

An organic Africa

If you want to feed a hungry Africa then organic agriculture is your best choice. So says a key new study from UNEP the United Nations Environment Programme which has the clear message that only organic farming offers Africa a real chance of breaking the cycle of poverty and malnutrition that it has been locked in to for decades.

An analysis of 114 projects in 24 African countries found that yields had more than doubled where organic, or near-organic practices have been used. That increase in yield jumped to 128 per cent in East Africa.

Read the full story at [Organic Inform](#)

H5N1 avian flu is back

German veterinary officials in the region of Saxony have slaughtered the whole flock of some 1400 ducks, turkeys, geese and chickens on a breeding unit at Goerlitz, near the Polish border. Germany's national animal health laboratory says the outbreak is 'somewhat surprising' as the infection alert had been reduced to moderate after an outbreak was beaten in December last year.

Read the full story at [Organic Inform](#)

Harmonising organic trade

A long slog (taking six years) to harmonise trade in organic produce between markets with different standards and environmental conditions has finally borne fruit, with the launch of two new tools designed to establish equivalence between organic standards and improve market access for farmers in developing countries.

Two new tools are being introduced:

Equitool will enable people making decisions on organic sourcing to assess whether organic standards for production and processing in one part of the world are equivalent to standards elsewhere.

IROCB (International Requirements for Organic Certification Bodies), is designed to enable recognition of organic certification bodies around the world.

Read the full story at [Organic Inform](#)

Forthcoming Events:

The Sustainable Farming Debate

"Meeting environmental challenges whilst ensuring future profitability and productivity".

A one day conference.

Wednesday 5 November 2008
Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire

Renewables in the South East

A Farming Futures event.

Wednesday 5 November 2008
Leckford Estate, Hampshire

Biomass in the East Midlands

A Farming Futures event.

Wednesday 5 November 2008
The Rural Training Centre, Leicestershire

GM Conference - Feeding the World

Examining the claims and counter claims of one of the most critical issues of our age.

Wednesday 12 November 2008
The Queen Elizabeth 2nd Conference Centre,
London

Organising school visits to farms

Mercia Organic Producers evening talk

Monday 17 November 2008
Garden Organic - Ryton, near Coventry

Organic Farm Walk and Direct Marketing Event

Integrated Organic Production and Direct Marketing Opportunities

Tuesday 18 November 2008
Lamancha, Peebleshire

The Farm Energy Event

Including farm energy use: ways to save it, equipment to reduce its use, and even ways to generate it.

25 November 2008
Newark, Nottinghamshire

Surviving The Credit Crunch

A Better British Organic Poultry event.

Friday 28 November 2008
Coleshill, Swindon

For full details on these and other events, visit:
[Forthcoming Events](#)

Crunch time for real organic market

Downturns happen; recessions come and then recede. This one may go too, but meanwhile it will crunch many businesses and initiatives to their core; some may not survive; those that do will be in a different economic environment where the end of cheap energy and climate change means “business as usual” is not an option.

The hollow, fatuous phrase “market failure” now has a more unacceptable, harmful meaning. Markets are failing on a massive scale and tragically the casualties might include those enterprises that could have a leading role in developing business, trade and markets appropriate to our world of finite and diminishing resources.

Fritz Schumacher called these “preliminary examples”; activities that could lead the evolution of an economy fit for these conditions. The problem is that the current and prevailing economic conditions are hostile to them.

Even in good times they are vulnerable – for example local producer box schemes preyed on by corporate national ones – but they are particularly so when so many adverse forces come together as now.

It is now that we have to act as a movement. Can we find ways of working together so that those farms and businesses that have the movement’s principles at their heart can survive? Can those with financial muscle or knowledge use their skill and resources to help those who are more vulnerable? Can the ethical banks really support them? Can the organic millionaires help with loans, shares or funding instruments? Can the certification bodies act to protect the genuine organic pioneers? Can the large farmer work with the small farmer, sharing or loaning equipment, land, stock, feed?

Can we find a different way of doing things? Because if we can, now is the time to innovate. Can we even find the interest to discuss it? We would really like to hear from you.

Lawrence Woodward

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

Organic Forage Seed percentages to remain at 65% until 2010

In 2007, Defra accepted the Grass Seed Working Group’s recommendation that the minimum percentage of organic content in seed mixes not requiring prior authorisation should move from the current 60% to 65% for 2008 and 70% for 2009.

However, due to poor growing conditions which have resulted in low availability of organic seed, moving towards a minimum organic percentage requirement of 70% will now be postponed until 1st January 2010. The Defra Organic Control Manual will be amended.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

Poultry perch problems

New poultry perch regulations from the Soil Association (SA) aimed at improving bird welfare are in danger of backfiring. Organic poultry farmers report real problems with introducing (retrofitting) perches into houses that were designed without them.

One leading organic egg producer in Southern England reports spending well over £2500 to fit perches in two laying sheds only to reap the rewards of a big rise in keel bone and other fractures; excess dunging and mess on shed surfaces; and real mobility/safety problems for staff in moving around the now cluttered shed.

It seems the SA could be on the verge of fine-tuning the new perch regulations (set out below) after its Food and Farming department met on-farm to see for itself the difficulties caused. But there is some anger amongst producers that such “welfare” standards could be introduced without proper “road-testing”.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

An end to organic bacon?

The organic sector needs a concerted response to proposals that could spell the destruction of organic pork sales, says Organic Farmers & Growers.

The concern centres on an EU move towards banning sodium nitrate and sodium nitrite as processing aids which the certifier says could lead to a major risk to public health and a collapse in the market for organic cured meats such as bacon and ham. Regulation changes currently under discussion in Europe could see nitrates and nitrites banned from organic cured meat products within two years.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

Zero greenhouse gas farming

The Organic Research Centre – Elm Farm has joined forces with other environment, food and agriculture bodies to pursue a route to zero greenhouse gas emission (GHG) farming and food in the UK.

A set of principles and targets has already been established. The elements of low, zero or even positive GHG farming are detailed online.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

Compulsory Bluetongue jabs for Scotland

A compulsory vaccination programme will be launched this winter to protect Scotland's livestock industry against the spread of the BTV-8 Bluetongue virus. The move contrasts markedly with the England and Wales voluntary schemes.

The programme will not begin before the start of November and will depend on the prevalence of midges which spread the disease among the estimated seven million susceptible farm animals. Manufacturing costs will be met by the Scottish Government and industry.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

Bog standard SA certification lives on

In a surprise move, The Soil Association has announced that it is to continue operating its organic certification company – Ascisco – (UK 15) which certifies organic businesses to the baseline EU regulation (minimum organic standards).

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

Organic arable farming - conversion options

HGCA has published a new technical guide for arable farmers considering conversion. It details the current state of the market, the organic supply chain, conversion, fertility, cropping and sources of further information.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

OCIS: free advice for organic conversion

Free Organic Conversion and Information Service (OCIS) helpline number: **0800 980 0048**

The service is delivered by Natural England (NE) on Defra's behalf via the Organic Research Centre – Elm Farm and includes a national helpline, an information pack, a website and a free on farm advisory visit .

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

The Organic Inform project is supported under the England Rural Development Programme by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund.



Market updates

Eye on the market: Horticulture

Latest prices from the Soil Association and HDRA (Prices collated August 2008).

Kingshay: Organic Dairy Production

Organic market and yield information from Kingshay have been published by DairyCo (October 2008).

Livestock, dairy and eggs

Latest prices from the Soil Association (Prices collated May 2008)

Organic Grain Market Update

Prices and commentary on the organic grain market (October 2008).

Prince of Wales and the GM "wrong turning"

The Prince of Wales has once again entered the fray on GM crops. He has attacked the contention that "GM food is now essential to feed the world", and says that the evidence shows that modified crops' yields are "generally lower than their conventional counterparts". He calls them "a wrong turning on the route to feeding the world in a sustainable or durable manner" and "a risky and expensive distraction, diverting attention and resources away from those real, long-term solutions such as crop varieties which respond well to low input systems that, in turn, do not rely on fossil fuels."

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

Conference Programme available

The Organic Research Centre's third
Producer Conference

6th and 7th January 2009

Harper Adams University, Shropshire

For the Early Bird Discount we must receive your booking form by 15th November 2008.

South West Farmers can receive even cheaper rates through the Vocational Training Scheme. See [website](#)