

## Summerhill Farm, Hittisleigh, Devon

### About Land Heritage

Summerhill Farm is part of the Soil Association Land Trust, a land-based organic farming charity acquiring land for organic and sustainable farming for new entrants into agriculture, and helping to reconnect people with farming and food by providing farm-based training and education events and activities.



### About Summerhill Farm

The farm is a typical mixed Devon holding of 100 acres and became certified organic in February 2003. The current major enterprise is 20 Red Ruby single suckler beef cows with progeny taken to finished weights. A pure bred Red Ruby bull runs with the cows and the herd is fed on haylage/hay produced on the holding. A small flock of 40 rare breed pure bred Zwartble sheep are kept and oats for winter feed are grown on the farm as well Maris Widgeon wheat, a proportion of which is milled and sold locally for bread making. The simple six year rotation consists of four years grass clover broken to winter wheat and in the sixth year, winter oats.

We believe farming organically is farming in a climate friendly way. We:

- avoid the use of artificial fertilisers, the production of which is an energy intensive process using fossil fuels as a raw material and producing large quantities of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and nitrous oxide, a gas 300 times more powerful than CO<sub>2</sub>
- build soil fertility and increase the all important carbon content of soils by using farmyard manure as fertiliser and deliberately managing grassland to produce a high clover content - good for livestock and good for the soil
- are self-sufficient in livestock feed so do not need to transport feed in, helping to limit our CO<sub>2</sub> contribution
- sell our produce – beef, lamb, wheat and oats – locally
- encourage biodiversity by setting aside wildlife corridors and specific areas of the farm, planting trees and monitoring results
- try to adapt to changing climate and conditions naturally – we have introduced an arable silage crop at the end of the grass ley as an additional feed source which was particularly welcome in last year's dry spell when grazing became scarce and a specialist Timothy/Meadow Fescue ley with red clover is grown as an insurance against drought conditions
- encourage others, through educational activities and events, to support food production that is organic, local, seasonal and unprocessed

Summerhill has been developed as a model farm allowing for practical demonstrations of organic husbandry and sustainable farming practice.

### **The Education Centre**

The Trust has developed an Education Centre on the farm which comprises of a classroom, WCs, including disabled facilities, and large workshop on the ground floor with a first floor to be developed as offices, a board room and a library. The Centre is built from timber from locally grown sustainable sources and is fitted with low energy light bulbs throughout. The WCs are low flush and the urinal waterless. The first floor will feature sustainable materials wherever possible – sheep's wool insulation, eco-friendly paints and varnishes.

### **The photovoltaic and solar thermal system**

A photovoltaic and solar thermal system has recently been installed on the roof of the Education Centre allowing us to produce our own electricity with hot water. 42 photovoltaic panels, generating approx 5800 kWh of electricity, will provide all of the Centre's energy needs and a surplus which can be sold back to the grid, creating more green energy for wider community use. The solar thermal system will provide hot water for the washbasins, workshop and shower and for the new offices.

The new system will save about £500 a year on energy costs and cut the building's carbon emissions by 1.894 tonnes each year. A live display panel tracks how much energy has been generated and how much carbon dioxide has been saved.

This project is part of the Trust's work to integrate sustainable farming practice and renewable energy systems, crucial for the future of our farming and food industry in a post peak-oil world challenged by the effects of climate change. We plan to build the project into the educational visits and courses for local school groups and other organisations.

### **Future plans**

Future plans include an on-farm energy audit, reusable rain water system and a windmill to mill wheat grown on the farm.

### **Further information**

Visit [www.soilassociation.org/landtrust.aspx](http://www.soilassociation.org/landtrust.aspx)

Soil Association

Trade and producer support team

**South Plaza, Marlborough Street,**

**Bristol BS1 3NX**

**T** 0117 914 2400

**F** 0117 314 5001

**E** [ff@soilassociation.org](mailto:ff@soilassociation.org)

**W** [www.soilassociation.org/foodandfarming](http://www.soilassociation.org/foodandfarming)