

## Taking the pulse of organic animal health

Leading vets, organic farmers, researchers and advisers gathered in Oxford (June 2nd and 3rd) to debate issues on animal health, against a backdrop of Bluetongue fears, rampant TB and continuing avian influenza, alongside apparent official inertia and indifference.



A recurring theme of the two days was vaccination – from its routine, multiple use in organic poultry to prophylactic applications against serious, exotic diseases such as H5N1 avian influenza.

Some of the main conclusions of the Organic Inform/Organic Research Centre Organic Animal Health Colloquium included:

- The DESTVAC tool should be considered when making vaccination decisions. Vaccination should not be used to prop up bad management.
- Use of Bluetongue vaccination strongly advocated, as well as a press for use of FMD vaccine.
- Bio-security as a tool for disease prevention should be considered at all scales.
- The organic sector needs a push to understand and promote best practice – improve health planning, training, inspections etc.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

## The rise and fall in organic conversion

Roger Hitchings of the Organic Research Centre discusses the new government organic advisory service for farmers and growers on Farming Today.

Anna Hill from Farming Today, questions Roger Hitchings on the current interest in organic farming, raising concerns that the number of farmers converting from conventional to organic is dropping.

Mr Hitchings, Head of Advisory Services at The Organic Research Centre, says that most of the farmers he has spoken to through the new Organic Conversion Information Service (OCIS) are still enthusiastic, and whilst there is the economic case to consider before converting, many farmers still have a sense of principle in their desire to convert.

To contact OCIS, telephone 0800 980 0048

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

## Forthcoming Events:

### **Organic Research Centre: Arable Events**

Latest arable research and news.

[17th June - Sheepdrove, Berkshire](#)

[24th June - Wakelyns, Suffolk](#)

### **Homeopathy for Livestock**

The fundamental base of homeopathy, and use in livestock farming.

[17th June - Roskillys, Cornwall](#)

[18th June - Little Sellan Farm, Cornwall](#)

### **16th IFOAM**

#### **Organic World Congress**

Cultivate the Future based on Science.

18th - 20th June 2008

Modena, Italy

### **New Climate, New Crops?**

Defra-funded Innovation Network.

18th June 2008

Kensington, London

### **SAC Organic Producer Farm Walk**

Organic Arable and Field Vegetable

Production in Practice.

25th June 2008

Chapel Farm, North Berwick

### **Contemplating Conversion**

OF&G national one-day event.

26th June 2008

Great Berwick Farm, Shropshire

### **Young Producers Weekend**

An Organic Futures event.

12th - 13th July 2008

Hankham Organics, East Sussex

### **Cumbria Organics Farm Walk**

Family event, and farm walk around established organic dairy farm.

13th July 2008

Paul Casson's Farm, Lancaster

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

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## Making more use of research

Mark Measures, Director of the Institute of Organic Training and Advice summarises improved access to research information for farmers and advisers.

“One of the problems which I continually experience as an adviser and a farmer is the difficulty of accessing the results of research, indeed in a recent consultation exercise with advisers some of them were not even aware that research had been undertaken in major areas of specialist interest to them, let alone know what the results were.

Accessing the results quickly is certainly a problem, so web based services such as the ‘Compendium of Animal Health and Welfare in Organic Farming’ and ‘Organic Weed Management’ are immensely useful for farmers and advisers. Another problem is that most research projects and sometimes the website that goes with it only have a finite life.”

Mark Measures goes on to describe the role that the Defra funded PACA Res project has in facilitating access to research.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

[PACA Res project](#): Providing Access, Collation and Analysis of Defra Research for the Organic Sector

## New study finds reason for organic milk benefits

Researchers at Newcastle University demonstrate that grazing cows on organic farms produce better quality milk.

The study, published in the Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture, compared milk from three UK dairy production systems: (i) high-input, conventional (10 farms); (ii) low-input, organic (10 farms); and (iii) low-input non-organic (5 farms). Samples were taken during the outdoor grazing (78 samples) and indoor periods (31 samples).

Results show that organic milk contains more nutritionally desirable fatty acids, vitamins and antioxidants. It also showed significant seasonal differences, including up to 60% more conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) during the summer months.



Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

## Price not biggest barrier to organic

A survey into shoppers’ perceptions of organic fruit and vegetables has found only 16% of shoppers are driven by cost when buying organic.

The survey revealed factors leading people to buy organic produce included:

- health (fear that “sprays” and “preservatives” could cause cancer);
- safety (many claim to buy organics for their children);
- taste (many believe organics taste better than conventional produce).

The findings have prompted concerns that few organic producers understand their consumers, and suggest developing better-tasting produce rather than cutting production costs.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

## In-conversion grain in organic diets

Hi Peak Feeds fears potential new entrants to the organic sector will be deterred if in-conversion grain for organic livestock diets is withdrawn.

Currently, qualifying grain for organic feed has to be in at least its second year of conversion. However, there have been calls to withdraw the use of in-conversion grain.

Ian Proctor of Hi Peak Feeds of Killamarsh, Derbyshire says: “Whenever possible we have always resisted the use of conventional feed in organic rations, often believing policy to be too relaxed. But to compare second year conversion with conventional grain is entirely to miss the point.”

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)



## **Biodynamic: a new approach to organic?**

Workshops throughout April and May run by the Biodynamic Agricultural Association have provided an on-farm introduction to biodynamic farming.

Biodynamic farming has developed from eight lectures provided by Rudolph Steiner (1861–1925), a philosopher and scientist who sought to “extend scientific research beyond the existing parameters of natural science and investigate the non-physical, spiritual realities of life” (BDAA website).

Follow the link to read more about biodynamic preparations, sowing and planting calendar, and Demeter certification.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

## **Environmental Stewardship Review of Progress**

A review was conducted by Defra and Natural England on the progress of Environmental Stewardship (ES), the latest phase of agri-environment schemes.

Results found in general, ES was working well. So far agri-environment schemes:

- delivered 5 million hectares across England under Environmental Stewardship agreements;
- created more than 4,800 kilometres of footpaths, and 2,400 kilometres of cycle paths and bridleways;
- assisted recovery of a range of species including the stone curlew, bittern, twite, curlew, and chough;
- are on target to bring 95% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest into favourable condition by 2010.

However, a key recommendation to come out of the review included the need to address the scope that Environmental Stewardship has to help combat climate change

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)



## **Grants for biomass fuel**

Friday 6th June saw Environment Minister Phil Woolas announce a new round of grants for up to £200,000, under the Bio-energy Infrastructure Scheme, to help the biomass industry in England, for use in heat and electricity generation.

The scheme is open to producer groups (all members must be growers), and small/medium businesses (SMEs).

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

## **Organic Grain Market Update**

Prices and commentary on the organic grain market, from Organic Grain Link (June 08).

The last month has been extremely quiet for new business, for both conventional and organic crops. Old and new crop markets and prices are starting to merge as we come to the end of the season and existing stocks are cleared.

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.



## **And finally...**

Following the success of the last two years, look out for our third Organic Research Centre Conference.

6th and 7th January 2009.

Location to be confirmed.

**Keep it in your diary!**

**More information at [Organic Inform](#).**

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