Organic Newsletter

August 2008

Scottish Organic Producers Association

Organic cereals are a source of optimism with the current strong demand and strong prices. There has also been a surge of interest in organic fertility management from the conventional side as the cost of fertilisers soars into the stratosphere. So how profitable do organic cereals look when compared to conventional cereals?

Certainly there is a yield penalty. One could surmise across the board organic cereals would average at half the yield of conventional cereals. The yield measures have to be averaged across the length of the rotation—so that first year cereals will generally yield higher than 3rd year cereals.

Organic fertility inputs are also long term 'investments', usually applied once in the rotation. So the cost of these has to carried over more than one accounting period.

If we were to assume organic spring barley was sold at £250/t and conventional spring barley at £100/tonne, a quick gross margin calculation shows a comparison of organic at £290/acre and conventional at £111/acre. This figure is based on the same fuel, seed and contractor costs. The only variable is the cost of chemicals and fertilisers in the conventional enterprise.

Debs

Christmas Promotions in the next SOPA Newsletter

Are you a food businesses selling direct to the consumer?

Can you offer Christmas specials to SOPA members?

SOPA will run a pre-Christmas Foodie Listing in the next newsletter (October)

contact Debs on 0131 335 6619
Free Listing to SOPA members

In this Issue

This newsletter is published by
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CERTIFICATION CORNER

With SOPA assessments well under way, I am pleased to confirm after reviewing the assessments reports so far this year SOPA members have embraced the new 100% feed regulation for ruminants. This is not too say that there has not been stress and worry, from our side as well as yours. Members were very active during the autumn of 2007 in seeking 100% organic feed very early on and this proved to be worthwhile, even if expensive. I appreciate this was a big change to many feeding regimes but SOPA members have coped with this change very well.

This year so far is proving to be a challenge also, with the wet weather preventing machinery to get on and harvest crops. In some cases the weather in some areas has prevented or caused low silage/hay yields. If this is the case, firstly, work out by how much silage/hay you still require and contact the SOPA office and we will try and find organic forage locally. Please let the office know in plenty of time so that we can advertise in the newsletter and on the website. This is also relevant to those members that have excess forage or cereals. *Jane*

PropCorn Reminder

- If you are intending to preserve moist grain at harvest with Propionic acid, you must contact the SOPA office for a derogation.
- Propionic acid destroys the vitamin E in the grain, so monitor selenium levels in livestock being fed these cereals.

Residue Testing

SOPA will be routinely taking samples of materials on SOPA certified organic farms this September 2008. The purpose of the residue testing is to verify the authenticity of the product and its compliance with the SOPA standards. Samples may include products such as grain in bulk stores for pesticide residue analysis and freedom from GM, milk for medicines residues analysis, or samples of inputs to verify organic status, composition and GM status etc.

This year we are concentrating on potatoes and our assessors will be taking samples during your SOPA assessment. Our Assessors are trained in the correct sampling procedure and will explain the procedure to you at the sampling time. The assessor will take a sample in the presence of the member; this will be split into three sub-samples one sample to be kept by the member, one to be kept by SOPA and the remaining sample to be sent under an anonymous code number to a designated laboratory for testing.

DEFRA announced on 08 May 2008 an amendment to the EU Organic Regulations, the following products have been approved for use in organic farming systems;

Copper Octanoate – as a copper product allowed for use as a fungicide. The same restrictions apply to this new copper product as for other forms of copper, see SOPA standard 2.7.2.

Ethylene – currently this is approved for de-greening of organic bananas, Kiwis, Kakis and flower induction of organic pineapples. This product has now been approved as a sprout suppressant for potatoes and onions and for de-greening organic citrus fruit. A derogation must be applied for prior to use.

Potassium Bicarbonate – has been approved as a fungicide without the need for a derogation.

Spinosad – this product has been approved as an insecticide. A derogation must be applied for prior to use

The SOPA Livestock Management/Health plan has been reviewed and updated. This process is almost complete and the new Plan template will be introduced to members during Sept/Oct 08. The reason for the review is to try and include more of the day to day problems that organic farmers are experiencing and highlighting the preventative strategies that can be included in routine management tasks, hopefully becoming a more useful document for you. This health plan template will be introduced gradually and members will be asked to complete the new health plan only when existing plan needs to be amended or updated.

CERTIFICATION CORNER

Sheep scab is a major welfare concern to the sheep industry. It remains a growing concern this year for all organic sheep producers as we still have no preventative measures under the SOPA standards that can be used now that the non-OP dips have been taken of the market. This leaves producers vulnerable unless they have very strict bio-security measures in place to help restrict the risk of sheep scab entering their farm.

Most organic sheep enterprises run a closed flock which is a primary biosecurity measure. Maintaining good secure farm boundaries especially from neighbouring sheep producers helps prevent the risks, and restricting any sheep coming onto the farm as much as possible. If you are buying in store lambs this year, isolate the lambs when they arrive and monitor for any physical signs e.g. scratching. If in any doubt take skin samples and get the samples tested by SAC or your local veterinary surgeon. Only when scab is diagnosed by your veterinary surgeon or SAC can you treat with an injectable. If this procedure has not been approved by SOPA in your health plan you must contact the SOPA Certification officers IMMEDIATELY. Please be vigilant.

SOPA will permit groups of neighbouring sheep farmers to co-ordinate a sheep scab control programme, which comes under the Scottish Sheep Scab Initiative scheme. This will involve detailed information and a full control plan and this should ideally be co-ordinated by your local veterinary surgeon. To obtain more information on this programme please contact the SOPA Certification officers.

The Scottish Government will be issuing a new Sheep Scab (Scotland) Order, due to be implemented in spring 2009. SOPA is a member of the Scottish Sheep Scab Industry Working Group and will be actively involved in the consultation process in the near future, and in representing SOPA members.

ADAS have been commissioned by The Scottish Government to produce an evidence base report for new legislation and guidance for implementation of a compulsory treatment period for sheep scab. This report has now been published and can be viewed at

http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/07/17113358/0

Selling livestock at Auction

1. Book stock with Mart in a timely manner
2. Ensure you have a valid organic certificate
3. A Livestock Transfer Document must accompany stock to sale
4. Check market has facilities for organic lairage if required
5. The Organic Standards **do not** permit Auction sales of
   - calves less than 6 months old
   - Sheep and goats less than 12 weeks old
   - Pregnant sheep and goats
   - Cows calved within 16 weeks
   - Store animals may only be sold at auction once in their lifetime
   - Breeding stock may only be sold at auction twice in their lifetime

Bluetongue Vaccination

SOPA members should follow the Scottish Government Animal Health Requirements for Bluetongue Control. The organic status of units and flocks should not be affected as long as they adhered to the rules and advice on bluetongue and SOPA would strongly urge all members to be vigilant at stock inspections and firm with biosecurity management.

The P-Link Project—Researching Phosphorus

Improving phosphorus supply in organic farming systems' is a Defra funded LINK project (LK0963), with assistance from the Scottish Government, currently being run by the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC). The project's focus of this project is to increase the effectiveness of applied mineral rock phosphate (PR) to soils which that are low in phosphorus (P).

The Scottish field site is investigating whether particular crops in the organic rotation whose roots produce organic acids, will indicate a response to low P in the soil. These organic acids either release P from applied PR or increase mineralisation of P in the limited P already in the soil reserves or that is applied as PR, thus increasing the P available P to the current or subsequent crop. Crop types such as lupins, rape and buckwheat have been shown more able to obtain P better in low P soils than other crops such as cereals. However, as yet these have not been widely tested in the field.

A field trial has been planted at Ted and Sharon Baker's farm, 'Windshiel' near Duns in the Borders to investigate whether the crops buckwheat, white lupins, field beans, red clover, and kale can utilise PR better than wheat and if these crops will increase the amount of P available to the subsequent crop.

The Crops

Buckwheat

Buckwheat (*Fagopyrum esculentum*) is a short season summer crop with triangular shaped seeds. Contrary to its name it is not a cereal but is related to rhubarb. Its name is derives from another name "beech wheat" because it's seeds that resemble the larger beech nut seeds of the beech tree, and because the crop is used like wheat. As a crop it grows well on low-fertility or acidic soils, that are well drained. It does not tolerate frosts and flowering is affected by hot dry conditions. It is mainly used for flour production, but has various other possible uses including nectar for honey. It was previously grown in Scotland until the advent of nitrogenous fertilisers, which favour cereals and maize. It is Buckwheat's short season and vigorous root system lends itself to being grown as a green manure and or cover crops. It has been shown to respond well to better applications of PR than most crops.

White lupins

White lupins are not generally suitable as a grain crop in Scotland as they do not mature early enough, but have increasingly been included in pasture-crop silage mixes. White lupins have been studied in relation to soil P as they have the ability to form special roots that produce organic acids when P is limiting in the soil. The variety *Dieta* are being grown alone and under sown with a mix of ryegrasses and white clover pasture as would be more typically grown for silage production.

The P-Link Project—Researching Phosphorus cont.

Brassica crops such as rape have been studied as for their ability to grow vigorous fine root systems that can explore greater volumes of soil and to thus scavenge P whilst they also accumulate for P and accumulate P through the production of organic residues from these roots. **Kale** is a less commonly grown crop. The variety used in the trial is *Maris Kestral*.

Kale

More commonly grown crops in the trial are **field beans** (Ben) and **red clover** (Maro). These crops have shown some abilities to gain less poorly available soil P. **Spring wheat** however does not generally respond greatly to PR applications so is included for comparison.

The Story So Far…

PR (granulated Gafsa rock from Tunisia) was applied at 600 kg/ha to half plots late April 2008 prior to sowing. The crops were sown 2nd May but the lupins and beans were resown 22nd May as they suffered badly from bird damage. To date the lupins have continued to be grazed by birds then by hares. The wheat has also been grazed considerably whilst kale has struggled to establish and has suffered from insect damage. The buckwheat established very well and is showing a good response to PR application with biomass yields measured on July 16th 2008 showing 75% greater yield on the portion of the plots that had PR applied compared to where no PR was applied.

Each of the crops will be measured for yield and response to the application of PR. The P in the soil which is available to plants, will be monitored to determine if extra increased levels of P will be supplied to the following crop. The following crop is expected to be barley. This crop will be monitored for any response to increased supply of P from the application of PR and for any increased supply of P attributable to the initial crop grown.

We are grateful to Ted and Sharon Baker for their generosity in providing the field and assistance in planting this trial. Also thank you to SOPA for their organisation of the field day.

For further information contact:

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Caledonian ORGANICS

Caledonian Organics has doubled turnover year on year since the outset in 2005. Growth has been easy because an increasing number of farmers are choosing to market their organic live-stock through the only independent organic collaborative marketing group in Scotland.

Others still take their own route directly to processors or to Marts which 'add on' organics to their conventional stock which reduces the effect that CalOrg can achieve. Despite this the numbers that CalOrg now trades means that they are bringing benefits to the marketplace in terms of guaranteed minimum prices and weekly price adjustments. And more and more of those farmers that 'play the market' are realising the benefits they bring, as their impact grows.

The market for organics has recently experienced a dip in demand as consumer spending on 'luxuries' falls. In addition within the next two years a significant number of new organic lamb and beef producers from Wales will enter the market, attracted by grants. The impact on the organic sector is worrying as given a wide choice of suppliers, processors will choose to make generous offers to the large, low-cost producers to supply them.

To ensure that all producers have a market for their organic lambs and beef, even when the home market experiences a dip in demand, CalOrg are researching other markets NOW, in order to safeguard many more producers. A strong collaborative structure of marketing is not idealistic, but practical if organic food and farming is to have a future where farmers don't just leave the rest of the food chain to tell them their price.

The Organic Stores Website

Are you looking to buy or sell organic stores, breeding stock or even crops and equipment?

The Organic Stores Website is a joint collaboration between Caledonian Organics and Graig Producers. Between them they cover Scotland, the Borders, Wales and South West England.

The principal aim of the website is to match organic beef and lamb stores buyers with sellers, by advertising 'Sales' and 'Wanted' notices.

The website is open to non-members and adverts are free. You can also sign up to a free email and fax bulletin to keep you updated on current adverts and news.

If a sale is arranged through the website CalOrg's fee is 2.5% of the final sale price (to be paid by the seller). When a sale is agreed, the payment from the buyer to the seller is not made until 7 days after delivery to ensure that the buyer is happy. The payment to the seller is guaranteed.

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Lanark and Lothian Local Organic Producer Meeting

On the 5th August, our Lanark and Lothian Local Group held an Organic Producer Meeting at Bonnington Farm near Peebles courtesy of Bill and Margaret Brown. Andrew Lorrain-Smith organised the event as local co-ordinator for Lanark & Lothian area. Prices and organic markets, both finished and store were the hot topics for debate during refreshments - a mouth watering BBQ and strawberry meringues provided by Bill's wife Margaret!
Many thanks to Bill, Margaret & Andrew for a very enjoyable and useful event.
The afternoon was excellent with plenty of discussion during the farm walk, and a frank exchange of knowledge.

Local Group Network Forthcoming Events

On the 3rd September our Aberdeenshire Local Group are holding an Organic Producer Meeting at Mains of Thornton, by Inverurie, courtesy of Ian Cooper and Partners.
The meeting will include a farm tour and talks by CalOrg's Jenny Cuthbert on the current fatstock market and Alistair Black, who markets stores for both Dumfries Mart and CalOrg, on the organic stores market.

Caledonian ORGANICS

Independent Organic Livestock Marketing Group

- **FOR FULLY ORGANIC OR "IN-CONVERSION"** FARMERS
- **BEST MARKET FOUND** FOR ALL YOUR ORGANIC LIVESTOCK, INCLUDING CULL COWS
- GET YOUR VOICE HEARD IN THE MARKETPLACE!
- **MANY OTHER ADVANTAGES OF MEMBERSHIP; BAD DEBT INSURANCE NOW ON ALL ABATTOIRS, INPUT DEALS**
- **STRONG LINKS** WITH GROUPS ACROSS UK
- ORGANIC STORES & BREEDING STOCK WEBSITE WWW.ORGANIC-STORES.CO.UK

FOR MORE DETAILS CONTACT :

Jenny Cuthbert on 01224 711063 or jenny@caledonianorganics.com

WheatLINK Project Report

Wheat Quality – the effect of seed spacing and variety, and below ground effects of drill

Narrow row spacing and high seed rates of 250kg/ha provide considerable yield benefits compared to either wide row or strip drill systems and low seed rates of 150kg/ha. However, drill and seed rate did not influence grain protein in the same way in the second year of the Wheat LINK* project (an Organic Research Centre led trial investigating the interactive effect of seed spacing, variety, under-sowing and late season weeding on the agronomic performance of organic winter wheat).

Although wheat grown in narrow rows had significantly higher grain protein at one site in the second year, this trend was not repeated, and there was a tendency for higher seed rates to give lower grain protein across years and sites. Choice of variety was a better determinant of grain protein, although overall protein in 2006/07 was much lower than in 2005/06. Hereward was found to have higher grain protein than Aristos (a variety bred for low input) in 2005/06, but a population of wheat introduced in 2006/07 performed as well as Hereward at one site and significantly outperformed it at the other for protein (Table 1).

	Grain protein (%)			
	2005/06		**2006/07**	
Variety	**Wakelyns**	**Sheepdrove**	**Wakelyns**	**Sheepdrove**
Aristos	11.17 a	11.66 a	8.11 a	8.21 a
Hereward	11.93 b	11.74 a	9.15 b	8.62 b
Population	*	*	8.97 b	9.26 c

Table 1: Grain protein (%) for three varieties at two sites in 2005/06 and 2006/07. Figures marked with a different letter in the same column are significantly different (P<0.05).

Whilst above ground characteristics like yield and protein are easy to measure, there may also be significant effects occurring below ground which influence the final performance of the crop. For example, a Strip drill built for this trial by Jeff Claydon was originally designed The Chisel time set 3 cm below the drill depth breaks up the soil with the aim of providing an optimum seed bed for improved root distribution. To test if this design actually did have a significant effect on the roots, we took soil cores from both narrow and strip drilled plots at Wakelyns in May last year.

A total of 240 cores were taken, and subsequently washed, scanned and analysed by our project partners Scottish Agricultural College. The strip drill significantly increased the root length density (the length of roots in a cubic cm of soil) compared to the narrow row drill. While this increase was not translated into higher yielding or quality crops in those plots this season, this improved rooting structure may be particularly useful in drought years, where improved access to and uptake of water would help the crop perform to its best. for use in non-organic minimum tillage systems.

The trial is now in its final year. Economic analysis of final data will help to determine the feasibility of adopting various management strategies for improving organic wheat crops.

Zoe Haigh, Organic Research Centre, Elm Farm

SAC Organic Market Link (OML) Producer Survey

A big thank you to all you producers who have either found time or made time to complete and return your OML Producer Survey, your prompt response is really appreciated. I am already distributing lists of store lambs, store cattle and grains and pulses to other organic producers who are looking to source these commodities but please remember your produce cannot be included in these lists if you have not returned your survey. I will also be able to distribute information about sources of other organic commodities such as fruit, veg, eggs, table birds if requested.

For those of you who have not had the opportunity to return your survey I will be calling you to try and establish your production over the phone in a few weeks time. However, if you would rather reply by post and have mislaid the original survey and I can easily email or post out a replacement to you just let me know.

Your continued support and participation is essential. It really makes a difference and enables positive change. It is very important that Scotland's production is understood so you can plan your marketing more efficiently and I cannot emphasise just how invaluable the market intelligence gained from the previous four surveys has already been to many producers.

Caroline Bayliss
Organic Farming Consultant
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NEWS FROM DUNN COMMODITIES

Organic Molasses

We have organic cane molasses now available in one tonne recyclable tanks and from October 2008, we will be able to supply in bulk. Ideal if you want to increase feed intake by improving palatability, give your livestock a great source of sugar and make rations less dusty.

The Organic Expeller Company

Dunn Commodities has just teamed up with the Organic Expeller Company to produce organic soyabean meal and oil in the UK, thus removing many of the risks associated with Asian products. With our sophisticated equipment, we will be producing a top quality, high protein meal to the highest of standards.

Organic Expeller Sunflower Meal

Varying in protein between 28 – 41 % depending on whether or not dehulled, organic sunflower meal is a great protein product for ruminants.

Organic Poultry

SOPA has recently published a Guidance Note on the Standards for Organic Poultry Production. The information is partly reproduced here. Call the SOPA office for a full copy.

Organic poultry must have access to range, shelter and sufficient feeding and watering points to allow for the expression of normal social behaviour.

Indoor Stocking Densities

	Layers	Broilers	Turkeys	Ducks	Geese	Guinea fowl
Maximum stocking rates in mobile housing	6birds/ m^2	16birds/$m^{2\dagger}$ (30kg/m^2)	3birds/m^2	16birds/ m^2	3birds/ m^2	
Minimum perch space (cm per bird)	18cm/ bird		40cm/bird			20cm/ bird
Individual nest boxes (max no. birds/nest box)	6birds/ nest					
OR communal nests (min cm^2/bird)	120cm^2/ bird					
Maximum slatted floor area (%)	50	50	50	50	50	50
Minimum exit/entry pop-holes (m length per 100m^2 floor area)	4m per 100m^2	4m per 100m^2	4m per 100m^2	4m per 100m^2	4m per 100m^2	4m per 100m^2
Maximum area of poultry houses per unit (m^2)		1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600
Maximum House Capacity	2000 birds	1000 birds	1000 birds	1000 birds	1000 birds	1000 birds

Maximum Outdoor Stocking Densities

Poultry	Birds/ha	Designated Range
Ducks	2000	50m
Geese	600	100m
Guinea Fowl	2500	100m
Turkeys	800	50m
Layers	1000	100m
Broilers	2500	50m

Feature—Böd Ayre Seaweed Products

Böd Ayre seaweed products contain 60 growth nutrients plus all the base elements and because they are made purely from seaweed using hand-harvesting techniques, we don't have high manufacturing costs and we pass these savings on to you! We know the quality of the products because the nutrient level in Böd Ayre's feeds are tested by the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) and approved for use in organic systems by Scottish Organic Producers Association (SOPA).

Bonus…By Trying Böd Ayre Products, You'll Help Save Environment Too!

How? Because unlike machine-driven dredging harvesting techniques that rip the seaweed from the seabed (along with destroying everything in their path) Böd Ayre works in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage and have created a sustainable harvesting technique, hand-harvesting the seaweed so it re-generates within a 4 yr period.

Our **Sea-X** Seaweed Extract come in 5, 25, 210 and 1000 litre containers.

Want to sample some? We have small sizes to suit.

Want to start saving big money today? Be like the farmers below!

Want to improve your fertility with a natural, approved product? Why not purchase the 1000 litre container – apply 5-10 litres per HA, every 3 – 4 weeks.

D. Stuart, Caithness – My lambing was easiest I have had.
Estate Manager, Perthshire – Products are excellent for Organic Farmers.
Iwona Charleson, Shetland – We use Böd Ayre's lick buckets and the plant feed. We believe in the nutritive value of seaweed. Quality of products and service are excellent.

Why not try our **Liquid Seaweed Extract as an alternative Animal Feed supplement - full of Mother Nature's goodness. 210 litres - £439 delivered.**

Also available our **20kg Sea-Lik buckets in Standard; Hi-Mag; Hi-Phos and with Organic Garlic.**

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Photo Competition

We had a fantastic response to our photo competition. Congratulations to Morag Doig of Keithick Farms with her winning entry. By public vote at the Royal Highland Show, the runner up went to Paolo Berardelli of Glencoe. A big thank you to all entrants.

WINNER: Waiting on the Gate Opening, from Morag Doig, Mains of Keithick.

RUNNER-UP from Paolo Berardelli, Glencoe

Droving Shetland kye on Sou

Blackrocks and Victoria plums

Help at lambing

Coming in for Winter