



Organic Inform

E-mail update: 15th September 2008

Researchers give thumbs up for organic chicken

Organic chicken has a higher concentration of healthy fats than conventional birds with associated health benefits to consumers, say Italian researchers.

Led by Dr Gianvito Martino at the University of Teramo, the group analysed 24 birds, half conventionally reared and half organic. They found that breasts from organic chickens contained nearly 30% more polyunsaturated fatty acids than conventional birds. Consequently, saturated fatty acids and mono-saturated fatty acids were more abundant in conventional chicken.

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

Organic estate bucks trend in farmland bird numbers.

Whilst farmland bird populations in South East England are generally tumbling, Home Farm on the Goodwood Estate has seen a 50 per cent increase in the breeding populations of three key farmland birds (skylark, linnet and yellowhammer) in the five years to 2007.

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

EU to limit vehicle biofuels

MEPS vote to set a limit on targets to increase the use of biofuels for road transport.

A committee of the European Parliament has voted to limit the use of crop biofuels on Europe's roads. The original EU target that 10% of all road transport fuel should come from renewable sources by 2020 contained no set limits for such sources.

Now the MEPs say that at least 4% of the total will have to be achieved using electricity or hydrogen from renewable sources, or from second-generation biofuels from waste or non-food crops with a maximum of 6% coming from crop biofuels.

The panel of MEPs also approved a mid-term goal of 5% of road transport fuel from renewable sources by 2015, of which 1% should not be food crop-based biofuels.

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

Forthcoming Events:

Growing your own feed workshop

A Cumbria Organics event to share experiences of growing feed crops this year.

25th September 2008

Helsington, Kendal

Lady Eve Memorial Lecture

Led by Monty Don.

2nd October 2008

Central Hall, Westminster

OGA Farm Walk

A tour of Hankham Organics.

17th October 2008

Hankham, East Sussex

Welsh Organic Producers' Conference

Conference for organic producers in Wales.

Note the new date:

23rd October 2008

Builth Wells

Feeding organic poultry

Maximising feed from the farm.

24th October 2008

Aberystwyth

Soil Association Conference 2008

The Soil Association's annual conference.

18th - 19th November 2008

Bristol

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

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

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Row over vegetable box scheme booklet

The Soil Association recently published a directory of box schemes in the UK, designed to highlight their availability .

However, it soon became clear that a significant number of well established schemes had not been included, many of which are certified with Soil Association Certification Limited. This issue was further compounded by a reference in a letter that accompanied the booklet, suggesting that those schemes included were the 'best'. The implication was that those schemes that were not included were not in the top echelon of schemes. Some scheme operators were contacted by customers who were concerned that 'their' scheme was not considered to be among the best.

There are over 450 entries in the booklet and around 150 of these referred to 'the award winning' Riverford Organic Vegetables and its partners River Swale, River Nene and Riverford @ Norton in Hampshire. The impression given is that there are lots of organic growers around the country working in partnership with the main centres but in reality the great majority are franchisees acting as distributors for boxes packed in distribution centres. The Organic Growers' Alliance (OGA) was extremely concerned that the large numbers of entries gave an unfair advantage to four, large inter-linked companies.

The response by the Soil Association was swift with a personal apology from Helen Browning, Director of Food and Farming circulated to all affected producers. There are also plans to re-write the booklet and publish a brand new version.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

New report forecasts rising profits for UK organic arable.

The production of organic combinable crops, such as wheat and barley, is set to generate greater margins compared to non-organic as the price of oil increases to US \$200 a barrel - predicted by a recent Chatham House report to happen in 5 to 10 years – reveals a new study carried out for the Soil Association.

The report shows that with oil at US \$200 a barrel, the profit margins of non-organic combinable crop systems range from £296 to £348 per hectare, per year whilst the organic margins range from £371 to £411. This is mainly due to the high cost of oil-based artificial fertilisers that are extensively used in non-organic systems which could soon rise to £550 a tonne.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

Organic Seed

ECO-PB, the European Consortium for Organic Plant Breeding, is holding a follow up workshop of the issues surrounding the use and supply of organic vegetable seed. The overall aim of the workshop is to identify a top five list of vegetable crops that could be candidates for cross-country agreements to reduce the need for derogations to a very low level or remove the need altogether.

Participants in the workshop have been asked to propose crops for inclusion in the annex in the next 2-5 years, crops for which a cross-country agreement is needed and what varieties are missing from the present provision. To help us with this task could you answer the following questions and e-mail your responses to Roger Hitchings: roger.h@organicresearchcentre.com

1. Roughly what percentage of the seeds that you use is organic?
2. What has been your experience of organic seed? (good, bad or indifferent – detail would be useful but not obligatory)
3. What wrongs need to be righted? Yes I know this is a leading question but it essentially asks what changes are needed for the present system.
4. Are you able to nominate 5 crop species that you think could or should be grown entirely from organic seed within the next 2-5 years.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

New EU Regulation

Organic Centre Wales has issued a technical note on the new regulation.

The regulation, which comes into force on 1st January 2009, will provide a clear statement of the objectives and principles of organic production and provide an over-arching regulatory framework.

Read more at [Organic Centre Wales](#)

Advertise your event here

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Telephone 01488 657600 or e-mail us:

organicinform@organicresearchcentre.com

Bluetongue vaccination running out of steam?

Defra's Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer is concerned at the low take up of Bluetongue vaccine in Northern England. Recent evidence indicates a drop or delay in vaccine take-up in counties recently brought into the Protection Zone. Sales data for some of those counties suggest that the number of animals vaccinated in these areas could be as low as one in three, and in Northumberland and Cumbria, the most recent counties brought into the Protection Zone, as low as one in five.

His message comes as a further incident of imported Bluetongue has been logged by Defra on a farm in County Durham.

Read more at [Organic Inform](#)

Animal Health Plans

Organic Centre Wales has produced a series of case studies on animal health plans.

The case studies show how organic and in conversion farmers have developed and used animal health plans to help them meet the organic standards and improve the health and wellbeing of their stock.

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 (September 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 (September 2008).

Ups and downs of UK organic market

The Guardian commissioned retail analyst TNS to examine the current state of UK organic food sales. They say that the UK organic market is down by twenty per cent.

Figures collected by TNS show spending on organic food and drinks fell from a peak of nearly £100m a month, earlier this year, to £81m in the most recent four-week period recorded. The fall has been steepest in eggs, but is also reported in the most popular sectors, including dairy, fruit and vegetables and chicken. In fact the TNS data shows the retail market share of organic eggs back at 2001 levels at under five per cent.

"We're certainly seeing a dip, the question is: is it a dip that's bouncing back again or it could be the start of a real drop," says Edward Garner of TNS.

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

Book your place now to receive an early bird discount!

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