

Apologies for the late delivery of this final 2009 issue of the SOPA newsletter. Weather conditions disrupted the publication date and the technical problems have intervened. The STOP PRESS opposite is the only late inclusion to this December issue.

EDITORIAL 2009—the year of Big Issues

Despite all the criticism and attacks on our industry this year we are still here and going strong. 2009 was a rollercoaster of big issues and at times it felt like we were swatting away at flies ... the economic downturn ...FSA Nutrition Review ...SRDP failure ...climate change ...a new focus on CAP Reform ...GMOs in Europe ...general media backlash to everything organic

And while all this goes on in the ether above we still have businesses to run, rules to abide by, markets to supply and most fundamentally FOOD TO GROW. It is what we do.

Many of us intend to spend a moment over the festive season liking at the financial performance of our businesses. I would urge you to do so with extra care this year, and take a moment to see other businesses and how they are faring. Organic gross margins continue to out perform many non organic sectors. Organic systems are about reducing costs. We do this through better nutrient management and a close eye on details like soil nutrient status and livestock health.

And what of 2010?

Organic prime meat prices are equivalent to previous years and there are encouraging signs of a return of the organic premium. Cereal prices remain depressed as the industry is still under duress from the market boom in 2007-8. With retail sectors indicating improvements in consumer demand this should filter through the supply chain and improve farm gate prices.

The organic sector remains niche and this makes it fragile and more susceptible to changes in demand. Organic systems do not adapt to change well because of the long term production cycle—rotations mean this is even more pertinent for us. Most producers have hunkered down and just got on with the daily routine thus riding out the storm.



It's been a tricky year and ends on a white note so have a safe and happy Christmas from all at SOPA and here's to a prosperous 2010....

Debs

STOP PRESS

Extreme Weather conditions and animal feed

Please contact the office immediately if you are worried about short or long term feed supplies.



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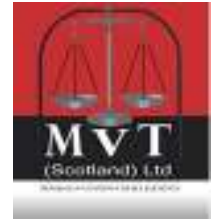
General Enquiries can also be directed to info@sopa.org.uk

CERTIFICATION CORNER

From the SOPA team
best wishes for a safe and
Happy Christmas and
prosperity in 2010



SOPA Approves Orkney Organic Minerals



Renting Organic Land

Do you rent land in or out for organic grazing or vegetable production?

If so, you need to be recording the fields and dates. We have a form for both parties to complete—just contact the office or download off the SOPA website.



SOPA Website

All SOPA forms and Standards can be downloaded from the Members Section of the website. Contact Debs if you need to

- Set up your username and password
- You have forgotten your username and/or password
- You need to update your contact details (new email address perhaps?)
- You discover an error or outdated form

MVT Scotland has developed a bespoke SOPA Approved Organic Mineral Range for the Orkney's Organic Farmers. The mineral products can only be used in specific deficiencies, so check the label or with the SOPA office before use.

Orkney is naturally deficient in selenium, copper and cobalt and this causes problems with Vitamin E levels in beef animals, leading to poor thrift, white muscle disease and even death of young calves.

2009 has seen a culmination of efforts to get to the bottom of Orkney's susceptibility to mineral deficiencies. SOPA Inspector Ian Hunter had played an active role in highlighting Orkney's unique situation. Orcadian farmers were also worried, knowing that it was very difficult to manage minerals in organic systems. Local vets and Mike Girvan in the SAC office had all contacted SOPA about the continuing decline of mineral status in Orcadian cattle.

Earlier this year SOPA and Charlie McLaren of MVT (Scotland) Ltd started work on resolving the solution for mineral deficiencies in organic systems. Charlie spent hours on Orkney's organic farms, talking to the farmers and taking samples for analysis. Once we had an idea of the degree of the deficiencies Charlie was able to develop a bespoke mineral supplement.

The new mineral supplements had to be organically approved and this meant quite a bit of discussion between Charlie and Jane Ellis in the SOPA office to make sure that the new formulations could be used without compromising organic status.

In December 2009 we have approved several products that can be used on Orkney's organic farms, but only in specific circumstances i.e. when minerals are deficient.

Check the label



Orkney's organic beef herd have help to fight selenium deficiencies

2 New SOPA Approved Products

MVT Orkney Organic Suckler
MVT Orkney Youngstock Organic



1 new SOPA Approved with Restricted Use

YOU MUST SEEK PERMISSION PRIOR TO USING THIS PRODUCT

MVT Orkney Dry Cow Organic



To discuss your mineral deficiencies contact MVT Scotland by email enquiries@mvtsotland.co.uk Or Charlie McLaren by mobile 07711 849 474

To discuss SOPA Approved Products call the SOPA office

The Local Food Supply Project



After the successful publication of **The Larder** this year, SOPA identified a need to improve the links between producers and the food service sector.

This became even more apparent at the SOPA sponsored Local Food conference in April when former Edinburgh restaurateur Martin Irons outlined the Chefs Market concept. Chefs Markets are a new take on Farmers Markets, where producers can showcase their wares direct to a chef and hotelier audience. On the back of this SOPA successfully applied for a Scottish Government Skills Development Scheme grant and contracted SFQC to pilot a series of 4 FEASTS workshops this autumn which if successful could be rolled out into a wider 3 year programme.

These workshops were designed to allow producers, chefs and restaurateurs to meet up, hear about the challenges of food production and also the opportunities for supply of local food into restaurants, hotels, cafés etc. The workshops were held at **Monachyle Mhor** hotel at Balquidder near Callander; **The Store** near Foveran in Aberdeenshire; **Earthy Foods** in Edinburgh; and **Loch Leven's Larder** near Kinross.

The format of the 4 events involved local food producers outlining their farming/growing operation and what challenges they have found supplying the food service sector; chef speakers giving an overview of how important local food is to their business, what they needed from producers and how they could improve their access to this market; and finally an opportunity for local food suppliers to showcase their produce at market stalls for people to view and sample over lunch. A variety of produce was on show including organic beef, lamb and pork products (from SOPA members Peelham Farm), organic and free range chicken, local Fife cheese, Perthshire pressed rapeseed oil, deluxe homemade pies with local ingredients and local jams to name but a few.

The four venues provided ideal bases to explore the various issues and thanks must go all to hosts and speakers for making the events so successful. There was a good turnout at all events with over 120 people attending in total. It is hoped that those local producers attending will be better prepared for what they need to do to access the food service market and secure new business arising from contacts gained at these events.

Likewise it is hoped that more SOPA organic and non-organic produce will be on local restaurant, hotel and café plates as a result of this venture! Any SOPA members interested in accessing the food service market should speak to Debs in the first instance and we can investigate opportunities for you.

SRDP Update

The final round of 2009 has concluded but the Scottish Government has not announced the successful applicants yet. This was a highly competitive round, with three times the number of applicants than in the previous (October) round. It remains difficult for organic maintenance to successfully achieve sufficient points and farmers have to consider other options that fit well with organic management to help boost the value of the proposal. The most obvious add-ons are agri-environment options but anything can be considered as long as it complements organic farming and gives an overall package of improvements.

SOPA continues to lobby strongly in favour of organic farming, in particular trying to redress the balance towards organic maintenance rather than conversions. It is, in our opinion, essential the industry retains existing organic farmers because they have

1. achieved the conversion period
2. learnt appropriate skills and new management techniques to meet the organic standards
3. learnt new business management skills
4. most likely already been supported through the OAS and so have received public funds
5. have established markets and trade networks

Don't forget you can still take advantage of the LMO Membership of Food Quality Assurance Schemes. If you do not receive any funding for conversion or maintenance, i.e. you are not in a current scheme (Rural Priorities or the old OAS) you can claim up to £150 towards your SOPA fees. You do this at the same time as you complete the IACS form, call Debs if you need further information.

Brian Pack Inquiry

SOPA did submit a response to the Brian Pack Inquiry for the Future Support of Scottish Agriculture. Some SOPA members also submitted individual responses.

The key points from our response are as follows....

1. Recognise that organic farming delivers a broader spectrum of public benefits than any other form of agriculture: it produces food, protects biodiversity, protects water and soils, protects animal health and welfare and contributes less GHG than other forms of agriculture. In addition to this, the organic system comes guaranteed as it is annually enforced by certification body inspection.
2. SOPA believes it is counter-productive for a national wide-scale conversion to organic farming. Environmentally this may be desirable but it would not continue to deliver financial sustainability. It is essential that the organic retail demand is balanced by supply otherwise the premium disappears. When the premium disappears (as at present), organic farm income falls and without profit the business fails. This is not sustainable economic growth of the organic sector.
3. Support food production of environmentally friendly and sustainable production methods, such as organic farming, through public procurement of Scottish and organic food.
4. Recognise the environmental benefits delivered by grazing animals, particularly in the uplands but also in a traditional rotational system.
5. Organic conversion is not a cure-all for LFA areas. Upland farms maybe considered 'nearly' organic by some, but it is our experience a successful organic farm is self sufficient in fertility and feed for livestock. Upland farms that have the ability to be self sufficient will find organic management much easier.

Production must not be at the expense of environmental protection. Organic farming offers the ability to produce quality food and sustain environmental protection without compromise.

Perthshire Organic Monitor Farm

Introduction

Peter Lindsay opened the meeting by welcoming around 20 visitors and community group members to Balanloan, and introduced Colin Morgan (SAC Senior Nutritionist, Edinburgh) as the guest for the day.

Farm Update

Cattle

Gordon Learmonth gave the update. Scanning is due to commence next week, with this being chosen as opposed to using a vet. This year there were a number of twins born and Gordon felt that scanning would allow these cows to be kept separate and monitored as opposed to just be told that the cows were either in calf or empty.

The calving percentage of the herd is very high, something which the group questioned. It was considered that this was due to the level of husbandry for the cows and calves, though only 3 cows required assisted calvings. It was noted that many of the cows are 10/11 years old when put away, though there are some cows in the herd of 12-13 years old. Usually around 10 cows are culled from the herd each year, though with a herd of 50-60 older cows Gordon admitted it would take some time to replace all of these at this rate. With the value for cull cows now increased it is easier to trade in an old cow for a heifer given that replacements are home-bred.

This year 100% of calves would be weaned, something which is notably higher than the national average of 86%. Gordon put this down partly to being able to select heifers based on their mothers and not calving down until 3 years of age. He put it to the group that smaller heifers calving before this age often did not grow and struggled to get back in calf the second time around. A few sets of twins each year also helps to keep the calving percentage up.

Spring born calves achieved 177p/kg across the board, a strong price which Gordon felt was being held up by the conventional market. The group discussed this price as well as the potential for a shortage of organic finishing cattle next year due to the current practice of selling organic stores onto the conventional market.

Gordon considered that the autumn calvers were still a bone of contention, he was not yet sure if they are a success or not. Calving had finished the day before the meeting, with every cow calving fine and a few heifers requiring assistance. Last years calves were due to go to Stirling Mart in a few weeks time. As there is currently no increased margin for organic stores they will be sold on the conventional market. Gordon felt that there was a slight margin in the organic, market for the older calves but not for the younger ones.

Weaning would start in the next few weeks when cattle would be brought in and clipped. At a recent sale at Stirling Gordon said that cows with calves at foot were making £1350-£1400/head whilst heifers were achieving around £1,000/head. A number of smaller bulling Simmental cross heifers were recently sold off farm for £1,000/head destined for North Uist, sold as organic. Gordon was pleased with this price and noted that the buyer was likely to return in future.

The group then moved on to look at pens of cattle currently indoors.

Pen 1

20 Heifers, 20-24months old (Simmental X and Salers cross) which had been sold for £850/head.

Pen 2

Autumn calvers from last year, mixed Salers X, Simmental X and some Luig, 10 to 15 months old. Gordon stated that these were not forced at all and were fed 2lb of barley along with silage.

Pen 3

16-18month old, which are destined for Stirling Mart in a few weeks. They had weighed in at between 416 and 495kg.

The group then moved on to look at the recently purchased Simmental Bull. Gordon purchased the bull at Stirling Mart from Corskie Farm. The group commented on the bull and asked how he had been selected. Gordon replied that he had been selected on the grounds of figures and physical appearance. Calving ease and milk yield was most important as the cows calve outside, growth rates are also important but getting live calves is more important than the growth rate. It was felt that the bull would suit the cows currently in the herd. The bull had a high health status which is particularly important to the farm. On questioning he went on to say that the bull had cost £5,000. Currently there are 5 bulls on the farm, with 2 due to go for slaughter.

Sheep

George Scott explained that ewes are currently getting ready to go to the tup. Recent lamb sales included:

1. 113 lambs-19.9kg average @ £65/head
2. 12 lambs-23.9kg average @ £78/head
3. 101 lambs-19.5kg average @ £66.92/head
4. 88 lambs-18.6kg average @ £63.84/head
5. 189 lambs-18.5kg average @ £59.47/head
6. 144 lambs-17.73kg average @ £58.66/head

In all a total of 642 lambs made an average of £61.97 at an average weight of 19.61kg.

It was noted that since the last meeting lambs had been split with 188 at 36.5kg put in the rape field at Calvine and the remaining smaller lambs put on the field sown with chicory. The lambs on the chicory field had out performed the larger lambs in the rape field, increasing by an estimated average of 6-7kg per lamb in around a month. As the lambs had done so well on the chicory the George was considering increasing the number of acres sown for the coming season. It was generally considered that it would be a good idea, and that it was ideal for this purpose but this would only be suited to units which had spare acres and not on units which had limited grazing available.

A couple of new high index Texel and Blackface tups had been purchased, although one had subsequently died.

Top Tip

Analyse different batches of silage to ensure winter rations are formulated correctly.

Silage can be targeted at different groups based on quality with lowest quality silage fed to dry cows and highest quality silage for youngstock and autumn calving cows.

Arable

Since the last meeting spring barley has been harvested, achieving 27.5t from 14 acres at 15% moisture which had been bruised and propcorned before being put into store.

Arable silage was described as a 'disaster' owing to the inclement weather conditions prohibiting removal from the field. It was eventually salvaged, though cut and baled due to the wetness-170 bales in total. Gordon considered that in this situation cutting and baling had been the only option available. The bales had led to a problem with vermin, which was being monitored and controlled. It was noted that only the end rigs had been undersown with grass due to the wet spring.

The horse trials continue to have a considerable effect on the arable operations. This year is considered to be the worst conditions that Gordon has seen, with 5 working days spent towing vehicles in and out of the showground. He reported that the area had now dried out and the grass had been resown which had established well this year. As much of the grass is of a considerable age David Greer has plans for reseeded more grass, as yields are relatively low.

Silage Samples

Three different samples of silage had been brought along to the meeting for the group to assess using their nose and eyes. They had the following analysis.

	Silage 1	Silage 2	Silage 3
Dry Matter (g/kg)	312	300	224
ME (MJ/kg DM)	9.1	11.9	10.5
Protein (g/kg DM)	101	139	140

The attendees thought that silage 1 smelt sweet enough but looked to be quite mature which was correct.

There was a bit of difference of opinion between the silage 2 and silage 3 but after some discussion it was decided that silage 2 was the best silage. It is very good silage with a high protein and high energy content and with an optimal dry matter.

Silage 3 had a high protein level as it was actually a red clover silage. Colin Morgan explained that high protein is typical of this type of silage. He also commented that red clover silages are thought to have a higher energy utilisation by the animal than grass silages when the analysis results have the same ME value. Red clover silages also tend to have a higher intake level.

The group asked if silage with the quality of number 2 could be grown in this area. As the farmer who had produced silage 2 was in attendance then he was able to explain that it could be produced in the area. This silage had been grown using a seed mix from John Watson Seeds, was cut in the afternoon when the sun was shining using a conditioner mower and was lifted the next day and ensiled in a pit with no additive used. Cutting date was the most important factor making sure that the grasses had not shot before cutting.

Colin stressed the importance of analysing the silage before rations can be made up due to the high variations in silage quality. He explained that it is a low cost compared to the saving it can give by feeding less concentrate in line with the analysis.

Although silage 3 was wet and did not smell particularly good it actually had much better feed value than silage 1 which was drier and sweeter smelling.

He went on to explain that the most important factor in silage making to get a high energy and protein silage is the cutting date. Cutting early can compromise the yield but will result in a better silage. The decision on when to cut should be based on what stock are to be fed. Fattening stock need better quality silage but if it is dry suckler cows that are to be fed, bulk is more likely to be the more important factor.

The intake factor of the silage is higher if there is a high sugar level in the silage. High sugar levels often reflect a poorer fermentation on the silage as the sugars are turned into acid by the bacteria during fermentation. Colin explained that a balance of the two factors is the best.

Moist Cereals

Colin highlighted the advantages of using moist cereals with the main reason being higher dry matter grain yield and also the ability to spread the workload by harvesting it before the main harvest time. The disadvantages are that the contractor must be available, it must be kept airtight and vermin can be a big problem. Colin warned not to use straw on the top of the pit to help reduce the vermin problem. As he put in don't provide a bed for them next to their dinner! In the clamp the target moisture content is 30-45% for cereals and 25 - 35% for legumes.

It was noted that when using moist cereals an additional amount of barley will need to be used as it has a higher dry matter level than traditionally fed cereals. As a guideline to replace 1kg grain at 88%DM requires:

- . 1.10kg at 20% moisture (80%DM)
- . 1.26kg at 30% moisture (70%DM)
- . 1.47kg at 40% moisture (60%DM)

Balanloan Silages

When comparing the silages from last year to this year they have improved in both energy and protein levels. They also made approximately 200 bales more than they did last year. As the silages were cut about the same time as last year it is thought that the reason for this improvement is that clover was stitched into some of the fields. It is recognised that a major problem with silage fields in the horse trials and this limits the way the silage fields can be reseeded. Red clover will be sown out in the spring for silage production which will help the quality of silage available for the autumn calvers and the weaned calves.

The silages which are analysed from this year to last year are a like for like comparison apart from the Arable in 2008 and the Balanloan Pit in 2009.

2008	Arable	Castle Pit	Castle Bales	Wood Bales
Dry Matter %	30.9	58.2	28.7	25.4
D Value	62	54	59	51
ME MJ/kg DM	9.9	8.7	9.4	8.2
Protein %	12.6	8.6	11.5	10.9

2009	Balanloan Pit	Castle Pit	Castle Bales	Wood Bales
Dry Matter %	31.2	33.5	29.5	28.5
D Value	57	56	59	59
ME MJ/kg DM	9.1	8.9	9.5	9.5
Protein %	10.1	10.5	11.2	11.4

The spring calvers will be fed on the Castle Pit silage with straw. The autumn calvers will get ad-lib silage and the castle and wood bales and the Balanloan pit along with some barley will be fed to the calves.

Colin mentioned that along with the silage and the barley the newly weaned calves should have a protein source for the first few months after weaning to get their rumen working properly. Beans was suggested and it was thought that to buy in beans it would cost £250 -300/tonne

Colin also thought that the autumn calvers which are out wintered would benefit from some additional barley as they require extra energy for living outside as well as coming into season.

Colin finished off by saying that if the quality of silage is too good, in particular for spring calvers then straw may be needed to be fed alongside the silage to prevent the cows gaining too much condition. In many organic systems this could be a very expensive option.

Chicory

The group asked Colin Morgan if he knew why the lambs had done as well when on the chicory field. It was noted that the chicory had been sown with a mix of timothy and clover during Highland Show week in 2008. It had received some lime after the pH had proved to be low. The chicory had been slow to come in the springtime but once it started growing it grew very vigorously. Colin considered that the high growth rates were due to the high and constant protein content of the crop as well as its ability to take up and contain more minerals due to its long tap root. In addition it was considered that it was due to the fact that the crop proved drought tolerant during the season. The main issue with the chicory had been with the encroachment of the weed population, necessitating topping twice during the season. The group enquired as to the lifespan of the chicory and Peter Lindsay replied that he would hope it would last 4 years although this was dependant on good management practices. Peter also noted that two lamb carcasses had been procured for a future meeting, one from the chicory field and one from the grass fields. The group will be invited to taste both meats in order to ascertain if chicory has any influence or improvement on flavour.

Red clover

Care must be taken when harvesting red clover silage as it is prone to leaf shatter. The average analysis of red clover silage is

- Dry matter: 250 – 300g/kg
- Metabolisable energy: 9.8 – 11.4MJ/kgDM
- Crude protein: 140 – 190g/kgDM
-

It also has a high intake potential and hence animals perform well when fed red clover silage. The disadvantages of red clover silage are that it has poor fermentation, and hence inoculants may be required. It contains phyto-oestrogens which may affect ewes at mating and hence care should be taken when feeding red clover to sheep at this time.

With clover fields care should be taken to reduce the risk of bloat. Colin mentioned that the way to treat bloat revolves around getting rid of the froth that is produced. Feeding oils in the diet can reduce the risk of bloat. Bloat guard can be mixed with concentrates or fed in blocks with veterinary advice.

Vitamin E

Vitamin E is not stored in the animal in large amounts and hence the amount of Vitamin E in the diet is particularly important. Cereals are a good source of Vitamin E but moist grains lose their Vitamin E within 12 weeks and hence it should be supplied by other sources in the diet if moist cereals are fed. Green forages such as silage are a good source of Vitamin E as long as they are ensiled well.

Mineral and Vitamin Supplementation

There is a very complex relationship between the minerals and vitamins in an animal's body. Each vitamin and mineral has a different function in the body. Colin gave examples of what some of the minerals and vitamins are required for and symptoms of deficiencies. In general mixed diets are less likely to be deficient in minerals or vitamins than single feeds. Many compounds already contain a supplement. A discussion was held about how supplementation should be given. It was decided that the best way to do this is to mix it in the feed to ensure that all animals received the supplementation.

During summer months when the animals are not getting and supplementary feed then the only way is to feed it in a tub. Colin warned that some animals may eat more than their requirements whereas other animals may not eat any at all. Some farms may have particular deficiencies and have a specific mineral compound made up. Balanloan feed their cattle a mineral with a high copper level due to a known deficiency.

The best way to identify deficiencies was discussed. Using copper and cobalt deficiencies as an example the group questioned Colin on whether it was better to test the soil or the animal. Colin answered by stating that the animals was the best way as the soil may contain the mineral but it may not be available in the grass and hence may be causing a deficiency although there is sufficient in the soil. He also mentioned that doing soil analysis would also help towards identifying deficiencies and hence a programme of both should be carried out on farms.

It was also asked whether to treat a deficiency it was better to treat the soil or the animal. Again he gave a mixed answer. On some farms such as the monitor farm the area where the animals graze is too big to make it viable so animals would need to be treated.

The problem with treating the animals is that it is a short term fix as in following years animals may show the same deficiencies.

The sheep had previously been given boluses for copper and cobalt deficiency, as a deficiency had been identified by blood testing the animals. Colin was asked whether they should continue to blood test a few animals as they were not showing deficiencies. Colin answered that animals should be blood tested to identify if they had a problem as that would be the only way to know.

Copper deficiency and toxicity was queried. Colin mentioned that he has seen many more cases of toxicity in sheep and very rarely deficiency. Many of the farmers had more of a problem with deficiency, including the monitor farm.

It was mentioned that cobalt deficiency at mating time reduces lamb vitality at lambing time. If too much sulphur is applied to a crop this could cause sulphur toxicity in animals. This is particularly the case in Kale and therefore Sulphur application should be kept to a minimum.

caledonian organics

Caledonian Organics, the organic livestock co-operative, has announced that they are to join forces with Scotland's largest prime stock deadweight co-operative, Farm Stock (Scotland) Ltd.

Caledonian Organics was originally launched in 2005 with the objective of uniting the organic sector and coordinating the marketing of organic lamb and beef prime stock. It currently has over 160 members and the volumes of organic stock handled have grown steadily since it began with a current annual throughput of over 17,000 lambs and around 1,400 cattle.

The addition of Caledonian Organics will strengthen the Farm Stock Group still further taking the total farmer membership to around 1000 and annual volumes to over 120,000 lambs and 4000 cattle.

Ian Watson, Chairman of Farm Stock said 'We are delighted to welcome Caledonian Organics into the Group. In the immediate short term with declining livestock numbers it will bring much needed volume,

Livestock to sell?

Call Jim Manderson – Operations Manager
Office : 01750 723366
Mob : 07767 802755
Home : 01896 848003 (evenings)
Marjory Tennant - Farm Stock Office : 01750 723366

General CalOrg queries call Ross Paton 07967 273 181

which when added to the numbers of organic stock currently handled within the group will create the largest organic marketing group in Scotland and possibly even in the UK.

Farm Stock which operates from an office at Lindean Mill near Galashiels, has a network of experienced fieldsmen operating throughout its trading area in central and southern Scotland and supplies large numbers of both conventional and organic prime stock to abattoirs across the length and breadth of the country.

Ross Paton, Chairman of Caledonian Organics said "I am sure our members will benefit from this move which will undoubtedly improve our negotiating position and we are now well placed to offer a slick, competitive service and to secure the best possible prices for our members."

SOPA Partners



SOPA Member Offer

Get free liners +

Bin Discount +

Completing the Loop

Recycled Products Discount

SOPA and Solway

Recycling are delighted to announce a new partnership of working together. Recycling is part of the organic standards and to help with this, SOPA members can now take advantage of discounts offered by Solway. **As a SOPA member you are entitled to a free offer on Liners, or great discount on Bins as well as discounts on the recycled products in Completing the Loop.** To claim your discount contact Solway Recycling directly on 01387 730666 and quote your SOPA number for validation.

The Solway Bin and Liner system has been widely adopted by farmers across the UK and Ireland. Roy Hiddleston, Solway's Managing Director explains its success. "We have been collecting and reprocessing farm plastics for nearly 20 years. I realised that we needed a practical, low-cost system for collecting and transporting a variety of farm wastes. The Bin stays on the farm and we ask farmers to segregate their plastics and place the different materials directly into Bins or Liners. This simple action prevents mixing of incompatible plastics, which is very important because mixed, dirty plastics are nearly impossible to recycle."

"As we charge by the filled liner we advise people to get the best value out of the system by squashing plastics down with a large weight, such as a half-tonne fertiliser bag. By compacting materials you can get over 100 half-tonne fertiliser bags, or 250 bale wraps in a single liner." He continued, "Farmers are usually fairly sceptical of these figures, however once they start to use the system it becomes a personal challenge to fill the liners as full as possible. We have had reports of 300 wraps in a liner!"

BOCM PAULS as part of its continuing expansion in Scotland has increased its presence by recruiting three new and experienced sales support executives and announcing its intention to open a new BOCM PAULS Agri Business Desk in Motherwell, Lanarkshire. The three new recruits Lynn Gardner, Shona Brown and Yvonne Weir have worked at the farmer-facing end of the Scottish feed industry for a combined total of 26 years, and have a strong technical knowledge and affinity with the livestock industry.

The new team will function as a sales support team for both BOCM PAULS representatives and for the merchants, which BOCM PAULS works particularly closely with across the North of England and Scotland. They will help sell compound feeds manufactured from BOCM PAULS mill at Penrith; blends out of Turriff Farm Feeds and Kingans Farm Feeds at Brydekirk; and straights, distillery and brewery co-products from across the region. Also, in a significant departure from their previous role when they were engaged purely in a direct sales capacity, the team will also support merchant sales.

"We have a different work ethic in BOCM PAULS to many other companies, in that we work with our merchant partners rather than work in competition with them," says Grant Spittal, BOCM PAULS's Scottish sales manager. "Lynn, Shona and Yvonne are all experienced, respected and knowledgeable operators, well liked by Scottish livestock farmers, and who contribute in a positive way to farm businesses. They will continue to do that, and will help generate additional sales opportunities for our merchants and ourselves."

The move to recruit the new team is further evidence of BOCM PAULS's commitment to Scottish Agriculture, adds Mr Spittal. Three years ago the company had to revamp much of its sales team across Scotland, but since then BOCM PAULS has invested significantly in its people, product range and infrastructure, and sales volumes across the region have steadily grown and are now significantly above 2006 levels. The two new blend plants now collectively handle around 60,000 tonnes of feed a year, with expansion at Turriff being particularly rapid - going from zero tonnes in 2007 to 20,000 tonnes now. New products and an innovative feed "conditioning" technology introduced by the company this winter at

Mr Hiddleston said that Solway have successfully expanded the business across the UK and Ireland. "We have established the National Farmers Recycling Service and have a network of 28 Distributors and Collectors stretching from Orkney down to Cornwall. We can help with all aspects of waste management. And as well as recycling non-hazardous plastics, we can also dispose of hazardous wastes such as redundant chemicals, oils, tyres, asbestos, batteries, oil filters, aerosols and many other wastes. We offer rural business a complete waste management service." For further details ring 01387 730666 or visit www.solwayrecycling.co.uk

Completing the Loop



Solway Recycling Ltd. are now able to offer the agricultural industry various recycled products manufactured from contaminated used plastics.

The vision of Solway Recycling Ltd is to offer a full circle approach from the collection of used farm plastics to returning these plastics to the agricultural industry in a range of products which can be used on farm.

The extremely versatile Stokbord has a variety of applications that it can be used for on farm. Stokbord is non-absorbent, non-toxic, durable and long lasting. One of the main uses is for the cladding of cattle handling races and pens. Due to the noise reducing nature of the material, cattle are under much less stress when being handled. Stokbord is also very useful in the pig industry, as the material does not get chewed.

Following on from the award winning calf pens introduced at Agriscot 2007, Solway have introduced a new calf lodge as well as a full range of lambing pens.. All types of pens allow for a healthier environment for newborn animals during the first few days of their lives. Due to the non-absorbency of this material, there is much less disease pressure. The pens are easily steam cleaned and can also be flat packed.

Also available is a full range of animal shelters for pigs, dogs and hens.

Solway also have just introduced a unique range of garden and leisure products now available including benches, picnic tables and flower planters.

Please contact Solway Recycling Ltd on 01387 730666 or visit www.solwayrecycling.co.uk for further details.



both Turriff and Kingans will reduce the cost of energy and protein to the farmers in some compound and blend raw materials and will also contribute to the volume growth.

Says Lynn: "We are all delighted to be joining BOCM PAULS as we love the job, have a great relationship with the farmers, and now have the opportunity of developing similar relations with the merchants," she says. "We also have a wider range of products and solutions to assist livestock farmers, and we look forward to helping to take their businesses forward."

SOPA is pleased to work with BOCM Pauls in the Scottish organic industry. BOCM Pauls offer a wide range of organic livestock feeds and are also regular buyers of organic raw materials. Contact the BOCM Pauls Agribusiness Desk on 0845 075 0902 or Grant Spittal on 07802 596 867



CYRENIANS FARM CHRISTMAS GIFT HAMPER

The Cyrenians Farm is a small community enterprise located just outside Edinburgh. As well as growing delicious organic fruit and vegetables and cultivating livestock, the Farm is also home to a community of vulnerable young people. The Cyrenians products in this hamper are made with their help, from seed to jar.

This Christmas we have a unique product to offer:

We have taken feedback from our hamper buyers of previous years and conducted surveys to bring you a special gift that you really want. This year we are keeping it simple with just one option. All the goodies will be packed into a very usable jute bag printed with our logo which you can use instead of carrier bags when shopping in the January sales.

Contents.

Organic Cyrenians Jam (our fine raspberry jam of 60% fruit)
Organic Cyrenians Farm chutney (warm and spicy for those turkey leftovers)
Cyrenians Farm Lip Balm (flavoured with peppermint, great for those cold winter days)
Nairn's Oatcakes (crunchy and 'halesome!')
Island Bakery Biscuits (great dunkers)
Christmas card
Montezuma chocolates (a special festive treat)
Cyrenians Chocolate from the Chocolate Tree (East Lothians finest chocolatier)
A bottle of organic bubbly blackcurrant juice
And a mini stolen.

For more details please contact:

rob@cyrenians.org.uk or tom@cyrenians.org.uk tel. 0131 333 5202

YOU CAN ALSO PRE ORDER THE HAMPERS IN OUR ONLINE SHOP NOW (£40)

www.cyreniansfarm.org.uk/shop.

Hampers will be available for pick up from 14th December onwards from our key locations in Edinburgh and West Lothian.
(Delivery by special arrangement only)

As we have a limited number of the hamper available, order early to avoid disappointment!



**BUY CERTIFIED ORGANIC SEED DIRECT FROM
THE ORGANIC GROWER**

Tel 01289 382223 or janesmales@lcsmales-son.co.uk

Here at Smales Organic Seeds, we grow, process, certify and bag our organic C2 seed fully on farm. This ensures that we maintain a high quality product, with complete traceability, at an affordable price. We are flexible to the needs of the customer, if you would rather your seed in 250kg bags than 500kg bags, it is easily done.

We have been fully organic since 2004 (Organic Farmers & Growers certified). We have a wide customer base, delivering seed as far as Northern Ireland, the north of Scotland and the south coast of England. Our main focus though is supplying seed to local organic farmers throughout Northern England and Scotland.

For spring 2010 drilling, Smales have the following varieties available for sale:

Westminster Barley – This is suitable for malting & did very well with us this year, yielding 4.6t/ha with large, bright grains. This newish variety yielded well in HGCA untreated trials this year, only topped by Publican. It has a very long straw and a good resistance to mildew.

Waggon Barley – This feed variety was our best yielding barley at 5.3t/ha after grass/clover, and also very near the top of the HGCA untreated trials. Waggon has shorter straw than Westminster & Riviera.

Riviera Barley – This is a well-known & popular feed barley variety. As a second barley, it yielded 4.6t/ha with us. It has a heavy specific weight, fairly long straw and ripens around the same time as Waggon.

Firth Oats – This well known variety is suitable for milling, on average yielding 4.9t/ha this year here, after beans.

Leven Oats – This new variety is suitable for milling and slightly earlier to ripen than Firth. This yielded 4.8t/ha here.

Fuego Beans – this highly popular, high yielding bean variety produces beans with human-consumption grade potential. They are resistant to lodging, early to mature and have a good downy mildew resistance.



Up until Christmas open everyday with afternoon only on Sunday
24th Dec last day to collect cheeses

CONNAGE HIGHLAND DAIRY...
makes a range of cheeses from home produced milk

Affordable quality Christmas presents available from the Pantry at the Dairy
Christmas cheeses, British and European, cheese boxes, oatcakes, festive cheesecakes to order and cheese gifts

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Order and collect from Dairy or Inverness Farmers Market



Organic Lamb production

55% of Lamb losses are caused by poor Ewe feeding.

The benefits of getting it right are:

- Extra Lambs born
- Higher Lamb vigour
- More colostrum and milk leading to lower mortality
- Reduced time to finishing
- Extra profit

Increasing Lambing percentage by 10% from 160 to 176 is worth around £800 per 100 Ewes. For healthy Ewes and higher Lamb growth rates The Natural Range offers:

Natural Organic Sugar Green Nuts.

Designed to maintain placental growth and nutrient supply to the developing foetus in mid-pregnancy, when harsh weather limits forage intakes.

Natural Organic Ewe Nuts and Rolls.

For feeding to Ewes in the run up to Lambing and during lactation.

Natural Organic Calf & Lamb Pellets.

For creep feeding and finishing Lambs.

Sheep Feeds.

Natural Organic Ewe Nuts/Rolls	18% Protein
Natural Organic Universal 17 Nuts	17% Protein
Natural Organic Sugar Green Nuts	15% Protein

Contact BOCM Pauls Agribusiness Desk on 0845 075 0902 or agribusinessdesk@bocmpauls.co.uk

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UNTIL 31 December 2009

Providing health to animals and the land with natural levels of minerals, vitamins, amino acids and bio-stimulants



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PRICES BELOW INCLUDES DELIVERY THROUGHOUT UK

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1000 litre IBC £1650.00

210 litre Barrel 517.00

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Other News



The UK organic industry has come together to support a unique marketing campaign for organic products at a time when the industry needs to deliver positive messages on the benefits of organic to customers. A bid, fronted by Sustain (the alliance for better food and farming) is in the process of securing funding from the EU to match fund every pound pledged from UK companies. The unprecedented financial support from UK companies has already passed £250K per year for 3 years, which means that the total campaign with EU support will reach £1.5m over the three year period. This will allow the industry to run a fully integrated campaign, including press advertising to promote the benefits of organic products and drive a 15% increase in value sales during the 3 year period.

In addition, there will be a 'primer' campaign which begins early in 2010: this campaign is also funded by UK companies and will focus on positive PR messages and digital activity based around a new consumer facing website.

Finn Cottle, ex Noble Foods, is fully engaged in raising the funds for this campaign from industry, comments "There is an overwhelming level of support from the organic industry to re-engage their consumers - already over 50 companies have pledged to support this campaign. The recession has had a definite impact on the customer's propensity to purchase premium products and organic has been impacted. However there are still many loyal organic customers out there, who are continuing to buy organic products alongside many 'dabblers' who need to be reminded of the many benefits of organic including animal welfare benefits."

There has been only a few responses from Scotland so far and the campaign would like to drive the support to even higher levels and encourage companies who have not pledged to visit the website and pledge any amount, however small.

For more information please go to

www.organicuk.org

FARM SHOPS Value for money and still great quality

An independent report has shown that farm shops are cheaper on average than supermarkets when buying items such as fruit and vegetables.



The survey was carried out in Yorkshire, commissioned by the Regional Food Group for Yorkshire and Humber, and took place over three months. Items from Tesco, Sainsbury's and other major supermarkets were compared in price to the same items from 20 farm shops.

Farmshops were found to be 12% cheaper than supermarkets for meat, 16% for eggs, and 24% on baking potatoes.

RFG Chief Executive Jonathan Knight said "As well as being comparable on price, farmshops, and farmers markets (there are 800 in the UK) have the added benefit of offering food provenance and traceability, lower food miles, handmade and specialist products and enable small farms to bypass supermarkets and reap the rewards of their bumper harvest this year."

<http://www.internationalsupermarketnews.com>

Organic eggs in the Diary



J S R Services (Blairgowrie) Ltd are again holding a One Day conference for **Scottish Organic Egg Producers** to which anyone in the Scottish sector is most welcome.

This year's event will be held on Tuesday 2nd March 2010 at Perth Racecourse.

Please call John Retson on 07831 541 703 for further details.

Soil Association Scotland

Climate Change Programme – Thursday 28th January 2010

Developing On Farm Renewables, Forfar
A session in the morning will look at understanding how renewables work; installing and funding for renewables; what is available; generating returns from renewables. Speakers include Maitland Mackie, the Forestry Commission and Atmos Consulting. The day will also include a farmers practical perspective of commissioning a 11Kw Gaia wind turbine and looking into further renewable options including hydro and solar on their farm. The cost is £40.00 plus VAT for primary food producers, £60 plus VAT for other interested parties.

Thursday 25th February, Optimum Manure Management Event, New Deer, Aberdeenshire Wednesday 10th March, Optimum Manure Management Event, Auchincruive, Ayrshire

The technical session in the morning will include presentations from SAC & SGRPID. They will look at storage & handling, when, where and how much to apply, putting a nutrient value on FYM/slurry, benefits to production, role & benefits of composting and the funding options under SRDP. The New Deer event will also include a visit to D & E Smith, Mains of Inkhorn, Ellon and the Auchincruive event a visit to Messrs WP Kerr & Sons, Low Dallars Farm, Riccarton. To discuss how these principles can be put into practice. The cost is £40.00 plus VAT. For further details call Lyn on 0131 666 0847 or email lmatehson@soilassociation.org

SFQC

**FOOD WITH
THOUGHT**

This newsletter is published by
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Scottish Food Quality Certification (SFQC) and SOPA

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