



Newsletter

Issue 24
Winter 2008

BUTTER MAKING DAY

The Soil Association has teamed up with Stony "Yogurt on a Mission" to launch A Taste of the Good Life, a range of fun workshops throughout the UK which offer people the chance to rediscover skills largely forgotten by an entire generation, such as buttermaking. Anyone joining the Soil Association can enjoy their workshop for free. Existing members can book for half price.

FIVE PEOPLE came to Wester Lawrenceton Farm on Saturday February 2nd to learn to make farmhouse butter as part of a Soil Association membership initiative to connect new members with food in a more hands-on way.

We started the day with an introduction to the work of the Soil Association, followed by a short history of dairying in the culture of the Highlands and Islands, including a Gaelic milking croon sung, very beautifully, by Sheila Pettit, one of the participants. Butter and buttermilk were highly valued ingredients in the diet, making palatable some of the drier staples, such as oatcakes, crumbly cheeses, potatoes and salted fish.

In the morning we churned the ripened cream, drained off the precious buttermilk, washed the buttergrains and shaped them into portions – one for lunch and one each for the participants to take home. Butter is fun to make – it is a fairly quick process, if done at the right temperature and acidity, and you can actually watch the yellow buttergrains form in the glass butterchurn and dance to the rhythm of the churning in the white buttermilk as they grow to the right size for straining. In the winter the grains are very pale yellow compared with the deep yellow of butter produced by fresh grass.

In the afternoon we made bere meal bannocks and scones to eat with our butter. We also sampled a fresh cheese made from the buttermilk, in the tradition of Shetland 'kirmilk' cheese.

Several other people have expressed an interest in learning to make butter, so we will repeat the course, with same offer from the Soil Association, in late April/early May, when the new spring grass will put flavour and sunshine into the butter. The date will be confirmed soon – feel free to ring Wester Lawrenceton Farm on 01309 676566 or check the Soil Association website for more details:

www.soilassociation.org/tasteofthegoodlife

HIOA'S NEW LIBRARY

IT WAS DECIDED at the last committee meeting to set up a library for HIOA's members. Some books can be quite costly for an individual to buy and many need to be read once only.

So, if you have any books on organic husbandry or organic market gardening or ordinary organic gardening, even books on running a business... anything which you no longer require and think might be of use to people running an organic business or those with an interest in organics, then do give them to Maggie Sutherland. The Sausage Making event at her house on 2 March would be a great opportunity to bring them along.

ALSO, if you have any suggestions of books that you would find useful, but are too expensive for you to buy or you feel have a general interest, then pass your suggestion on to a committee member (contact details elsewhere in the newsletter).

Maggie Sutherland, Clachandreggy, Torbreck, nr Inverness IV2 6DJ, tel 01463 250440. Email: maggie.natveg@btinternet.com.

Next HIOA meeting

SAUSAGE MAKING at CLACHANDREGGY

Sunday 2nd March, 4pm

Maggie and Neil have made sausages from their own pigs for several years. They will lead the process making a range of sausages which you will cook and compare. Bring your own ideas, favourite seasoning and a bottle of wine if you are so inclined!

*Please let Maggie know if you intend to come:
01463 250440 / maggie.natveg@btinternet.com*

Directions: Take the Dores road out of Inverness, and about a mile after the roundabout at the end of the bypass, turn left at the sign to Torbreck. The track to Clachandreggy is on the right along the edge of the forest.

There will be a COMMITTEE MEETING at 2:30pm before the sausage making.

WILL CORPORATIONS CONTROL FARMERS?

This is an extract from a speech by Canadian farmer, Percy Schmeiser, regarding one biotech corporation's control of farmers in north America. It is available on the web at http://com-monground.ca/iss/0401150/percy_schmeiser.shtml

"The other means of control is what can be considered extortion letters. This has been done all across America. We don't know how many thousands of these letters have been sent out; I have quite a number of them. The letters state: "We have reason to believe that you might be growing Monsanto's GM canola or soybeans without a licence. We estimate you might have 200, 300 or 500 acres. In lieu of us not taking you to court send us \$100,000"... or \$200,000. I've got one here for \$190,000. This one here is for \$30,000 because they think someone might be growing GM canola.

Can you imagine the fear in a farm family when they get a letter from a multibillion dollar corporation asking for many thousands of dollars so the company might not take them to court?!

Another clause: "You're not allowed to show this letter to anyone and you're not allowed to tell anyone that you've received this letter from Monsanto or what Monsanto has done to you." So, a total suppression of farmers' rights, freedom of speech and expression.

If they can't find a farmer at home and they don't know his mailing address, they can go to the local municipality and get the location of his land. They will then use a small airplane or helicopter and drop a Monsanto Roundup herbicide spray bomb on the field. It covers about 30 feet in diameter, in the centre of a canola or soybean field.

About 12 days after Roundup has time to activate, they'll fly back. If the crop, which was hit by the spray, has died they'll know the farmer has not been using Monsanto's Roundup, but if it hasn't died, God help the farmer.

These are the tactics. I'm talking about Canada and the US. This is what a multinational corporation is doing here.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

We welcomed a new committee member at the AGM – it is **Morven Dyson, Donnie MacLeod's daughter. She is bravely taking over care of Antony Walker's property in Ardross. It is wonderful to have a young and keen person working for HIOA.**

POYNTZFIELD HERB NURSERY WORKSHOPS

Poyntzfield Herb Nursery, on the Black Isle will be holding the first of this season's workshops on Sat June 7th. It will be on **Biodynamic Gardening – An Introduction.**

It is designed for those who wish to explore and experience the principles and practice of the biodynamic approach to work on the land. It will focus on the composts, preparations and sprays along with the use of the sowing and planting calendar. The workshop will begin at 10 am and finish about 5 pm. Bring a packed lunch, notebook and wellie boots! The cost will be £25/£30 and bookings can be made by e.mail to info@poyntzfieldherbs.co.uk along with deposit. Accommodation in local B&Bs can be prebooked if given sufficient notice.

On Saturday July 12th the next workshop will be on Homoeopathic and Anthroposophical plant medicines.

www.poyntzfieldherbs.co.uk

NEW SOIL ASSOCIATION REPORT ON GM ANIMAL FEED

The Soil Association has published the findings of its investigation into the use of GM animal feed. We have been shocked to find that very large quantities of GM feed are being used in the UK to produce our food. Around 60% of the maize and 30% of the soya is GM in the feed used by dairy and pig farmers. This means that most of the non-organic milk, dairy products and pork being sold in the UK is from GM-fed animals.

Despite the non-GM policies of the supermarkets, all supermarkets are widely allowing the use of GM feed, except for their fresh own-label chicken, turkey and eggs which are produced from non-GM feed. Due to a loophole in the law, none of this food is labelled as 'GM' so it is difficult to avoid. M&S, however, is far ahead of the others as all of their milk and fresh meat is from non-GM fed animals; but even they are not requiring non-GM feed for their frozen and processed products. At the moment, 'organic' is the only food type which prohibits GM feed.

New scientific evidence, reviewed in the report, shows that small amounts of GM DNA end up in milk and animal tissues of GM-fed animals, contrary to the assurances from the Food Standards Agency. In addition, at least 13 animal feeding trials now show a range of alarming health effects in animals fed GM: lesions in the gut, toxic effects in body organs, unexplained deaths and stunted growth in their offspring. We firmly believe that GM-fed animals should not be used to produce our food – do you? <http://www.soilassociationscotland.org/gm>

POPULARITY OF VEG BOXES TAKES INDUSTRY BY SURPRISE

The recently published Soil Association report into the Organic Market highlights the growth in the market for organic fruit and vegetables, which is again led by a continued expansion in box scheme sales. Sales through non-supermarket outlets have increased by 28% and box and mail order schemes by a massive 53%. The percentage annual growth rate of sales through supermarkets, which still command 75% of the sales, is: estimated by TNS at 10% growth for organic vegetables, and 8% for fruit, whereas Neilson have measured growth rates of 20% for organic fresh produce sales. The report however highlights the regional differences in the demand for organic food, with consumers in the south buying the most organic food as against the East Midlands and Scotland where the demand is lowest.

The area of UK organic land under horticultural production has increased by 10% to 8704 ha. There has been an increase in all the horticultural categories, except for flowers and ornamentals and herbs: Alliums and root vegetables +23%, potatoes +10%, green vegetables/salads/protected crops +14%, fruit +14%, herbs -3% and flowers and ornamentals -29%. All this has led to increases in UK self sufficiency for vegetables from 63 to 73% and for fruit from 11 to 15%.

UPDATE ON RAASAY WALLED GARDEN

Sadie has been locked out of the garden and was asked to remove her equipment seven days from the 17 January. Her lawyer is in communication with both Raasay House Community Company and HIE's lawyers stating that Sadie is a secure tenant unless Highlands & Islands Enterprise can produce documentation to show otherwise and holding RHCC liable for any damage to plants etc and also stating Sadie's need to get into the garden.

For those who get the 'West Highland Free Press' Sadie had a letter in the Friday 1 February 2008 edition.

SAC Organic Market Link Producer Survey Summary Report 2007 – 08

The production of organic beef and lamb in Scotland has again increased in 2007–08 compared with the previous year, but organic grain production is static. These are just some of the findings of the annual survey of organic producers in Scotland undertaken as part of the SAC Organic Market Link (OML) project. Ninety-four percent of organic producers in Scotland were accounted for in the 2007–08 survey, the fourth year it has taken place, and which estimates the annual output of prime stock, store stock and grain and pulses.

Between July 2007 and June 2008, organic producers in Scotland will produce approximately 7000 head of finished organic cattle (an increase of 19% compared to the previous year), 100,000 prime organic lambs (an increase of over 10%). The number of store cattle is the same as in the previous year, but store lamb numbers have fallen by 11%, perhaps reflecting the loss of some hill farmers from the organic sector.

In contrast to prime beef and lamb, the production of organic grains and pulses in 2007 was reduced at just over 18,000 tonnes. This is at a time when demand for organic animal feed has been expanding rapidly, resulting in very high feed prices. The Survey indicated that prime stock producers intended to increase both beef and lamb production over the next two years, but the price of feed may discourage some livestock producers, unless the price received from the processors for finished stock rises to match these increased costs.

SAC Organic Market Link Coordinator, Caroline Bayliss, points out the benefits of this information to organic producers, processors and marketing outlets, "Information gathered through the OML survey has allowed direct farmer to farmer trading for grains, pulses and store stock to develop. It has demonstrat-

ed continuity of supply and has given confidence now to two of Scotland's volume processors to get their beef lines up and running in Scotland. Supply information is fundamental for processors and multiple retailers when deciding to turn on new market outlets for Scottish organic producers. In addition, the results have also provided pointers to organic producers in terms of making production decisions. It is very pleasing to see this increase in production, but we have a long way to go to satisfy market requirements, particularly for beef and grain where we could probably double the current level of production and still not satisfy market demand. It is also pleasing to once again see a slight shift in the seasonal production pattern for lamb. Although September, October and November are traditionally the months with highest production, less lambs than usual were marketed during this period due to a backlog created by this year's FMD outbreaks. Notwithstanding this, producers still appear to have made an effort to finish more lamb in late winter/spring to fill this period of supply shortage, something that we have been encouraging them to do for several years.

"We're very grateful for the continued cooperation of producers in undertaking the survey."

DID YOU KNOW Scottish Organic Producers Association (SOPA) certifies more than 80% of the organic food production in Scotland? And our portfolio goes from strength to strength with a number of new developments in the services we offer our members.

SOPA can now certify food processing businesses – small enterprises such as egg packers, vegetable box schemes and artisan cheese dairies, and we also offer competitive certification for larger businesses such as abattoirs and meat cutting plants. This is a major step forward for Scottish organic certification because SOPA can offer a complete package through the links of the food chain from growing and rearing, direct through to the consumer at point of sale.

Information transfer to members is also under the spotlight in the SOPA office. We are working on improving the newsletters we send out to our members. The website is under review, at long last, and more and more members are calling Debs for advice and support.

SOPA has also been spending some time working on the Scottish Rural Development Programme and identifying funding opportunities for organic businesses. The SRDP will replace the Organic Aid Scheme which ended in 2006. Although the Programme is not approved by Brussels yet, the Scottish Government is very hopeful for a go-ahead in the spring of 2008. Between now and then, we have bit of time to digest the Programme for organic farmers, and to undertake some information gathering and planning for ways to access funding.

For the first time, applications can be made by rural businesses that are not necessarily land-based. This means a small business who can demonstrate contribution to rural development is eligi-

ble to apply. The Plan is intended to deliver public benefits for the overall good of Scotland, and the Government will do this by entering into contracts with any rural business which will deliver improved business viability, environment improvements and thriving rural communities.

The SRDP is a radical change from any previous public spending on the rural economy. For instance, the scheme can only be accessed online, and decisions about funding are made by regional committee. There are many other changes, too numerous to list here. Debs has been delving into the 900 pages of the SRDP and is starting to understand what it means. Importantly, SOPA can not only advise on organic conversion and maintenance, but also other bolt on measures which apply to all businesses. If you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please call Debs Roberts in the SOPA office on 0131 335 6619.

Deborah Roberts, Development Officer, SOPA



EVENTS

Biofach 2008: 21 – 24 February, at Nuremberg, Germany. Biofach is the world's leading organic trade exhibition and this year Food From Britain (FFB) is offering organic producers the opportunity to join the first British Pavilion. If you would like to know more about exhibiting at BioFach, contact Estelle Challe echalle@foodfrombritain.co.uk or call +44(0)20 468 8580.

Preventative Animal Health Management in Organic Livestock: SAC Organic Producer Event: Barnside, Abbey St Bathans, Duns, Berwickshire (Courtesy of Mr & Mrs Walker), Thursday 21 February. Making animal health plans work. Farm walk and seminar. 1.00pm – 4.30pm. Speakers: Charlie Walker & Duncan Shell (Producers), Douglas Gray (SAC), Certification Body speaker (OF&G). Free. For further information contact David Younie T: 01224 711072.

Edinburgh's Organic Potato Day, Edinburgh, Sunday 24 February 2008. Inch House Community Centre, Inch Park, by Cameron Toll, Edinburgh. Edinburgh's second Organic Potato Day will give keen gardeners a chance to buy seed potatoes from a wide selection of organic seed grown in Perthshire. There will be about 30 varieties on offer including Carroll's Heritage Potatoes, which were a great success this year. There will be a talk by John Marshall, whose life revolves around potatoes, and visitors will also be able to find out more about the Bridgend Community Allotment Health project. Light refreshments available. The event has been organised by Bridgend Health Project. Admission free. For more information contact Anne Jepson, senior project officer, on 07789-500 388 or email anne.jepson@lpct.scot.nhs.uk For more details about Bridgend Allotments visit www.bridgendallotment.org.uk

Growing your business by supplying multiples and food processors. Jamesfield, Perthshire, Monday 25 February 2008. A day when processors and multiples will discuss their requirements and producers give a practical view point on supplying these outlets. Cost will be £34.00 plus VAT. Contact Lyn on 0131 666 0847 for further details. A Soil Association event.

Politicians, Cowboys and fiddlers to converge at Bogbain, Thursday 6 March, 7 pm. An unlikely meeting of a leading politician, a Blazin Fiddler and one of the country's best chefs will mark the first gathering of **East Highland and Moray Slow Food convivium** to take place at Bogbain Adventure and Heritage Farm. The meeting will focus on our own Highland cattle and the associated culture. MSP Rob Gibson, author of "Plaids and Bandanas" will give an insight into the songs and routes of the Highland Drovers and the links with America's Wild West pioneers. Local varieties of Highland Beef will be prepared by chef Charlie Lockley, a member of the Master Chefs of Great Britain and Head chef at the 4AA rosette Boath House. Director of Bogbain and Blazin' Fiddler, Bruce Macgregor, will be giving an illustrated talk on the "Knockie collection" a book of Highland airs published in 1816 by local farmer Captain Simon Fraser. Many of the melodies in this publication were collected by Fraser's father and grandfather who were involved in droving trade. Contact details: Pam Rodway 01309 676566 / pam.rodway@virgin.net or Bruce MacGregor, Bogbain Farm 01463 772800 / info@bogbainfarm.com

Home-made organic ice cream-making, Saturday 10 May, Cream O' Galloway, Rainton Farm, Dumfries and Galloway. Rainton Farm's dairy herd and sheep supply the organic milk used in Cream O'Galloway's award-winning ice-cream. Tour the farm and meet the dairy cows before heading behind the scenes at the ice cream factory to create your own signature flavour. To book: 01577 814 040. All classes cost £50 or are FREE to those who join the Soil Association. Existing Soil Association members can book for half price. To book online and for details on all the **Taste of the Good Life** courses visit: <http://www.soilassociation.org/masterclasses>

Ready, Steady, GROW, Saturday May 17, 10am – 4pm, Bridgend Allotments, Inch House Community Centre, Edinburgh. Keen to enjoy home grown fruit and vegetables but don't know where to begin? Get a head start in the vegetable plot by spending the day at Bridgend with organic expert and allotment manager, Anne Jepson, who will share her knowledge and experience of successful fruit and vegetable growing the organic way. Find out how to plan your planting, identify soil types, get the lowdown on compost and discover how to care for your crops as they develop. Contact Bridgend Allotment on 07789-500 388 or email bridgend.allotment@blueyonder.co.uk. Cost £50 or FREE to those who join the Soil Association. Existing Soil Association members can book for half price. To book online and for details on all the **Taste of the Good Life** courses visit: <http://www.soilassociation.org/masterclasses>

Biodynamic Gardening - an introduction. Saturday 7 June 2008, 10am – 5pm, Poyntzfield Herb Nursery, Black Isle. Designed for those who wish to explore and experience the principles and practice of the biodynamic approach to work on the land. Focussing on the composts, preparations and sprays along with the use of the sowing and planting calendar. Bring a packed lunch, notebook and wellie boots! Cost £25/30. To book: info@poyntzfieldherbs.co.uk

Royal Highland Show, Ingleston, Edinburgh. Thursday 19 – Sunday 22 June 2008 Order tickets by phone 0131 335 6200 or via: www.royalhighlandshow.org

Homoeopathic and Anthroposophical plant medicines Saturday 12 July 2008 at Poyntzfield Herb Nursery, Black Isle See www.poyntzfieldherbs.co.uk for further details of this workshop.

Odds & Sods

Some of you will no doubt have come into contact with Indira Mann, Media Officer, Soil Association Scotland and will be sorry to hear that she left the Soil Association on Friday 8 February to go to a new job. We wish her well for the future. It was Indira who kept HIOA informed about events organised in Scotland. She is not being replaced straight away and most of her role will probably be handled by the press team down in Bristol. Alex Lambert and Pam Rodway will be good Scottish contacts in the meantime.

The cafe and jewellery shop in Fortrose is closing its cafe and instead, from this month, will sell clothes from "The Earth Collection". The clothes are not organic but they are made with a minimal use of chemicals in the production phase and they use accessories and packaging made of recycled and natural materials. Also, no-one is exploited or unfairly treated – from the factory workers through to the retail customer who buy their products. See: www.theearthcollection.org.uk/news

SALES/WANTS

WANTED: Organic Grower: EarthShare is looking for a full-time grower to join its small farming team. Experience of veg & soft fruit cycles, machine work, farm management, organic/biodynamic growing is desirable, but not essential. For a job description or more info, contact info@earthshare.co.uk or 01667 452879. Closing date 29 February. www.earthshare.co.uk

**HIOA
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