



Soil Association
the heart of organic food & farming

SOIL ASSOCIATION FOOD AND FARMING E-BULLETIN JULY 2008

News and updates

STOP PRESS!!!

"Forefront" contamination of manures

The Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD) has suspended with immediate effect the approval, sale and use of herbicides/weedkillers containing the active ingredient aminopyralid.

This move follows pressure on the government from the Soil Association and the [Organic Growers Alliance](#) (OGA) to withdraw the chemical from use after a number of both professional and amateur growers were affected by residues of the broad leaf herbicide 'Forefront' (active ingredient aminopyralid) that had contaminated manures. This caused decreased growth or death of plants grown where the manure was applied.

"The Pesticide Safety Directorate's licensing of these two weedkillers was nothing short of an act of environmental terrorism against sustainable land management," said Alan Schofield of the OGA.

"We are delighted that this product has been suspended. On behalf of the many growers that have lost crops and income as a result of the contamination we hope that the PSD will learn to take a more precautionary approach to licensing in the future," added Ben Raskin, Soil Association horticultural development manager.

For full details of the revised PSD position, click [here](#).

Older Cattle Disposal Scheme (OCDS) closing soon

The OCDS is closing on 31 December 2008.

From 1 January 2009 no compensation will be available for animals born pre 1 Aug 1996 and it is likely that the collection and disposal costs for these cattle will rest with the cattle keeper. As demand is expected to be very high in the last three months of the year, the RPA are advising all cattle keepers to ensure they have a slaughter slot before the Scheme ends.

The deadline for booking a slaughter slot is the **30 September 2008**.

At the time of booking a slaughter slot you must provide:

- The animal's ear tag number
- Your CPH number

Bookings cannot be made without this information.

If you have any queries please call OCDS helpline on **0118 968 7333**. For further information visit the RPA website, [here](#).

TB compensation

The Partridge family from Devon successfully brought a Judicial Review to the Royal Courts of Justice. After two days in Court, the Judge ruled that the Cattle Compensation Order is unlawful in the way it deals with high value animals. The Saunders family in Oxfordshire, with a Judicial Review pending, and representing the Soil Association, sat throughout with the NFU's legal team who supported the case.

"We have started knocking on Defra's door again, after months of getting nowhere, to achieve enhanced compensation. In the meantime please look out for a TB survey we are about to circulate and please respond - its success will depend on you," said Phil Stocker, Soil Association director of farmer and grower relations.

For further information on the Soil Association position, click [here](#).

Upsurge in Welsh conversions and potential problems

The Welsh Assembly Government has received over 300 applications to the new Organic Farming Scheme for Wales this year. The Soil Association has given a cautious welcome to the news.

"Most of these new applicants are grassland farmers with significant sheep numbers," said Phil Stocker, Soil Association director of farmer and grower relations. "While this is welcome news, we all need to be aware of the negative impact any rapid expansion could have if supply and demand is not carefully managed – particularly in organic lamb.

"It is wonderful to see more farmers converting. But if their interests are primarily driven by agri-environment schemes, with little awareness of the market or the movement they are joining, the decision could turn out to be more risky than they first thought.

"I hope that Soil Association producer members will help by engaging with these new converters and introduce them to the Soil Association and the wider movement. In this way, they will have the opportunity to become more engaged, as well as learning more about the supply and demand situation in the organic market."

Regional offices update

After over six years of having a regional office and delivery in Cornwall (and some wider Southwest work) via the Organic South West programme, and in Yorkshire, the Northwest and the Northeast, the regional support programmes going through times of change.

"Funding streams and delayed implementation of the new RDPE has resulted in us slimming down of some of our activities in these regions," said Phil Stocker, director of farmer and grower relations.

"However, we are delighted to report that we are keeping Soil Association staff busy and active on delivering Soil Association projects and some membership related work, whilst also working to develop new projects under the new regional funding programmes."

Contact Chris Atkinson for North of England project enquiries on 07717 802179 or Traci Lewis for queries specific to projects in the Southwest on 07870 268654. We continue to deliver general membership services and support from Bristol.

For more information on the support available in your area, click [here](#).

Research reviews available on IOTA website

For the first time the results of the comprehensive UK organic research programme are available without having to spend time studying individual research papers. The Institute of Organic Training and Advice (IOTA) has now completed 21 organic farming research reviews. They have written these reviews for advisors and others interested in the latest developments in organic farming. They provide a unique summary of the research on each topic and what it means for advice and practical farming. The

dissemination of research results is part of IOTA's PACARes project funded by Defra. The reviews are available for free download on the IOTA website [here](#).

Further information on IOTA's PACARes project can be found [here](#).

Visit www.soilassociation.org/organicresearch for links to Soil Association, Defra and EU-funded research papers. It also has links to other organisations carrying out organic research of use to organic farmers and growers.

Organic Milk Market Report 2008

The Organic Milk Suppliers Co-operative (OMSCo) has launched its third annual Market Report, covering the year to March 2008. The report demonstrates that there is solid momentum behind demand in the market – but also highlights the need for the industry to increase the price paid for raw milk to ensure continuity of supply.

To download the full report, visit the OMSCo website [here](#).

Soil Association Organic Fortnight

During Soil Association Organic Fortnight, people across Britain will be celebrating all things organic. From 6-21 September, individuals, businesses and communities will be hosting events to raise awareness of the environmental, health and social benefits of organic production. Not only that, but the campaign gives everyone a chance to enjoy organic products from delicious food and drink to beauty and textiles.

The fortnight kicks off with the [Soil Association Organic Food Festival](#), Europe's largest organic celebration, which takes place in Bristol on 6-7 September. The campaign closes on a high with the [Soil Association Scotland's Organic Food Festival](#) on 20-21 September.

Visit www.soilassociation.org/organicfortnight to find out how you can order publicity materials and make the most of Soil Association Organic Fortnight.

ADVANCE NOTICE: Soil Association annual conference

The Soil Association is holding the Soil Association annual conference on Tuesday 18 and Wednesday 19 November at the British Commonwealth Museum in Bristol.

The events team will shortly announce further details. For the latest information visit www.soilassociation.org/conference

Rare business opportunity

Award-winning organic vegetable growers, Pollybell Organic Farm, near Doncaster, are looking to introduce livestock to the farm. They are looking for partners in this new business venture. For further information, visit the Organic Marketplace [here](#).

For the latest news and announcements affecting the organic producers visit our website notice board at www.soilassociation.org/noticeboard

For day-to-day news on the organic world, why not sign up to receive *Today's News* – a free daily email digest of stories involving and affecting the organic sector. Simply login into the Soil Association website, click on 'amend my profile' and tick the box marked 'send me a daily news email'.

What we have been up to

Policy and representation

Soil Association food and farming director Helen Browning, recently chaired a meeting of the Food Ethics Council and attended a Defra meeting to discuss the recently published 'Food Security' paper. In addition, Helen attended several animal welfare events and meetings during the last month, including an animal health colloquium at Elm Farm and a poultry welfare seminar at Abbey Home Farm. Helen has also popped on TV a couple of times, appearing on 'Countryfile' to talk about the organic veal and on 'The Politics Show' to discuss GM.

Soil Association head of farmer and grower relations Phil Stocker has continued to work with partners around the TB compensation issue (see news above) and has met with many different groups in the last month, including the Irish Organic Farmers and Growers Association, Cornwall Agri Food Council and IGER (now IBERS) in Aberystwth. Phil also attended a beyond calf exports forum plenary session and a wheat breeding LINK project consortium meeting.

Food and farming team members attended various agricultural shows, including the Royal Show, the Royal Welsh Show and Cereals 2008. "After a four year absence from the show we decided to return to Cereals 2008 to proactively talk with non-organic producers," said Phil Stocker. "While there has undoubtedly been a real shift in attitudes and perceptions among non-organic arable producers over the last few years, I was truly surprised by the high level of interest in organic principles and techniques. Many more producers accept the potential contribution of organic techniques, particularly in light of increasing oil prices."

The Soil Association policy team work with the food and farming department across a range of issues, from climate change and pesticides to antibiotics in farm stock and food security. They recently published [Silent Invasion](#) – the hidden use of GM crop in animal feed. For more information on the work of the policy team, click [here](#).

Market development, technical and business support

The latest horticulture price data is available on the food and farming website. For June prices and comment on the current market, visit www.soilassociation.org/pricedata

Following on from the welfare day, four new briefing papers poultry welfare issues will be available soon. The briefing papers will cover foot pad dermatitis, feather pecking, mortality and range management. For further information please email ff@soilassociation.org or visit our poultry pages [here](#).

The Soil Association's event "producing and processing organic herbs for the health and beauty market" which ran on Thursday 17 July was a great success with over 70 people attending. We heard some interesting presentations in the morning, which provoked a challenging and lively debate. This was followed by a tour of the Organic Herb Trading Company's two-acre site in the afternoon. Despite the potential difficulties, the speakers articulated in setting up a profitable herb enterprise a group of growers has started to discuss the possibility of working co-operatively. The Soil Association would like to take this opportunity to thank Pat Fleming without whose help and support this event would not have happened.

Soil Association Sales and Services

Packaging

The new packaging catalogue is now available. It includes **significantly reduced prices** on the compostable food bags (suitable for both vegetables and meat) and our latest addition to the range product – a Fairtrade organic cotton tote bag for sale at farm shops, market stalls and so on. For your free copy call **0117 914 2446** or view the entire range at www.soilassociation.org/packaging

Are you exhibiting at the Soil Association Organic Food Festival in Bristol in September? If so, you can now order **Soil Association packaging** for use on your stall. We will pick out and deliver your order to the festival for free: saving you both delivery costs and transport hassles. You can choose from our iconic 'food you can trust' paper bags, compostable vest carrier bags, strong multi-use, recyclable carrier bags and our brand new Fairtrade organic cotton tote bag. And why not wear a hardwearing Soil Association apron when serving your customers?

All exhibitors should receive an order form in the post in next couple of days. Alternatively, order your packaging online at www.soilassociation.org/organicfortnight

Bookshop

We have also just updated books catalogue. It now lists our entire books range in one handy booklet. As well as new and existing technical titles, you can now use it to order classic organic texts and organic lifestyle titles. Catalogues are available to callers on request, or you can browse and order via the website. Visit www.soilassociation.org/shop to see the full list or call **0117 914 2446** for your free catalogue.

Events you might like

Tuesday 29 July 2008

Economic opportunities in organic arable production

Gillingham, Dorset

Organic South West in conjunction with Bowerings Feeds are running an event to discuss the opportunities available to existing organic farmers and those considering conversion to organic arable production, with a farm walk on a near by organic farm to follow. Cost: £10 incl. VAT, including an organic lunch. Call **0117 987 4587** or email vsleap@soilassociation.org to book your place.

Saturday 2 August 2008

Creating a sustainable local food economy

Stroud Communiversity, Stroud

Jade Bashford will give a presentation and lead a group discussion about of what needs to change in the food system and why. Followed by a visit to Stroud Community Agriculture and Ebb & Flow's reed bed system at Hawkwood College. For more information and bookings, contact Odilia Jarman on **01453 766598** or email vitalsqueeze@gmail.com

Wednesday 6 August 2008

Organic Cereals Farm Walk

Gilchesters Organic Farm, Stamfordham, Northumberland

This Northumbria Organic Producers farm walk is being held by kind invitation of Andrew and Sybille Wilkinson. There will be a speaker from SAC present on the day. The event is of interest to experienced growers looking to improve quality of production and those looking to become involved in producing

organic arable crops for the first time. In addition, there is also likely to be a visit to the flourmill at Gilchesters Organics. The emphasis will be on growing crops of the right quality for the market and looking at quality requirements for home feed, animal feed manufacture and human food production. For further information and to book a place, contact Carron Craighead (Northumbria Organic Producers group) on **01661 872825**

Wednesday 6 August 2008

Thinking of going organic?

Buckfastleigh, Devon

Designed for farmers and growers considering going organic, these events will provide practical advice and information on the principles of organic farming, how to convert your farm, how veterinary treatments fit with organic farming, how you can benefit from organic grants and market opportunities for your business. Cost: £10 incl. VAT. Call **0117 914 2406** or email goorganic@soilassociation.org to book your place.

Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 September 2008

Soil Association Organic Food Festival

Harbourside, Bristol

Now its eighth year, the food festival will kick off this year's Soil Association Organic Fortnight. For full details of the festival, what's new for 2008 and how you can get involved, visit the website at www.soilassociation.org/festival

Soil Association licensees can claim two free entry passes per licensee. To order your passes contact Feona Horrex, Events Officer, on **0117 987 4586** or email fhorex@soilassociation.org

Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 September 2008

Soil Association Scotland's Organic Food Festival 2008

Merchant City, Glasgow

For a third year the highlight of Scotland's organic calendar returns to Glasgow and the stunning Old Fruitmarket, and for the first time expands to occupy the neighbouring and historic Ramshorn Theatre. If you would like to exhibit, call Creativity Events on **01934 813407**, email

office@organicfoodfairs.co.uk

For full information on the festival visit www.soilassociationscotland.org

For full information on all Soil Association events and a selected range of partner organisation events, visit www.soilassociation.org/events

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