



**Soil Association**  
the heart of organic food & farming

## SOIL ASSOCIATION FOOD AND FARMING E-BULLETIN JUNE 2008

### News and updates

#### Dig this!

**The Organic Apprenticeship Scheme** is due to go ahead for another year starting this September. Ben Raskin, Supply Chain and Technical Team manager explained. "The scheme operates in partnership with the Organic Growers Alliance and the Organic Advisory Service and is run with the support of Garden Organic and Duchy College. The Soil Association believes that apprenticeships are the key to a well-equipped and experienced future work force, particularly for those who choose not to take a formal education route into farming and growing. We are currently looking for growers who would be interested in providing a placement for an apprentice to work with them."

If you would like to find out more or register your interest in the scheme please contact Vicky Slep or Ben Raskin on **0117 987 4587**

#### All change!

The Organic Entry Level Scheme (OELS) will undergo some key changes this summer.

"As part of the EU approval process for the new Rural Development Programme for England, some key changes have been introduced to OELS," explained Anna Bassett, Soil Association business manager. "While these changes will not affect those who already have agreements, producers who are thinking about going for OELS should take note."

A new updated OELS handbook, which incorporates these changes, will be available from late July. Anna Bassett continued: "However, in preparation for the launch of the new handbook, Natural England (NE) will not issue new OELS agreements during August 2008 and will process any applications received after 15 June for a 1 September start date, incorporating the new changes."

"It is important to note that this is *not* a closure of the scheme, and applications can still be submitted during this time. However, the new agreements will not be issued until after 1 September."

For a more detailed explanation of the changes and how you may be affected, see the full article at [www.soilassociation.org/noticeboard](http://www.soilassociation.org/noticeboard)

For further information order a copy of the Soil Association's *Organic Entry Level Scheme* Briefing paper by calling **0117 914 2400** or email [ff@soilassociation.org](mailto:ff@soilassociation.org)

## Bluetongue vaccine!

As the bluetongue vaccine rolls out across the country, we want to remind licensees that the Soil Association fully supports the vaccination programme.

"We are still receiving a lot of calls from concerned members about the use of the bluetongue vaccine in organic systems," said Helen Browning, food and farming director at the Soil Association.

"Licensees are reminded that the bluetongue vaccine can be administered to organic sheep and cattle without jeopardising their status. If you are planning to vaccinate your livestock you simply need to update your animal health plan, including a brief justification for its use, and maintain your treatment records as you would for any other veterinary treatment."

For further information please visit [www.soilassociation.org/bluetongue](http://www.soilassociation.org/bluetongue) or call **0117 914 2400**

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

We are currently restructuring Soil Association producer membership and intend to re-launch the service in the autumn. We have two main aims. Firstly, we want to encourage our members to engage with the broader work of the Soil Association. Secondly, we want to encourage membership from the wider farming and growing community. This includes organic farmers and growers licensed by certification bodies other than Soil Association Certification Limited and non-organic farmers who are interested in organic methods and techniques.

This wider focus has come about as, having attended several early summer shows, it is clear that many non-organic farmers are interested in organic farming methods. Membership will be open to them even though they may not want to become certified organic farmers. We hope by engaging with non-organic farmers in this way can help them on their journey towards greater sustainability and a reduced carbon footprint.

We will be contacting all existing producer members with more details in the near future.

We have restructured the Producer Board, the elected group of farmers and growers who help to steer and guide our work. We have renamed it the Soil Association Farmer and Grower Board. Readers can find out more and read summaries of board meeting minutes on the website. Visit [www.soilassociation.org/foodandfarming](http://www.soilassociation.org/foodandfarming) for more information.

The next round of nominations and elections to the Board will take place in the autumn and anyone with an interest should contact Phil Stocker on [pstocker@soilassociation.org](mailto:pstocker@soilassociation.org)

### Market development, technical and business support

The Soil Association attended Cereals 2008 with Organic Arable. Both days were very busy. The team noticed a significant change in attitude towards organic production methods from non-organic farmers since we last attended the show three years ago. We had an enormous amount of interest from a wide range of producers who are now open to testing organic techniques. In addition, we had a fantastic display of organic produce from a wide range of licensees who donated products and helped pull in the crowds. Many thanks to all those who provided samples.

In the last few days, we have updated the price data pages for arable, livestock and horticulture prices. To see the latest market data, visit [www.soilassociation.org/pricedata](http://www.soilassociation.org/pricedata)

SA Certification has decided that they will allow the use of potassium bicarbonate on a restricted basis pending the decision by our Standards board in July as to the long-term status within our standards.

## Soil Association Sales and Services

### **Packaging**

Potato producers – don't wait until August! Order your potato sacks now to beat the rush.

The Soil Association's packaging service is up and running again, providing a range of quality packaging materials to organic businesses that comply fully with Soil Association standards – including potato and root sacks.

Our aim is to provide a quality service to our small to medium-sized members, including brand new vegetable delivery boxes, potato and root sacks, paper bags, carrier bags – and much more. We would like to welcome everyone back - call us to request samples.

To see the full range and download a copy of our brand new catalogue visit [www.soilassociation.org/packaging](http://www.soilassociation.org/packaging) or call **0117 914 2446** and speak to a member of the team.

### **Bookshop**

New in stock: *Weed Management for Organic Farmers, Growers and Smallholders: A complete guide* by Gareth Davies and Becky Turner. This practical guide uses a 'whole systems approach', looking at everything from the underlying causes to effective management methods: a comprehensive and essential guide for all organic growers.

We are currently updating our books catalogue to include all new titles, but in the meantime, you can browse and order via the website. Visit [www.soilassociation.org/shop](http://www.soilassociation.org/shop) to see the full list or call **0117 914 2446** to order a catalogue.

## Events you might like

**Thursday 19 – Sunday 22 June 2008**

**Royal Highland Show**

**Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, Edinburgh**

Soil Association Scotland will be attending.

Call Lyn Matheson on **0131 666 0847** for more information on the Soil Association stand or [www.royalhighlandshow.org](http://www.royalhighlandshow.org) for general information on the show.

**Thursday 17 July 2008**

**Producing and processing organic herbs for the health and beauty market**

**Milverton, Somerset**

There will be several presentations in the morning, followed by a guided tour of the Organic Herb Trading Co. Discount for members of the herb society.

Cost: £25 +VAT for food and farming members or Herb Society members; £35 (+VAT) non-members.  
Call Vicky Slep on **0117 987 5487** for more information.

### 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](mailto: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](http://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

[fhorrer@soilassociation.org](mailto:fhorrer@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](mailto:office@organicfoodfairs.co.uk)

For full information on the festival visit [www.soilassociationscotland.org](http://www.soilassociationscotland.org)

For full information on all Soil Association events and a selected range of partner organisation events, visit [www.soilassociation.org/events](http://www.soilassociation.org/events)

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