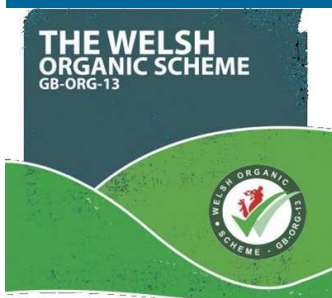


Spring 2014

WELSH ORGANIC SCHEME



Newsletter

Organic Farming Support – RDP Plan 2014-2020

Alun Davies AM, has acknowledged the challenges faced by organic farmers in recent years and recognises the important role that organic farming has in the future of the Welsh agricultural sector. The delay in implementing the new RDP (which was originally due to start on 1 January this year) has meant it has been an uncertain period for organic farmers, but the extension of OFS agreements has to the end of December 2014 in order to bridge the gap period between schemes has helped.

Following a consultation process, which finished in January, the minister announced that an application window for the new scheme, 'Glastir Organic', will open in the Autumn with new agreements starting on 1 January 2015. While we do not have exact details of what the scheme may entail, the Welsh Government has stated that it remains committed to the principles of organic farming and that is reflected in the statement made by the Minister:

- Re-imburement rates are being reviewed in light of the changing costs
- The ongoing maintenance of being organic will be more fully recognised
- Organic farmers will have equal access to capital support for modernisation of their infrastructure
- Requirement and re-imburement for ongoing training and development of skills

Over 60% of organic farmers have applied to or are currently participating in, the existing Glastir scheme. The minister believes that these farmers 'should be able to join the new stand-alone Glastir Organic Scheme' without implications (e.g. double funding issues) for the existing agreements.

The proposed payment rates for the new organic scheme are due to be published in Gwlad at the end of May.

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We will inform our Welsh Organic Scheme members of any further developments regarding the Welsh Government Organic Farming Scheme by post and also via our website: www.welshorganic.co.uk

For information relating to Welsh Government schemes or payments please contact: www.wales.gov.uk or Rural Payment Wales Customer Contact Centre: 0300 062 5004

Dear Members

Spring is here at last! We hope you are looking forward to a Summer full of shows and events after the stormy weather over the Winter months. We were hit hard here in Aberystwyth- the sea-front took quite a battering but we are hopeful the repairs will be completed soon.

Although the organic sector has been uncertain over the past 18 months, we are confident that Alun Davies will deliver on his intentions to promote and support the organic farming sector in Wales. We are hopeful that plans for a new scheme in the Autumn will benefit existing members and will allow farmers to plan for the future of their businesses.

We at QWFC Welsh Organic Scheme have seen changes to our staffing recently. Marilyn James, who you will have known as QWFC Organic Development Manager has stepped down from her role. We are grateful for Marilyn's contribution during her time with us. We will be continuing with the Scheme and any future Organic queries will be taken by myself, QWFC Organic scheme certification officer, and Lorna Leadbetter-Jones whom many of you will be familiar with and had contact with over the years. Please do not hesitate to contact myself or Lorna if you have any queries regarding the scheme.

The Royal Welsh Show will soon be upon us and the Welsh Organic Scheme will have a stand there again this year- please pop in to say hello! We will also be at the RABDF Open Day hosted by Phil Jones and Family on 29th July. We look forward to seeing you.

Regards

Carys Jones, Organic Scheme Certification Officer

FREE Online Farm Records Website

Welsh Organic Scheme members can access a free internet-based records service, building on the health plan application already available. The website has been developed for WLBP by Shearwell Data Ltd and is a tried, tested and secure system.

Users will be able to keep stock movement records and medicine records on-line where they can access a sheep register to record information on the birth, movement, death and tagging of sheep while a complementary herd register can record the same information for cattle: additionally, the cattle section is able to import and export data from and to BCMS. The website will also have a Medicine Records section to record the purchase and use of medicines. Both medicine and movement records can be updated via a mobile phone app for Android smartphones and tablets. This can be downloaded from the Google Play app store by searching for Shearwell Stock Move Express.

The growth in the use of Information Technology, from computers to mobile phones, has been explosive in recent years. Many would argue that it is still an under-exploited resource by the agricultural community. We hope that by offering these tools to members it can begin to redress the balance and encourage more farmers who have yet to take the step to start to use IT systems thereby contributing towards the development of the Welsh farming industry in future.

For more information, please visit: www.wlbp.co.uk & follow the links

Proposals for New Organic Regulations

The European Commission has recently published proposals for new regulations on organic production and the labelling of organic products.

The proposals have three main objectives:

- **Maintain consumer confidence**
- **Maintain producer confidence**
- **Making it easier for farmers to switch to organic production.**

The aim is that organic farming remains close to its principles and objectives, so that the public demands in terms of environment and quality are met. The EU Commission have also approved an action plan on the future of organic production in Europe to help organic farmers, producers and retailers adjust to the proposed policy changes. Copies of the action plan and the proposals are available on the organic website: www.welshorganic.co.uk

The proposals are now the subject of wide-ranging consultation throughout member states. QWFC will be participating in that process and we would welcome your input and feedback, especially in respect of one suggestion that organic holdings must be 100% organic rather than a combination of organic and non-organic units as is possible under current regulation.

Given the complicated movement of change within the EU, the new regulations may not be in place for a further three years. If you would like to be kept informed of progress, then please let us know, however we will send out details via email, website and post.



Farmers Weekly Beef Farmer of the Year-Open Day 29 July

The Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers is pleased to be organising an Open Day for the winner of the Farmers Weekly Beef Farmer of the Year, Phil Jones and family, at his farm in Carmarthenshire.

Phil has been an organic farmer for more than 10 years and is an advocate of good grassland management and the benefits to be had through the use of technology in herd management.

Discussions and events throughout the day will include:

Efficient Family Farming is the Key to our Success

- Efficient Cattle Breeding - Ian Pritchard, SRUC
- Efficient Health Planning - Helen Scott, CVC
- Efficient Feeding for Efficient Cows - Dr Delena Davies
- Efficient Grassland Management for Nutrition - Heather McCalman, IBERS

For further information and to register, please visit

www.rabdf.co.uk

Organic Producer Web-Checker

Proposals are in hand to create a database of organic producers and processors that will enable consumers to check and verify organic status.



Access will be via a website that will provide even further assurance regarding the integrity of UK organic production. It's hoped that the website will be available by 2015.

Non-Conformance Analysis

We recently investigated which common non-conformances are being raised at Organic inspections. We were pleased to find that the average number of non-conformances is 1.29 which shows that the majority of our members are compliant.

Here are the top 5 non-conformances and action details:

Standard Reference	Description
1.01	Land schedule inaccuracies
1.46	No derogation for 70% forage mix
2.01	No Organic certificate present for grazier
2.08	Breeding and production stock not sourced from registered organic holding
2.44	Medicine treatment records not up to date

If you need any further information concerning non-conformances please contact QWFC. Derogation forms can be printed from our website www.welshorganicscheme.co.uk (Members- Derogations) or by contacting the office.

Heartening Return to Growth

A recent report has revealed that sales of organic products in the UK rose by 2.8% in 2008 in 2013, a return to growth after a very difficult period when the economic recession affected consumer purchasing habits.

The Soil Association's survey suggests that the UK organic market is now worth £1.79 billion in sales and the rate of growth was above the rate of inflation. The dairy sector saw strong growth of 4.4%, organic vegetables sales grew 3.4% while sales of meat, poultry and fish grew 2.2%.

Sales by independent retailers grew by an impressive 6.9% to £10 million per week while Ocado (+10.4%) and Waitrose (6.9%) recorded the strongest growth in the multiple retailer sector.



Jon Morgan from Livestock Marketing:

At the farming end of the supply chain the 2014 marketing year is starting with exceptionally good growing conditions. With generally good grassland management and a lower reliance on bought-in feed the organic sector stands to have a year of lower production costs and in the lamb sector output should be high.

Movement out of organic production by some farms could well reduce any historic surplus of supply and help stabilise the marketplace. As well as watching developments in support payments this is the year to understand what your market wants. The long-term future of organic production is going to be a combination of support and market returns. Market returns can be managed by supplying what is required at the right time, at the right cost.

USEFUL CONTACTS:

Rural Payments Wales: 0300 0625004

Organic Centre Wales: 01970 622248 organic@aber.ac.uk

Farming Connect: 07970 636565

farmingconnect@menterabusnes.co.uk

The Organic Research Centre: 01488 658298

elmfarm@organicresearchcentre.com

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

17 & 18 May 2014

RWAS Spring Festival

More info: www.rwas.co.uk

Various Dates & Locations

Glastir Entry drop-in Surgeries

4 June	Lampeter
10 June	Monmouthshire
18 June	Trefriw
26 June	Goodwick
30 June	Welshpool
4 July	Penrhyndeudraeth

Tel: 01970 636565

E-mail:

farmingconnect@menterabusnes.co.uk

29 July

Farmers Weekly Beef Open Day 10:30 - 16:00

Lan Farm, Cynwyl Elfed SA33 6SP

More info:

www.Rabdf.co.uk-forthcomingevents

www.eventbrite.co.uk