

Technical Newsletter



General News

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*assuring organic
standards*

Notice of OF&G Office Hours over the Christmas period

The office will be closed from 3pm Thursday 24th December through to 9am Monday 4th January 2010.

Emergency only telephone numbers are available during the above period for Richard Jacobs on 07974 256585 or Stephen Clarkson on 07929 623118.

Christmas message from the Chairman

As I write this the world is focusing on the environment and climate change at the UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen. I'm sure there will be opportunities to promote the organic message on the back of this, which could be very valuable as the economy hopefully starts to move out of recession. OF&G has organised two successful conferences this year to help raise the profile of the industry. The National Organic Cereals Event, aimed at the farming side of the industry, was extremely well attended. The Selling Organic event was aimed at the industry as a whole to develop our marketing. The incredible interest in both of these events showed how people believe in the future development of organics.

OF&G has had a stable year which I am very pleased with when we have all faced difficulties in the economy. There are also some good news stories from our licensees that have been reported in this newsletter or featured on our website.

On behalf of all the Directors and Staff at OF&G I would like to wish everyone a Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

Media Enquiries

We have had a very positive response to our call for licensees who are willing to be contacted regarding media enquiries. Our PR & Media Manager, Mark Waugh, is in the process of setting up a simple system that will allow us to contact interested licensees quickly by text message to let them know of opportunities for publicity.

OF&G does get fairly regular requests from various media for people in the industry who might be willing to tell their story or share an opinion. Sometimes these requests are quite specific, sometimes not. We are still open to anyone who would like to take part. It doesn't involve any obligation or cost on your part and anyone who does step forward in response to an enquiry is always welcome to talk through any concerns or issues with Mark before he puts the media in touch with them. If you are interested in being on the list, please email mark.waugh@organicfarmers.org.uk.



Licensee News

Change in feed percentage for Pigs and Poultry

Poultry and pig producers should be aware of an important change in feed regulations from the start of the New Year. As of January 1, 2010, the percentage of non-organic feed allowed in pig and poultry rations reduces from 10% to 5% of the agricultural ingredients, calculated on a dry matter basis. All producers must ensure that from this date they are feeding at least 95% organic.

This latest reduction is part of the drive to continually improve the organic standards in line with the organic ethos and consumer expectations. It is an important step and takes the pig and poultry sectors closer to the existing position for ruminants, which are already at 100% organic/in-conversion feed.

The final step to 100% organic/in-conversion rations for pigs and poultry will come at the beginning of 2012 and producers should bear this in mind as they plan for future feeding.

While the rules are fairly straightforward, please do not hesitate to contact your certification officer directly if you have any questions.

Use of nitrates and nitrites in meat processing

Some time ago we wrote in the newsletter about the impending review on the use of nitrates and nitrites in the curing and processing of organic meats.

The introduction of the new EU organic regulation in January 2009 included the following statement:

'The use of sodium nitrite and potassium nitrate are to be re-examined before the 31 December 2010. The re-examination shall take into account efforts made by member states to find safe alternatives to nitrites/nitrates and in establishing educational programmes in alternative processing methods and hygiene for organic meat processors/manufacturers.'

As part of Defra's investigations in August 2008 they wrote to all licensees who potentially use these products to request information. Unfortunately the information Defra have received has not been sufficiently comprehensive to forward to the European Commission. Following discussion with Defra they feel that if we are to retain the use of these products we must put together a comprehensive argument to keep them. This must take into account the recommendations in the new EU regulation (above) highlighting where efforts have been made to find safe alternatives and the conclusions reached following this. It is OF&G's view, based on advice from our own food scientist, Gabrielle Lanceley, 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.

As a result we are highlighting this issue again and requesting that any processor using these products contact either their OF&G certification officer or email Defra direct on organic.standards@defra.gsi.gov.uk.

EU Logo update - voting

Finally, all has been revealed regarding the contenders for the new compulsory, EU-wide organic logo. There are three shortlisted contenders and voting is now open to every EU citizen to make their selection. We won't comment here on what we think of the finalists, or which we prefer - but consensus in the office seems to be that there is only one obvious choice! Will it be 'the one' though??? Voting is open until the end of January. After that the logo has to be voted on and adopted by the Standing Committee on Organic Farming.

The final logo is scheduled to be introduced from July 2010, throughout the European Union. The use of the new logo will be compulsory for all pre-packaged organic products that originate in the 27 Member States and which contain 95% or more organic agricultural ingredients. It can be used on a voluntary basis on non-prepackaged organic products that originate from the EU or that are imported from third countries.

Please note that the EU organic logo cannot be used by our Cosmetic and Bodycare licensees or our Evaluation Scheme licensees.

But before licensees rush to change all their packaging and labels, there is a grace period until January 1, 2012, during which labels and packaging approved under the old EU regulation (which was replaced in January of this year) can be used up.

Over 3400 students representing all 27 EU Member States submitted their artwork in the EU organic logo competition. A panel of judges has selected the final three and voting is now open to all EU citizens until 31 January 2010. Go to http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/logo/index_en.htm

So please go online and vote for your favourite logo! For more details on labeling and other EU Regulation changes, view this page on our website: <http://www.organicfarmers.org.uk/regulation/index.php> and see our enclosed briefing sheet.

West Midlands Farm Health Planning

This programme will provide funding for farmers (in the West Midlands area) to work with their vet to prepare an active farm health plan which will identify key areas for improvement in animal health. Health plans will be grant funded at a rate of 80% with extra funding for sample collection and analysis. The plan will recommend a range of capital items which could be funded at a grant rate of 40% including livestock handling facilities, improvements to buildings, computer programmes and a range of other specialist livestock equipment.

To find out more, talk to your vet to find out if they are involved in the scheme or call Victoria on 01939 262106. This article was taken from the Shropshire Rural Hub Newsletter.

Licenses in the News

Liz is Director of the Year!

Licensee Liz Russell, of Envirosystems, has scooped the prestigious title of Director of the Year, as awarded by the North West branch of the Institute of Directors. Liz launched Envirosystems in 2001, with the aim of producing sustainable and affordable animal bedding. She was recognised by the IoD for overcoming significant hurdles in the development of the business and demonstrating the best qualities of a successful director. Our congratulations to Liz for this high-profile accolade.

TV stars abound

It's great to see our licensees aren't shy of the camera. Since only the last newsletter we've learned of at least three licensees who have been playing host to TV crews. Most notably, Jess Vaughan, of Hardwicke Farm, Gloucester, provided the backdrop to a long day's filming for the Hairy Bikers Christmas Special. The well-known TV cooks spent around 12 hours on the land with a sizeable crew, getting their festive offering "in the can". Jess said they were highly enthusiastic about the farm and its successful milk brand, Jess's Ladies.

Staff at the National Trust Wimpole Estate attracted quite some attention recently with the story of their open-air, non-flushing, recyclable, compostable, loo-with-a-view. In an enlightened move, the gardeners at Wimpole Hall, in Royston, Cambridgeshire, (the associated Wimpole Home Farm is converting to organic with OF&G) have installed their bales against a spare wall and the men use it in preference to the more traditional water closet. This led to a visit from the BBC which resulted in an interview on Radio Four's Today programme as well as video footage on the BBC News website.

And finally, as they say in the news, Diana and Paul Redgate, of Willey Wood Farm, in Moorgreen, Nottingham, had a visit from a film crew making cookery programmes for Sky. The couple were interviewed on their land before taking the presenter for a tour of their farm shop, which you can see for yourself at www.moorgreenfarmproduce.com.

They're no clots!

An OF&G licensee has won a prize at the Flavours of Hambleton Awards, which were established by the district council in 2004 to celebrate the best in food and drink in the area.

Angus and Sue Gaudie of Stamford Farm, West Rounton, North Yorkshire, won the prestigious Food Producer of the Year award.

The family produce traditionally made organic clotted cream and yoghurt using milk from their own dairy herd.

OF&G in the News

Since our last newsletter, in October, the main organic magazines have been published and we were delighted to see excellent coverage of our conference, Selling Organics: What's the Story. It was great to have the editors of both Natural Products (Jim Manson) and Organic & Natural Business (Rachel Symonds) at the event and they have both produced comprehensive and informative reports of the day. Natural Products devoted an entire page while Organic & Natural Business treated us to a double-page spread. Given that the main point of the day was to boost communication in the sector, this is invaluable coverage and we're grateful to both publications for being there and spreading the fascinating content of the day.

One of the topics for the conference was the OrganicUK bid to get EU match-funding for an industry-wide advertising campaign. That was the topic of extensive comments from our CEO, Richard Jacobs, in The Ranger magazine. The bid, by the way, exceeded its target of £250,000 in pledges by £10,000. Rather than resting on their laurels, however, the organisers have created a new target of £300,000 to make the campaign as powerful as it possibly can be. Well done to everyone who put their hands in their pockets!

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
Ingredients	Traditionally Harvested Sea Salt	Taviusa Lda	00 351 281 322 960	Approved	30/9/10
Plant Health Product	Legume Fix	Legume Technology Ltd	0115 966 3679	Approved	31/10/10
	Nature's Nitrogen	Legume Technology Ltd	0115 966 3679	Approved	31/10/10
	Prefixed	Legume Technology Ltd	0115 966 3679	Restricted	31/10/10
	Pea and Bean Booster	Legume Technology Ltd	0115 966 3679	Approved	31/10/10
Silage Additive	Axphast Gold	Biotal Limited	02920 475550	Approved	31/10/10
	Axcool Gold				
	Biohay				
	Wholecrop Gold				
	Wholecrop Legume				
	Biocrimp				
	Biograin				
	Maizecool Gold				
	Supersile				
	Biostable				
	Biostraw				
	Solomaize				
	Wholecrop Gold Mill				
	Axphast Gold Granular				
	Supersile Granular				
N-Hance	EM Effective Micro-Organisms Limited	01404 549000	Approved	31/10/10	
EM-1					
EM-Silage					
Soil Conditioner	Seer Rockdust	Rockdust Ltd	01877 382926	Restricted	31/10/10
	Seer Rockmix				
Vitamins & Minerals	DOSTO Mineral	Dostofarm GmbH	+49 4488 8459 0	Approved	30/9/10
	High Phos Mineral	SCA Nutek	01845 578125	Approved	30/9/10
	High Mag Mineral				
	Cattle GP Mineral				
	Sheep GP Mineral				
	High Phos Mineral				
	High Mag Mineral				
	Cattle GP Mineral				
	Sheep GP Mineral				