



Soil Association
the heart of organic food & farming

Soil Association
Food and farming department

**Organic action plan consultation meeting:
Southeast provisional outcomes**

28 June 2006, Southeast of England Showground, Ardingley

Rural enterprise scheme – GEOrgE project
(Growing England's Organic Regional Enterprise)

**To contribute your comments to the planning process please return
pages 2 and 3 (if appropriate) to A Rollett in the SAE provided or fax
0117 314 5001**

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Preliminary outcomes from the Southeast consultation meeting (producers¹, processors² and horticulture⁵)

Please indicate your top three priorities (1,2,3) from each section of the table below and return by fax or via the enclosed SAE. If you wish to add your own priority/priorities please do so on the comment sheet (page 3) and return as above.

What changes or additions to current policy would have the most benefit for the organic sector?

What are the greatest technical issues affecting your organic business and what are the best mechanisms for dealing with these?

What additional market intelligence would be most useful to you?

What do you see as the weakness of the current supply chain structure in your area of organic business and what are the solutions?

In which areas do you see potential for further market development and what support for market development would be most useful?

Policy	Technical	Market intelligence	Supply chain	Market development
Change the unsustainable import/export culture ⁵	Lack of collaboration and knowledge sharing ^{1,2,5} (equipment, inspections, information)	Accurate, reliable and up to date market intelligence ^{1,2,5} (Prices)	Poor links in the supply chain (e.g. lack of local processing facilities and abattoirs) ¹	Organic catering market (Baby food, service stations, schools, restaurants). Also locally sourced products ⁵
Increase policy makers understanding of organic ⁵	Minimal technical support for horticultural sector ⁵	What is being grown, who by, where, when it will be available and how much ^{2,5}	Lack of opportunities to add value in the Southeast region ⁵	Organic milk in organic or fairtrade coffee ⁵
Set specific organic targets for public procurement ⁵	Low yields or crop failure and pest control ¹	Information about potential buyers for organic ⁵ (Consumers and processors)	The high cost of transport, lots of empty transport, (could be utilised to improve efficiency ^{2,5})	Public procurement ² (school meals and/or packed lunches)
Increase policy support for organic ^{2,5}	Poor access to technical information ^{1,2}	Processors would like information about the price of ingredients ²	Need milk processing facilities, more livestock markets and abattoirs ¹	More public education to increase the understanding of organic ^{1,2} .
Rationalise organic certification and farm assurance procedures (less paperwork, streamline inspections) ¹	Lack of vet expertise in the region ¹	Producers interested in data on the economic viability of enterprises ¹		Develop a strategy and action plan for SE region ²
Clarify the transition from the OFS to the OELS ¹	Certification forms too time consuming ²			Change the organic licensing procedures ¹ (small producers 'doing it organically' but find it expensive to certify)
	Lack of training for new entrants to the industry ⁵			

Comments Sheet

Policy	
Technical Issues	
Market Intelligence	
Supply Chain	
Market Development	

What changes or additions to current policy would have the most benefit for the organic sector?

POLICY	DETAILS
Change the unsustainable import/export culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase support for UK production rather than relying on and prioritising imports⁵ ➤ The government needs a policy to buy UK first⁵
Increase policy makers understanding of organic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In particular, when thinking about organic and local food⁵
Set specific organic targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Perhaps regionally or specific targets for public procurement (like Italy)⁵
Increase policy support for organic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ For example, top fruit⁵, public procurement² and food in schools²
Change organic certification/farm assurance procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reduce paperwork and streamline inspection¹ ➤ The system should be rationalised to prevent multiple inspections and form filling¹
Clarify the transition from the OFS to the OELS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Poor understanding of the transition and conflicting advice from advisors¹ ➤ Is it necessary to stay with OFS for the duration of the agreement or can a producer transfer to OELS at any time?¹

NB: In this and all subsequent tables the superscript refers to, producers¹, processors² and horticulture⁵

What are the greatest technical issues affecting your organic business and what are the best mechanisms for dealing with these?

TECHNICAL ISSUE	MECHANISM
Lack of collaboration and knowledge sharing⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Outline the benefits of collaboration, perhaps in terms of increased profit or productivity⁵ ➤ Specific areas were sharing equipment and events for new entrants⁵ ➤ Increase collaboration between inspection bodies² ➤ Sharing information on the Internet, e.g. discussion forums⁵ ➤ Networks to improve/share best practice^{1,5}
Minimal technical support for horticultural sector⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Technical seminars or symposiums run at appropriate times (e.g. winter) that included detailed workshops and should address practical issues⁵ ➤ Seminars also need to address the issue of specific crop shortages and encourage more people to grow field-scale vegetables⁵
Low yields or crop failure and pest control¹	
Access to technical information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ One-stop local provision (e.g. a central information point with expert co-ordination)¹ ➤ Technical support directly to the farm¹ ➤ A help-line for processors and retailers (similar level of support to OCIS)² ➤ Effective dissemination of the results from technical research, (e.g. new veterinary techniques or variety experiments)¹
Lack of vet expertise in the region¹	
Certification forms too time consuming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Should be made available electronically²
Lack of training for new entrants to the industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More college courses, e.g. in organic horticulture⁵
Technical advice from Soil Association and HDRA is not always of high quality ⁵	
Lack of support to add value or to support benchmarking	

What additional market intelligence would be most useful to you?

MARKET INTELLIGENCE	DETAILS
Accurate, reliable and up to date market intelligence ^{1,2,5}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Eye on the Market includes inaccurate prices and is out of date. It should also clearly state the source of the price information and the date on which that information was current. Vegetable prices should include prices for carrots and onions but not cabbage, which have a fairly static price and the vegetables listed should also reflect what is in season⁵ ➤ The possibility of using an e-bulletin for regular price updates was discussed⁵ ➤ Prices should ideally be farm-gate (which should be clearly noted)¹
Market intelligence with regard to what is being grown, who by, where, when it will be available and how much ⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Information should be well sign posted and there should be a one-stop shop detailing where to source organic produce for both consumers and producers⁵ ➤ The resource should also contain information about the progress of the crop, (e.g. the possibility of low yields) to help with forward planning, particularly for processors^{2 5} ➤ Information should be online in a form that is easy both to access and to use⁵
Information about potential buyers for organic, consumers and processors ⁵	
Processors would like information about the price of ingredients ²	
Producers interested in data on the economic viability of enterprises ¹	
Data on the quantity of imported meat being eaten/sold in the Southeast ¹	
More horticultural market intelligence ⁵	

What do you see as the weakness of the current supply chain structure in your area of organic business and what are the solutions?

SUPPLY CHAIN WEAKNESS	SOLUTIONS
Poor links in the supply chain (e.g., a lack of local processing facilities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Concern that as supermarket livestock processing does not take place in the Southeast animal welfare may be comprised by long distances travelled to slaughter¹ ➤ It was suggested that OLMC need to push for stock to go to local abattoirs and then be transported as carcasses¹
Lack of opportunities to add value in the Southeast region⁵	
The cost of transport is high and, lots of transport is moving around empty, which could be utilised to improve efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Collaboration is needed so that transport can be shared and efficiency improved^{2,5} ➤ Set up a transport website, offering a groupage service linking together those who could share transport targeted at either organic business or those in the Southeast⁵ ➤ Develop distribution groups² or set up distribution hubs around the outside of London then use shared transport to deliver into the Capital⁵
There is a need for milk processing facilities in the region and there is a lack of livestock markets¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hailsham Livestock Market needs an organic facility¹ ➤ There is a need for a facility licensed to slaughter over 30-month beef cattle¹ <p>(The regulations that require organic beef cattle over 24 months to have the spinal cord removed were questioned. Cutting plants need to be certified to remove this, which is an extra cost)</p>
To improve linkages those at all stages in the chain need to know who has what, where and how much ⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improved market intelligence and easy to access information
Poor consumer awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improve consumer education so there is a market for imperfect produce⁵
Supermarket dominance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Soil Association should be involved in creating middle-level independent retail outlets to prevent a Tesco/Sainsburys whitewash²

In which areas do you see potential for further market development and what support for market development would be most useful?

MARKET DEVELOPMENT	SUPPORT
<p>The organic catering market E.g. baby food, service stations, schools and in all good restaurants. Locally sourced products should be available in all food outlets and there should be family friendly organic catering.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Soil Association needs to promote the organic catering code of practice more widely to encourage greater uptake⁵ ➤ A TV chef or a good restaurant, which uses organic food, could be used to promote and develop the organic catering market⁵ ➤ Educate chefs about seasonality and about how to use more cuts of meat⁵
<p>Organic milk in organic or fairtrade coffee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Many outlets sell organic or fairtrade coffee but the milk in these drinks is usually non-organic⁵
<p>Public procurement particularly school meals and/or packed lunches²</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To fully develop this market changes in policy were suggested to require schools to serve organic². ➤ More information about how public procurement works was requested by some sectors²
<p>More public education is required to increase the understanding of the organic message. In addition, it was suggested that the health benefits, natural image and environmental benefits need more promotion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Offer financial support to those farmers that are good at advancing the organic message¹ ➤ Improve producers marketing awareness² ➤ Increase regional help to co-ordinate marketing¹
<p>Develop strategy and action plan for SE region²</p>	
<p>Changes in the organic licensing procedures (lots of small producers are 'doing it organically' but find it too expensive to be individual licensee)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It was proposed that small producers should be able to group together under one licence to reduce costs¹
<p>High quality organic ready-meals should be available to both the public and the catering sector¹</p>	
<p>Packaging²</p>	
<p>Market diversification, some producers who supply the supermarkets would also like to sell into the local market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Guidance on how to market to particular areas would also be welcomed² ➤ Support for group formation as collaborative working was seen as a way to improve buying/selling power⁵