

## General News

### Hot Debate on Livestock Measures

There has been much debate since Christmas, much of it fuelled by spurious media reports, about possible measures to help out struggling organic livestock producers.

OF&G, along with the Soil Association, other certifiers and key industry stakeholders, have approached Defra to begin discussion on what, if any, steps might be suitable, or even possible, to alleviate the worst of the problems of a falling market and high feed costs.

We would like to emphasise that these are only discussions. It may be that any intervention would be inappropriate. Even if it was desired, it may not be possible under the EU Organic Regulation. OF&G fully appreciates that there are many aspects to this issue and we are sensitive to the concerns of both livestock and arable producers.

It has to be stressed that OF&G would not sign-up to or countenance any measures which could be construed as harmful to the integrity of the organic sector and we will, first and foremost, be looking to maintain the trust of your customers, for the benefit of everyone.

### All you need to know about processing certification

We're very pleased to unveil OF&G's new guide to processing certification. We think it's a very comprehensive booklet that takes readers step-by-step through the requirements of getting that all-important certificate.

Too often we hear of people being daunted by the process of being inspected and certified – and we're confident that this guide will remove the unjustified myths and fears about the process.

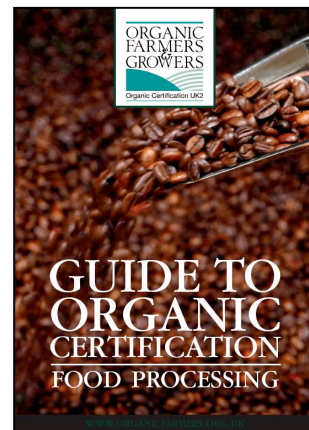
Having been professionally produced and carefully written and refined over a number of weeks by our expert team, it's probably the best publication we've ever produced. If you know of someone who is (or is contemplating) embarking on organic processing and could do with some hand-holding or just straightforward advice, please point them our way and we'll be delighted to put a copy in their hands.

### New Member of Staff

OF&G is delighted to welcome our newest recruit, Alex Patchett, as a Trainee Producer Certification Officer. As with all our COs, Alex comes from a background in the industry. His family farms at Brough, East Yorkshire, and he has studied at Reading University and gained a BSc in Agriculture and Business Management and a MSc in Rural Land and Business Management.

Alex says "I'm enjoying working at OF&G and learning about the organic sector. I hope to get to know as many licensees as possible".

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# TECHNICAL NEWS FOR PRODUCERS

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## Livestock eligible for sale as organic under the new EU Regulation.

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Following the last newsletter we have received a number of calls from licensees wishing to know if, under the new organic regulation, they can sell their adult animals as organic.

Under the new regulation if an animal was on the farm prior to the start of the conversion period the whole production unit (land and livestock) must undergo a simultaneous conversion for them to be able to be sold as organic. This would rule out most, if not all, dairy farms that have undergone conversion. However, it is our understanding that this rule will only affect farms that start conversion after the new regulation came into force on the 1/1/2009.

The OF&G board are discussing the issue above and we have requested further clarification from Defra.

## Part organic pullets

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It has been brought to our attention that some egg producers may be misinterpreting the status of eggs when purchasing 'part organic' pullets.

In the first instance an operator must try to obtain organic pullets, if these are purchased and a Certificate of Compliance and Schedule to the Certificate are obtained that specify organic pullets a conversion period will not be required and the eggs may be marketed as organic from point of lay.

If organic pullets cannot be purchased you are able to, with our prior approval, purchase 'part organic' pullets at up to 18 weeks of age. These are birds that have been hatched from a non-organic source but have been managed to the organic feed and veterinary standards.

Please note that these birds are **NOT ORGANIC** and must undergo a six week conversion under full organic management before the eggs may be marketed as organic.

If you have any queries please contact your certification officer.

# TECHNICAL NEWS FOR PROCESSORS

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## California Crop Improvement Association (CCIA)

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The National Organic Program (NOP) announced on December 19 that they have revoked the accreditation of the US accreditation company California Crop Improvement Association (CCIA). Auditing of the organic certifier had identified 10 deficiencies, of which CCIA was able to correct only four in the past year. The NOP is requesting that any organic operations using CCIA as their certifier quickly seek a new accredited certification agent. CCIA is barred from seeking reinstatement from the USDA for a period of three years. Operations certified by CCIA remain certified until certification is surrendered, suspended, or revoked. Properly certified and labeled products from CCIA certified operations are still eligible for sale as organic during this transition. If you are purchasing any products certified by CCIA, please contact your supplier to ensure that they are seeking a new accreditation body.

# EVENTS

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## Natural and Organic Products Europe

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Once again we will be attending Natural & Organic Products Europe, at Olympia, London, on 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> April.

This was a very positive event for us in 2008 in terms of both profile and the opportunity to meet with existing licensees and make new contacts. Once again we will be joined on our large stand by Trevarno Organic Skincare and Rebecca Raynor, of Glebe Farm, with her range of organic bread and cake mixes.

We have an opportunity for another licensee to take stand space and are making provision to put other licensee products and information on display. If you would like to have your products showcased on our stand for a very modest cost, please contact our Development Officer, Steven Jacobs, on 01939 292009 or email [steven.jacobs@organicfarmers.org.uk](mailto:steven.jacobs@organicfarmers.org.uk). We think this is a great opportunity at a leading show.

If you're going, please do drop by our stand and say 'hi' to the team.

## National Organic Cereals 2009 – a key date for your diary

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Following the huge success of our Contemplating Conversion arable event in 2008, we're repeating it in 2009 under the title National Organic Cereals 2009. We're aiming to make it an even bigger and better event and have already received pledges of support from a variety of key bodies. Once again we're working with Abacus Organic Services and demonstration plots have been planted for delegates to examine for themselves.

As before, the aim of the day will be to honestly examine the challenges and rewards of taking up organic arable production to meet UK demand. As well as providing advice and information we want to put people and organisations who can benefit each other in touch.

This year's event will be on July 9<sup>th</sup> at OF&G licensee John Pawsey's farm in Suffolk (David Alston Suffolk Ltd) and will involve many of the leading agricultural support and advice bodies, as well as machinery suppliers and consultants.

For more information or to book your place, contact OF&G Development Officer, Steven Jacobs, on 01939 292009 or email [arable@organicfarmers.org.uk](mailto:arable@organicfarmers.org.uk). We look forward to seeing many of you there and please pass this information on to your colleagues and neighbours who may be interested.

## LICENSEES IN THE NEWS

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It's been another busy time for many of our licensees who have been filling the airwaves and the news pages with their contributions. We can only report those we know about, so if you or your family members have made the headlines, please do let your CO know.

### True Taste of Wales Food and Drink Awards 2008/2009

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Some OF&G licensees have won prizes at the True Taste of Wales Food & Drink Awards 2008/2009:

- Welsh Farm Organics: True Taste Meat Product (Lamb) - Reserve Winner
- Beacon Foods: True Taste Speciality Products (Pre-packed & Convenience Foods) - Reserve Winner
- Slade Farm Organics: True Taste Organic Product - Reserve Winner

Also in the news.... As part of Farmhouse Breakfast Week (25-31 January 2009)...

Side Oven Bakery supplied croissants, artisan bread and honey toasted muesli to invited guests and dignitaries at a special Wolds breakfast hosted by Angela and John Foster of Field House Farm in Sewerby on 28th January

### Seed winners

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It's good news for two OF&G licensees who were entered into a draw run by Trevor Cope Seeds Limited. All purchasers of three varieties from the merchant in the spring had their names put into a metaphorical hat to scoop prizes of seed worth £2,000. Early in February OF&G was asked to pick three random numbers from an anonymised list and the lucky winners, as advised to us by Trevor Cope Seeds, are:

1<sup>st</sup> prize (2 tonnes of C2 Organic Armada spring barley): OF&G licensee, Sam Bradford, of Lewes, Sussex.

2<sup>nd</sup> prize (1.5 tonnes of C2 Organic Amaretto spring barley): OF&G licensee, John Aynsley, of Morpeth, Northumberland.

3<sup>rd</sup> prize (0.5 tonnes of C2 Organic Vok spring oats): SAFL licensee, Andrew Forster, of Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Congratulations to them all.

### Barkers become BBC regulars

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The Barker family, of Great Berwick, near Shrewsbury, have become a monthly fixture on BBC Radio Shropshire, which is following their progress throughout the year. This came about after we put journalist, Ian Perry, in touch with Sam Barker to talk about the state of the organic market. In the latest instalment, Sam, his wife Clare and dad, Steve, discuss the rejection of their organic potato crop by their multiple retailer buyer, even though members of the public, when presented with the spuds, said they would be happy to have them! This piece was, at the time of writing, also due to be used on BBC Radio 4's Farming Today.

The Barkers played host to our first organic arable event in 2008 and have built a great business selling their organic English Longhorn beef.

## National news for Noel

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Licensee Noel Marsh, of Dorchester, Dorset, took part in a film for BBC Breakfast news on the difficulties being faced by some livestock farmers at the moment. It was part of the piece our own Richard Jacobs took part in (see below) and Mr Marsh explained that feed costs were higher than he'd ever known them while demand for his milk was falling away.

## Top award for farmers and recyclers

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Nick Teagus, site manager for Chichester organic farmers and recyclers, The Woodhorn Group, scooped the Compost Site Manager of the Year Award from the National Association of Organics Recycling. The win was announced at the organisation's gala dinner in Birmingham.

Our congratulations go to Nick and the whole company (registered with us for farming and composting). You can read more about the win on our blog. Just follow this short link: <http://tinyurl.com/aqykvs>.

## Organic in the NFU

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In a feature looking at the impacts of the recession on organic farming, Farmers Weekly talked to two members of the NFU Organic Issues Group, including two OF&G licensees, John Pawsey and Peter Barton. John talks of a rocky-looking short term for organics, but emphasises that he's still better off as an organic farmer and stresses the need for controlling costs, managing resources and getting the product right for the market. Peter, who has built one of the biggest organic poultry operations in Britain, says that expansion plans have been put on hold, but is confident that his business can survive a serious downturn without laying off staff. He says the best thing the government can do for organic farmers is stop meddling!

## Making a splash

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It wasn't so much licensee Janet Corbett making the news as her terrier, Gibby, who was seen by thousands of Farmers Weekly readers climbing out of a water trough after taking the plunge to cool down. Gibby's picture made it into a collection of reader submissions in the magazine at the end of January. Apparently the tireless terrier needed to cool off after chasing the quad bike around.

## OF&G in the news

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It's been another very busy time in terms of keeping up OF&Gs' profile and responding to requests from various parts of the media for comment and contacts.

Most notably our Chief Executive, Richard Jacobs, was invited to the BBC Breakfast studio to discuss the debate that is underway on possible remedies for hard-pressed livestock farmers. In two appearances on the programme Richard explained why the discussion was being had and worked hard to clarify that the issue was not, and never would be, about any weakening of the organic standards. Appearing alongside Richard in one of his interviews was the founder of Planet Organic, Renee Elliot, who also did a sterling job of driving home the message about the protection of standards and helping to clear up some of the myths circulated by mainstream media.

Richard also did a live interview with Radio Five on the same morning, while he was at Television Centre.

Other media appearances and mentions since the last newsletter include: Radio 4's Farming Today, The Farmers Guardian, Farmers Weekly, The Organic Standard, The Fruit Grower, The Glasgow Herald, Eastern Daily Press, Foodnavigator.com, FWi.co.uk.

We are very interested in your news and experiences. Please tell us about your story. What is happening that is new or different in terms of your business? Subjects have previously included local events, crop variety, educational access, marketing cooperatives and even Newspaper, Radio and TV interviews.

Please contact Steven Jacobs, Research & Development Officer, OF&G

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