us a visit – although ask for a map first because we're quite easy to drive straight past!!!

### Changes for the better

At OF&G we like to think we're always looking for ways to make things work better. To that end we have been working hard on making changes to our producer application process which should only be for the good! We've taken apart the forms and reconstructed them to make the process as simple as possible, removing any repetition or requests for information that isn't strictly necessary. This is in response to feedback we've had – and we were listening. While this is no kind of bonus for those of you who have been through the old forms, we wanted to make you aware of it in case you have friends and colleagues who are contemplating organics but have been fazed by the paperwork. We think we've made it pretty straightforward and we'd be delighted if you would be willing to share that fact with your peers.

## Technical News

### New materials approved for use in organic

On 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008 DEFRA informed the certification bodies of an amendment to the EU organic regulation.

From 13<sup>th</sup> May 2008 the following products have been approved for use:

**Ethylene** – previously approved as a material for the de-greening of organic bananas, kiwis, kakis, and flower induction of organic pineapples. This material has now also been approved as a sprout inhibitor in both potatoes and onions and for de-greening organic citrus fruit.

Anybody wishing to use ethylene during 2008 must apply to us for a derogation prior to using it.

**Potassium bicarbonate** has been approved as a fungicide for general use without the need for a derogation beforehand.

**Copper octanoate** has been added to the list of copper products allowed for use as a fungicide. The restrictions applying to copper fungicides are as stated in the OF&G Control Manual.

**Spinosad** has been approved as an insecticide, however, this product has certain restrictions on its use. OF&G are currently discussing what information will be required in order to approve a derogation, this is likely to involve a plan containing details of why the product is needed and how you will minimise the risk to key beneficial insects such as bees. The product must not be produced using GM or GM derivatives. If you wish to use spinosad please contact your Certification Officer to discuss.

# For Producers

## Wheat LINK Summary.....

### Wheat Quality – the effect of seed spacing, variety and late season weeding

Narrow row spacing and high seed rates of 250kg/ha provide considerable yield benefits compared to either wide row or strip drill systems and low seed rates of 150kg/ha (reported in the February 2008 OF&G newsletter). However, drill and seed rate did not influence grain protein in the same way in the second year of the WheatLINK project\*.

Although wheat grown in narrow rows had significantly higher grain protein at one site in the second year, this trend was not repeated, and there was a tendency for higher seed rates to give lower grain protein across years and sites. Choice of variety was a better determinant of grain protein, although overall protein in 2006/07 was much lower than in 2005/06. Hereward was found to have higher grain protein than Aristos (a variety bred for low input) in 2005/06, but a population of wheat introduced in 2006/07 performed as well as Hereward at one site and significantly outperformed it at the other for protein (Table 1).

	Grain protein (%)			
	2005/06		2006/07	
Variety	Wakelyns	Sheepdrove	Wakelyns	Sheepdrove
Aristos	11.17 a	11.66 a	8.11 a	8.21 a
Hereward	11.93 b	11.74 a	9.15 b	8.62 b
Population	*	*	8.97 b	9.26 c

Table 1: Grain protein (%) for three varieties at two sites in 2005/06 and 2006/07. Figures marked with a different letter in the same column are significantly different ( $P < 0.05$ ).

Late season weeding has the potential to provide a flush of nitrogen to the crop: nitrogen is mineralised when soil is disturbed and becomes available for uptake by the crop. However, assessments of whole plant nitrogen in 2007 made at three sequential points through the season did not show any significant effect of weeding this year. It is possible that the severe drought in April affected these results; soil was extremely hard and deeply cracked, reducing the effect of the hoe. The trial is now in its final year. Economic analysis of final data will help to determine the feasibility of adopting various management strategies for improving organic wheat crops.

\*LK0970 is sponsored by the Defra Sustainable Arable LINK programme and industry partners Organic Farmers & Growers, Claydon Yieldometer Ltd., Grain Farmers PLC., Norton Organic Grain Ltd., OAMG, OFF, Progressive Farming Trust, SAC Commercial, SOPA, Sheepdrove Organic Farm, Soil Association, SA Cert, Wakelyns Agroforestry – Stephen Briggs, and Alistair Leake sit on the project steering group.

## Events

### Contemplating Conversion

By the time you read this we'll be heading rapidly for the day of the biggest event we've organised for a long time. *Contemplating Conversion* is an OF&G and Abacus Organic Associates collaboration aimed at putting information about organic conversion at the fingertips of non-organic arable farmers. Our aim is to provide un-biased, practical information on what's required to convert and what the grants and other benefits might be. We have a huge shortfall of organic arable to address and there are great opportunities for converts. So if you know of anyone who might be open to the idea, please pass on the details (below). Leading buyers, millers, feed compounders and others will all be there on the day, providing the opportunity to make crucial contacts – they are actively seeking suppliers!

Contemplating Conversion, June 26<sup>th</sup>, Great Berwick Farm, Shrewsbury. Entrance is free, with an organic lunch at a subsidised cost of £5. Call Steven Jacobs on 01939 292009 or email [steven.jacobs@organicfarmers.org.uk](mailto:steven.jacobs@organicfarmers.org.uk). More information is available at [www.organicfarmers.org.uk](http://www.organicfarmers.org.uk).

### Show season in full swing

It's a busy time for all of us with a calendar full of shows and events over the summer. Coming up next are the Royal Highland Show and the Great Yorkshire Show, both of which we will be attending. If you would

like the chance to have a chat with our team, discuss any issues or just let us know what you are up to, please feel to drop by our stands at either show. (4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Stand 480 at the RHS and with the Yorkshire Organic Centre at the Great Yorkshire Show). We'd be very pleased to see you. Alternatively, to make a more concrete arrangement, our Development Officer, Steven Jacobs, will be armed with the office mobile phone and you can give him a call to set up a get-together. He'd be delighted to hear from you and the mobile will be switched on during the show dates for you to get in touch. Call 07956 819587.

## Licensee News

### Keep your bull\*\*\*\* in Westminster...

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OF&G licensee, Andrew Bebb, of Shrewsbury, is no stranger to publicity. Recently he, or more correctly his cow, made the headlines after Shrewsbury MP, Daniel Kawczynski, was denied permission to take the animal to Parliament. Mr Kawczynski was aiming to highlight the impacts of bovine TB on the dairy industry. In the end the refusal by Commons officials probably gained more media interest than if the cow had actually made the trip – and at least she was spared the journey!

### The best of boxes

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Rob and Elaine McGregor have been growing organically at Low Leases Farm, nr Leeming Bar, North Yorkshire, since 1999. Since then they've launched a successful box scheme, so successful in fact that they were listed as one of the 'Very Best Vegetable Box Schemes' in the Sunday Telegraph's Stella magazine (June 8<sup>th</sup>). This is no mean feat, given that they were named alongside some of the biggest names in veg boxes. Congratulations to Rob and Elaine from OF&G. Take a look at their site at [www.theorganicfarm.co.uk](http://www.theorganicfarm.co.uk) (where you'll also see a beautifully prominent OF&G logo!).

## OF&G in the news

As ever, plenty of attention for OF&G in the various media since the last newsletter. Key issues include our comments on the 'farical' withdrawal of the proposed EU 'bio' logo (meant to denote an organic product but, as it turned out, too similar to the existing Aldi organic logo!). There was also some entertainment to be had in rebutting a rather poorly argued (in our opinion) piece in The Independent attacking the environmental credentials of organic farming. We've also seen plenty of column inches about our upcoming 'Contemplating Conversion' arable event (see above) and positive coverage of the introduction of our compostable carrier bags. More info on all of this is on our website, [www.organicfarmers.org.uk](http://www.organicfarmers.org.uk).

## Staff News

This month we're saying a temporary farewell to our accountant, Lucille Crundell. Lucille, who's quickly become a key part of our growing team, is off to have her first baby. We're sure you'd join us in wishing her the best with the new arrival. In the meantime her role will be covered by Jill Searle, who you can reach on Lucille's number (01939 291800 x231) or at [accounts@organicfarmers.org.uk](mailto:accounts@organicfarmers.org.uk).

# 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
Silage Additive	Agros Clamp	Volac International Ltd	01639 814344	Approved	31/1/09
	Agros Hi-Dri			Approved	31/1/09
	Agros Corn			Approved	31/1/09
	Agros Dominator			Approved	31/1/09
Composts	10mm Soil Conditioner	Material Change Limited	07795 624608	Restricted	31/5/09
	25mm Mulch			Restricted	31/5/09
	40mm Mulch			Restricted	31/5/09
Plant Health Products	Algaflex	Biotechnica Services Ltd	0118 951 5605	Restricted	30/9/08
	Algaflex 30			Restricted	30/9/08
Bedding Materials	Easichick	GI Hadfield & Son Ltd	0161 370 2360	Approved	31/7/09
	Easibed			Approved	31/7/09
	Easiplay			Approved	31/7/09
	Easicattle			Approved	31/7/09
	Easiride			Approved	31/7/09
	Easibed Plus			Approved	31/7/09
Animal Feed Supplements	Ecoblock	Minsups Ltd	01606 556161	Approved	30/4/09
	Ecoblock Extra			Approved	30/4/09
	Ecomag Block			Approved	30/4/09
	Eco Block Fly			Approved	30/4/09
	Special Eco Pre-Calver Block			Approved	30/4/09
	Mineralised Salt			Approved	30/4/09
	Startright			Restricted	30/4/09

## Important Change

The soil conditioner Physiolith, supplied by Mole Valley Forage Services, had previously been listed as 'Approved for use in Organic Systems' in OF&G Technical Newsletter Number 54, October 2007.

However, this should have stated 'Product Approved for Restricted Use, Derogation Required', therefore Physiolith requires derogation approval from the OF&G office prior to use.