



ofgorganic.org



Newsletter

March 2024 Issue 152

General News

UK Organic - Crisis or Crossroads

While there have been recent press articles talking about the continued growth of the UK organic sector, the hard truth is that while consumer spending on food and drink overall in the UK between 2005 – 2022 has grown from £60bn to £105bn (75% growth in value), consumer spending on organic food and drink in the UK between 2005 – 2022 has grown from £2B to circa £3B (50% growth in value). This shows a decline from 3.3% to 2.8% share of total food and drink sales. Value 'growth' over the last two years has been due to businesses seeking cost recovery during a period of unprecedented (certainly in the last four decades) inflation. Circa 3.6% increase in sales value in the organic sector over 2022 and 2023 in the face of overall inflation on food and drink in the region of 13% over the same period, is not, one could argue, 'growth'.

Add to this the increasing level of competition from 'regenerative' and 'sustainable' brands like Regenagri, Wildfarmed and others who claim they can deliver the same 'outcomes' as organic but at a lower price point, and we know we have a fight on our hands.

Many within the sector recognise these twin challenges and many organisations across the sector have been doing their bit to try and communicate the advantages and promote organic more widely but the result has been a disconnected and scattergun approach, with the

consumer messaging about the specific benefits of organic changing on an almost monthly or quarterly basis. The hard reality is that no single organisation has the bandwidth or resources to truly promote the whole sector.

In other countries, where organic has had much better cut-through and consumer traction, what we see is collaborative groups like the Organic Trade Association in the US (<https://www.ota.com>) or Government supported sector wide representative bodies like L'Agence Bio in France (<https://www.agencebio.org/>) or Organic Denmark in Denmark (<https://www.organicdenmark.com/>).

The Netherlands government recently announced €26M to support organic. On a per capita basis that is equivalent to £88M in the UK. The fact is however, that the UK Government is not minded to initiate any funding (never mind £88M) so it is for the UK organic to sector to either collaborate and seek alternative funding (until Government does step in) or slowly lose relevance and return to its niche status.

There is an undoubted opportunity in the face of the existential human health and environmental challenges we face for organic to thrive but right now the UK sector is a multi-headed beast and paradoxically (in the face of everything) wracked by self-doubt and an apparent loss of confidence. So now is the time to rediscover our belief, learn from others who ARE

UK ORGANIC

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OF&G CIC
Old Estate Yard
Shrewsbury Road | Albrighton
Shrewsbury | Shropshire
SY4 3AG

01939 291 800

info@ofgorganic.org

ofgorganic.org

@ofgorganic

/organicfarmers

getting cut-through and find a new impetus and conviction. As Henry Ford famously said “If you always do what you’ve always done, you always get what you’ve always got”.

In the face of this analysis, the Organic Trade Board (which was formed in 2009 to arrest the decline in organic sales following the financial crash) has reviewed its status and objectives and is now set to reposition itself. Under the new name ‘UK Organic’ (UKO) and as a Community Interest Company its single aim is to become the “The marketing agency” for the UK organic sector on behalf of every single UK certified organic business.

In reality what does that mean? Well it means a few things

- 1) Everyone can be a member (fellow supporter) ; you don’t need to pay a fee to join, just register as a fellow. The key to this is getting as many people on board as possible to demonstrate that UK Organic is truly representative of the whole sector and there is an appetite to collaborate and drive the market forward.
- 2) For UK Organic’s operating costs it will seek funding from external stakeholders. UK Organic will use its new fund-raising capability and wider stakeholder profile/status to develop an alternative funding mechanism from trusts, HNW individuals, philanthropic foundations, etc to finance an independent (non-partisan), research, communications, branding, marketing and trade-facing team.
- 3) UK Organic will then seek

campaign and marketing funding from DEFRA, AHDB, EU and elsewhere to finance the “brand organic” marketing activity, raise awareness and create demand for certified organic products through a strategic and long-term commitment to a consumer activation and communication programme.

The aim is to communicate what organic is and consequently its value to consumers. If people understand organic’s USP then the likelihood to purchase rises exponentially!

4) There will also be the opportunity to become an Affiliate Fellow (which will require a funding commitment) for those businesses that want to undertake direct brand or sector-specific activation.

5) UK Organic also seeks to develop strategic trade plans with the retail sector to drive growth.

6) UK Organic, while not initiating this work, aims to support the introduction and adoption of labels and logos that better communicate the benefits of organic.

What UK Organic will not be doing is negotiating international equivalences, harmonising certification standards, setting organic policy or addressing supply chain failure.

In summary, in the absence of an aligned single message and years of fragmented and disparate activity, real terms sales are going backwards; retailers have switched off and there is little or no central government support for the sector. The good news is there is a plan which is to evolve

OTB into a new CIC organisation called UK Organic (UKO). The aim is for UKO to be ‘The marketing agency’ for the UK organic sector. UK Organic will work to align the organic sector, raise awareness of the benefits of organic and grow the sector in the UK. Funding will be innovative and different, with the ultimate aim being to secure central government support.

All organic certified businesses will be members and those that want to be can be more involved. There will be clarity over roles, effort and outputs and a single-minded purpose to create long-term consumer awareness, activation and a communication program that will engage retailers and trade and will grow the consumption and usage of organic products. There will be a strong trade and retail agenda creating momentum for promotion, ranging, trial and advocacy.

Finally – UK Organic will be a strong, non-competitive, not-for-profit and independent organisation that can operate in the interests of all, provide a space for consolidation of effort and activity in the sector, and if and when funding from Central Government is ever forthcoming, represent a non-competitive vehicle that can receive that funding and utilise it to everyone’s advantage.

We will be emailing you separately in the coming weeks with how you can sign up and show your support.

BASIS Course (September) 2024

<https://ofgorganic.org/events/basis-foundation-award-in-organic-farming>

In collaboration with the independent awarding body, BASIS and agronomy advisers Abacus Agriculture, we have announced 2024 dates for the Foundation Award in Organic Farming.

Open to all farmers and advisers looking to enhance their knowledge and expertise specific to organic systems, the qualification will act as a stepping-stone towards more advanced certifications in the future.

The award will provide a comprehensive introduction to organic farming and organic legislation, primarily crop and livestock production, soil management and conversion planning.

Candidates will complete five modules via training delivered in small groups, supported by independent study, over four days.

Successful completion of the training, followed with a written examination, will allow candidates to join the BASIS Professional Register of Organic Farmers and Advisers as associate members, which demonstrates a commitment to professional development in the organic sector.

The new dates are **24 to 27 September 2024** and the course will be held at the Royal Agricultural Showground at Stoneleigh.

If you would like to know more check our website article (link above) or email admin@ofgorganic.org

The BASIS logo features the word "BASIS" in a bold, green, sans-serif font. The letter "i" is stylized with a yellow dot above it. The logo is enclosed in a thin green rectangular border.

National Organic Conference 1-2 July 2024 - Food, Farming, Nature, Climate & People

<https://ofgorganic.org/events/national-organic-conference-1-2-july-2024>

The National Organic Conference has become the place where farmers, growers, researchers and food brands all come together to share experience and insight. Whether you are a longtime organic farmer or just starting to take the first few steps on that path, you are most welcome to come and join us.

The National Organic Conference 1-2 July 2024 will be held on Tim May's Kingsclere Estate in Hampshire. Tim is a fourth generation farmer based on the 2,500 acre Kingsclere Estate in Hampshire. The farm is biologically diverse but also the farm business is brimming with economic diversity. Tim sells grain through Organic Arable and is a Wildfarmed contract grower.

He is also trialling different crop varieties for the Organic Research Centre and Organic Arable. This year Tim also has varieties that are part of the new UK Grain Lab Diverse Cereal Seed project.

Tim May not only runs the farm but he also runs a project called Pitch Up! Tim started an initiative on the Kingsclere Estate in Hampshire to encourage new entrants to farming, while building an economically diverse and potentially a more resilient farm business. One of the successful 'Pitch Up!' businesses is the Roaming Dairy, run by Oliver Chedghey. Oliver also works with Sophie Alexander at Hemsworth Farm, just over the border in Dorset. And more recently Kingsclere have also partnered with the Balcaskie Estate in Fife.

On Monday 1 July with our partners Organic Arable, the Organic Growers Alliance, UK Organic, and the UK Grain Lab, we will be hosting fringe events that afternoon, gathering together for a meal in the evening.

On Tuesday 2 July we will hold the usual NOC - talks in the morning followed by a two-course lunch prepared by Aimee Collins of the prestigious and highly decorated restaurant Five Little Pigs. As always the NOC lunch will be followed by the NOC farm walk.

This year we are very pleased to announce that for the NOC farm walk we will be joined by the British Grassland Society who will be starting their three day summer tour at Kingsclere. More details very soon.

If you want to take part please contact OF&G Business Development Manager and event co-ordinator, Steven Jacobs.



Precision Bred Organisms

The Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act was passed by Parliament in March 2023.

We have been updating you via our newsletter to help people understand our position and the work we're doing in order to protect the integrity of organic supply lines.

Working with colleagues across the UK over the last three years we have been building a dialogue and putting the case for better regulation on an iteration of genetically modified organisms that some in government and industry want to place into the food system.

Precision Bred Organisms, also referred to as PBOs, is a classification Defra ministers have created and relates directly to a form of genetic engineering that involves what is often called 'gene editing'.

More on the details of the science here -

As we have reported in previous newsletters, the new Genetic Technology act doesn't only remove regulatory control from 'Precision Bred' plants and animals; it also removes such control from almost all types of genetically engineered crops and foods, including those resulting from the insertion of foreign genetic material (old style GMO).

OF&G continues to express concerns around the regulation and the release of new GE material into what is already a depleted environment. Any new technology

carries risk and using a technology designed to artificially disrupt the genetic material of an organism on products that people will eat without a rigorous, transparent and independent assessment framework carries obvious risks.

The Food Standards Agency is now engaged in building a framework to deliver new food products containing these new GMOs. OF&G along with organic colleagues from other organisations are continuing in our efforts to help the FSA recognise the need for organic businesses to be protected against contamination which could risk those operators being able to continue trading under organic licence.

We will keep posting updates in our newsletter and at www.ofgorganic.org.

If you have any concerns, comments or questions regarding genetic technology and its use in food and farming in general, and specifically on organic integrity - then please contact our business development manager, Steven Jacobs.

Further reading:

- [The facts about CRISPR-Cas](#)
- [OF&G response to FSA PBO/GMO consultation](#)

OF&G and Organics in the News

Ooooby Announces A Colossal Competition Worth Over £10,000

www.oooby.com/competition

A company that champions small scale farming celebrates their 15th year in 2024 and has just announced a £10,000 prize pot up for grabs - entirely gathered to support the industry they love.

Ooooby (which stands for Out Of Our Own Backyards) provides an online platform to over 100 farms and food hubs in the UK to help them grow and nurture their business and sell directly to customers in a fuss free and efficient way.

With prizes from Jean-Martin Fortier's Market Gardener's Institute as well as his new Heirloom software, membership to the Organic Growers Alliance and Better Food Traders, subscriptions to Permaculture Magazine, tickets for Groundswell and FarmEd's Farm Walks, tools from ReAg Tools, a hotline to Marketing Support, a screening of Six Inches of Soil and 6 months of FREE Ooooby Software.

Winners will even get members of the Ooooby team visiting to get their hands dirty and help on site!

That's a total of 135 prizes that 15 lucky

winners can get their hands on!

The prize pots will be split into three categories - Entrant, Expanding and Ooooby, giving all levels of businesses a chance to win.

To enter the competition, people need to record a video designed to be published on Instagram that shines a light on the small-scale farming industry. It can be inspiring, funny, motivational, thought provoking - it just needs to be creative and designed to fuel conversation!

Videos are to be a maximum of 5 minutes long and MUST be filmed in portrait format.

Deadline for entries is the 19th April 2024.

Be sure to follow them on Instagram to keep up to speed as the competition develops - [@ooobyHQ](https://www.instagram.com/ooobyHQ)

Roger Kerr, chief executive at OF&G writes in Tech Farmer Magazine, a publication from Direct Driller

Roger highlights the real problem with genetically engineered material is that a release into the environment cannot be withdrawn, the material will have pervaded the environment. He makes it very clear therefore, that the precautionary principle must be strongly adhered to.

Article: - <https://directdriller.com/feeding-the-world-or-seeding-unknowns/>

Full magazine: - <https://s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/files.thefarmingforum.co.uk/DirectDriller+Tech+Farmer+Magazine+Issue+26.pdf>



If you are involved in an event please let Steven know and we can add it to our list to share via the newsletter and online at ofgorganic.org

steven@ofgorganic.org

Defra / EOF Organics Policy Forum launched

The English Organic Forum (EOF) has been working with Defra to establish an Organics Policy Group to open a dialogue across the sector and with policy makers to share understanding of the challenges and opportunities to develop organic in England. This was launched at a meeting at Defra on 6 March. A Programme of Work was discussed that will form the basis of an implementation plan for specific actions to deliver the objectives of the Group. It is intended that the Group will increase the visibility of the organic sector within government, amongst environmental NGOs, with citizens and with consumers. The Group will support the organic sector in forward thinking and future development in the medium and long term to create a reformed and shared vision for organics.

The Programme of Work outlines four themes:

- Support and stimulation of organic production.
- Organic market development.
- Developing organic farming practice for environmental, climate adaptation and productivity goals.
- Develop organic regulation and ensure equivalence.

A number of specific actions are close to finalisation, with the output, outcome and impact of each defined. It is intended that the required work will be undertaken by the organic sector working in partnership with Defra. The EOF will establish close working relationships with those willing and able to support the work.

A key objective is to ensure that organic farming is recognised as a viable approach to meet the Government's environmental objectives; also that appropriate policy continues to be implemented and further developed so that organic farmers can provide 'public goods'. This will be matched by facilitating an increase in the supply of organic products and improving the public's understanding of what organic stands for and how it delivers - for the environment, for animal welfare and for human health.

As the Group starts its work, OF&G will remain actively involved and looks forward to working with the organic sector through the English Organic Forum.

Putting organic front and centre – OF&G and SA adopt collaborative approach

As the two biggest organic certifiers in the UK, OF&G and the Soil Association have worked together to shine a light on the positive outcomes that organic delivers.

This latest collaboration has led to the development of a series of infographics that clearly position organic's restorative approach within the context of other farming systems.

The graphics have been produced in response to increasingly confusing and conflated messaging currently being promoted in the media and wider industry. The aim is to provide greater clarity by identifying the differences and commonalities between alternative farming practices.

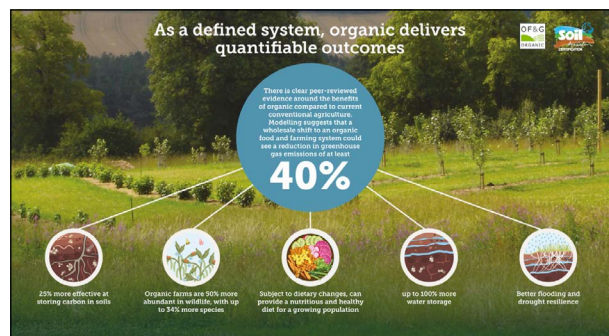
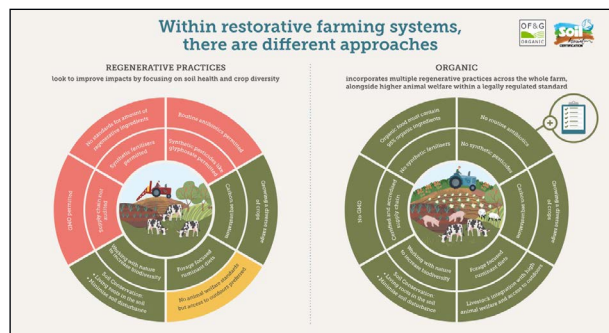
We believe the work provides a useful reference and framework for anyone working in the sector.

We continue to take a pragmatic approach to how best to support our organic licensees and engage with other interested parties.

Our intention is to create some reference materials that demonstrate how organic tackles the fundamental challenges that our food systems and environment face.

For over 70 years, the organic movement has been the conscientious objector to today's exploitative farming practises. It is frustrating that it has come to this. Continuing to feed people in the face of climate change, biodiversity collapse, high levels of pollution and deforestation is a complex problem, and complex problems require versatile and multifaceted solutions... like ORGANIC.

<https://ofgorganic.org/news/putting-organic-front-and-centre-of-g-and-sa-adopt-collaborative-approach>



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Homeopathy at Wellie Level - 2024 Course Dates

<https://www.hawl.co.uk/courses>

The HAWL Farm Homeopathy Foundation Course is designed for farmers and smallholders who want to learn the responsible use of homeopathy on the farm.

HAWL Online Course

Location: Online
Next start date: 5 June 2024
Start time: 11am (UK local time)
Sessions: 7 x four-hour sessions

HAWL Attendance Course

Location: Tetbury, England
Next start date: 25 September 2024
Start time: 9am (UK local time)
Sessions: 3 x full-day sessions over 6 weeks

Agroforestry Open Weekend

17-20 May 2024

A great opportunity for farmers, campaigners, politicians, environmentalists and others to see agroforestry in action!

In 2021 6 farms took part. In 2022 there were 10. In 2023 it was 37 across the UK, Ireland and beyond. Each was open and welcoming visitors for part of the weekend.

Anyone with an area of agroforestry planting who would like to join in – see the information here (<https://agroforestryopenweekend.org/uncategorized/farms/>) about what's involved or contact info@agroforestryopenweekend.org

Shows/Events OF&G attending

The Royal Highland Show : 20 - 23 June

Groundswell : 26 - 27 June

The Royal Welsh Show : 22 - 25 July

What are the key differences between regenerative agriculture and organic farming?

A recent RSPB study revealed that 56% of adults want UK farmers to prioritise nature-friendly farming. In the face of the UK's massive biodiversity loss, this figure should be much higher. But with a growing lexicon of buzzwords being used to describe farming practices that aim to preserve the environment, what's the best approach?

Regenerative agriculture and organic farming focus on an environmentally benign approach. Having gained traction in recent years, the term 'regenerative farming' is being championed by numerous industry stakeholders and influencers as a 'catch all' phrase. While there are some excellent regenerative initiatives, there is a distinct lack of clarity around what 'regenerative' actually means. This muddies the water, creating confusion and potentially unleashing wholesale greenwashing by businesses seeking to capitalise on the term's new-found popularity. However, there is an obvious choice to be made. Organic makes a hugely compelling case as the most robust and legitimate way to farm sustainably. We examine the key differences between organic and regenerative farming.

Organic farming is upheld by legally binding standards

Firstly, organic farming has well-established and internationally recognised certification standards. These standards outline specific requirements for soil health, pest and disease management, and the avoidance of synthetic chemicals. The standards ensure a clear and consistent approach to organic farming practices. Regenerative agriculture lacks a standardised certification system. While there are principles and practices associated with regenerative agriculture, the absence of a widely recognised certification makes it impossible to verify and compare regenerative practices across different farms.

Organic's legally binding production standards are clearly defined in black and white. This is in stark contrast to regenerative's conspicuously grey areas.

Organic licensees undergo annual audits

Hand-in-hand with the standards is organic's regulation of its licensees. Every single organic farmer delivers tangible and measurable improvements that are officially verified. There are no such inspections for regenerative farming. OF&G's regular audits ensure that organic standards are applied on all our organic farms and food businesses across the UK.

Can you use synthetic inputs in regenerative farming?

Yes. For those at the back - YES you CAN use synthetic inputs in regenerative ag. While a reduced reliance on agrochemicals is encouraged, they are NOT strictly prohibited. So the soil is still being damaged, whichever way you look at it. Regenerative's limited use of synthetic inputs creates ambiguity. It's also massively contentious for anyone seeking a 'pure' holistic farming approach.

Organic farming forbids the use of synthetic pesticides, fungicides, herbicides and fertilisers. This strict avoidance of synthetic inputs is a fundamental aspect of organic farming, contributing to reduced environmental pollution, the promotion of natural processes and ultimately better human health.

Is organic food better for you?

Did you know that there are detectable levels of herbicides and pesticides in most people's bodies? It's a scary thought, considering these residues can be incredibly harmful as they impact our bodies' gut microbiome and lead to the production of abnormal chemicals.

In his video 'The Truth about organic food' Professor Tim Spector's presents compelling evidence that supports the health benefits of organic food. A study in France reveals a 25% reduced risk of cancer in people who consumed organic food. Epidemiology studies also showed high exposure to glyphosate led to an increased risk of cancer, and a particularly strong link to Non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

Organic food has, on average, more beneficial minerals and fewer toxic minerals. Interestingly, organic fruit and veg also contain 30-40% more polyphenols, the natural defence chemicals found in plants. This indicates that non-organic produce is like 'a giant sumo baby' that has little resilience to its environment as it is dependent on agrochemical inputs for survival. Buying organic is a way to ensure you're getting a better quality product, that's better for your body and better for the environment.

Regenerative and organic farming focus on soil health

Organic farming emphasises the enhancement of soil health through practices like crop rotation, cover cropping, and the use of organic additives such as compost and manure. The organic standards specifically address soil health and require farmers to adopt practices that maintain or improve soil fertility.

Regenerative agriculture also prioritises soil health but it does not have detailed, standardised guidelines to follow. While regenerative practices can contribute to soil health, there is significant variation, with little or no oversight from external auditors.

Organic has an established market presence

The global organic food market is worth over £135bn vs. £6.9bn value of the regenerative agriculture market. Globally organic has been having an impact for decades and there is consistent demand for organic products. Regenerative agriculture, being a more recent and evolving concept, is facing challenges in terms of market recognition. The absence of a widely recognised label makes marketing products as 'regenerative' much more problematic.

Is regenerative agriculture a 'wolf in sheep's clothing'?

The answer to this question depends very much on who's making the claims for regenerative farming! Without regulation, regen ag is exposed to the superficial adoption of practices. This lack of transparency and vulnerability to exploitation raises the biggest concerns. Claiming to support regenerative agriculture by highlighting a few environmentally friendly practices, when the majority of products and practices still involve the heavy reliance on synthetic pesticides and fertilisers, wholly contradicts the supposed holistic principles of regenerative farming.

What is regenerative greenwashing?

Greenwashing is a practice where companies, including those in the agrochemical sector, attempt to portray their products or practices as more environmentally friendly or sustainable than they are in reality.

This is concerning in the context of regenerative farming, where genuine efforts to improve sustainability might be undermined by deceptive marketing and agrochemical corporations' ability to influence policy and regulation. Misleading labelling and product claims are incredibly worrying, as they undermine the integrity of regenerative principles. While presenting themselves as 'champions of sustainability', many large agrochem businesses may at best dilute the true impact of regenerative practices; and in the worst-case scenario, subvert it. They are frequently part of the problem.

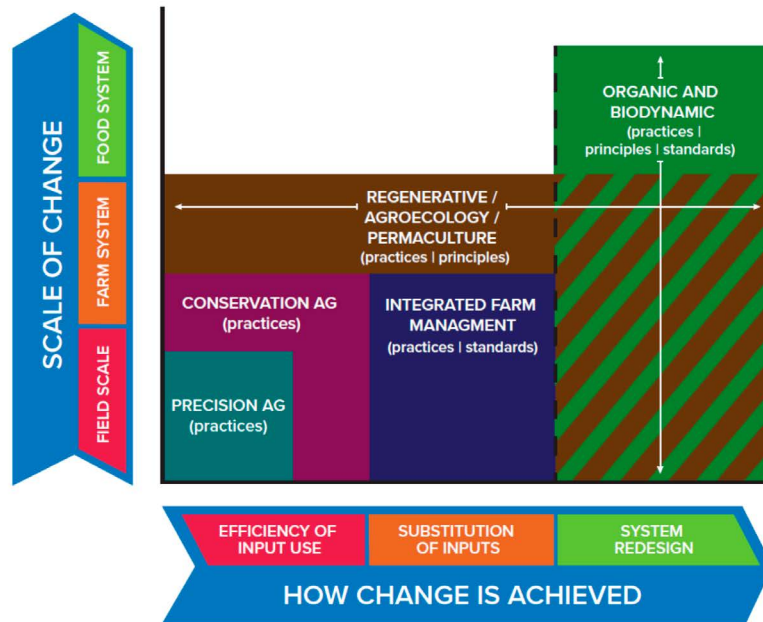
It is therefore essential to critically evaluate claims made by companies, particularly in the agrochemical sector. After all, most of us want to see and believe we deserve transparency throughout the entire supply chain. In a bid to help distinguish genuine regenerative efforts from instances of greenwashing, the EU has given the green

light to ban misleading environmental claims. We urge our Government to follow suit.

Organic is regenerative... and more

There is a clear correlation between organic and regenerative in terms of practices, outputs, impact and intent. But organic sets benchmark standards for advanced regenerative farming and deserves acknowledgement for this. Organic producers undertake regenerative practices, day in day out, well beyond the clear and legally binding organic production standards. Instead of relying on chemical inputs, organic farmers and growers adopt management practices that build and enhance natural soil fertility with the application of organic matter, green manures and long-term crop rotations; controlling weeds, pests and diseases through mechanical weeding, variety choice and by encouraging natural predators.

In the face of significant climate and biodiversity challenges, organic provides a holistic and multi-dimensional approach that delivers tangible benefits. In addition, the legally binding organic standards already enshrine regenerative principles.



SFI Update to OF&G Technical Leaflet 130

OF&G Technical Leaflet 130 was published in September 2023 and outlined how the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) and Countryside Stewardship (CS) can work to support the delivery of public goods by organic farmers. The paper, prepared by William Waterfield of the Farm Consultancy Group, outlined how the SFI options and CS schemes could operate on two case-study organic farms, each 210 ha (the average size of organic farms certified by OF&G). One is a predominantly livestock farm, the other predominantly arable. Both farm types ensure a nutrient balance through a diverse rotation including legume-based pastures and green manures for fertility building.

In January 2024 Defra announced increased payment rates for some SFI options, and introduced additional options. The OF&G Technical Leaflet has been revised in the light of these changes (see the Useful Info section of the OF&G website for the updated version). The financial support provided to organic farmers by these policies, aimed at supporting the delivery of public goods, has increased slightly and more than replaces the income lost from the Basic Payment Scheme. A greater increase is seen in the returns to the predominantly arable model organic farm.

Market Reports

Grain Prices: Courtesy of Andrew Trump, Organic Arable

I have been accused of being rather bleak in outlook in this update about the arable sector but my mood reflects that of many arable producers at present. The continuous wet weather has created significant challenges in crop establishment this spring with only one producer so far as I'm aware having drilled anything. Usually by mid-March people would be cracking on and perhaps 50+% drilled. Worse still water-logged soils have adversely affected a proportion of the winter drilled crops some areas will hopefully recover as dried, warmer weather comes but these winter crops have not developed much biomass over the winter and would probably be re-drilled in a usual year. Finally, last year's wet harvest affected seed quality making seed both scarce and expensive this Spring with prices remaining at similar levels to last year despite the grain price on which the seed premium is determined being about £100 lower. To show some positivity those winter

crops that have not drowned are looking well although in our trials we are seeing some indications of Extase carrying some yellow rust.

The organic feed market remains well supplied with mills reporting good cover in the nearby positions making spot sales challenging. There remains demand for good quality milling wheat but most of this is now sold and available volumes are low. Values are about £260 - £270 ex farm for feed wheat with barley and oats at a discount. Feed wheat and feed oats remain in good supply whilst feed barley is tighter as mills have increased usage this year to help use carried over stocks.

see <https://www.organicarable.co.uk/arable> for more information. Please keep an eye on our blog www.organicarable.co.uk/blog

01638 744144 / 07980 955490 @organicarable

Organic Livestock Trends: OLMC

ORGANIC STORE REPORT

The cattle and sheep trade continue to be very strong and organic producers will be enjoying good prices for the stock they produce. The wet weather continues although longer milder days surely herald the much-needed arrival of spring.

Beef producers will have seen the first of this year's calves appear and this focuses our attention on breeding cattle for next year. I would remind beef producers as I have on numerous occasions in these newsletter's to carefully consider the genetics of their breeding herd.

Cross breeding and the benefits of hybrid vigour are an important tool to increase profitability. The quality of the terminal sire for beef production and for the replacement heifers require careful consideration.

Fertility also, is of importance to the financial return from suckler herds and maintaining a young high fertility herd is important and achievable. The high cull cow prices surely leave no excuse to retaining old cows that are past their best.

The reduction in the number of organic suckler herds is of concern, the reason behind this is largely due to lack of profitability, with careful management and planning low yielding suckler herds can be turned round into a viable enterprise.

The price of store cattle is likely to remain very strong, in most areas the ground is still too wet to turn cattle out, this will change in the next three to four weeks and we could well see a further lift in prices. The finished lamb trade is nothing short of extortionary and producers that purchased store lambs in the Autumn are being justly rewarded for their efforts in a very wet winter and ending up with some phenomenal prices for hogs.

As always, we are available for advice or simply just a second opinion, whether it be on breeding, husbandry, planning or marketing of your cattle or sheep enterprises.

Contact the office on 01829 730580 or:

Peter Jones: 07720 892922

David Bostock; 07734 808050

OLMC FINISHED STOCK

Organic Prime Beef Cattle

The continued drop off in numbers of prime finished cattle has certainly helped fuel the strong trade. The increase in kill numbers required in order to meet the Easter holiday was a challenge for some abattoirs, instigating a positive price push in order to acquire their weekly needs. The numbers of cattle coming forward are certainly dwindling, with shorter supplies we could assume that higher prices are here for a while.

The general quality of cattle coming through OLMC is very good, some lighter but well finished beast, but on the whole meeting specifications.

Average R4L Organic UTM in spec @ 580p/kg deadweight

Organic Cull Cows

Cow prices have continued to rise in the first quarter, the prices are now approaching the peak of last year. A steady demand for organic processing meat and lower numbers of organic cull cows is likely to help sustain this current trade.

Average R4L Organic OTM Cow in spec @ 410p/kg deadweight.

Lamb

The Continued wet weather has challenged lamb finishers, numbers coming forward have been erratic and not balancing the increasing demand as we draw towards the Easter holidays. The resultant acceleration in price has seen lambs realising record returns. With still a way to go until we see the new crop, prices are expected to remain strong.

Higher prices and the time of year can often be a catalyst for producers to dump out of specification lambs on to the

market, the quality of lambs OLMC is currently marketing remains very good and sought after by our abattoir customers.

Average R3L organic OSL in spec @ 840p/kg

Finished Stock Marketing office: 01763 250313 /

olmc@olmc.co.uk

Tim Leigh: 07850 366404 / James Doel: 07741 248928

Organic Dairy Report: Courtesy of Rob Daykin, Daykin Partnership Ltd.

Organic on the up, but volumes remain well down

Things are looking up for organic farmers, it seems after a pretty torrid 2023 (apart from the weather that is, which isn't doing any aspect of farming any good!)

Sales have taken a beating over the last two years or so – not least because organic dairy products cost around 18% more than conventional, according to AHDB. It is no wonder people have traded down.

While it is hard to get an exact grip on the fall in sales of organic dairy products the most recent and reliable data shows that organic milk sales have dropped 14% and yogurt dropped 16%. Together these products account for 97% of organic milk sales. Organic cheese sales fell 18%. Separately Arla has reported that sales of its organic brand declined 7.1% in 2023, due to consumers trading down and shifting towards private label. More recently though, it has stated that “conventional and organic markets continue to pick up” and that “as we move through the first quarter of 2024 a stable market outlook will be welcomed by our farmer owners.” So good news there.

This positivity has resulted in rising prices for organic milk, with Arla increasing in March, and Muller and the Organic Herd for April. The latter is now paying 50ppl, with Muller at 48.5p and Arla at 45.46p for a standard litre, although with milk quality being extremely high most Arla farmers in particular will be getting several pence more than the base price. That aside the average standard litre is just a touch under 48p now – the highest price for a year now.

And the prospects are for these prices to remain at such levels, as the Organic Herd is reporting “sustained growth in demand for the co-operative’s high quality organic milk in particular from its UK dairy processor customer base”. On the back of this, and a significant fall in milk volumes during the downturn which saw many organic farmers convert back to conventional as they couldn’t make organic pay, Organic Herd has launched a drive to grow its milk pool by encouraging existing members to produce more and through the “selective recruitment” of new members across the UK. Sales of its organic cheddar brands in major export markets are growing on the back of better sales, and new partnerships are developing with those seeking certified PWAB (Produced Without Antibiotics) milk, the firm reports. Organic herd is the UK’s only dedicated source of that for export. There is little doubt that other companies will not want to lose any more organic farmers to Organic Herd, so will be trying to keep their farmers happy.

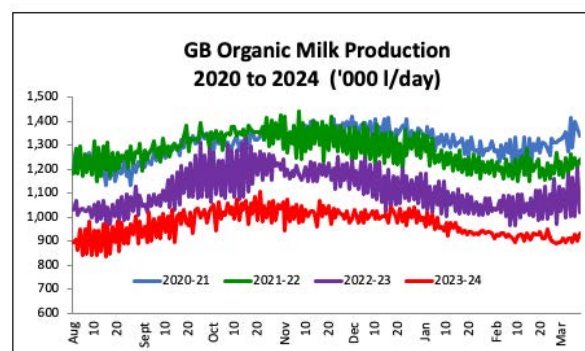
While milk prices continue to climb, feed prices continue to fall with all of the main feed ingredients falling, and freight costs also down. It means the Milk Price:Feed Price Ratio is just under 1, which is the best it has been since 2019. On the back of this farmers can afford to feed cows properly, rather than to a budget, but it’s hard to see it stimulating additional milk at these prices.

Nevertheless milk volumes are better this year than last year – marginally! Currently volumes for the last 50 days are down 12.6% on the previous year. This time last year volumes were down 12.8%!

The last time we produced more than 1m litres in a day was in the first week of January, for example. In 2023 there were only three days where we had produced less than that volume in a day, and there were no days at all in 2022. It’s little wonder some companies are recruiting!

01327 264962 / 07815 741547

rob@daykinpartnership.co.uk



AHDB

Become the next AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds Monitor Farm

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As a Monitor Farm, you will work in collaboration with your regional AHDB Knowledge Exchange Manager to host four to five meetings each year for three years.

Your farm will serve as a case study for discussions to centre around and topics will be decided by you.

AHDB will then support your ideas by sourcing industry experts and facilitating events.

Interested?

For full details of what it means to be Monitor Farm and to apply, visit: ahdb.org.uk/monitor-farms



OF&G policy activity - what we have been up to

SJ - Steven Jacobs / CS - Christopher Stopes

| NAME | ACTIVITY | DATE | COMMENT |
|------|--|-------------|-----------|
| CS | Pesticide Collaboration meeting | 01/02/24 | Online |
| CS | Defra Account Management | 02/02/24 | Online |
| CS | Defra Farming & Countryside Programme Update | 05/02/24 | Online |
| CS | Defra Farming & Countryside Programme Update from NFU conference | 20/02/24 | Online |
| CS | SA Certification Organic Market Report Launch | 22/02/24 | Online |
| CS | RSPB Fair to Nature and organic standards | 29/02/24 | Online |
| CS | Defra / EOF Organics Policy Group meeting | 06/03/24 | In person |
| CS | UK Organic (OTB) Find Better - Look for Organic meeting | 14/03/24 | In person |
| CS | Wildlife & Countryside LINK Agriculture Group | 14/03/24 | Online |
| CS | Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy | 18/03/24 | In person |
| SJ | IFOAM Organics Europe Farmers Group | 01/02/24 | Online |
| SJ | Organic Growers Alliance | 06/02/24 | Online |
| SJ | NFU Organic forum, Stoneleigh | 08/02/24 | In person |
| SJ | BioFach (Organic trade fair and conference), Germany | 14-16/02/24 | In person |
| SJ | Welsh Govt Agriculture Industry and Climate Change Forum (AICCF) | 21/02/24 | Online |
| SJ | Agroecological Group - Fruit and Veg Alliance | 22/02/24 | Online |
| SJ | IPSOS: Understanding your views on the FSA | 23/02/24 | Online |
| SJ | LWA: The Agroecology Learning Collective | 23/02/24 | Online |
| SJ | UK Grain Lab | 28/02/24 | Online |
| SJ | IFOAM OE Comms Hub | 29/02/24 | Online |
| SJ | National Organic Conference - Site visit | 04/03/24 | In person |
| SJ | Low Carbon Ag Show, Stoneleigh | 07/03/24 | In person |
| SJ | Sustainable Food Cymru | 11/03/24 | Online |
| SJ | Organic Arable summit, Eastbrook | 13/03/24 | In person |
| SJ | UK Grain Lab, Wakelyns, Suffolk | 16-18/03/24 | In person |
| SJ | Shropshire Organic Gardeners, Albrighton, Shropshire | 19/03/24 | In person |
| SJ | Food Standards Agency board meeting, Leeds | 20/03/24 | In person |
| SJ | IFOAM OE Comms hub | 21/03/24 | Online |
| SJ | NFU Agriculture and Land Use Alliance Meeting | 22/03/24 | Online |
| SJ | OGA AGM, Parkmill, Wales | 23-24/03/24 | In person |

Open Farm Sunday; 18 years in the making and open to all in 2024

This year Open Farm Sunday celebrates its 18th anniversary with a focus on encouraging more farmers to open their gates, tell their unique stories and put farming centre stage.

Taking place on 9 June 2024, the farming industry's annual open day aims to build trust, connect people, and promote the value of farming with nature.

Open Farm Sunday Manager, Annabel Shackleton, says; "Every farm's story deserves to be heard, appreciated, and understood. Whatever the scale or type of event you choose to organise, every event matters and every farm can benefit from being involved."

To actively support farmer engagement, LEAF's 2024 Open Farm Sunday campaign includes a series of online Zoom meetings between 27 March and 22 May to provide additional support across a range of topics. From 'where to start' and 'managing visitor numbers' through to 'last minute

questions and support,' these 30-minute presentations are followed by a 15-minute Q&A session. Visit the OFS website to register. <https://farmsunday.org/>

A flagship event in the farming calendar, Open Farm Sunday brings together organisations from across the supply chain to demonstrate what goes into producing nutritious food while farming with nature and managing the countryside.

"This is an open invitation to farmers to get involved. By working together, we can really showcase every aspect of British farming," concludes Mrs Shackleton.



Approved Inputs

A full list of approved inputs appears on our website <https://ofgorganic.org/useful-info/approved-suppliers>

Updated approved inputs

| SUPPLIER | WEBSITE / EMAIL | CATEGORY |
|--|---|--|
| Realistic Agri Ltd | https://www.realisticagri.com/ | Processing Aids |
| Agrimin Ltd | https://www.agrimin.co.uk/ | Vitamins, minerals and trace elements, |
| GreenBest Ltd | http://www.greenbest.co.uk/ | Fertilisers |
| Unium Bioscience Ltd | https://www.uniumbioscience.com | Fertilisers |
| Russell Bio Solutions Ltd | https://russellbio.net | Insect Control, Fertilisers, Soil Conditioners |
| Celtic Sea Minerals | http://celticseaminerals.com/ | Vitamins, minerals and trace elements, Fertilisers |
| Strathclyde Nutrition Ltd | https://www.strathclydenutrition.com/ | Vitamins, minerals and trace elements, |
| AZ Global Solutions Ltd | azglobalsolutionslimited@gmail.com | Vitamins, minerals and trace elements |
| Soil Fertility Services Limited | http://www.independentsoils.co.uk/ | Plant Health Product, Soil Conditioners, Animal Feed Additives, Slurry Treatment |
| Premier Nutrition | https://www.premiernutrition.co.uk/ | Animal Feed Supplements |
| Blackthorn Salt | https://www.blackthornsalt.co.uk/ | Ingredients |
| W Neudorff GmbH KG | https://www.neudorff.de/ | Pest Control, Fertilisers, Insect Control |
| LKAB Minerals Ltd | https://www.lkabminerals.com/en/products/calcifert/ | Soil Conditioners |
| Thomson & Joseph Ltd | http://www.tandj.co.uk/ | Fertilisers |
| Sylgen Animal Health Ltd | https://sylgenanimalhealth.com/ | Slurry Treatment |
| Aiva Limited | https://www.aivafertiliser.co.uk/ | Plant Health Products, Slurry Treatment |
| ICL UK Sales | https://polysulphate.com | Fertilisers |
| Devenish Nutrition | https://www.devenishnutrition.com/ | Vitamins, minerals and trace elements |
| Kelvin Cave Ltd | https://kelvincave.com/ | Silage Additive |
| PCS Poultry Services Ltd | https://www.fossilshield.com/ | Insect Control |
| Mineral Guard Europe Sp z o.o. | https://mineral-guard.com.pl/ | Additives |
| Abundigro | https://www.abundigro.com/ | Fertilisers, Soil Conditioners |
| Gwen's Den | https://www.gwensden.co.uk/ | Fertilisers |
| SB Osypenko | http://biogel.com.ua/ | Fertilisers |
| Microferm Ltd | https://www.microferm.co.uk/ | Animal Feed Additives, Silage Additive, Plant Health Products, Slurry Treatment |

Recently awarded approved inputs

| SUPPLIER | WEBSITE / EMAIL | CATEGORY |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| Citadel Environmental Solutions (UK) Ltd | http://www.cb-biostimulant.com/ | Animal Health Product |