

July–Nov 2003

Soil Association producer services

Farmer and grower training events

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

We are running a range of this year's events under the heading The Organic Pathfinder Programme (TOPP).

TOPP is a six month pilot scheme, set up by the Soil Association and Abacus Organic Services Ltd (and partly funded by DEFRA through the Vocational Training Scheme), which is running in the south west of England.

Through specialist training days TOPP provides farmers with increased knowledge of organic principles, practices and techniques and demonstrates how to develop organic businesses further. Specific areas are looked at in much greater depth, helping farmers decide on appropriate options, which could in turn lead to an improvement in profitability.

If this south west pilot scheme proves successful DEFRA funding will be sought to run the scheme across the whole of England.

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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Tuesday 8 July

ORGANIC ARABLE PRODUCTION (DAY TWO OF THREE)

Chapel Farm, Netherton, Worcestershire

This event follows on from the first in the series of arable production days. Speakers will talk in-depth about grain storage and pest control, summer weed control strategies and post-harvest soil management, crop and rotation planning, seedbed preparation and variety selection for autumn sowing. Delegates will again have the chance to see the development of the milling and biscuit wheat, oats, beans and triticale crops and the effects that management decisions have had. The 360ha farm also runs sheep and beef.

Thursday 10 July

PRODUCTION STRATEGIES AND MARKETING FOR THE ORGANIC DAIRY FARMER

William Davis Room, IGER, Aberystwyth

The organic milk market has been, and is still, going through some difficult times. Milk buyers and producers have worked together to try and find ways through the supply and demand issues. This has often been through pricing policies, but others have come up with new marketing strategies and product diversification.

This event will discuss prospects for the dairy market, highlighting key issues and recommendations for further development. There will be a report on the recent Organic Centre Wales study 'Improving market intelligence for dairy production in Wales', as well as representation from key players at producer, processor and retail level.

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).



TOPP EVENT

Wednesday 23 July

KNOW YOUR NATURAL ALLIES

Longmeadow Organic Vegetables,
Godmanstone, Dorchester, Dorset

Natural predators can help to alleviate many of the technical problems that can

occur in organic horticulture systems. It is therefore important to encourage 'natural allies' onto the farm by providing habitats for them to harbour in. Crop biodiversity is key to this and the level of natural allies will build up over time with good management. But how do you recognise your natural allies? This event will help growers to identify natural on-farm predators and will encompass a technical session with a leading entomologist to identify the range of natural predators that exist. There will also be a farm walk to show which practices encourage natural predators onto a farm – this will involve a search for natural predators on the holding.

TOPP EVENT

Tuesday 29 July

MARKETING AND FINISHING ORGANIC LAMB, BEEF AND PORK

Ensors abattoir, Cinderford, Gloucestershire

The finishing process for organic livestock is increasingly important, in terms of both the finished animal and the finished processed product. This event will cover topics such as different finishing strategies for beef, lamb and pork, and the finishing requirements for different markets, for example supermarkets, direct marketing and farmers' markets.

There will be the opportunity to view cuts of meat that illustrate market requirements, look at the importance of packaging and presentation of meat, marketing strategies and look at finishing strategies with emphasis on nutrition.

Ensors abattoir offers a full processing service for beef, lamb and pork.

Wednesday 6 August

GROWING ORGANIC PROTEIN CROPS

Goodwood Estate, Chichester, West Sussex

The importance of home-grown protein crops is increasing as 2005 approaches and non-organic feed derogations will run out. Although peas and beans are grown widely on organic farms, soya and lupins are less well established as many producers wait for more research and field scale production.

Aimed at arable producers who are looking for alternative crops, and livestock farmers wanting to grow their own protein, this event will deal with all the above crops, going into detail on varieties, weed control strategies,

rotation, crop management, their potential as home-grown feed and marketing.

The day will include a farm walk to see organic blue, white and yellow lupins, and beans being grown on the estate in order to help Goodwood achieve their aim of 100 per cent organic feed. There will also be a visit to a nearby 5 ha trial plot of soya and lupin varieties.

TOPP EVENT

Thursday 14 August

ANIMAL HEALTH – AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW

Manor Farm, Godmanstone, Dorset

The increase in use of alternative remedies for people seems to be just as extensive in livestock production and perhaps especially so in organic farming. Most people are aware of homeopathy but herbalism, acupuncture and even chiropractic are being used regularly and can have very positive results.

Topics covered during this insightful event will include the practical application of homeopathy, when and where to use acupuncture, herbs for prevention and treatment of disease and chiropractic for cows.

There will also be a farm walk to see the livestock at Manor Farm which has been organic for 15 years. The farm almost solely uses homeopathy for their dairy herd and sheep, which run on 132 ha.

Tuesday 19 August

ALTERNATIVE FORAGE PRODUCTION

Garthorne Farm, Darlington, County Durham

With feed standards changing in 2005, there is much talk about feeding systems and alternatives to traditional livestock forages. This event provides the chance to learn more about alternative forage crops, both from a range of expert speakers and by seeing some of these crops growing on an established organic farm.

Whole cropping, maize production, red clovers and lucerne will all be discussed, as will current research and best practice. Speakers will include John Bax of Biotial Ltd, and Gordon Tweddle who has had several years experience of growing maize organically.

This year, 130 ha Garthorne Farm is growing wholecrop wheat, triticale and red clover. It also supports a dairy shorthorn and Friesian/Holstein herd.

Event kindly supported by



TOPP EVENT

Wednesday 3 September

ORGANIC MANAGEMENT OF LAYING HENS

Abbey Home Farm, Cirencester, Gloucestershire

Demand for Soil Association standard organic eggs and egg products continues to grow. This event is designed for both experienced and potential egg producers and will cover the management of organic laying hens with speakers going into depth on topics including organic pullet rearing, disease control, health and welfare, nutrition and marketing. There will also be a farm walk around the poultry unit at Abbey Home Farm which has three flocks totalling 460 Black Rock birds. Eggs are sold through the farm shop, with seasonal surpluses going wholesale to local outlets. The unit has been going for four years and is now an integral part of the 635 ha holding which includes a dairy herd, beef, sheep, pigs, vegetables and arable crops.

Wednesday 3 September

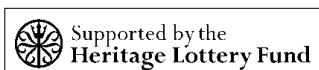
EDUCATION ON THE FARM – A TRAINING DAY FOR FARMERS

Meanwood Valley Urban Farm, Leeds

This event is aimed at those farms in the north of England, north Wales and Scotland who are interested in offering schools a farm visit and education about organic farming. The day provides a valuable opportunity to share ideas and experiences with like-minded people. Advice will be given on aspects including health and safety requirements, national curriculum links and how to deliver an exciting day for the schools involved. The morning will be spent exploring key issues and this will be followed by a farm walk in the afternoon.

Meanwood Valley Urban Farm is a city farm with an organic market garden situated in the centre of Leeds. The farm works to protect local flora and fauna, whilst providing an environmental education, training and leisure resource for the community. The new EpiCentre provides an interactive arena for learning about environmental issues.

Event costs £17.63 per person (including VAT). Call Colin Esrich on 0117 914 2440 or email cesrich@soilassociation.org to book.



TOPP EVENT

Wednesday 10 September

ORGANIC HERB PRODUCTION AND MARKETING

Organic Herb Trading Company, Court Farm, Milverton, Somerset

Whilst organic herb production is a technically challenging method of production it is an area that has grown rapidly over the past few years and looks set to grow further. With the development of organic health and beauty standards and more practitioners using homeopathic treatments there are still plenty of marketing opportunities available. The morning of the event will be run by experts in the field giving technical sessions on the practicalities of growing herbs, such as information on nutrient management and the processing and marketing of the final product. Following an organic lunch there will be a tour of Court Farm giving the opportunity to see a fine example of organic herb production.

Tuesday 16 September

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

Perridge Farm, Pilton, Somerset (new venue)

Following on from the day held at Sheepdrove Farm in May, this event looks further at the finishing of livestock. Summer and autumn finishing, nutrition and feed rations, processing and market requirements will be explored in depth, and top producers will give examples of their own strategies. There will also be an opportunity to see the beef cattle at Perridge Farm, winner of the best beef and sheep producer in the 2002 Organic Food Awards.

Event kindly supported by



TOPP EVENT

Thursday 18 September (new date)

ORGANIC CHICKEN PRODUCTION

Cobbs Cross Farm, Goathurst, Bridgwater, Somerset

Standards for organic table bird production are still causing problems for some but with demand continuing to increase there is plenty of opportunity for those wanting to start a new enterprise or existing units looking to expand. Topics covered during this event will include standards, nutrition, housing management, marketing, health and

welfare, and brooding.

Cobbs Cross Farm produces 1,000 birds a week under contract for Lloyd Maunder. The 160ha holding also has beef, sheep and arable enterprises.

TOPP EVENT

Wednesday 24 September

DIRECT ORGANIC MEAT MARKETING

West Hembury Farm, Askerswell, Dorchester, Dorset

An increasing amount of organic meat is sold directly by producers through outlets such as farm shops, farmers' markets, box schemes and the internet, but it is not an easy option. This event will cover topics such as understanding the market, marketing options, producer co-operation and how to develop a customer base. Speakers will also talk about the regulations for slaughtering and meat cutting, transport and storage of meat, butchery techniques and presentation of finished products.

West Hembury Farm is a 40ha holding producing White Park cattle and South Down sheep and is part of the West Dorset Organic Foods co-operative. A local abattoir is used for processing and the meat is sold directly by the group under a standardised logo.

Event kindly supported by



Friday 26 and Saturday 27 September

WALKING AND WORKING TOGETHER – SOIL ASSOCIATION SCOTLAND GATHERING

Elmwood College and the Kingdom of Fife

Soil Association Scotland is pleased to invite all those with an interest in organic food and farming to join us at our first Scottish gathering. We will provide an interactive and informative programme of visits looking at various enterprises within the Kingdom of Fife.

For further details call Lyn Matheson on 08701 202 110 or email lmatheson@soilassociation.org

Wednesday 8 October

ORGANIC FEED REGULATIONS – PREPARING FOR 2005

Organic Resource Centre, Low Luckens, Rowelton, Carlisle, Cumbria

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.

The effect the standards will have on the practicalities of livestock production, availability of feedstuffs, especially protein sources, and the ability to formulate appropriate rations are areas of concern which will be addressed during this day. Speakers will concentrate on ruminant feeding, although there will be opportunities to discuss the issues affecting pig and poultry diets as well.

Wednesday 15 October

EXTENDING THE SEASON

Growing with Grace, Clapham, Lancashire

As pressures in the market for organic vegetables increase it is ever more important for growers to be able to make their produce stand out. While opportunities at peak times in the season have become more limited, there is still plenty of potential in the market for growers who can successfully extend the season. This may require considerable investment and learning of new technical skills.

This day will focus on the practical and commercial implications for businesses looking to extend the season through growing under protection.

Growing with Grace consists of 0.9ha of glass growing crops which include salad leaves, lettuces, aubergines, peppers, courgettes, cucumbers, beans and peas, squashes, brassicas and some root crops. Marketing is through its own box scheme and shop, sourcing direct from other local producers when necessary. It is a workers co-operative.

Event kindly supported by



Wednesday 22 October

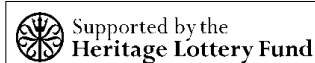
EDUCATION ON THE FARM – A TRAINING DAY FOR FARMERS

Abbey Home Farm, Cirencester, Gloucestershire

This is a repeat of the 3 September event in Leeds (see facing page).

Abbey Home Farm is a 635ha mixed farm with a range of livestock including dairy cows, pigs, sheep and laying hens. Cereals and over 80 different vegetables are grown, many of which are sold at the farm shop and cafe. The farm leads a number of school visits each year and has a classroom facility.

Event costs £17.63 per person (including VAT). Call Colin Esrich on 0117 914 2440 or email cesrich@soilassociation.org to book.



Thursday 6 November

ORGANIC ARABLE PRODUCTION (DAY THREE OF THREE)

Chapel Farm, Netherton, Worcestershire

The last day of this three part event will discuss management of green manures, seed bed preparations, autumn/winter management for spring sown crops, avoidance of soil related pest problems (for example slugs, fruit fly, birds), variety selection and trials results, and marketing. As previously there will be a farm walk to look at the crops that will have recently been planted at Chapel Farm, and a report on how this year's crops performed.

Wednesday 19 November

ALTERNATIVE MARKETS FOR ORGANIC FOOD – SUPPLYING THE LOCAL CATERING SECTOR

Dukes Restaurant, Eastbourne, East Sussex

This event explores the marketing potential in supplying the catering sector as well as how to overcome the difficulties of organising the consistent high quality supply that this sector requires. Speakers will range from suppliers of organic outlets to representatives from the catering industry. There will be plenty of opportunity for discussion and to meet potential buyers/suppliers.

The event is hosted by Dukes, a restaurant that uses local organic meat and vegetables.

Event run in conjunction with the Netherfield Centre for Sustainable Food and Farming

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.

TOPP EVENTS

Please contact us for price details for TOPP events

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.

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

THANK YOU

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 call Angela Wescott on 0117 914 2400.

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 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: 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.

CPH NO./HOLDING NO. (FOR TOPP EVENTS ONLY)

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