

Feb–Jun 2003

Soil Association producer services

Farmer and grower training events

We are pleased to present our spring and summer producer training programme. Event prices are held at 2002 levels but we have plenty of new specialist subjects on offer.

Please book early to be sure of a place – there is a discount on bookings received at least 14 days before an event. Further savings are available to Soil Association producer members and licensees of Soil Association Certification Limited. We hope you will find time to attend at least one of the days on offer.



Soil Association producer services

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Thursday 13 February

VETERINARY SERVICES FOR ORGANIC FARMS

Organic Resource Centre, Low Luckens, Rowelstown, Cumbria

This specialist training day for vets will involve an introduction to organic farming principles, animal welfare, organic livestock standards, regulation and the market. The speakers will take a detailed look at the veterinary support needs of organic farms and organic animal health in practice.

Subjects covered will include clean grazing systems, organic livestock production, nutrition, acceptable medicines, mineral and trace element usage, other assurance schemes, the role of homoeopathy and animal health plans.

There will be a site visit to view the livestock enterprises at Whiteholme Farm, which produces lamb, beef and pork, sold through direct marketing.

Please note this event costs £125 (incl VAT) or £100 (incl VAT) for vet producer members.

Wednesday 19 February

GRANTS, ENVIRONMENTAL SCHEMES AND OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING

Piercebridge Farm, Piercebridge, County Durham

The wide range of available schemes and grants is often bewildering. From woodland grants to capital grants, countryside stewardship to marketing loans this day will focus on what funding is available, who is eligible and how to apply. Representatives from all the major agencies will be on hand to discuss particular schemes and answer your questions. Please note that this day will cover funding in England only.

This event will be repeated in Gloucestershire on Wednesday 19 March (see overleaf).

Wednesday 26 February

ORGANIC FEED REGULATIONS – PREPARING FOR 2005

Fingle Glen Hotel, Tedburn St Mary, Devon

With 2005 fast approaching the issues surrounding organic feed standards are uppermost in many people's minds. With the derogation for the non-organic allowance being taken away many producers are apprehensive about what effect this will have on animal diets and

consequently production, health and welfare. Availability of feedstuffs, especially protein sources, and the ability to formulate appropriate rations are areas of concern to be addressed during this day. Speakers will concentrate on ruminant feeding, although there will be opportunity to discuss the issues affecting pig and poultry diets as well.

There will be a farm visit to Court Barton, a 370ha organic farm. The dairy herd consists of Shorthorns, Ayrshires and Guernseys, and some sheep are also kept.

Wednesday 5 March

THE USE OF HOMOEOPATHY IN ORGANIC SYSTEMS

The Farm, Longnor, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

This event provides the chance to find out more about alternative treatment methods, and to learn from the experience of people who have used them successfully. It will be a valuable day for those exploring what homoeopathy has to offer, as well as those with some experience of its usefulness.

There will be a range of talks from experienced practitioners, including a homoeopathic veterinary surgeon and a practising homoeopathic herdsman. Topics will include history, dosing methods, specific treatments of disease, and constitutional remedies.

There will be a short tour of the organic livestock at Longnor as part of the day. This 230ha organic farm supports 130 Friesian type dairy cattle, 80 followers and 100 beef cattle, as well as growing cereals and pulses.

Tuesday 11 March

STRATEGIES FOR MARKETING ORGANIC RED MEAT

Lakewood Conference Centre, Rhodyate, Blagdon, Somerset

Organic beef and lamb production in the UK has increased dramatically over the last two years as large areas of grassland have completed conversion. Substitution of imported products has taken place but what can be done to ensure continuity of UK supply to satisfy year round retailer and consumer demand? Can farmers be confident that their future is secure selling through major processors into conventional multiple retail chains or should more emphasis be placed on different food chain structures? The day

will draw on two recent important studies carried out in Wales and the south west of England both of which analysed the organic red meat sector and identified a range of strategies to secure the future of UK organic beef and lamb production.

This event will also be run on 29 May at IGER, near Aberystwyth (see facing page).

Wednesday 19 March

GRANTS, ENVIRONMENTAL SCHEMES AND OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING

Abbey Home Farm, Cirencester, Gloucestershire

This is a repeat of the 19 February event in County Durham (see previous page).

Thursday 27 March

PEST AND DISEASE CONTROL IN ORGANIC GLASSHOUSE CROPS

Cantelo Nurseries, Chilton Cantelo, Somerset

Pests and diseases pose a technical threat to successful organic glasshouse production. The organic glasshouse salads group identified the key public enemies: pepino mosaic virus, root rots, *Verticillium*, *Cladosporium* and botrytis with key pests being woodlice, aphids, mealy bug and russett mite. Through a series of discussions and technical talks methods of preventing and controlling these pests and diseases will be considered. The day will include a walk around the organic glasshouses at Cantelo nurseries and a chance to see the early stages of the composting operation being established.

Wednesday 2 April

ORGANIC ARABLE PRODUCTION (DAY ONE OF THREE)

Chapel Farm, Netherton, Worcestershire

The first in this series of three events will discuss sowing dates, early weeding techniques, variety choice, rotations, and the pros and cons of autumn versus spring sowing. There will also be a farm walk to look at crops in the ground.

The aim of these three days is to follow various crops as they develop through the season including what effect decisions on weeding, variety choice and cultivations have on the finished product, and discuss the issues that arise.

A 360ha mixed farm Chapel Farm grows milling and biscuit wheat, oats, beans and triticale. Crops are mainly autumn sown. Sheep and beef are also kept.

There will be a 50 per cent discount off the cost of day three if booking for all three days. The other two days will take place on the same farm in July and October.

Wednesday 9 April

DEVELOPING A LOCAL MARKET FOR PRODUCE

Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells, Powys

A loyal, local customer base is vital to the survival of many organic farms. One way to encourage local people to take an interest in your business is to actively involve the community – whether through a box scheme, offering shares in the farm or through the use of local volunteer help.

Through its Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project, the Soil Association helps organic farms make links with local people in exciting and innovative ways – from rent-a-tree schemes to providing work opportunities in return for a weekly box of food. Farms involved in these projects can enjoy a more secure income while also giving environmental and social benefits and building up vital links with customers.

This training day will look at how your farm can benefit from CSA, successful models, opportunities for further development and how to run a successful scheme.

Run in conjunction with Organic Centre Wales. The event is free of charge to producers in Wales, funded through Farming Connect (still reserve places via the Soil Association).



Wednesday 23 April

ORGANIC DEER FARMING

Wootton Farms, Farley, Oakamoor, Staffordshire

Standards for organic deer production have now been finalised, providing a new opportunity for producers to join those who have already created successful enterprises. Deer farming itself became quite popular in the past decade but rearing deer organically has always had its own specific issues.

This event will cover all aspects of organic deer production including housing, nutrition, health and welfare, marketing and processing issues.

Wootton Farms is a 1,050ha mixed farm. The deer enterprise was established in 1984 and now runs 650 farmed red deer. The farm also supports 250 suckler beef, 1,100 ewes and a poultry unit. Around 400ha are put down to combinable crops. The holding became fully organic in 2001.

Wednesday 30 April and Thursday 1 May

CONFERENCE

COMPOST AND SOIL – THE FOUNDATIONS FOR HEALTH

Holme Lacey College, Hereford

Soil health has long been regarded as the foundation for success in all organic farming systems. Yet what do we really mean by soil health, how do we measure it and how do we best manage and protect it for sustainable crop and livestock production. This two-day gathering of farmers and growers will tackle the subject from a highly practical perspective investigating topics such as:

- How to make good compost
- Understanding soil profiles
- The potential of compost teas
- Minimum cultivation systems – benefits and drawbacks
- Measuring soil health – where are we and where do we need to be going
- Tailoring compost for disease suppression.

Over the two days opportunities will arise for delegates to visit local organic farms and see the compost production facility at Holme Lacey College. There will also be an chance to learn more about the Project Carrot initiative being carried out at the college.

Due to the nature of this event there will be different cost options. Call 0117 914 2400.

Tuesday 6 May

FINISHING STRATEGIES FOR ORGANIC BEEF AND SHEEP (DAY ONE OF TWO)

Sheepdrove Farm, Lambourn, Berkshire

Organic products have an inextricable link with quality. Increases in production of UK organic beef and lamb have been stimulated largely by demand in the market place and it is crucial that consumers are presented with high quality, well finished and presented organic meat products. The first of these two days will focus on winter/spring finishing strategies for stock – and the second day will focus on summer/autumn finishing. Considerations such as identifying market requirements, breed selection, advance planning, feeding, and grazing management will be presented and discussed, and the farm walks offer the opportunity to view livestock at varying stages of production.

The second of these days will be held, again at Sheepdrove, on 16 September 2003. The day will not be a repeat of this event but will follow on from topics discussed to address new issues.

Thursday 15 May

THE ART OF COMPOSTING – THE WAY FORWARD FOR ORGANIC GROWING

Blaen Camel Farm, Lampeter, Ceredigion

Following on from the Compost and Soil conference this event will give a practical insight into the composting system that has been operational at Blaen Camel Farm for two years. The day will focus on making proper compost including:

- Potential ingredients
- Machinery needed and costs
- The composting process – from organic matter to humus
- Labour requirements
- Uses and benefits.

Delegates will have the chance to experience and discuss the controlled microbial composting system adopted at Blaen Camel as well as considering other composting options. Growers will also be able to see some of the crops receiving compost applications on the 18ha farm including salads and glasshouse tomatoes.

Run in conjunction with Organic Centre Wales. The event is free of charge to producers in Wales, funded through Farming Connect (still reserve places via the Soil Association).



Tuesday 20 May

MECHANICAL WEED CONTROL FOR ORGANIC GROWERS

Russell Smith Farms, Duxford, Cambridgeshire

This ever-popular annual event draws on the latest developments in mechanical weed control giving growers the opportunity to see what's new, active in the field. To supplement the latest innovations, demonstrations will also be on show of hoes, brush weeders and tines to suit growers of all scales.

Thursday 29 May

STRATEGIES FOR MARKETING ORGANIC RED MEAT

Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research (IGER), Aberystwyth

This is a repeat of the event being held on 11 March (see front for details). However, this discussion will be based around the study carried out in Wales and will concentrate on Welsh needs.

Run in conjunction with Organic Centre Wales



Tuesday 3 June

CROP AND LIVESTOCK DIVERSITY IN ORGANIC SYSTEMS

Pertwood Farm, Hindon, Wiltshire

Much has been written about the loss of biodiversity in the UK. However this largely ignores the massive declines in agricultural diversity that have occurred over the last 50 to 60 years – estimated at around 75 per cent. Diversity within the organic system is central to managing crops and livestock for 'positive health' and there are also direct benefits for pest and disease control. Yet organic farming faces the risk of following non-organic farming down the route of 'globalisation' of plant and livestock breeding often due to lack of choice, but also because of the demands of major processors and retailers in the name of 'uniformity'. Can this cycle be broken on a significant scale and can diversity of organic farm products become a positive marketing tool that supports the rebuilding of many native and regional crops and livestock.

There will be a tour of Pertwood Farm, a 690 ha mixed farm on the Wiltshire downs. The diverse livestock enterprise includes Wiltshire horns, Lleys, Welsh black cattle, beef shorthorns, Herefords, and crossbred pigs. The arable rotation comprises oats, barley, triticale, oil seed rape, peas, seed beans and wheat. There is also a new laying hen unit.

Tuesday 17 June

PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING FOR LOCAL RETAIL

Radford Mill Farm, Timsbury, Near Bath

Adding value before products leave the farm is an important strategy for success, particularly for small-scale producers. This day will introduce and discuss a range of practical options for product diversification and adding value on the farm. The event will include: meat processing; growing vegetables – variety and extending the season; dairy processing for yoghurt, milk and cheese; mushroom growing; flour milling; and other innovative ideas.

Radford Mill Farm produces and processes organic vegetables, fruit, wholefoods and meat for local markets.

Thursday 19 June

IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND BUILDING CUSTOMER LOYALTY – THE ART OF BOX SCHEME SUCCESS

Warborne Organic Farm, Boldre, Hampshire

Box scheme numbers have remained fairly steady over the last two years but many have fallen by the wayside while others

have thrived. What is it that sets these two operations apart? This day will focus on ways for existing schemes to consolidate and build on customer loyalty and explores means by which the economic efficiency of a scheme can be improved to save on unnecessary costs. Issues that will be explored on the day:

- What to grow and what to buy in
- Communicating with the customer
- Time-saving measures for organising packing and deliveries
- Dealing with the media to raise profile.

There will also be a chance to look around the award-winning farm. In the 2002 Organic Food Awards, Warborne Organic Farm was highly commended for its box scheme and won best mixed producer of the year. Situated in the New Forest, the 166ha holding farms beef and sheep as well as growing vegetables on 12ha and arable crops on a further 38ha. The box scheme supplies to nearly 400 customers all within a ten mile radius of the farm. In addition the farm is active in the community running numerous farm open days and getting involved in local events.

Wednesday 25 June

PARASITE CONTROL IN ORGANIC LIVESTOCK SYSTEMS

Churchtown Farm, Fowey, Cornwall

The issue of internal parasites is one of the major concerns of livestock farmers. This event will concentrate on the control of internal parasites by selective breeding, rotational and mixed grazing and novel forages. External parasites will also be covered including options for scab control and flies. The day will also take a detailed look at the practices at Churchtown Farm, which is a 260ha organic holding with 80 suckler cows and followers, 350 ewes and 50 store cattle. Cereals are also grown in the rotation. The event will be valuable for all farmers who have livestock at risk from internal and external parasites.

Joint event with Organic South West. Open to all at usual prices. The event is half price for producers from Cornwall funded through the Soil Association Organic South West project, under the Objective One Programme.

EVENTS IN SCOTLAND

A range of events for producers are being set up by the Soil Association Scotland office. Further details will be circulated to Scottish producers when available.

To suggest topics or find out what is being planned please contact Lyn Matheson on 08701 202110.

BOOKING

Advance booking is required for all our events. Unless indicated otherwise, the cost for events is:

- **£39** (including VAT) for Soil Association producer members or Soil Association Certification Limited licensees

Or:

- **£56** (including VAT) for non-members

Confirmation of booking, directions and a programme will normally be sent out to delegates 10 days before an event.

An organic lunch is included in the cost of the majority of the events.

DISCOUNTS

Bookings for events received 14 days or more before the event are discounted by £4 per place.

CANCELLATIONS

We can refund 80 per cent of the booking fee if a cancellation is made at least seven days before an event. The full fee is payable for places cancelled after this time.

BOOKING FORM

Please use a separate form for each event (you can photocopy this page or contact the Soil Association producer services for more forms).

Please supply the full name and address of all delegates.

If you are a member or licensee, please quote your membership or licence number on the booking form.

You may also pay by credit card. Please call 0117 987 4587 or 0117 914 2400.

THANKS

We wish to thank the many organic producers and others who host and speak at our events. Their great contribution of time and sharing of knowledge is significant in making the events programme so successful. We are grateful for the financial support for several events in the programme from various companies named which has helped us keep the prices for delegates as low as possible.

If your company is interested in the opportunities offered by sponsorship of our events please contact Laure Lort-Phillips on 01646 650193.

SOIL ASSOCIATION

Established in 1946 as a charity, the Soil Association is the UK's leading organisation for organic production, inspection, certification and promotion of organic food and farming. Soil Association Certification Ltd is the most professional, practical and respected certification service for producers, retailers and processors, implementing organic standards which have been developed over 25 years.

SOIL ASSOCIATION PRODUCER SERVICES

The Soil Association producer services department represents the interests of organic producers. It provides high quality, affordable support and information to its members. Membership is available to anyone interested in technical or marketing information about organics. Benefits include:

- Telephone helpline with free advice and support on the interpretation and application of organic standards, information and market contacts.
- An extensive range of fact sheets, technical guides and briefing papers.
- Our excellent quarterly magazines, *Organic Farming* and *Living Earth*.
- The respected annual *Organic Food & Farming Report* at a discount.
- Representation – we promote producers' interests at industry and government levels.
- A varied national programme of training events and farm walks where farmers and growers meet to share information, see organic farming demonstrations and socialise.
- Organic market development – we support a range of initiatives helping UK producers to succeed.

ORGANIC FARMING

The main components of an organic farming system are the avoidance of artificial fertilisers and pesticides, the use of crop rotations and other forms of husbandry to maintain fertility and control weeds, pests and diseases. A written conversion plan, including detailed cropping plans, rotations, a livestock management plan and budgets, is also an essential part of a successful move into organic farming.

Standards for organic farming, horticulture and food processing are subject to EU regulation – and within the EU only certified produce may be legally sold as 'organic'. UK certification bodies and standards are regulated by the government's United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards (UKROFS).

BOOKING FORM

Complete and return this form to: Angela Wescott, Soil Association producer services, Bristol House, 40–56 Victoria Street, Bristol BS1 6BY

EVENT

DATE

YOUR NAME

COMPANY

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

TELEPHONE

PRODUCER MEMBERSHIP NO. OR LICENCE NO.

NO. OF PEOPLE IN YOUR PARTY (PLEASE ATTACH DETAILS OF OTHER NAMES AND ADDRESSES)

BECOME A SOIL ASSOCIATION PRODUCER MEMBER

I would like to join and receive a discount on the cost of this and future events.

Individual @£76.13 (incl. £6.13 VAT) **Corporate** @£266.44 (incl. £21.44 VAT)

I enclose a cheque (payable to 'Soil Association') for **£**

Or Please debit my Visa/Mastercard/Switch account for **£**

CARD NUMBER

CARD EXPIRY DATE

ISSUE NUMBER (SWITCH ONLY)

NAME ON CARD