



ofgorganic.org



Newsletter

July 2020 Issue 130

General News

V-NOCC20

OF&G National Organic Combinable Crops 2020 was due to take place at John Pawsey's Shimpling Park Farm in Suffolk on 7 July.



However, in light of the COVID-19 restrictions we organised a series of online events for this year, but will revert to NOCC in its more traditional form next year, again at John Pawsey's farm.

OF&G partnered with the AHDB and Agrigology and together we hosted a short series of webinars.

In the first webinar in the V-NOCC webinar series OF&G business development manager Steven Jacobs chaired a panel discussion on crop varieties and seed breeding.

- **Seeds and Deeds - Collective plant breeding for reduced input farming**

The panellists were organic farmer and OF&G licensee Mark Lea from Green Acres Farm in Shropshire, Dr Ambrogio Costanzo, Principal Crops Researcher at the Organic Research Centre, Dr Phil Howell, Head of Cereals Pre-Breeding at NIAB and Emily Pope, Knowledge Transfer Manager for the AHDB.

The discussion centered on what varietal traits plant breeders have been focusing on up until now, and how these may not always be appropriate for low input and organic agroecological farm systems due to the focus on yield which leads to other desirable traits being left behind. The panel discussed in detail the participatory research project,

LiveWheat, which Dr Costanzo is leading and with Mark Lea as one of the participating farmers.

In a short OF&G video, now on the OF&G website, Dominic Amos, also from the Organic Research Centre, joins Mark and Ambrogio in one of Mark's fields. They talk about the project and about the challenges organic growers like Mark are facing and some of the solutions.

The video can be viewed by going to <https://ofgorganic.org/news/livewheat-at-green-acres-farm-in-shropshire>

- **Challenges of Net Zero**

John Pawsey, who has been licensed with OF&G since 1999 and only recently stood down as chair of the NFU Organic Forum, hosted a virtual organic farm walk on 23 June 2020.

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The event included a fascinating video tour of the farm followed by John answering questions from audience members.

To watch the video go to www.nfuonline.com/sectors/crops/crops-news/virtual-organic-farm-walk-challenges-of-net-zero/

The following webinar in the V-NOCC series took place on 7 July.

- **Know your soils and know your sales - organic min-till and non-organic no-till**

This was a conversation between John Pawsey and min-till, organic grower and no-till specialist Clive Bailie, and was chaired by NOCC regular, the journalist and broadcaster, Charlotte Smith.



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On 14 July the third in the series of V-NOCC webinars organised by Agricollogy-OF&G took place.

- **Land Sharing/Sparing: A conversation on the value of agroecological food production systems.**

The event was again chaired by journalist and broadcaster **Charlotte Smith** and the panellists were -

- **Sue Pritchard**, chief executive of the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission

- **Vicki Hird**, Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming
- **Dr Bruce Pearce**, director, Organic Research Centre
- **Roger Kerr**, chief executive, OF&G

Charlotte and her guests discussed the merits of agroecological systems and how they fit within a 'land sharing' model.

The aim of land sharing is to bring multiple benefits from food productivity to high levels of biodiversity but also stabilising local economies with a more

integrated local infrastructure serving regional communities and providing job security.

The OF&G report on the land use models of sharing or sparing is available online.

All the webinars were recorded and will be available to watch very soon via the OF&G website at:

orgorganic.org

Green Recovery Wales (GRW)

OF&G is one of several organisations who, working together over digital means, built a Green Recovery Wales virtual festival that ran in late July 2020.

During the week that the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society ran a virtual agricultural show, the Green Recovery Wales festival - <https://greenrecovery.wales/> - ran alongside.

The GRW was organised by RSPB Cymru with support from Black Mountains College, the Food Farming and Countryside Commission, the National Trust, Nature Friendly Farmer Network, OF&G, Wildlife Trusts Wales, Woodland Trust and WWF Cymru.

OF&G Chief Executive, Roger Kerr said:

"The food production, climate, ecology and health challenges we face are not insurmountable. Wales is bursting with excellent innovators working across the food system. Organic Farmers & Growers are proud to contribute to Green Recovery Wales and we're looking forward to a week of informative discussions and presentations seeking to bring organic and agroecological methods to the heart of the future policy debate."

Besides our work helping with event material and administration, OF&G organic licensees featured prominently in a number of the live discussions.

The theme for the day on 21 July was Future Food Systems -

<https://greenrecovery.wales/tuesday-live/>

At 11am the session 'A Welsh Food System Fit For Future Generations' was chaired by Andy Middleton and Graeme Wilson, OF&G licensee from Slade Farm Organics was on the

panel along with Shea Buckland-Jones from WWF Cymru, Dr Angelina Bellamy and Professor Terry Marsden of Cardiff University's Sustainable Places Institute and Katie Palmer from Food Sense Wales.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=X2h2V-Z3QM4>

And at 4pm on the same day farmer, Mark Lea was a panellist for the Land Sparing v Land Sharing discussion.

The session was described as a look at how land can be shared, bridging the gap between different land use interests (including agricultural, wildlife and ecosystem regeneration, housing and leisure and tourism uses) towards understanding how land can deliver multiple benefits.

This session was chaired by Jane Davidson, former Minister for Environment and Sustainability in Wales where she proposed legislation to make sustainability the central organising principle of government; the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act came into law in 2015.

The panellists were:

- **Sue Pritchard** Chief Executive: Food, Farming & Countryside Commission, who also runs a small livestock farm in Monmouthshire.
- **Alicia Miller** runs Troed y Rhiw Organics and is also the web editor at the Sustainable Food Trust. Alicia is on the steering group for the Wales Real Food and Farming Conference and is a part of the team at Food Manifesto Wales.
- **Mark Lea** (Green Acres Farm, Shropshire) Mark works closely with the Welsh Grain Forum.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uVndoJXhgM>



Mark is a director of Organic Arable & is part of two research projects, Living Mulch and LiveWheat which are both managed by the Organic Research Centre. Mark is active on social media – @GreenAcres_Farm

- **Erica Thompson** is part of Rhiw Las, a One Planet Development of four smallholdings which gained planning permission in 2016. Erica also chairs the One Planet Council, a voluntary organisation dedicated to supporting and promoting One Planet Development in Wales and beyond.
- **Chris Blake** (Director, Green Valleys CIC). Chris has spent the last decade supporting community responses to climate change. As a founding Director of both award-winning social enterprises The Green Valleys and Community Energy Wales he has been at the forefront of the movement for community owned renewable generation. More recently he has been leading the Skyline programme delivering landscape-scale community stewardship of public land in the South Wales Valleys. He is also a Board member of Natural Resources Wales.

Market Information

Grain Prices: Courtesy of Andrew Trump, Organic Arable

The cereal market has been difficult in recent weeks as the impact of Lockdown on the dairy sector has fed through to the arable feed grain market. Dairy farmers have taken marginal cows out of the herd to reduce grazing and cut costs which has had an impact upon the demand for organic dairy feeds. Feed companies have been slow moving contracts and we have not seen farmers buying an odd additional load prior to harvest as we might normally. This has resulted in grain remaining on farm and there will be a carry over of grain, mostly barley this season.

The new crop market is slower to form than usual as feed buyers remain cautious and are confident in supply availability. Despite the difficult winter and drought this spring most crop reports are reasonable and we are anticipating a reasonable harvest. The reports from Europe and Black Sea suggest there will be good availability of grains this harvest and so the fundamentals of the market do not suggest values will improve. The ongoing dairy challenges and uncertainty posed by the recession ahead is making forward business uncertain. As with last season the Baltic supply appears plentiful and will compete with Black Sea and early indications peg values for feed wheat at £230 ex farm and it will be currency rather than supply that will support values. We will start the 2020 harvest season £30 below the 2019 harvest. It is important you let us know what tonnages you have available to sell this harvest. Starving the market of information means buyers look to imported supplies sooner. UK growers have been confident of markets given the low level of UK self-sufficiency but as seen with the malting barley market if demand falls it may mean making sales difficult if buyers have already bought volumes of imported grain.

At Organic Arable we have worked hard over several years to develop longer term relationships with end users and those supplying these customers have secure markets for their grain this season – showing the benefit of committed supply

relationships. We have a feed grain buyer who prioritises UK sourced feed grain and pulses and a new feed entrant into the UK market who wishes to buy UK beans and wheat and we would encourage anyone who favours long-term secure supply relationships to contact us to find out more. We'd love to work with you. Autumn seed supply is likely to be tight this autumn so please order early and if you are using over-year-old seed please run a germination test. Please 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](https://www.instagram.com/organicarable)

Organic Livestock Trends: OLMC

The last four months have seen events that historically will be recorded as a once in a lifetime experience. The lives tragically lost and the illness succumbed by people will take families years to recover from. In light of such tragedy and suffering it seems fickle to talk about money but we do live in a world where the financial challenges ahead could well be a long and painful recovery.

Meanwhile the natural world of food production and farming has continued. The outdoor and small mainly family unit has meant that farming and farm work has been able to continue largely unaffected by the pressures of Coronavirus.

I went to see an organic producer's cattle in May in Fife and he told me that Nicola Sturgeon had announced that farmers could go back to work!! He was dismayed that a politician had no concept of the fact that he had 150 suckler cows to feed daily and had just planted 200 acres of spring corn, such is the political ignorance of farming.

Selling cattle from mid-March to mid-April was difficult. There were understandably huge uncertainties, meat plants were working on a reduced staff and throughput, farmers were reluctant to purchase store cattle until some sort of certainty prevailed.

Since then I can report that things have progressively improved. The

period of dry weather ended and in some areas we have had plenty of rain enabling some very good second cuts of silage. The market for finished organic cattle has improved beyond anyone's expectations and prices have risen accordingly, subsequently the demand for organic store cattle has increased and again store cattle producers and finishers are enjoying much improved returns.

The question now is of course what does the future hold?

Demand for organic products has been increasing for a number of years and the meat sector has also been part of that growth. History has proven that economic downturns and recessions do little to help organic sales and most economists are predicting a serious economic downturn. However, the penetration of organic products in the retail market place is more firmly established and with the public's appetite for eating at home now the "new normal" rather than eating out, it may be that the organic sector can withstand the economic pressure ahead of us.

On a practical level organic cattle numbers are short; this is due to increased demand for finished cattle and a shortage of 20-26 month old store cattle. The drought of two years ago is partly responsible when shortage of grass meant that milk production (the only food for calves) was lower and growth rates of calves in that Summer was well below what would normally be expected. Mortality in calves in the following Winter was unusually high due to some calves lacking robustness after being housed. The lack of grass also led to lack of fertility in suckler cows and so we have ended up two years down the road with a shortage of two-year-old cattle.

The OLMC's store cattle department has continued to operate during the last four difficult months adhering to the strict distancing guidelines and as lockdown eases, we are always available to view your cattle for sale and offer marketing advice.

For more information on store cattle, dairy stock and store lambs please ring Peter Jones' office on 01829 730580 or mobile 07720 892922 or David Bostock on 07734 808050 or Iain Turner on 07970 197619. For finished Stock please contact Tim Leigh on 01763 250313 or 07850 366404.

ELMs update

As part of the on-going discussions with Government OF&G have been actively involved in pressing the case for recognition for organic systems within ELMs (and across the developed nations) via funding of the joint Chairmanship of the English Organic Forum (and the secretariat of the Welsh Organic Forum) alongside contributing toward policy papers setting out the justifications for support. Below is an extract from the paper setting out the rationale for support written by Prof Nic Lampkin of the Thuenen Institute.

There is a clear need for an organic specific policy (an Organic Public Goods option) as part of ELM, for the following reasons:

- *There needs to be recognition that the synergistic, system-derived delivery of multiple benefits is not easily mapped on to a series of separate, single-benefit focused schemes, with the potential for duplication of administrative effort. This also needs to recognise the trade-off of some crop and livestock output in return for many environmental benefits.*
- *The benefits already being delivered by organic producers need to be recognised and maintained, not only the additional ones that might be added subsequently. In the absence of this, there is a significant risk of farmers reverting to non-organic production and the capacity to delivery benefits previously paid for by agri-environment schemes being lost.*
- *There needs to be a recognition of the additional costs of managing farm complexity and diversity in a systems context.*
- *There needs to be an incentive to encourage the uptake of best organic/agro-ecological management practices that go beyond the minimum requirements of organic standards*
- *The costs of organic conversion, including substantial system restructuring and capital investments, needs specific recognition in the form of additional support during the initial transition period.*
- *While it may not be appropriate for support to be used to manage organic markets, there is a need to ensure that policies implemented are*

done so in a way that doesn't disrupt the potential contribution of the market to help deliver the objectives. Complementary policies to support organic market development (e.g. public procurement, promotion, product development, engagement with trade opportunities) can be supported via business support policies, ideally within an action plan framework to encourage an integrated, joined-up approach, also integrating the information and research needs indicated earlier.

Principles for calculating support payments:

As a multi-functional, systems-based approach, organic farming provides the option of delivering significant, multiple public benefits while being simple to administer due to the certification systems and annual inspections already in place.

Since 1994, organic farming conversion and maintenance payments in the UK have been possible as part of the agri-environmental measures of the CAP. These are intended to be WTO green-box compliant, and therefore have been calculated on the basis of:

- *Income foregone, for example as a result of reduced crop yields and livestock numbers. The EU Commission Guidance has also required premium prices for organic products to be included in the calculations, mitigating the income foregone, although there is a strong case that organic premium prices result from the marketing of organic products and the entrepreneurial activities of organic farmers, not from the organic land management practices that are the focus of the agri-environment schemes. In some cases, this has resulted in non-organic farmers implementing the same practices (e.g. no synthetic nitrogen fertiliser use) receiving higher payments than organic farmers.*
- *Additional costs incurred, for example for mechanical weed control, fertility building crops in rotations, more complex rotations etc. These may be offset by costs saved, including fertiliser and pesticide inputs. Given the inclusion of organic premium prices offsetting income foregone, the additional costs of marketing organic products should also be included here, but*

this is not always the case.

- *Transaction costs, which are those costs required to participate in the scheme and be eligible for the payments. Although organic certification is primarily a cost to access the organic market and secure organic premium prices, in many cases certification is used to police eligibility for organic support payments, and therefore certification costs become transaction costs associated with participation in the scheme – the products may not even be marketed as organic in practice. If payments are focused on public good delivery in future, then transaction costs could extend to the measurement of relevant outputs.*

The model implemented for organic farming under previous agri-environment schemes does recognise the principle of including opportunity costs, to the extent that the decision to farm organically is voluntary (albeit regulated) and that the farmer always has the option to revert to non-organic management. Therefore, income and cost comparisons between organic and non-organic options are relevant not only during the transition process but on a longer-term basis where benefits continue to be delivered.

Given that the environmental and other public benefits from organic farming are primarily related to the land management practices and not the marketing of the products, and that organic premium prices reflect primarily the marketing and entrepreneurial activities undertaken to secure those prices, the current arrangements to take account of premium prices may result in inappropriate support levels and priorities. From various perspectives, it is in any case not desirable to use environmental benefit payments to manage organic markets, and there is no reason in principle why organic land managers receiving support for generating environmental benefits need to market their products as organic at all. However, the benefits identified above are typically greater on cropped land than on permanent grassland or rough grazing, so it is likely that land use would be an important factor determining future payment rates. This could help incentivise arable and horticultural conversions with the potential for synergistic market benefits.

The income losses/additional costs incurred model provides no reward or incentive to farmers to focus on the delivery of public goods. While a baseline payment covering practices that all organic producers need to implement to comply with organic standards (such as the prohibitions on agrochemicals) could be based on an income foregone calculation as envisaged for Tier 1 of ELM, there is a need to also consider how farmers might be incentivised to go beyond the

minimum required for certification and to adopt best organic/agro-ecological farming practices, in particular to address regional environmental priorities. Here a more specific focus on measurable public benefits may be appropriate, an approach which is now under development by the German government[1].

Discussions are on-going and the EOF are seeking a meeting with Victoria Prentis - the Under-Secretary of State at Defra to press home the necessary

recognition of the organic sector following George Eustice's intervention at an APPG on the 7th July : youtu.be/XNbNysJdUBU (at 35.27) where he stresses the "very important role for an organic scheme" and suggests he is open to two possible approaches including a bespoke organic scheme, mentioning the considerable costs of conversion."

[1] <https://www.thuenen.de/index.php?id=9728&L=1>

GMO update

Three of the UK's largest GM campaigns – GM Freeze, Beyond GM and GMWatch – have joined together to oppose an amendment to the Agriculture Bill that would give the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, George Eustice, the power to change the definition of a GMO within the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and re-classify many forms of genome editing as non-GM.

The amendment will be discussed at Committee Stage in the Lords and, if adopted, it would mean that those techniques were no longer regulated (meaning no safety checks or GM labelling) and could be used on our farms or in our food without our knowledge or consent.

The groups asked that citizens write to both George Eustice MP and Lord Gardiner of Kimble, who are jointly tasked with seeing the Agriculture Bill through to completion, and urge them to reject Amendment 275 to the Agriculture Bill that plans to deregulate a range of genome editing techniques by changing the definition of a GMO.

Whilst the organic regulation explicitly prohibits the use of GMOs, some people believe that it may bring environmental and yield benefits. Evidence to date however does not support this. A National Academy of Science report found that over the last 20 years 'there was little evidence' that the introduction of GMOs in the US had led to yield gains beyond those seen by conventional crops. The report goes on to say, however, that herbicide use has increased. The United States Geographical Survey states that in the US over the last two decades insecticide and fungicide use has fallen by a third but herbicide use has increased by 21%. This

compares with Europe, which over the same period has seen fungicide and insecticide use fall by 65% and herbicide use fall by 36%.

There are many issues relating to GM plants/products that remain unresolved. These include monitoring and measuring seed and pollen mediated gene flow and predicting levels of impacts on whole farm and regional scales. The measures needed to segregate GM from other cropping systems at the farm, regional and devolved nation scale, including changes in agronomic practices, new investments in equipment and machinery, zoning of crop production and the practicality and cost of these measures. These additional costs include testing, authentication and stewardship of crops; the socio-economic impacts of introducing GM crops into certain areas including increased costs on both the non-GM and GM sectors; the relationships between farmers adopting different technologies; constraints on farmers, farm saved seed implications; liability for purity of crops and the conflicts and disputes between farmers.

The CRISPR-Cas9 method for altering genes at the nucleotide level has been referred to as "precise gene editing". Many scientists however do not see nucleotide alterations as precise when the repair mechanism in the DNA can alter the DNA unpredictably, thereby making the alteration that is away from the original intention.

A report published in 2018 describes flaws that can and have occurred as a result of nucleotide changes, with very serious implications.

In July 2018, scientists from the Wellcome Sanger Institute in the UK

found that new genetic engineering techniques like CRISPR may cause "genetic havoc". Earlier this year researchers found large deletions and complex rearrangements of DNA near the target site that were not intended by researchers. Two recent independent studies found that cells genetically engineered with CRISPR "have the potential to seed tumors", or may initiate mutations that develop into tumors. - <https://foe.org/news/new-report-gene-editing-agriculture-poses-new-risks-health-environment/>

The benefits of GMO/GE technology therefore remain at best unclear, whilst potentially releasing genes into the natural environment whose impact is entirely unknown in the face of the current biodiversity collapse. Consumers are on the whole resistant to the introduction of GM/GE and it could be argued that its introduction could undermine the current view that the UK has some of the highest environmental and food safety standards in the world.

One thing about GM is certain however and that is something that Clive Bailye recently alluded to. Clive said that he has been to the US and talked to farmers that are using GMO technology and they all said it was much easier to farm with it - but they were also equally clear that they were not a 'dime' better off as a consequence.

OF&G do not support the introduction of GM or GE technology currently for the reasons outlined above and certainly not until the issues around co-existence and the liabilities arising from the contamination of non-GM crops by GM crops is resolved satisfactorily.

IFOAM Organics Europe

Our Policy lead, Christopher Stopes, attended the online congress of the European group of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and sent back this report -

Organic Congress debates the 25% organic target for the EU

OF&G are active members of IFOAM, an international membership organisation that brings organic groups together from all over the world.

The European hub, IFOAM EU Group, is now IFOAM Organics Europe, a more inclusive name that definitely includes the UK now and even after the UK government withdraw from membership of the European Union.

At the organisation's General Assembly held during the European Organic Congress (30 June-2 July), a motion to ensure the UK's continued active participation was unanimously supported – gratifying and reassuring.

The UK's representative to IFOAM Organics Europe, OF&G Chief Executive Roger Kerr, said "This refresh for IFOAM Organics Europe is a very welcome move. The months and years ahead will be full of challenges, but we can and will build knowledge and discover opportunities as members of the European hub of IFOAM Organics International."

500 participants from Europe and around the world gathered together online for the European Organic Congress. A very professional and inspiring on-line event covered all the positive things that are going

on, tempered by a thoughtful final session on Covid-19 that considered the threats and the opportunities for organic producers and local supply chains to ensure diversity and resilience.

The Congress website has all the sessions online - <https://organic-congress-ifoameu.org/>

The European Commission and the European Parliament were well represented. They spoke enthusiastically about the new EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity strategies and the target for 25% of European farm land to be organically managed by 2030.

The new Director General for Agriculture, Wolfgang Bartscher, explained that 25% organic land will support the essential move towards "a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system".

A new European Organic Action Plan will be developed during this year, and we can expect that IFOAM Organics Europe will be feeding into this. The Chair of the European Parliament Agriculture Committee, Norbert Lins, a Green Party MEP and an organic farmer, emphasised that the target of 25% organically managed land was an average for the EU as a whole. Member State CAP strategic plans will set appropriate, country specific targets, based on the current status and scope for organic market development.

Jan Plagge, re-elected IFOAM Organics Europe's President at the General Assembly, said: "What we heard from the speakers from the

Commission is that they are serious about the target of 25% organic land by 2030 through an ambitious Farm to Fork strategy.

As organic movement, we appreciate that they are putting organic at the heart of the transition to sustainable and fair food systems. But we still have much to do and no time to waste to make European food and farming more resilient after the Covid-19 crisis showed the food system's weaknesses."

It was great to hear the new EU Commissioner for Health, Stella Kyriakides, make the link to health, not least in these times of Covid-19 where it is essential to ensure good health and a strong immune system.

The new CAP will be designed by member states to enable this through organic food and farming.

There was much talk of the measures that will be introduced in the member state's CAP strategic plans. All in all, an inspiring opportunity to catch up on the good things going on for organic in Europe.

Roger said "the Congress showed the important role that organic will play in the European Union, a message that is now being understood in Westminster and Whitehall."

Visit their recently launched new and improved website <https://www.organicseurope.bio/> for an accurate and optimistic presentation of the organic movement across the European continent.

1235 update

As you are aware from the May newsletter, OF&G (alongside all other UK organic Control Bodies) made an application to the Commission for inclusion in the list of CB's recognised as equivalent under Article 33(3) of Regulation 1235/2008. This regulation details the rules for importing organic products into the EU from third countries. OF&G received correspondence from the EU Commission in early June on this matter and we are working through the areas that require further attention. With restrictions imposed by the C-19 pandemic the Commission have indicated that this has caused issues/delays. However the indicative time-scale for the approval of applications is between 6 and 9 months and we remain within that timescale.

Staff News

In early 2020 Kat Rohts, part of our producer certification team, decided it was time for a change of scenery and to move on from her position at OF&G. Kat's official finish date was at the beginning of June. As you can imagine this was a difficult time due to the restrictions imposed by COVID-19 and Kat has been kind enough to stick with us, albeit in a part-time capacity, to allow us to train a new certification officer.

With Kat taking the decision to leave us we started the recruitment process for a new producer certification officer. At the beginning of July Emma Harding joined the team and, whilst we are not currently in the office, members of our producer certification team have the difficult task of training her remotely. Regardless of this, Emma is picking up the process quickly and we are sure she will make a valuable member of the team. For the time being we will let Emma settle into her new role and give you a little more information about her at a later date.

NATRUE

OF&G is now an approved certifier in the UK and Ireland for businesses wanting to carry the NATRUE label on their natural and organic bodycare products.



"OF&G developed its own private cosmetic and bodycare standards a number of years ago but as interest in these products has grown over recent years, OF&G took the decision to actively develop this side of our certification offer and applied to become a NATRUE Approved Certifier given the excellent reputation of the NATRUE Label internationally", said Roger Kerr, OF&G's Chief Executive.

Dr Mark Smith, NATRUE Director General, commented: "NATRUE is delighted that OF&G has joined our global network of NATRUE Approved Certifiers. It was clear that as the UK market's demand for natural and organic cosmetics grows yearly, having a UK-based certifier was a must for NATRUE, and with over 45 years of experience, OF&G is a highly reputable certification body of organic products that echoes our core values."

For more details contact us and we will send you an application pack that includes pricing, copies of standards and an application form. <https://ofgorganic.org/certification/natrue-cosmetic-certification>

OF&G in the News

In June surveys undertaken at the **National Trust's organic estate at Wimpole** were widely reported. The surveys revealed that numbers of rare skylarks, in decline in the wider countryside, have nearly doubled since 2013, from 12 to 21 pairs, while the number of linnets has increased from three to seven pairs.

Callum Weir, farm manager at Wimpole said: "Many of the increases we recorded in the surveys are down to the combination of organic farming methods in the fields and the mosaic of margins, hedges and habitats that surround each field."

Key results included:

- a doubling in numbers of breeding pairs of rare skylarks and linnets in six years, good indicators of a healthy ecosystem
- a 38 per cent increase in invertebrate numbers over 13 years, including the recording of 95 rare and protected species, vital for pollinating crops and preying on pests
- a total carbon balance of -2,260 tonnes of CO₂ per year achieved through the amount of organic matter in the soil which soaks up carbon, the number of trees and grown out hedges

More details were published in a number of articles and the National

Trust's own press release is available to read here - <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/press-release/farming-for-nature-pays-off-for-wimpole>

OF&G producer licensees **Pollybell Farm** were featured in an edition of the BBC radio programme, Farming Today on 2 July 2020.

Pollybell director James Brown was interviewed. James described some of the activity they're doing on the farm to help restore the natural environment - "We've a project with the Environment Agency & the RSPB to create rotational flooding. This will provide water storage, habitat for winter waders and removing pest & disease for our soils so I can then grow better crops in the rest of the rotation."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000kfrz>

Also in June **Tim May**, who farms organically under OF&G licence, gave an in depth interview to Clemmie Gleeson in The Farmers Guardian - 'It gave me permission to set the business up for me' - Fresh thinking working on mixed farm

Visiting farms overseas gave Tim the inspiration and confidence to instil some huge changes on his family's estate in north Hampshire.

The Kingsclere estate is on the edge of the North Wessex Downs. In 2012 its 1,000 hectares (2,471 acres) was entirely arable land managed in eight

blocks. Since then more than half of the land has been put into temporary herbal leys, livestock re-introduced and an 'enterprise stacking' approach implemented.

Tim, 39, who farms with his father, Robert, was a Nuffield scholar in 2011. His research into sustainability took him to Brazil, America, Kenya and Tanzania, during which time Polyface Farms in the US was particularly inspirational, says Tim.

"They use enterprise stacking where you have one enterprise and layer it with more," he says. "I could see the potential productivity gains by adopting those principles."

Early on Tim discovered the potential of working with business partners to make the enterprise stacking approach work and sustainable. As well as using a contract shepherd and an arable contractor, he sought further partners keen to develop their own livestock enterprises.

"I am trying to end up with more enterprises stacked together run by partners not by us. The idea is they come and have more skin in the game."

The full article is available from the Farmers Guardian website -

<https://www.fginsight.com/vip/it-gave-me-permission-to-set-the-business-up-for-me---fresh-thinking-working-on-mixed-farm-109836>

Cockhaise Farm is licensed with OF&G and farmer **Dan Burdett** was

featured in the livestock section of the Farmers Guardian on 3 July 2020 -

Dairy farm with regenerative aspirations

Dan hopes to learn from others and share his vision for balancing efficiency with profitability during his three-year stint as part of AHDB's strategic dairy farm programme.

After working off the family farm for a number of years, Dan returned to Cockhaise Farm, Sussex in 2008 to follow his father's footsteps and take over the dairy business.

In 2013 he entered into a contract farming agreement with his father, Jeremy, as the landowner and now owns the majority of cows in the herd.

Mr Burdett says: "I would encourage anyone to go and work away from the business for someone else, to know what it feels like to be an employee. I think a lot of farmers come into the family business having only worked for their dad."

Cockhaise Farm has held organic status since 2001 and Mr Burdett believes this contributes towards his ethos of regenerative agriculture, which goes beyond sustainability and also takes into account the social and

economic impact of the farm business.

The full article is available at FGInsight

<https://www.fginsight.com/livestock-hub/livestock-features/dairy-farm-with-regenerative-aspirations--110109>

OF&G chief executive Roger Kerr has been quoted in a number of articles recently. In June, Farm Business published an article with the title **New Defra data shows growth in organic farming as consumer demand continues to rise**. The Department for Environmental Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) has released the organic farming statistics for the UK in 2019, which shows that the percentage of UK land farmed organically has risen by 2.4% compared to 2018.

485,000 hectares is now farmed organically in the UK. Permanent pasture accounts for the biggest share of the organic area (63%) followed by temporary pasture (20%) and cereals (8%).

The increase has been driven by the rise in fully organic land which has increased by 3.6% compared to 2018, more than offsetting the decrease in the area of in-conversion land, which fell by 15% – the first decrease since 2014.

Roger also welcomed the news that more farmers are responding to the increased market demand for organic produce in the face of uncertainty.

He said: "It's apparent from the new 2019 organic farming data from Defra that organic land area has increased by 2.3%. And while overall organic operator numbers have declined by 1%, this is primarily due to processor numbers falling. Farmer and grower numbers have actually increased by 0.7%. In the face of future uncertainty with farm support and trade agreements, this is a positive development, especially with rising consumer demand for organic."

"The market for organic food continues to grow globally and in the UK. Sales of organic food during the pandemic has significantly increased along with people's interest in growing organic food at home, evident by sales of organic seeds growing by 400%."

<http://www.farmbusiness.co.uk/news/new-defra-data-shows-growth-in-organic-farming-as-consumer-demand-increases.html>

Please find below links to two important updates on NFU online

1. Agri-Environment update – June - <https://www.nfuonline.com/cross-sector/environment/agri-environment-schemes/agri-environment-news/nfu-agri-environment-update-june/>
 - Latest information around the RPA and agri-environment schemes (available for NFU members only)
2. Countryside Stewardship Mid-Tier Exceptions Process- <https://www.nfuonline.com/cross-sector/environment/agri-environment-schemes/agri-environment-news/countryside-stewardship-core-mid-tier-exceptions-process/>
 - Information around the exceptions process that the RPA have announced
 - The deadline for members to trigger the exceptions process (by calling the RPA) is the 31st July, so fast approaching.
 - The deadline for CS MT applications to be in, and CS Wildlife offers is the 31st July.

Additionally, the **Scheme support update: 10 things you need to know** webinar, hosted by Alisha Anstee NFU Countryside Adviser and the BPS team can be re-watched [here](#) (NFU members only)



Website and Social Media

<http://ofgorganic.org>
<https://www.facebook.com/organicfarmers>
<https://twitter.com/ofgorganic>
<https://www.instagram.com/ofgorganic>



Technical Newsletter



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ofgorganic.org

General

If you have any concerns or queries please do not hesitate to contact your Certification Officer

Reminder about Self Assessment Inspection Questionnaires (SAIQs)

The last few months have been very difficult for many of our operators, the restrictions imposed on both licensees and OF&G as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have meant that the normal physical inspection process has needed to be reviewed and changed to a remote type assessment. Whilst a remote assessment has, for some, not been an ideal solution requirements specified within the organic regulation mean these have been necessary to allow for a continuation of certification and thus production and marketing of organic products. Since the beginning of May the OF&G team have sent the documentation for a remote assessment (Self Assessment Inspection Questionnaire (SAIQ)) to over 400 farms and processing licensees.

If you have received your inspection pack it is important that you follow the instructions, completing the documentation as requested and sending this to the inspector's email address detailed on your email as soon as possible together with any requested supporting documentation.

If you have not received the SAIQ and you feel you should have done (i.e. you are normally inspected between March and August) in the first instance you should check your emails for anything from OF&G (the email address is reports@ofgorganic.org) and check your Spam folder.

For a **processor** this email will consist of an excel spreadsheet (RD329 Processor SAIQ UKP...). with five worksheets (tabs) at the bottom of window: the tabs marked Processor, RD90 and RD190 RTQ must be completed by all processors; (only complete the tabs marked Importing or Slaughter if relevant).

For a **farm** this email will consist of two sets of documents. The first is your Annual Questionnaire and must be completed by all operators. This will be in the form of a spreadsheet (Producer AQ 2020 UKF...). In the spreadsheet you will find six worksheets (tabs) at the bottom of the window, the first tab being an instruction sheet: please follow the instructions and complete all relevant worksheets. When completing the tab marked RD146 Livestock and Sales please note that there are formulae already on the sheet to calculate the total figures.

Please note that where the SAIQ has not been sent to the relevant inspector we will be unable to issue you with a temporary certificate when your current certificate expires.

If you do not have an email from OF&G or you have questions relating to the SAIQ please contact your certification officer.

Physical Inspections (COVID)

As COVID-19 restrictions begin to be lifted we are being asked about the possibilities of undertaking physical inspections once again. At the

present time and for the foreseeable future it will only be possible to undertake physical inspections in certain circumstances. OF&G and our inspection partners Lloyds Register and Control Union UK must ensure the safety of both our inspector and operators and not put anyone at undue risk. With this in mind there will be a need to undertake the record keeping part of any inspection remotely to avoid the inspector needing to spend time in offices, farm kitchens etc., keeping the physical part of the inspection for checking the premises (buildings/facilities), crops and livestock.

Certification to Japanese Organic Standards

For those exporting to or intending to export to Japan there has been an amendment to Japanese Organic regulation for organic livestock products which came into force on 16 July 2020. In light of this and the imminent change as a consequence of the UK leaving the EU, OF&G have now secured a partnership agreement with Japanese Certifier JAScert - <http://jascert.or.jp/> which allows UK operators to export organic products to Japan.

If this is of interest please contact your Certification Officer.

Producers

Copper Use on Potatoes

The use of copper fungicide products on organic crops has been debated for many years. For some the expiry of authorisations for copper fungicide products has presented a need to research varieties and techniques for growing without the use for copper. However, for many organic potato

growers copper fungicide remains the only permitted solution for treating crops affected with blight. With that in mind the AHDB have been working with Certis Europe BV with regard to an application to the HSE for an Extension of Authorisation for minor use. On 13 July the HSE published an Extension of Authorisation for the use of copper hydroxide in organic potatoes. It must be noted that this authorisation relates to England only

and does not include authorisation for use in any of the devolved regions. Only Funguran Progress, a copper hydroxide product marketed by Certis Europe BV can be used with a final date for use of 30 September 2020. Specific details and conditions of use can be found by following the link <https://secure.pesticides.gov.uk/offlabels/OffLabelList.asp>

Processors

Taiwan recognition

A new organic regulation has been introduced in Taiwan, the results of which mean that unilateral recognition of the EU (including the UK) expired on 30 May 2020.

Without a further agreement in place or accreditation with a Taiwanese CB those operators exporting organic products to Taiwan will no longer be permitted to do so. There are currently two Taiwanese CBs accredited to certify to the Taiwanese Organic Regulation. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, they are currently unable to carry out the necessary controls. OF&G is a member of the European Organic Certifiers Council (EOCC) who have written to the Commission detailing the concerns of its members and asking for the possibility of an extension during the current restrictions.

OF&G have requested information from affected operators on the potential impact to their business.

COIs due to COVID restrictions

Due to the restrictions in place regarding COVID-19 and the measures introduced to protect human health a number of operators have experienced difficulty in obtaining the signed original paper copy of the Certificate of Inspection (COI) required for imported organic products. As a result the Commission has noted a need to allow a derogation against the relevant parts of the importing rules, Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008. The following derogations have been published:

1. By way of derogation from Article 13(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008, the COI shall be issued by the relevant control authority or control body by completing all necessary information and validating box 18 in the Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES). It shall be endorsed by the relevant Member State's competent authority by validating box 20 in TRACES and be completed by the first consignee in TRACES.

2. By way of derogation from Article 13(6) of Regulation (EC) No 1235/2008, at the verification of a consignment the relevant Member State's competent authority shall endorse the COI by validating box 20 in TRACES.

Fraudulent Certificate

We have been notified via the EOCC (European Organic Certifiers Council) of a fraudulent certificate that has apparently been issued by **CONTROL UNION;**

- Koperasi Wanita Srikandi 4
Based in Indonesia and certificate valid Until 15 June 2021

Control Union did not issue this certificate and do not certify this operator. If you receive or have received a certificate in the above name please contact your Certification Officer.



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