ORGANIC: PRINCIPLES, STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATION

Isabel Griffiths, June 2015
WHAT IS ORGANIC FARMING?
What is organic farming?

Farming without chemicals?

Back to pre-WW II farming?

Replacing chemical inputs with organic inputs?

Small-scale, self-sufficiency?

Hippy farming?
What is organic farming?

A farming system where the use of pesticides, herbicides and synthetic fertilisers is prohibited or strictly limited.
WHAT IS ORGANIC FARMING?
WHAT IS ORGANIC FARMING?

Holistic
Wildlife-friendly
Good animal welfare
Crop rotations
Mixed cropping
Soil health
On-farm nutrient sources
Natural pest control
Mechanical weed control
WHAT IS ORGANIC FARMING?

‘Organic Farming is a production system which avoids or largely excludes the use of synthetically compounded fertilisers, pesticides, growth regulators and livestock feed additives. To the maximum extent feasible, organic farming systems rely on crop rotations, crop residues, animal manures, legumes, green manures, off-farm organic wastes, and aspects of biological pest control to maintain soil productivity and tilth, to supply plant nutrients and to control insects, weeds and other pests.’

USDA
WHAT IS IFOAM?

1. A community
WHAT IS IFOAM?

1. A community
2. Norms
IFOAM NORMS

Set the basis for organic standards (The IFOAM Standard for Organic Production and Processing)

Outline organic principles (Common Objectives and Requirements of organic Standards)

Give a framework for organic operators and certification bodies (Accreditation requirements)
WHAT IS IFOAM?

1. A community
2. Norms
3. Principles
IFOAM PRINCIPLES

health  ecology  fairness  care

What do these mean?
Founded in 1946
Concerns:
• The loss of soil through erosion and depletion
• Decreased nutritional quality of intensively produced food
• Exploitation of animals in intensive units
• Impact of large intensive farming system on the countryside and wildlife
LADY EVE BALFOUR
Farm trials:
1. New intensive post-war methods
2. ‘Traditional’ techniques
3. Mixed system

New understanding of synergies between traditional and new techniques

First Soil Association standards 1967
SA STANDARDS HISTORY

1967 - guidelines
Soil husbandry
Crop husbandry
Animal husbandry

2015 - standards
Farming and growing
Aquaculture
Processing
Health and beauty
Textiles
Food for Life Catering Mark
OUR STANDARDS

1. Agriculture
2. Aquaculture
3. Horticulture
4. Processing
5. Health & beauty
6. Textiles
7. Catering Mark

Covered by EU organic regulations
EU or global standards partnerships
Soil Association scheme
STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT

Standards proposal → Check by Standards Team

Public consultation (60 days) → Draft proposal to Standards Committee

Standards Committee considers feedback → Public consultation (30 days)

Standards Committee considers feedback → Committee makes a recommendation to Standards Board

Standards Board make recommendation to Council → Publication of the standard

Council approve/reject
Standards

No system of farming has higher levels of animal welfare than organic farms working to our standards. Our organic standards use the EU organic regulation as their baseline, but in many cases our standards are more robust.

From time to time, we hold public consultations on our standards. We encourage you to get involved and participate in these consultations.

The current version of the standards are organised by sector below:

Farming and growing standards

- Farming and growing
- Livestock markets
- Abattoirs and slaughtering
- Aquaculture

If you are a feed manufacturer the standards you need to comply with are chapters 40 and 41 contained in the food and drink standards, and standards 10.13.37 and 10.13.38 in the farming and growing standards.

Food and drink standards

- Food and drink
EU ORGANIC REGULATIONS

Published in 1991
EC Regulation 834/2007
EC Regulation 889/2008

How we shaped its formation
IFOAM standards (heavily influenced by UK IFOAM members)
UKROFS and other national standards (based largely on SA standards)
IFOAM EC delegation - formed in 1986 to advise the COM
EU ORGANIC REGULATIONS

Framing organic regulation 834/2007:

Organic production is an overall system of farm management and food production that combines best environmental practices, a high level of biodiversity, the preservation of natural resources, the application of high animal welfare standards and a production method in line with the preference of certain consumers for products produced using natural substances and processes. The organic production method thus plays a dual societal role, where it on the one hand provides for a specific market responding to a consumer demand for organic products, and on the other hand delivers public goods contributing to the protection of the environment and animal welfare, as well as to rural development.
EU ORGANIC REGULATIONS

Implementing regulation 889/2008

...laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products with regard to organic production, labelling and control
Group task

Why have Soil Association standards?

Why have a regulation for organic production and processing?
STANDARDS WHY HAVE THEM?

• To drive change
• To enable innovation
• To improve EU organic regulation
• To support the global organic movement
Why have a regulation for organic?

1. Consumer protection
2. Level playing field
3. Official ‘recognition’ – public goods = financial incentives
Declaration of Intent

Those who are prepared to subscribe to the above Standards are invited —where applicable—to sign the following Declaration:

To:
In consideration of your agreeing to include the name and address of

my.............................................in your publication Wholefood Finder, I undertake that to the best of my ability all the foods which may be produced or sold by me (or my firm) as organically grown will be produced according to the "Recommended" or "Permitted" standards annexed herewith.

Signed.............................................
CERTIFICATION

• Any food or drink product sold as ‘organic’ must comply with the EU regulation
• All members of the supply chain must be certified and licensed
• SACL can inspect and award organic certification to EU regulation and the SA standards
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<th>Approved UK organic control bodies</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Organic Farmers &amp; Growers Ltd</td>
<td>GB-ORG-02</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Organic Food Federation</td>
<td>GB-ORG-04</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Soil Association Certification Ltd</td>
<td>GB-ORG-05</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Biodynamic Agricultural Association</td>
<td>GB-ORG-06</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Irish Organic Farmers and Growers Association</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Organic Trust Ltd</td>
<td>GB-ORG-09</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Quality Welsh Food Certification</td>
<td>GB-ORG-13</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Global Trust Certification Ltd</td>
<td>GB-ORG-16</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Scottish Food Quality Certification Ltd</td>
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SOIL ASSOCIATION CERTIFICATION

- a subsidiary of the Soil Association Charity
- set up in 1973
- offers independent auditing from field to consumer
- 100% of Soil Association Certification surplus income reinvested in Soil Association charity
CERTIFICATION

Annual inspection:
• Farm/production site visit
• Inspection report
• Identification of corrective actions
• Organic plans
• Spot inspections
CERTIFICATION

Conversion periods:
24 months arable land and grassland
36 months perennial crops
Simultaneous conversion land + crops
Reduced conversion periods
Why have a conversion period?
PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC PRODUCTION
SOIL HEALTH

‘Feed the soil and let the soil feed the plant’

*Lady Eve Balfour, The Living Soil*
Soil Health

Aims:
• Maintain and enhance soil health including soil fertility and soil structure
• Maintain humus levels, biological activity and plant nutrients

Key practices:
• Return of crop residues, animal manures
• Use of green manures
• Well-timed cultivations, avoiding damage to soil structure
• Monitoring levels of soil organic matter, available plant nutrients
• Nutrient budgeting
ROTATIONS

The cornerstone of organic horticultural and arable production

Balanced rotation benefits:

• Building of fertility
• Varying demands on the soil
• Providing nutritional needs of crops
• Limit disease spread
• Help prevent weed problems
• Break lifecycle of pests
• Keep nutrient loss to a minimum
ROTATIONS

Things you should do:
Use fertility building crops – legumes (catch crops, green manures, leys, legume crops)
Deep vs shallow rooting crops
Weed suppressing vs weed susceptible

Things you shouldn’t do?
WEED CONTROL

Things you should do:
Careful design and management of whole farm system e.g. good rotation design
Good manure management
Well-timed soil cultivation
Good farm hygiene
WEED CONTROL

Methods:
Weed suppressing crops
Green manures
Good composting of plant wastes and manures
Pre-sowing cultivation, stale seed beds
Crop variety selection for weed suppression/vigour
Under-sowing
Mechanical weed control
PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Questions?
Aim:
To rear livestock in optimal conditions for the species with special care for their health and welfare, providing conditions that satisfy their behavioural needs.
ORGANIC ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Elements of the system:
• Stress free outdoor based systems with high welfare standards
• Access to grazing when conditions allow
• Ample space when housed to reduce stress and disease
• Natural diet free from GMO’s
ORGANIC ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

How:
Good management practices
High standards of welfare
Good stockmanship

Aims:
Prevention of disease and injury
Increase resistance of stock to infection and disease
Increase their ability to overcome disease (rapid healing)
PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Questions?
THE ORGANIC MARKET 2014
UK sales of organic products, 2012–2014
UK organic sales up 4%

Growth in organic sales of Soil Association symbol holders +7.7%▲
Over £7 million spent on organic food

- Schools 78%
- Nurseries 6.4%
- Universities 5.7%
- Hospitals 5.4%
- Cafés and restaurants 2.8%
- Others 1.7%
THANK YOU