



Organic Farming in Wales

2003 • 2004



Canolfan Organig Cymru
Organic Centre Wales



Organic Farming in Wales 2003-2004

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Organic Centre Wales is a publicly funded organisation responsible for the dissemination of information on organic food and farming in Wales. The Centre comprises five partners: ADAS Wales, the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research (IGER), Elm Farm Research Centre (EFRC), the Soil Association and the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.



Cover photo: Jeremy Moore

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Foreword

As the time approaches when I will retire as Chair of the WDA Agri-Food Partnership Organic Strategy Group, I can look back proudly at what has been achieved since its inception in 1999.

This Annual Report contains accounts of the progress that has been made on many fronts during the last 12 months, particularly in market knowledge due to the research for the recently published report, 'Organic Food: understanding the consumer and increasing sales'. This information, together with continuing product development work, will enable Welsh organic producers to be proactive in building a solid consumer base. The funding of this report by the WDA indicates the support that they and the Agri-Food Partnership continue to show towards the organic sector, encouraging the growth of many organic companies.

This year has seen a development of our public education work; in conjunction with the Soil Association there has been a successful programme of school visits to organic farms and it is hoped that, subject to future funding, this work will continue. With Assembly initiatives on the public procurement of local and organic produce, it is hoped that there will be scope for organic producers to participate in opportunities that may arise in the future, especially in the education and health sectors.

Earlier this year, the extension of the Welsh Assembly Government's Organic Farming Scheme allowed existing organic producers to claim on-going financial support.

Whilst the future of organic production in Wales continues to present a number of opportunities, the challenges presented by CAP reform and global markets cannot be ignored and we are fortunate in Wales to enjoy constructive and productive discussions with officials on these and other policy issues.

We must remember that all our efforts depend on a viable and thriving farming community and to this end producers, officials and organisations must work together maintaining the momentum that has already been established by the true partnership that has been created in Organic Centre Wales.

The future looks very positive for the organic sector in Wales and I would like to thank those who have played a part in developing an Organic Centre for Wales - long may it continue.

*Gareth Rowlands
Chair of Organic
Strategy Group*

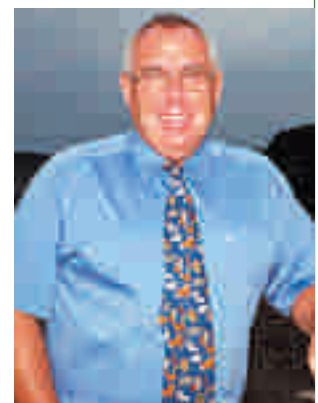


Photo: WDA

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Organic Policy

Organic Centre Wales (OCW) was originally formed to act as an information source for producers enquiring into organic farming; in our second phase, in response to changes in the sector, we have an increased remit on policy issues. It has been a busy time, seeing the production of a second Organic Action Plan,¹ the implementation of the CAP reform and development work on agri-environment reforms. The year also saw the start of organic maintenance payments for farmers.

Second Action Plan

Reviews of the first Organic Action plan identified a need to refocus activities from encouraging increased supply to improving the marketing of organic products, developing consumer understanding and increasing demand. The second plan reflects the changed circumstances, focusing on sustainable development of the organic market, public education, public procurement, retailing and supply chain development. The plan also recognises the need for more research, market intelligence and information dissemination, and reiterates the wish to see Wales' GM-free status maintained.

Agri-environment schemes

Entry Level Scheme

OCW is working with Welsh Assembly Government officials in developing the pilot Entry Level Agri-environment Scheme for Wales (ELSW), to ensure that any new scheme and organic farming support are integrated. The potential for the ELSW to assist farmers, through support for drawing up farm resource management plans, will help Welsh farming to be more sustainable and reduce pollution.

Organic Farming Scheme

As part of the development of the ELSW, the Organic Farming Scheme operation is being reviewed. Payment

levels are being re-assessed in the light of some environmental obligations moving to the ELSW, and the compensation for lost subsidy due to reduced stocking rates on conversion will no longer be relevant under the Single Farm Payment.

Despite the uncertainties caused by the changes in CAP support, 38 new applications for conversion aid through the Organic Farming Scheme were received between 1 April 2003 and 31st March 2004.

| Net annual uptake of Organic Farming Scheme | 2001/02 | 2002/03 | 2003/04 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|
| Number of agreements | 35 | 101 | 38 |

Maintenance payments

March 2004 saw the start of the long-awaited organic maintenance payments. This support is operating through an amendment to the Organic Farming Scheme, and means farmers within the scheme have higher payments for years 4 and 5, and can continue to be supported for a further 5 years. The immediate impact of the change is for those farmers that converted to organic without any financial support, who can now claim support for the first time. Although this pool of farmers is relatively small, the uptake of the scheme so far has been disappointing.

CAP reform and the Mid Term Review

OCW now has a place at the Welsh Assembly Government's CAP Stakeholders committee, and we are doing our best to ensure reforms are favourable for organic farmers, both now and in the future. Despite the laudable intentions of the reforms, some aspects appear to disadvantage organic farmers, so OCW has worked with officials and responding to consultations to highlight these issues and find mechanisms to overcome them.

¹ See Welsh Agri-Food Partnership (2004) Second Organic Action Plan for Wales. www.organic.aber.ac.uk/policy/orgactionplan2.pdf

Consultation responses

OCW has a remit to respond to consultations that may affect organic farmers or farming and food. We also respond to consultations if an organic perspective or ideas can offer solutions or views. Whenever possible, draft responses have been posted on our website, with an open invitation for comments to be provided before the consultation deadline². Once the consultation is closed, our submitted response is posted on the website. Over the last year we have responded to consultations from Defra, Welsh Assembly Government and the FSA. Issues have included: the review of agri-environmental schemes in Wales, animal health and welfare, TB, Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE), Wales' Sustainable Development Action Plan and several on CAP reform. A full list for 2003/04 appears below:

- CAP reform: Proposals for the operation of the cross-compliance regime
- CAP reform: Potential for use of the national envelope
- CAP reform: Operation of the National Reserve
- Sustainable development action plan
- Potential for use of National Envelope
- Operation of the National Reserve
- Proposals for the operation of the Cross Compliance regime
- Preparing for a new GB strategy on bovine tuberculosis
- Draft contingency plan for BSE being identified in sheep
- Reform of the EU Common Agriculture Policy implementation in Wales. Dairy elements
- Review of the National Assembly's Sustainable Development Scheme
- Proposals to rationalize compensation for notifiable animal disease control
- Reform of the EU Common Agriculture Policy implementation in Wales
- Outline of an animal health and welfare strategy for Great Britain
- Positive animal health: a draft action plan for a partnership approach in Wales and England
- Animal health and welfare strategy for Great Britain: a partial regulatory impact assessment
- Organic Strategy Group position paper on mid-term review proposals

Building relationships

An important part of our role is to build relationships with other organisations and one of these has been with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) who are implementing an important nutrition strategy for Wales. We have attended FSA meetings and responded to consultations, including one on research into organic food.

We also have secured a place on the English Organic Action plan committee. This is particularly useful to co-ordinate cross-border issues and to facilitate good communications within the organic sector in the UK.

Public Investment* in the Welsh Organic Sector (£m), 2001-2004

| Programme | 2001/02 | 2002/03 | 2003/04 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|
| Organic Farming Scheme | 1.7 | 2.5 | 2.7 |
| Processing and marketing grants | ** | 0.8 | 2.1 |
| Organic Centre Wales | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.2 |
| Organic Conversion Information Service (OCIS) | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Farming Connect Organic Development Programme | - | 0.3 | 0.2 |
| TOTAL | 2.5 | 4.0 | 5.3 |

**Expenditure from Welsh Assembly Government, WDA and EU sources, excluding funders' administrative costs*

***Specific organic data not available for 2001/02*

Sources: Welsh Assembly Government, WDA and Organic Centre Wales

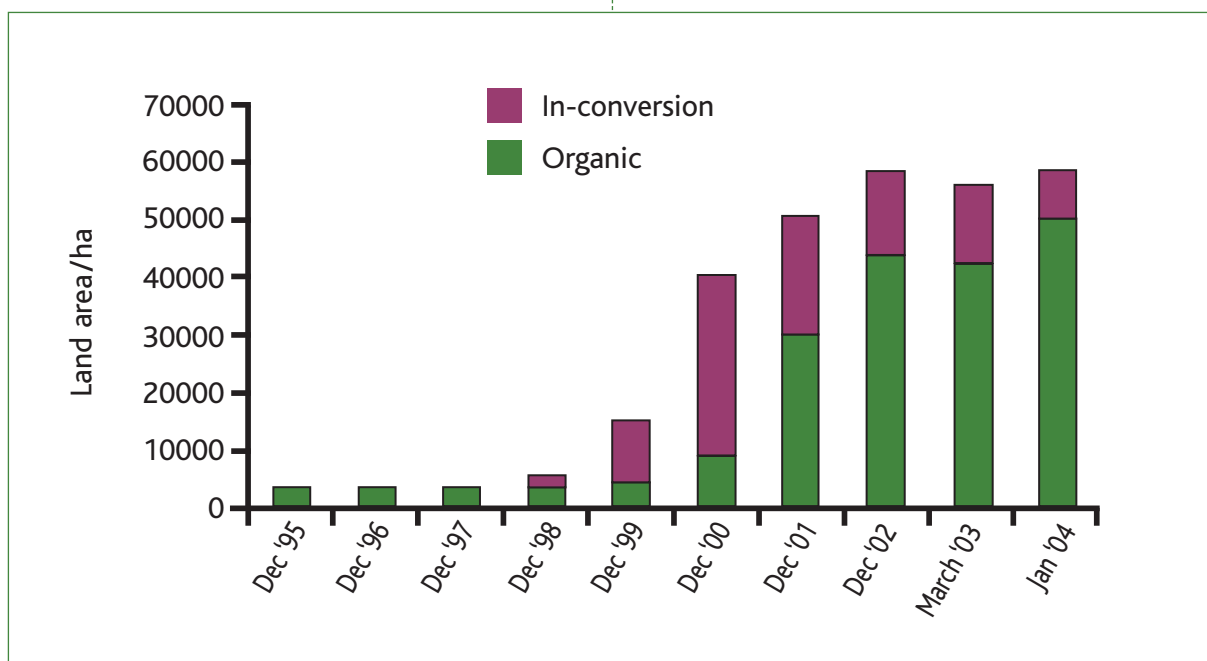


² See www.organic.aber.ac.uk/policy/consultations.shtml

Organic Production

Following the rapid growth in the area under organic management during the period 1998-2002, the last two years have been a time of consolidation.³ The area of fully organic land increased from 41,381 ha in March 2003 to 50,921 ha in January 2004, but there

was a considerable drop in the land in conversion, from 13,702 to 9,124 ha. This reflects the pattern in England. Altogether some 4.1% of the agricultural area is under organic management.



Growth in organically managed land in Wales, 1995 to 2004 Source: Defra Organic producers, processors and land area in Wales, March 2004

| | March 2004 |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Organic farmers and growers | 622 |
| Organic processors/importers | 106 |
| Total licensed organic businesses | 728 |
| In conversion (hectares) | 9,124 |
| Organic (hectares) | 50,921 |
| Total organically managed land (ha) | 60,045 |

Source: Defra and OCW, 2004

The number of licensed organic farms over the same period rose slightly from 618 to 622, while the number of registered organic processors (abattoirs, wholesalers, manufacturers, fresh produce packers etc) increased marginally from 103 to 106, making a total of 728 Welsh organic businesses.

³ For further information on organic production statistics in Wales and beyond, see www.organic.aber.ac.uk/statistics

Most of the organic land in Wales is associated with beef and sheep production – traditional enterprises of the Welsh rural landscape, with grassland and pasture accounting for nearly 90 per cent of organic land in Wales. Other significant enterprises include arable (four per cent of holdings), in addition to 1.2 per cent of holdings growing fruit and vegetables in 2003.

Which counties have the most organic land?

The county with the largest area of organic land is Powys, with 12,353 ha in March 2003, just under one-quarter of the Welsh total – see table. Over 50% (28,501 ha) of fully organic land lies within the western counties of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Gwynedd, with the remaining 26% (14,247 ha) scattered in the smaller counties.

Distribution of organically managed land by county, March 2003

| County | Ha | % total organic land |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Powys | 12,353 | 22.4 |
| Pembrokeshire | 9,144 | 16.6 |
| Ceredigion | 6,511 | 11.8 |
| Carmarthenshire | 6,458 | 11.7 |
| Gwynedd | 6,388 | 11.6 |
| Denbighshire | 3,810 | 6.9 |
| Monmouthshire | 3,403 | 6.2 |
| Conwy | 2,919 | 5.3 |
| Glamorgan | 1,551 | 2.8 |
| Anglesey | 527 | 1.0 |
| Clwyd | 458 | 0.8 |
| Wrexham | 414 | 0.8 |
| Swansea | 397 | 0.7 |
| Flintshire | 312 | 0.6 |
| Gwent | 239 | 0.4 |
| Cardiff | 140 | 0.3 |
| West Glamorgan | 77 | 0.1 |
| Grand Total | 55,101 | 100.0 |

Source: Defra Statistics Department, 2003. Note: As county names and boundaries changed in 1996 and have not been used consistently by the certifying bodies, these figures are only a guide.



Photo: OCW

Market Growth and Development

As the organic market matures, participants in it will require greater levels of sophistication to thrive. Following spectacular increases in demand in recent years, the rate of growth appears to be slowing slightly. This, together with more players entering the market, will put pressure on everyone.

The key to success in any market is a thorough understanding of your customer. With this in mind, the Organic Marketing Group proposed a thorough investigation of the motivation of organic buyers by the acknowledged leader in this field of market research Taylor Nelson Sofres and this major study, *Organic Food: Understanding the consumer and increasing sales*⁴ was launched in Wales in May 2004.

Supported by the Soil Association, the Welsh Development Agency and Organic Centre Wales and based upon research conducted across 15,000 UK households, the report revealed what motivates people to buy organic food and how Welsh organic businesses can expand sales with creative marketing strategies. Findings concluded that support for local organic food is stronger in Wales than in any other part of the UK, with 80% of Welsh consumers expressing a preference for organic food produced in their home country. The result of this work has been a fascinating insight into why some people buy a lot of organic food compared to others who only buy occasionally. This report has been made available to all processors of organic food in Wales, and it is hoped

that it will be a useful tool in developing their business.

This 'toolbox' approach is being taken in other areas where the Group consider that Welsh organic businesses need assistance. The next task is however to go back to the grassroots and understand from the participants in the industry what tools they need to better market Welsh organic products in an increasingly competitive marketplace. From this exercise, priorities can be given to the most pressing requirements for 'tools' to enable Welsh organic companies to stay at the forefront of organic developments in the UK.

The new marketing report



⁴ See www.organic.aber.ac.uk/library/TNS2004eng.pdf

Supporting the Market

The Welsh Development Agency (WDA) continues to make an important contribution to the development of the food and drink sector in Wales. The WDA provides support for organic producers and processors in various forms, including grants, promotional initiatives, Farming Connect and trade development activities.

Processing and Marketing Grants

Over £6m has been invested in the Welsh organic sector in the past year through the Processing and Marketing Grant (PMG) scheme, which is delivered by the WDA using Welsh Assembly Government and European funding. House of Rhug is one company to have benefited, having been awarded £70,000 to develop a bespoke EU standard meat storage, maturation and cutting plant. Philip Hughes, House of Rhug manager, explained: "The PMG grant will enable us to reduce our processing costs, making our product more competitive to a growing market both in England and Wales. We do not let the customer forget that they are buying Welsh lamb and beef, which is amongst the best in the world, direct from the farm. Our customers are willing us along."



Philip Hughes and Rhug butcher

True Taste/Gwir Flas Wales Food and Drink Awards

The True Taste Food and Drink Awards,⁵ now in their third year, celebrate and recognise the very best of food and drink in Wales. Winners have the opportunity to show-off their produce to a high-profile judging panel, which includes chefs, food writers and supermarket buyers. They also benefit from an UK-wide public relations campaign and are guaranteed coverage on ITV Wales Food Show.



The Scotts of Bacheldre

In 2003 organic food businesses took ten of the awards, from a total of twenty one they could enter. Gold Award winners for 2003-4, Bacheldre Watermill of Churchstoke, have grasped the promotional opportunities made available to them and have recently secured contracts to supply the Savoy and Jamie Oliver's Fifteen restaurant in London.

⁵ See www.walesthetrue taste.com

"Winning the award really has done no end of good for our business," says Matt Scott of Bachelldre. "Promotion and marketing of the awards has raised our profile significantly and has given us an extra seal of quality."

Trade development

Organic food companies have exhibited under the industry brand, True Taste, at trade and consumer events across the world. A number of successful business deals have resulted from attending these shows. For instance, Calon Wen has secured a deal to supply milk and butter to a leading London based distributor as a result of contacts made at the Organic Products Europe Show held at Olympia, London in April 2004.

In the coming year the WDA will be implementing a dedicated organic supplier development programme.

The nine month programme will consist of workshops, one-to-one advice and hands-on consultancy support.

The programme aims to improve the marketing skills of organic food businesses, so that they can consistently meet the needs of their target customers, both at a trade and consumer level, leading to a more robust, long term and profitable business. Furthermore, a better understanding of the requirements of the customer base will assist in developing more secure contractual relationships, which should lead, in time, to the development of more profitable trading relationships.

Many companies have already benefited from the wide range of trade development activities offered by the WDA, which are leading to more and more Welsh organic products appearing on the shelves.

Photo: Calon Wen



The Red Meat Sector

Historically, agriculture in Wales has been best at producing top quality lamb and beef. Indeed, there is no difference in the organic sector, where Wales produces a high proportion of the UK's best quality organic lamb and beef.

Whilst there has been a very welcome blossoming of novel ways of marketing organic red meat – farmers' markets, mail order, farm-gate sales and the internet – it remains a reality that over 80% of such produce is sold through the supermarkets. There has been a dramatic change for the better in the quality of animals produced for that market, which has given Wales a well-deserved reputation for quality produce.

Volumes of lamb and beef being produced in Wales have also increased dramatically over the past few years. Whilst generally the market has absorbed most of this production, there remains, in common with the non-organic market, a bulge in production in the autumn. This has resulted, all over the UK, in organic lambs being sold on the conventional market as the organic outlets become saturated. The medium-term key therefore must be for organic farmers to spread their production through the season. However, in order to do this, farmers must have confidence that the outlets and prices will be sufficient to make the task of spreading production throughout the season a viable one. This is where a commitment from the supermarkets is

needed in order for the system to work to everyone's advantage.

Without doubt, Welsh organic farmers can do more to produce quality organic lamb and beef throughout the season, but it needs the joined-up thinking expressed in the Curry Report and subsequent statements for this to be achieved. Organic farmers working as a group in discussion with processors and supermarkets has to be the answer, and we are on our way to achieving that goal.



The Dairy Sector

Changing prices within the organic dairy sector have focused attention on both the importance of forage in the diet and the relative costs associated with either purchasing concentrate feeds or growing all feed (forage + concentrates) on the farm. When the organic milk price was high the feeding of higher quantities of concentrate feeds was justified, including using the non-organic allowance of 20% (now 10%). During this period over 50% of the total milk from organic farms was produced from concentrate feeds and forage quality was less important.

Although the price of organic concentrate feeds has fallen in the last two years, the current low milk price and requirement to feed 100% organic diets from August 2005 onwards increases the importance of efficient forage production and utilisation. Forage production costs are usually much lower than the price of purchased concentrate feeds but dependent on achieving good crop yields, effective utilisation from grazed grass/clover swards and ensuring low conservation and feed-out losses from conserved forages. The cheapest forage to produce is from grazed swards with a good grass to white clover ratio. These swards have high protein contents from mid-summer onwards and feeding high-yielding cows a concentrate with a high energy/low protein feed (e.g. cereal grains) rather than a concentrate mix will improve the energy to protein ratio and reduce feed costs.

On some organic farms with a favourable climate for producing high yields from grass/clover swards,

purchased rather than home grown concentrate feeds may reduce the sustainability of the system but may be financially advantageous and an easier system to manage.

The average cost of organic milk production has been reported as 22.9 p/litre (Kingshay Trust, 2003), higher than the price currently paid to many farmers for their organic milk. However, the total annual production of organic milk in the UK has stabilised (Soil Association, 2004) and there are indications that demand is steadily increasing. Providing the increased demand is supplied by UK-produced organic milk and not imported milk/milk products, there may be a welcome increase in the future price paid for organic milk.



The Horticulture Sector

A report on organic horticulture, *Improving market intelligence for organic horticulture in Wales*, funded by Farming Connect and prepared for OCW by the Soil Association was published in February 2004.⁶ This revealed that the retail market for organic fruit and vegetables in Wales was in excess of £20 million and estimated the total area in organic horticulture production in Wales at 513 ha with potatoes, fodder crops and green vegetables being dominant (accounting for 28, 27 and 25 % of land area respectively). The survey also revealed an area of top fruit, with 24 ha of orchards recorded. Salads and protected cropping, although very small in terms of land area, are also significant in terms of the value of product.

Breakdown of fully organic horticultural land use in Wales, April 2003

| | Welsh land area (ha) | % Welsh hort. area | Welsh land area (ha) | % Welsh hort. area |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Root vegetables and alliums | 49 | 9.5 | 1,588 | 22.4 |
| Potatoes | 145 | 28.3 | 1,860 | 26.3 |
| Green vegetables | 129 | 25.1 | 1,396 | 19.7 |
| Salads, protected crops and herbs | 15 | 3.0 | 288 | 4.1 |
| Fodder crops (not for human consumption) | 137 | 26.6 | N/A | N/A |
| Total vegetables | 474 | 92.5 | 5,133 | 72.5 |
| Top fruit | 24 | 4.6 | 1,574 | 22.2 |
| Soft fruit | 6 | 1.2 | 181 | 2.6 |
| Total fruit | 29 | 5.7 | 1,755 | 24.8 |
| Flowers and ornamentals | 7 | 1.4 | 146 | 2.1 |
| Plant propagation, seedlings and vegetative reproductive material | 2 | 0.4 | 50 | 0.7 |
| Total organic land area | 513 | 100.0 | 7,084 | 100.0 |

*N/A - No equivalent UK data available for comparison
Source: Defra, 2003 and Soil Association, 2003*



The number of farmers' markets, box schemes and community-supported agriculture initiatives continues to grow. There are no data for Wales specifically but direct sales of organic produce (most of which were fruit and vegetables), grew by 28% in the UK as a whole in 2003, and anecdotal evidence suggests that the situation in Wales is no exception. Looking at the bigger picture, a large proportion of organic fruit and vegetables is still being imported and there are still opportunities for import substitution. However, the need to communicate with packers before planting is as critical as ever in order to plan production to meet the market.

The Agri-Food partnership launched its Horticulture Strategy for Wales in early 2003. Key elements are to evaluate the composition of the industry, to establish a Development Centre for Horticulture in Wales, improve the technical and business performance of the sector, develop new markets and opportunities and to address the training and education needs of the sector. Several elements of the strategy are currently being implemented including the establishment of a Farming Connect Development Centre based at University of Wales Bangor to address the needs of the sector.

⁶ See www.organic.aber.ac.uk/library/MIhort2004.pdf

Organic Centre Wales - Aims and Objectives

Organic Centre Wales (OCW) was established in 2000 as a focal point for the dissemination of information on organic food and farming to producers and other interested parties in Wales. Its establishment fulfilled a key objective of the first Welsh Action Plan for organic farming, with a remit to support the achievement of the action plan goals, and in particular the delivery of a co-ordinated information strategy.

The funding for OCW comes from the Welsh Assembly Government and Farming Connect (with additional support from the European Union EAGGF Objective 1 funds) to carry out the co-ordination functions, with additional funding for delivery through a separate Welsh Assembly Government Organic Conversion Information Service contract and the Farming Connect Organic Development Programme.

The core activities of OCW during 2003-04 were similar to its first phase in 2000-2003, focussing primarily on meeting the needs of producers, particularly those converting to organic farming, by providing a helpline, training, advice and information. However, with the rapid increase in supply of organic products and the marketing pressures that have been generated, the policy emphasis has shifted from encouraging supply to supporting demand-stimulating measures including public education and public procurement.

Therefore, the contract awarded to Organic Centre Wales by the Welsh Assembly Government for 2003-2006 for a further £240,000 p.a. includes a remit to extend the provision of information services to the whole of the supply chain. It will service consumers, service providers and other interested parties and support the strategic development, capacity building and policy development needs of the organic

community in Wales. The fulfilment of this enlarged remit must be set against a background of resource restraint, with the Welsh Assembly Government contract being equivalent in value to the previous contract and the tightening of Farming Connect funds.

The aim of OCW has therefore evolved to support more generally the achievement of the Welsh Organic Action Plan objectives and the agencies involved in implementing the Action Plan. This will be achieved by co-ordinating and supporting services to the organic community in Wales and acting as a focal point for gathering data and disseminating information on organic food and farming. OCW also provides a focus for policy, strategic and market development, supply chain facilitation and public procurement. In particular, it aims to enhance the capacity and effectiveness of the Organic Strategy Group and the Horticulture, Marketing and Policy subgroups who are collectively working to deliver the current and future Organic Action Plans.

In working towards these objectives, Organic Centre Wales aims to achieve a level of excellence that justifies it playing a leading role, not just in Wales, but also in the UK and internationally.



Partnership, Staffing and Management 2003/04

Since its inception in 2000, OCW has been based at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth and is run by a partnership of five organisations actively involved in organic farming research and knowledge transfer in Wales: ADAS Wales, Elm Farm Research Centre (EFRC), the Institute of Grassland and Environmental

Research (IGER), the Institute of Rural Sciences at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth (IRS) and the Soil Association. OCW core staff are responsible for the co-ordination of the different areas of activity, with the partners responsible for much of the delivery of services to producers and others.

| OCW Staff | OCW Steering Group |
|---|---|
| <p>Nic Lampkin, Director (on sabbatical Feb - August 2004) Neil Pearson, Manager Sue Fowler, Policy and Development Officer Carolyn Wachter, Training and Events Co-ordinator Tony Little, Advisory Services Co-ordinator Phil Jones, Helpline Officer Jane Powell, Information Officer Pat Elkins, Secretary David Frost, Marketing Strategy Office (ADAS Wales) Michael Green, Market Intelligence Officer, November 03-May 04 (Soil Association)</p> <p>Associate Staff Roger Hitchings, EFRC Heather McCalman, IGER Phil Stocker, Soil Association</p> | <p>Andrew Jedwell (Chair) Nigel Elgar, Farmer Tom Latter, Farmer Brian Walters, Farmer Iwan Wynne Jones, Farmer Juliet Morris, Farmer Owen Lort-Phillips, Farmer Paul Nicholas, Organic Farm Foods Trevor Roach, National Botanic Garden Richard Jones, Lantra Alan Starkey/Ken Stebbings/John Davis, Welsh Assembly Government Kevin Thomas/Arwyn Davies/Huw Thomas WDA Food Directorate Nic Lampkin, Organic Centre Wales Neil Pearson, Organic Centre Wales John Cook, ADAS Wales Richard Weller, IGER Heather McCalman, IGER Roger Hitchings, EFRC/OAS Phil Stocker, Soil Association John Griffiths, Dairy Development Centre</p> |
| OCW Management Group | |
| <p>Nic Lampkin, Institute of Rural Sciences, UWA and Director, OCW Neil Pearson, Manager, OCW John Cook, ADAS Wales Phil Stocker, Soil Association Richard Weller, IGER Roger Hitchings, EFRC</p> | |

Advisory Services to Farmers

The Organic Conversion Information Service (OCIS)

OCIS provides farmers with the information they need to decide whether to convert to organic farming. The service is managed by OCW, funded by Welsh Assembly Government and includes a technical helpline, an information pack and up to two advisory visits, delivered by ADAS Wales and the Organic Advisory Service.

The numbers of registrations and visits were broadly similar to last year (see table). CAP reform has been uppermost in the minds of many farmers considering conversion this year. The announcement of the maintenance payments in late 2003 also generated significant interest.

OCIS registrations and visits, 2002-04

| Year (1st May – 30th April) | Registrations | 1st visits | 2nd visits |
|-----------------------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| 2003 – 2004 | 181 | 116 | 44 |
| 2002 – 2003 | 215 | 105 | 35 |

Farming Connect

Since its launch in September 2001, most of the publicly funded advice to farmers has been available through Farming Connect. Business advice is provided through a Farm Business Development Plan (FBDP) which helps farmers explore avenues for improving farm income. In addition to the FBDP a further day of specialist technical advice is available.

A total of 44 requests were received in 2003/4 for specialist technical advice. These topics included manure management, agri-environment schemes (in particular the links between the Organic Farming Scheme and Tir Gofal), preparation for the ending of feed derogation in 2005, and standards and certification issues.

Environmental Opportunities Review

The 2003 Winter Fair saw the launch of a new Farming Connect advisory service, the Environmental Opportunities Review (EOR). This new service, which is part of a wider environmental strategy for Farming Connect, is an integral part of the FBDP. It is delivered by ADAS Wales on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government, and aims to ensure that any proposals made through the FBDP are not detrimental to the environment, as well as identifying opportunities to enhance the farm's environmental resources.

Organic farmers stand to benefit significantly from the service, which will provide additional advice on manure management, support the environmental prescriptions in the standards and the Organic Farming Scheme, and help farmers who are also in Tir Gofal manage their agreements better through improved waste management.

Integration of advisory services

OCW is working to modify the advisory services so that they link better with one another, for instance by drawing on the combined resources of OCIS, FBDP, specialist technical advice and EORs to develop a single organic conversion plan with technical, financial and environmental aspects.

Grassland Technology Transfer Programme

The organic extension work by IGER has continued over the last year with increasing collaboration with Organic Centre Wales and Farming Connect partners and participation by farmers. Trawscoed and Tŷ Gwyn have featured in organic open days at IGER.

Meetings with discussion groups have included a 'bring your own theme' with silage analysis and interpretation, forage and meat quality (including meat tasting) and grassland management for parasite control with faecal egg counting.

Open days on organic demonstration farms have included grass, forage and cereals, topics key to technical and financial farming success and where there is IGER research and development effort. The Farming Connect funded organic herbage seed project has completed its first year with a successful field scale harvest at one of the participating farm sites. The group involved are continuing to explore many of the practical challenges to growing herbage seed in Wales including weed control, fertility building and integration into an organic farming system.



Knowledge Transfer

Farming Connect Organic Demonstration Farm

Network: Changes have occurred in the Network during these last 12 months. Following a number of successful events, Gareth Williams of Porthamel, Ynys Mon and Maesterran, Penegoes run by the Jones family, decided not to continue as Demonstration Farms. However, five new farms have recently joined the Network and together with the original farms, Cannon and Groes Bach, there are now a total of seven organic demonstration farms in Wales. The new farms are:

Slade Farm, Vale of Glamorgan was converted in 1999 by Peter Davies. This beef and sheep farm extends to 810 acres with 240 acres of spring arable crops in conjunction with Tir Gofal.

Big House Farm, Carmarthenshire is farmed by Alex Holland and family. Running a low cost, spring calving, grass-based dairy unit, they began their conversion in March 1998, now with 240 Holstein crosses and 100 followers.



Event on Cannon Farm

Great House Farm, Usk is where Gerry and Linda Tuffs started free range egg production in 1985 and converted to organic systems in 2000. In 1999 they established Farmhouse Freedom Eggs, an organic enterprise which grades and packs free range and organic eggs for a range of marketing outlets.

Penpont Estates, Brecon is a specialist horticultural unit managed by Gavin Hogg, with Mike Westrip as head gardener. In 2003 the unit developed rapidly and now produces a wide range of high value crops, both protected and field crops.

Aberhyddnant, Crai farmed by Paul and Liz Matthews who are the most recent recruits to the network. This upland beef and sheep unit which is also in Tir Gofal carries 36 suckler cows and 230 sheep on 91 ha and the farm attained organic status in June 2001.

Other producer activities and events

Development farms: Three farms, ADAS Pwllpeiran, IGER Trawscoed and the Welsh College of Horticulture, continue as part of the network of Farming Connect Development Farms. Open events on these farms ensure that their organic research work is disseminated to producers throughout Wales.



Discussion groups supported by Farming Connect are flourishing around the country, bringing together small groups of producers to discuss technical issues in a social environment. Judging by the number of people that attend and the variety of topics, these groups are proving popular.

October Conference: A one-day Conference for producers concentrating on production issues and the CAP will be held on 14th October 2004 at Llanelwedd. Following on from a very well attended, successful event in 2003, this year's event will be a

valuable opportunity to gain technical information, renew acquaintances, make contact with other producers and enjoy organic produce throughout the day.

Animal health and welfare assessment: in conjunction with two vets from University of Bristol, this project aims to incorporate existing animal based welfare assessment techniques into organic farming and certification. An assessment was carried on three of the OCW demonstration farms and followed up by a well attended meeting in Aberystwyth.

Training courses: OCW can provide these through existing discussion and marketing groups. Provided the producer has had a Farming Connect Skill Check, they can access 50% of the costs charged for the courses via Lantra.



Schools and Public Education

The renewed contract with the Welsh Assembly Government gives Organic Centre Wales a new remit to cover the whole of the organic food supply chain, including consumers.

Schools are a vital first step and in collaboration with its partners IGER and the Soil Association, Organic Centre Wales began working with schools in 2003. In the autumn, a pilot project involving OCW and others enabled some Ceredigion primary schools to visit an organic farm and have an organic school dinner using local produce, coinciding with Organic Week and British Food Fortnight.⁷

In 2004, with funding from the Millennium Stadium Charitable Trust, OCW and the Soil Association have worked together on a project to enable schools to visit organic farms in Wales. This has included training for farmers in leading school visits, support in developing educational programmes and risk assessments, and subsidies towards the costs of the visits, including help with transport costs for some schools.

Useful links have been made with organizations such as Farming and Countryside Education, Careers Wales, the Healthy Schools Scheme, Communities First, Eco-Schools and the Countryside Council for Wales to deliver a programme which will see some 50 schools benefiting from farm visits, and leave the farms themselves in a better position to convey the message of healthy food and farming to the public.

Shows and events

This year, the **Royal Welsh Show** Programme included an Organic Trail leaflet enabling visitors to the Show to find organic information and produce. Together with the organic stands in the Organic Food and Farming Centre situated in the Countryside Care Area and the provision of refreshments and hospitality, there was a real organic presence on the Showground. OCW will also be co-ordinating an organic presence at the Winter Fair and be sharing a stand at Ynys Môn and the United Counties Agricultural Shows.

The newspaper produced by OCW in 2003, *Cymru Organig - Organic Food and Farming in Wales*, has proved a useful consumer tool at these events and in addition, a new leaflet '*Organic food – what's it all about?*' has recently been produced which sets out the facts about organic food and farming and its importance to Wales.⁸



⁷ A case study is available at www.organic.aber.ac.uk/schools/bffceredigion_eng.pdf

⁸ This leaflet is available from OCW or www.organic.aber.ac.uk/organics

Research and Development

Organic Centre Wales is evaluating the UK organic research and development programme against priorities previously identified for Welsh organic agriculture. The work identifies areas needing more research, research topics that are ready to move into the application or development stage, and also assesses the effectiveness of the dissemination of practical results. This work is following on from the reviews carried out for Welsh Assembly Government and the now disbanded United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards Board.



Staff in the Institute of Rural Sciences, ADAS Wales, IGER and EFRC are continuing their long and distinguished record of organic research and the Centre enjoys a close relationship with them.

The 2004 Colloquium of Organic Researchers (COR) biennial conference was held in April at Harper Adams University College in association with the British Grassland Society and the Association of Applied Biologists. The overall theme was Organic Farming: Science and Practice for Profitable Livestock and Cropping and Nic Lampkin together with a number of researchers from OCW partners presented posters and papers. Details of how to obtain a copy of the proceedings can be found on the research pages of the website.

OCW is involved in the dissemination of research work through knowledge transfer projects, funded via the Farming Connect programme, some of which are detailed below.

In the horticulture sector work is continuing on the evaluation of vegetable varieties that are available as organic seed. This is important work given the increasing pressure for growers to use exclusively organic seed. It is hoped that next year this work can link into a wider project that will be led by the National Institute of Agricultural Botany and the Soil Association. The Centre is also supporting a project at the Welsh College of Horticulture to explore the effects of UV blocking plastic films on pest behaviour.



ADAS woodchip trials

A project that links a number of important topic areas has been the evaluation of woodchip for livestock bedding and its subsequent composting carried out by ADAS at Pwllpeiran. This has now moved to a second phase where the resulting compost is being evaluated for the production of mushrooms. The go-ahead was recently given for an ADAS project to look at aspects of potato blight including Sarpò variety evaluation, an examination of the potential for compost teas in blight control, and the subsequent dissemination of the findings.

Another recently approved project will look at the control of endoparasites on organic farms. It has the twin objectives of reviewing current drenching practice and the evaluation of

grazing systems using faecal egg counting (FEC). Various dissemination activities such as workshops have been carried out over the last 12 months to communicate the outcomes of projects that were completed under Phase 1 of Farming Connect. These include topics such as the livestock breeds and organic farming review, crop pest and disease control, the survey of ectoparasites and foot-rot control methods and several others.

For more details of research carried out by IRS, OCW partners and a wide range of other organisations go to www.organic.aber.ac.uk/research.

Open day at Sarpò trials at Henfaes



Reports, Factsheets and Online Information

OCW continues to produce a range of printed and electronic information resources, details of all of which are available on the website at www.organic.aber.ac.uk.

An online survey of website users in the second half of 2003 found that farmers made up the largest group of users, the remainder identifying themselves as consumers, academic staff, students, government or NGO employees, advisers and consultants. Reports and factsheets were most in demand, but the farmer pages, events list, policy section and classified adverts page were also mentioned frequently.

Since OCW's remit was broadened in 2003, new pages on market development and consumer information have been added. These include market intelligence reports and factsheets, information on supplying the public sector, organic tourism and links to retail directories.



Photos: Jeremy Moore

Comprehensive statistical data on the Welsh organic sector is also posted on the website, in response to the large number of requests regularly received for organic facts and figures.



Two electronic bulletins, both produced monthly, are sent to over 500 individuals and organizations in Wales and beyond, and read by many more. Organic Wales⁹ contains general organic news and research, while Organic Market Wales¹⁰ focuses on market intelligence.

OCW regularly contributes articles on organic food and farming to Gwlad, the Welsh Assembly Government's magazine for farmers, and the Cambrian News, the local paper for Ceredigion and north Powys.

⁹ See www.organic.aber.ac.uk/bulletin

¹⁰ See www.organic.aber.ac.uk/markets/mibulletin/

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*published since July 2003

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- Organic Milk Production. 1. Farm production and performance. IGER
- Organic Milk Production 2. Health of the dairy herd. IGER
- Roundworm Control in Organic Sheep Systems. Soil Association
- Managing Manure on Organic Farms. ADAS and Elm Farm Research Centre

Bilingual leaflets and factsheets¹²

- OCW activities leaflet series (3)
- Objective 5b demonstration farm leaflet series (11)
- Thinking of going organic?* New edition 2004
- Organic food: what's it all about? Consumer leaflet 2004
- FS1 Organic conversion information/advice and Farming Connect
- FS2 Additional information on the relationship between the Organic Farming Scheme and Tir Gofal
- FS3 Training opportunities in organic agriculture and horticulture
- FS4 Organic approved abattoirs, meat processors and livestock outlets (withdrawn)
- FS5 List of OCW accredited consultants
- FS6 Seeds, feeds, fertilizers
- FS7 Organic farming in Wales
- FS8 Machinery rings
- FS9 Introduction to organic certification for farmers and growers
- FS10 Organic maintenance (stewardship) payments
- FS11 Benchmarking with Organic Centre Wales
- FS12 Marketing organic red meat: direct sales
- FS13 Organic milk production: financial performance

Published 2003/04

- FS14 Lowland organic beef and sheep production: financial performance
- FS15 Upland organic beef and sheep production: financial performance
- FS16 CAP reform and organic farming I
- FS17 CAP reform and organic farming II
- FS18 Building markets for organic red meat in Wales
- FS19 Building markets for Welsh organic horticulture

¹¹ See www.organic.aber.ac.uk/publications

¹² See www.organic.aber.ac.uk/library/factsheets

Organic Strategy and Subgroup Membership 2003/04

| Organic Strategy Group | Policy Subgroup |
|--|--|
| <p>Gareth Rowlands, farmer, Chair Andrew Jedwell, consultant, Chair OCW Steering Group, Chair of ACOS Bob Kennard, Graig Farm, Chair marketing subgroup David Frost, ADAS Wales, Chair horticulture subgroup Nic Lampkin Director Organic Centre Wales, Chair policy subgroup Hilary Miller, Countryside Council for Wales Rhian Nowell-Phillips, FUW Dylan Morgan, NFU Cymru Mike Dunn/Alan Starkey/Chris Lea, Welsh Assembly Government Peter Segger, Organic Farm Foods Phil Stocker, Soil Association Louise Owen, Young Farmers Club John Davies, Food Centre Wales Lyn Powell, ex ADAS Pwllpeiran Nichola Salter, Environment Agency Representative from Organic Farmers & Growers Carwyn James, dairy farmer Kevin Thomas/Arwyn Davies/Huw Thomas Delyth Davies, Welsh Development Agency</p> | <p>Nic Lampkin, Director OCW, Chair Andrew Jedwell, consultant, Chair OCW Steering Group Dylan Morgan, NFU Cymru Gundula Azeez/Phil Stocker, Soil Association Hilary Miller, Countryside Council for Wales Kevin Morgan/Selyf Morgan, University of Wales, Cardiff Peter Midmore, University of Wales, Aberystwyth Rhian Nowell-Phillips, FUW Sue Fowler, Policy & Development Officer OCW (Acting Chair February-August 04) Huw Thomas, Welsh Development Agency</p> |
| Marketing Subgroup | Horticulture Subgroup |
| <p>Bob Kennard, Graig Farm, Chair Martin Cottingham, Soil Association Andrew Jedwell, Consultant, Chair OCW Steering Group David Stacey, Rachel's Dairy Suzanne Rees, Organic Farm Foods Nigel Elgar, Graig Farm Producers Group Sue Jones, Llanboidy Cheese Arwyn Davies/Kevin Thomas/Huw Thomas Welsh Development Agency Neil Pearson, OCW</p> | <p>David Frost, ADAS, Chair Alan Starkey, Welsh Assembly Government Anne Evans, Grower Gareth Davies, HDRA Kevin Thomas, WDA Liz Findlay, Grower Paul Robertshaw/Mark Simkin, Welsh College of Horticulture Rob Haward, Soil Association Roger Hitchings, Elm Farm Research Centre Tony Little, Advisory Services Co-ordinator, OCW</p> |