

General News

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New EU Regulation - update

We have been continuing to work through the details of the new EU organic regulation, which is due to come into force on January 1, 2009. We have posted the latest clarifications and details on the OF&G website (here's a short link to take you straight there: <http://tinyurl.com/newreg>) and would urge all licensees to look at this as soon as possible, to avoid any unpleasant surprises next year! We have also enclosed a paper copy with this newsletter.

Below is a breakdown of issues covered:

- Standards
- Conversion of land
- Conversion of livestock
- Health plan
- Derogations
 - Farm inputs
 - Existing and replacement livestock
 - Feed
- EU Labelling Requirements
 - EU logo
 - Product origin
 - Certification Body codes
 - 70% to 95% rule

Fantastic Feedback

We would like to thank all of the processor licensees who took time to complete our recent customer service questionnaire. We achieved a very healthy response rate, which allows us to have great confidence in the results.

The recipient of the £50 M&S voucher has been drawn at random and we're delighted to announce that it was Linda Butler, of Copas Traditional Turkeys Ltd, in Maidenhead, Berkshire.

It's very pleasing to report that the feedback was overwhelmingly positive on all fronts. In addition to this, there were some very useful comments added about a variety of issues, which we are taking on-board and using to make constant improvements. Here are some of the highlights of the responses:

- Understanding of the requirements pre-inspection: 100% 'yes'
- Inspector co-operation in arranging an inspection date: 100% 'yes'
- Certification Officer rating: 100% 'good' or 'very good'
- Understanding of the post-inspection Compliance Notice: 100% 'yes'
- Compliance Notice sent in a timely manner: 100% 'yes'
- Email response times: 100% 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'
- Telephone response: 100% 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'

Even in those areas that did not reach 100% in positive responses, the negatives were limited to literally a handful, all of which have been noted. Hopefully licensees will have appreciated that we do take customer service very seriously and, surveys aside, would be pleased to hear from any licensee at any time if they have any concerns (or compliments!).

If anyone who did not find time to fill in the survey would still like to do so, we would still be delighted to receive your feedback (although unfortunately you're too late for the M&S vouchers!).

New organic livestock marketing scheme

A new marketing venture has been launched in northern England in a bid to improve sales of organic animals at stable prices.

The Agri-Connect Organics (ACO) scheme will be linked to Graig Producers and, like Graig it is a registered limited company that operates in the same way as a co-operative. For many years we've been encouraging more action like this and hope the new venture will be a great success for all involved. You can find out more at the excellent Organic Inform (<http://tinyurl.com/4yfvzg>).

Hand-in-hand with east African colleagues

VETAID is a Scottish-based charity that works with small-scale farmers in east Africa, providing training on improving livestock health. It has recently started a project which aims to raise awareness within Scotland of the importance of small-scale farming in east Africa and the challenges that farmers face there.

Over the coming months VETAID will hold seminars with students from the Scottish Agricultural College and vet students from Edinburgh University and the University of Glasgow. At the same time, students from Sokoine Agricultural University in Tanzania will be learning about farming in Scotland. The charity is also planning to establish a two-way learning process by means of video conferences and exchange visits.

In addition to the work with the colleges and universities, it is also planning conferences for farmers, crofters, and anyone else who is interested in learning about family farming in east Africa. The first conference will be held on Friday 21 November at Dingwall Mart, from 11am-1pm with coffee and registration from 10:30am. The next one will be on Friday 23 January, at the Moredun Research Institute, Edinburgh, also from 11am-1pm with coffee and registration from 10:30am.

Wanted – organic farm in Manchester area for French students to visit for a day in April.

An EcoTrip is being arranged by Sandra Tocqueville, the theme is sustainability. The students will be staying in Manchester from 15th-19th April. Please contact her via email if you can help. santocq@yahoo.fr

TECHNICAL NEWS

OF&G are pleased to see an increase in the number of our farmers who are venturing into organic on-farm processing. Therefore we have written this short piece about on-farm processing to outline the options available to any farmers interested in moving in this direction.

Introduction

On-farm processing is a good way of getting more value from your produce because you are selling directly to your customers. This reduces the road and air miles food has to travel and cuts out some of the middlemen, allowing those who produced the food to keep more of its value in return for their hard work.

Who needs On-Farm Organic Certification?

On-farm processing is normally an extension of activities carried out on the farm e.g selling fruit, vegetables, or meat cuts.

On-farm Processing is defined as simple or complex. Some examples of each type are shown below:

| | |
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| 1. Simple Processing Fruit and vegetable washing and grading Egg packing and grading Box scheme Poultry killing and dressing Simple meat cutting (animal slaughter must be done at licensed abattoir) Farm shop (depends on what you are selling, please contact OF&G to discuss) | 2. Complex Processing Milk bottling Cheese making Ice cream making Sausage and burgers Processing fruit and vegetables to make juices/jams etc Drying and blending herbs to make teas and tinctures Baking Seed cleaning Animal feed mill |
|--|---|

Fee structures are different for simple and complex organic on-farm processing:
We currently charge £110 (plus VAT) for simple processing.

For complex processing a separate processing licence may be required, please contact OF&G to discuss the fee structure.

Why does organic on-farm processing need to be certified?

Organic on-farm processing activities must be covered by an on-farm processing licence. All products that reference organic be it on a blackboard signage, label, or even just the ingredients list, must be Certified under EC 2092/91. This is to protect the organic integrity of the food, so the customer knows what they are buying is organic.

Contact us early on to check requirements. Your premises will need to be inspected before you can market processed food as organic. We recommend that you try to time your start date to fit in with your next annual farm inspection, otherwise you will need to pay for a separate inspection.

We are currently writing practical guidelines for Organic on-farm processing which will be available soon.

Forage Seed Percentage for 2009/2010

Due to problems with the sourcing of organic grass and clover seed DEFRA have decided to extend the minimum 65% organic inclusion for forage mixes until the end of 2009. For 2010 the rate of organic inclusion will rise to 70%.

Maximum Residue Levels information

For up to date information please go to <http://www.pesticides.gov.uk> or contact your certification officer.

Licensee News

As always OF&G licensees have been blazing a trail through the media and a whole host of awards. Below is our regular round-up. If you have some news to share, please don't hesitate to email our PR & Media Manager, Mark Waugh: mark.waugh@organicfarmers.org.uk.

Peter is the RSPB's champion!

Licensee Peter Davies, of Slade Farm, in Glamorgan has been named as the first national winner in the RSPB's farming award for wildlife conservation.

Peter manages more than 850 stunning acres of Welsh coastline and clifftops and took 36 per cent of the vote in a competition run by the RSPB and Countryfile Magazine.

The farm is a haven for the rare chough, member of the crow family, for migrating swallows, hundreds of seed-eating finches, and rare wild flowers.

He was one of four finalists shortlisted for the first Nature of Farming Award, as was OF&G licensee Henry Edmunds, of Cholderton Estate, Salisbury. Peter will be presented with his trophy and £1,000 prize money at a special event in January and we send our hearty congratulations.

Safeguarding the future

David Thompson, of Broxfield Farm near Alnwick, Northumberland, has been named as the regional winner of Natural England's Future of Farming Award.

The scheme celebrates environmental excellence and innovation in wildlife-friendly farming, and showcases how first-rate environmental land management and sound farm business can go hand in hand.

The Thompson family have farmed the land since the 1820's and all of the 195 hectares are farmed organically, producing cereals and beef from a herd of Aberdeen Angus Cross suckler cows. Lambs graze the clover rich pastures over the winter months. The clover and farmyard manure from the cattle adds fertility to the soil. David has opened his farm up for children, who learn how their food is produced and about the diverse range of wildlife on the farm.

Broxfield Farm now goes forward to the next round of judging, which will decide the national winner of the 'Future of Farming awards 2008'. Congratulations on the win and good luck in the next round!

Better buy Butterby

Low Butterby Farm, near Durham has been listed by The Times newspaper as one of their top 35 picks of box schemes around the UK. The Times entry for the Butterby-branded boxes reads: "A box scheme for the Durham area, which includes salad crops, summer vegetables, apples, pears and plums as well as cut flowers and honey from its own bees. Every box contains six free-range eggs plus seasonal produce." An excellent result. The full list can be seen at <http://tinyurl.com/4oq22r>.

Small farm, big win!

Paul and Diana Redgate's Willey Wood Farm, at Moorgreen, near Nottingham, has scooped the small farm category prize in the Wilkinson Environment Awards for Nottinghamshire. Since the family left dairy farming, the main enterprises are organic South Devon beef and Shropshire Down lamb production for sale through a local farm shop. The move to organic production nearly ten years ago and a successful bid to join the Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme means that the Redgates', in their own words, "aim to re-awaken other species which have been farmed into dormancy". Their enthusiasm and delight in their natural neighbours, particularly the brood of four barn owl chicks, impressed the judges.

Not so woolly thinking

Isobel Davies, the Managing Director of OF&G licensed box scheme, Farmaround, scored a big media hit with a four-page spread in the Mail on Sunday's You Magazine. The piece profiled Isobel's Izzy Lane fashion label, which is breathing new life into wool from rare breeds. Find out more at www.izzylane.co.uk.

Lily Savage and the pigs!

Well nearly... In one of the more unusual media appearances by an OF&G licensee, Emma Robinson, of Lower Gazegill Farm, near Clitheroe, Lancashire, took centre stage on the Paul O'Grady show on October 15. While O'Grady's transvestite alter-ego didn't actually put in an appearance, the presenter was obviously charmed by Emma's traditional breed pigs and admitted to having some of his own. Viewers were shown a film of Emma's typical day on the farm, putting in the elbow grease from dawn 'til dusk, sometimes with baby in tow. Though admitting on air to being extremely nervous, Emma handled the live studio part of her ordeal very coolly and was a great ambassador for organic farming and Rural Women's Day, which she was there to promote. Well done, Emma! For the next two or three weeks you will be able to watch the show online at channel4.com. Look for the Paul O'Grady pages. Emma is in the last ten minutes of the programme on Oct 15 (in case you can't bear to watch it all...)

OF&G in the News

Our most notable media contribution since the last newsletter was an appearance on BBC Radio 4's Food Programme by Chief Executive, Richard Jacobs. The programme looked at the organic regulations, their impacts and recent developments, plus what they mean for consumers. Richard took part in a studio debate with the Soil Association charity's Patrick Holden. We have since received a number of compliments on Richard's contribution, not least for being straightforward and practical – which we always aim to be!

Staff News

It is with some sadness that we have to announce the imminent departure of producer Certification Officer, Jenny Bibb. Jen has been a highly valued member of the team since she joined us in 2004 and no doubt her licensees will miss her as much as we will! Jenny is leaving us to return to the sharp end of the business, managing a dairy herd. We wish her all the best for the future.

We have now advertised for a new trainee CO (see our website, or telephone for details) and hope to have a candidate of the right calibre in place as soon as possible.

Please make sure that you have updated your records to show our new contact details – we are still receiving mail and phone calls from our previous offices at the Elim Centre.