

Your update of Organics news and issues from the NFU Food Chain team. Please remember to quote the NFU as the source of information if any of the content of this newsletter is forwarded on.

News in Summary

New organic proposals

The European Commission released a new proposal for organic production on the 24th March 2014. The proposal put forward is principle driven with considerable changes from the existing regulation in force. [Read more here...](#)

New European action plan for organic food and farming

In the wake of the new organic proposals, the European Commission released its new plan of action for organic food and farming from 2014-2020, stating 18 key action points. [Read more here...](#)

Organic feed & pullets – what's current the situation?

The exceptional rules regarding organic feed and use of non-organic pullets is due to expire on the 31st December 2014. However the NFU along with other industry stakeholders have been working hard on getting a solution for its members. [Read more here...](#)

Latest UK organic stats released by Defra

Statistical data release from Defra shows that land areas, livestock and producer numbers have fallen in the main, with the only commodity sector showing an increase being poultry by 1.2%. [Read more here...](#)

Beef and Lamb Price Monitor

The most recent figures supplied courtesy of Meadow quality show a poor organic beef price but an improving lamb price. [Read more here...](#)

NFU Organic Group welcomes new Chair

The first NFU Organic Group meeting for 2014 took place at Stoneleigh HQ on the 20th March with the group welcoming the arrival of its new Chair. [Read more here...](#)

National Organic Cereals event 2014

The event continues for its 7th consecutive year and is a key date for organic arable farmers across the UK. A host of top line speakers have been arranged to cover a range of different issues. [Find out more here...](#)

NFU & OF&G affinity deal reminder

The NFU has an affinity deal in place which enables members to get discounted membership with certification body Organic Farmers & Growers. [Read more here...](#)

Market report – UK organic sector shows growth

The Soil Association has recently published its market report on the organic market in the UK. The report has shown growth to the year-end February 2014. [Find out more here...](#)

Soil Association farm walks

The Soil Association farm walks for 2014 are well under way, taking part throughout the UK. Read on to find out when the next one is near you. [Find out more here...](#)

Tim Downes NFU organic member completes Celtic Challenge

Tim Downes who farms organically in Shropshire has successfully completed the world's longest true rowing race, travelling 90 nautical miles from Arklow in Ireland, to Aberystwyth in Wales. [Find out more here...](#)

Agriculture on the Cayman Islands

NFU organic farmer Erica Bargman has recently been out to the Cayman Islands to see how they farm, meet the Ministry of agriculture and much more. [Read more here...](#)

New organic proposals

On the 24th March 2014 the European Commission put forward a new proposal on organic production. The proposal looks to make the organic production standards stricter by adopting a principled driven approach. The Commission believes that by adopting this approach it shall deliver some key objectives including, better consumer confidence, better producer confidence and the removal of obstacles in farmers switching to organic farming in the EU

Whilst the above, in principle, sounds admirable and indeed good for the organic sector, the initial industry response has been one of serious concern. Below is a summary of just some key areas of the proposals that has caused the initial apprehension:

- Ending of all derogations and exceptional rules which apply under the existing regulation presently. This means that all producers will be required to use 100% organic inputs and agricultural ingredients including seed, livestock (Includes chicks), animal feed and ingredients for food processing and so on.
- End of mixed farm holdings whereby farming has both organic and conventional production. Products grown organically on these holdings will no longer be certified and marketed as organic unless the holdings are 100% organic.
- Animal feed to be sourced from on farm or local region – 90% for cattle and sheep and 60% for pigs and poultry, (this is currently at 60% and 20% respectively).
- Decertification for products exceeding a certain residue level threshold.
- Ban on dehorning

Looking in more detail at the proposal to stop the allowance of mixed farms, it is clear that this would cause an issue for UK organic production. It is estimated that approximately 25% of UK organic farms operate as mixed holdings, based on discussions with UK certification bodies. Taking this as a guide figure and basing it upon the most up to date [Defra statistics](#), it would indicate the organic land mass, made up from mixed holding farms in the UK could be around 150,000 hectares. This assumption takes a very linear approach and ignores the obvious variable of differing holding sizes. Nonetheless, the figure of 25% is substantial.

The allowance of farms to convert to organic production over a period of time has been an essential part of the development of UK organic farming and to not allow this practice to continue would act as a deterrent to both new and existing organic farmers. The logic behind this notion from the Commission is extremely questionable when it is still possible for organic holdings to operate directly adjacent to a farm which is operating conventionally. In this scenario, the risks of contamination will remain the same, if not higher, but the produce will be allowed to be classified as organic.

With regards the ban on dehorning, we are actively trying to seek clarification on whether this covers the procedure of debudding via the use of anaesthetic and hot irons or the use of caustic paste. It's well understood that cattle with horns pose both animal welfare and health and safety implications. An alternative to debudding can be to use a caustic paste, but this is not fool proof as cattle can still develop stumps. An example can be seen [here](#). The paste is applied directly to the horn bud and slowly dissolves it. Another disadvantage to this method is that it can only be applied when cow and calf are separated otherwise the calf will rub the paste onto its mother during feeding. This is not a feasible option for a beef suckler herd.

These proposals have now entered into discussions with the European Commission, European Council and European Parliament. We know that many member states, including the UK have already raised serious concerns with the proposal in its current form. This has been reinforced representations from farming organisation [COPA](#) and [IFOAM](#), of which the former, the NFU is a member. The NFU will continue to take representation from its Organic Group, on how best to proceed and protect the UK organic market.

One thing to bear in mind is that the proposal is not due to be implemented until July 2017 at the earliest. Between now and 2017 there is considerable discussion to be held with all stakeholders across the EU to try and iron out areas whereby the regulation is not beneficial for the organic sector and they have got wrong. It is normal procedure for regulations to undergo change through the use of derogations or exceptional rules when the consultation process starts.

Further reading / useful links

- You can read the NFU briefing document on the proposal [here](#).
- You can find the new regulation proposal on organic production [here](#).
- You can find the new annexes to the regulation proposals [here](#). This goes into more specific detail on production rules such as stocking density for poultry, conversion periods etc.
- You can find the citizen summary of the new proposal [here](#). This document provides a very brief summary of the Commission's aim of the proposal, what they hope it will achieve.
- You can find more information on the consultation process that took place prior to the proposals [here](#).

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European action plan for organic food and farming

In the wake of the new organic proposals, the European Commission has released its new [action plan](#) for organic food and farming from 2014 to 2020, stating 18 key action points it wants to achieve. The plan is effective immediately and looks to focus more on supportive measures to help the sector.

- You can read a brief summary of the 18 key action plan points by clicking [here](#).
- You can read the complete European action plan for organics by clicking [here](#).

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Organic feed and pullets

What are the issues?

Exceptional rules have been in place for some years now allowing the use of 5% non-organic feed for monogastric animals such as pigs and poultry and also the use of non-organic pullets for the egg sector. However, these exceptional rules are due to cease on the 31st of December 2014.

Currently, 100% organic feed for monogastrics is unachievable due to insufficient organic raw materials containing the required levels of amino acids, in order to achieve a welfare acceptable diet. The 5% non-organic exception enables industry to rectify this shortfall in amino acids. An alternative option for the sector

could be the use synthetic amino acids (SAA's), which would enable organic animals to be reared on a diet using around 99.9% organic raw materials. The use of SAA's would also provide other benefits such as reduced nitrogen excretion, lower volume of imported proteins and less reliance on fishmeal which is a threatened natural resource. Whilst many people are supportive of the notion to use SAA's and its obvious benefits, not everyone is in favour of its use. Worth bearing in mind is that the US have been using SAA's for some time, enabling them to reach 100% organic diets bar a minuscule fraction.

With regards to laying birds, there is an allowance for pullets which are not more than 18 weeks old, to come from conventional reared systems but adhering to organic feed and animal health standards, to be brought into an organic livestock unit. This is on the strict proviso that organically reared pullets are not available at the time and that birds undergo a 6 week conversion period before the eggs can be classified as organic. There are strict rules in place to govern this by the certification bodies. Industry has long awaited a harmonised set of organic production rules for rearing organic pullets but is yet to receive any proposals from the European Commission on how this can be realistically be achieved. In the absence of any specific production rules, industry does not know what will be expected of it post 2014.

Latest situation & NFU action

These exceptional rules are due to end on the 31st of December 2014. However, we remain hopeful that there is light at the end of the tunnel and common sense will prevail on these issues.

The NFU along with the majority of key industry stakeholders such as OF&G and the British Egg Industry Council have come together over recent months to find a common opinion on the issue of feed. We agree that the 5% exception should be continued until such time adequate organic raw materials are available so that pigs and poultry get the required amount of amino acids in their diet ensuring animal welfare is not impinged. This position has been reinforced by a letter to Defra from NFU Deputy President, Minette Batters, co-signed by numerous organic stakeholders. We have spoken at length with Defra about the threats to the poultry sector if these exceptional rules are not continued post December 2014.

More recently the NFU organised a visit to lobby the Organic unit at the European Commission. You can read more on this visit by clicking [here](#). Our understanding from the Commission meeting and discussions with Defra, that a proposal on both feed and pullets will be put forward in July when all member state representatives meet at the Standing Committee of Organic Farming Meeting (SCOF).

Research

Defra has commissioned a project into the availability and quality of organic raw materials. The project is being led by [ADAS](#) and will include industry input from pig and poultry feed specialists such as [Premier Nutrition](#) and [St. David's Veterinary Practice](#). The research shall be based on a review of published literature and recent nutritional developments.

The research will establish proposals for suitable fully-organic UK produced feedstuffs where possible and evaluate the likely impacts of these for businesses, market prices, animal health and welfare. The environmental impacts of dietary changes will also be assessed. This will be done with reference to nitrogen levels in livestock excreta as well as the growth of crops that will subsequently be used in feedstuffs. The requirements and limitations for growing suitable organic crops for pigs and poultry in the UK will be considered in terms of climate, soil type, crop rotation and profitability.

The project is scheduled to complete in Autumn 2014.

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Latest UK organic stats released by Defra

The latest statistical data release from Defra shows that land areas, livestock and producer numbers have fallen in the main, with the only commodity sector showing an increase being poultry by 1.2%. A summary of the data release is provided below.

Land areas: The total area of in conversion and organic land in the UK continued to decrease. Areas fell by 24% and 3.9% respectively to 24 thousand hectares of in conversion land and 551 thousand hectares of organic land during 2013.

Livestock numbers: The decline in the UK's populations of organic cattle, sheep and pigs decreased in 2013, while the number of organic poultry increased by 1.2%. Organic sheep and pig numbers both fell by 13% to 1million and to 30 thousand head respectively. The number of organic cattle fell by 2.4% to 283 thousand.

Producer and processor numbers: The number of organic producers and processors has fallen for the fifth year in a row (by 6.4%) to around 6 100 at the end of 2013. Nearly all of the UK's regions have shown decreases with Wales and Scotland showing the largest percentage declines of 16% and 9.8% respectively. The only part of the UK to see an increase was the South East, including London, where the number of organic operators rose by 0.7%

You can read the full statistic release from Defra [here](#)

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Beef and lamb price monitor

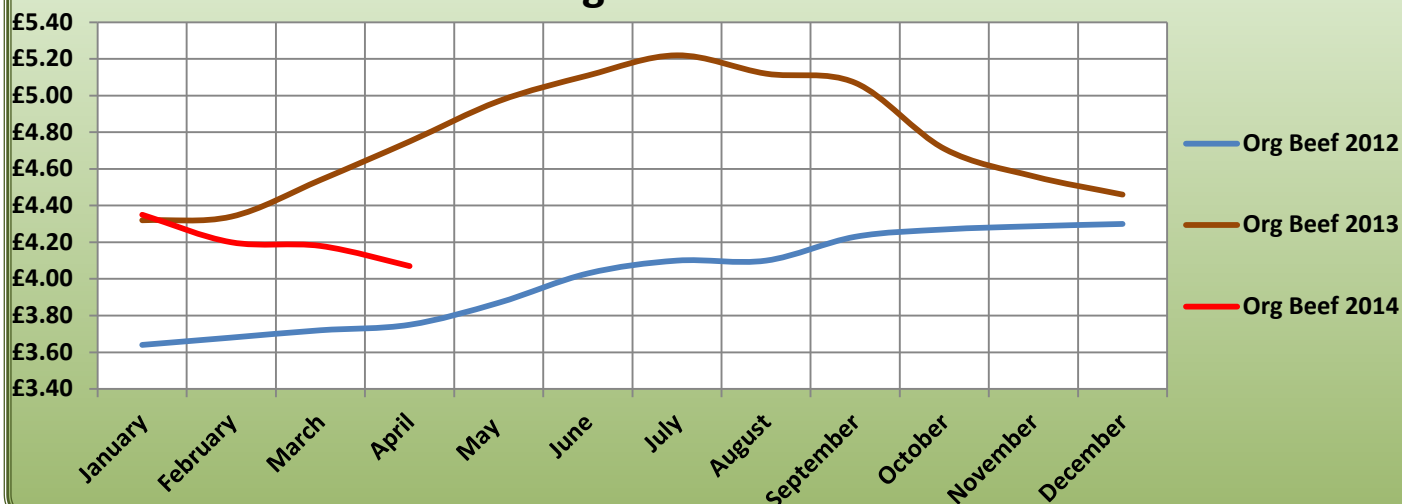
The below figures are supplied courtesy of [Meadow quality](#) and represent the average deadweight prices paid for beef and lamb sold through their medium.

The organic beef price based on these figures has continued on a downward trend since September 2013, at a price of £5.10 per kilogram, to around £4.05 per kg mark in April. Conversely the lamb price has picked up from around the £4.20 mark in January up to a price of around £4.90 in April. There have been reports of some processors paying around £5.10 per kilogram depending on weight and specification throughout May.

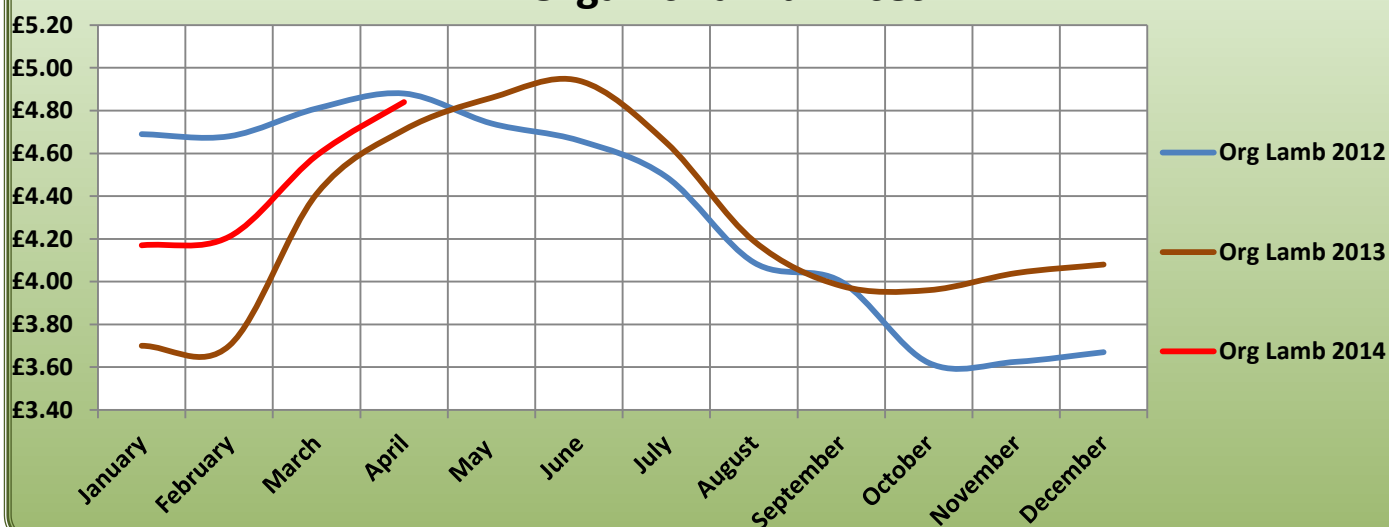
For more information on conventional market prices read the [NFU's Beef and Sheep news](#).

Read [here](#) to see more on what the NFU has been saying regarding the decline in beef prices.

Organic Beef Prices



Organic Lamb Prices



New Chairman of the NFU Organics Group

The NFU Organics group met on the 20th March for the first of three meetings for 2014. The group welcomed [Minette Batters, NFU Deputy President](#), who has assumed the role of Chairman from previous Vice President Adam Quinney. The group expressed their gratitude to Adam for all his hard work and commitment to the group over the previous two years.

The NFU Organics Group is a formal working party to the NFU Food Chain Unit, whereby matters of organic importance can be discussed across all commodity sectors. The group is able to provide valuable support and guidance to the various NFU Boards and Advisers at NFU HQ as and where appropriate. The group is chaired by the NFU Deputy President, Minette Batters and has 18 appointed members who represent all regions and sectors. The group has additional representation from the Soil Association, Organic Farmers and Growers, and the Organic Research Centre. The group meets 3 times per year.

See the table below of who makes up our Organics Group

Name	Region/Organisation	Role of OG	Interest Areas
John Pawsey	East Anglia	OG NFU member	Arable, Conservation and Community work
Nick Adams	East Midlands	OG NFU member	Beef and Arable
James Brown	East Midlands	OG NFU member	Cereals and Horticulture
John Alpe	North West	OG NFU member	Sheep, Dairy and Community work
Tom Rigby	North West	OG NFU member	Dairy
Chris Hewitt	North West	OG NFU member	Horticulture - Potatoes, brassicas and soft fruit
Martin Humphrey	South East	OG NFU member	Poultry, specifically poultry feed
Tom Turner	South East	OG NFU member	Beef and Arable
Simon Bernard Pain	South West	OG NFU member	Arable and Diversification
Joseph Wookey	South West	OG NFU member	Arable and Diversification
Roger Cozens	South West	OG NFU member	Global Organic Agriculture
Tom Tolputt	South West	OG NFU member	Arable, Beef and nutrition
Richard Tomlinson	Wales	OG NFU member	Ex dairy, beef and arable
Haydn Evans	Wales	OG NFU member	Dairy
Tim Downes	West Midlands	OG NFU member	Dairy, beef and arable
James Chatham	West Midlands	OG NFU member	Dairy
Graham Tweddle	North East	OG NFU member	Dairy
Minette Batters	NFU Officeholder	Chairman	
Tom Lander	NFU Food Chain Adviser	Secretariat	
Liz Bowles	Soil Association		
Nic Lampkin	ORC		
Steven Jacobs	OF&G		
Jeremy Burdett	South East (deputy)	OG NFU member	Dairy, beef and arable
Erica Bargman	South East (deputy)	OG NFU member	Beef and Arable

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National Organics Cereals Event 2014

The [National Organic Cereals event](#) returns for its seventh successive year on the 1st July 2014, hosted by the Turner Family at Rectory Farm near Milton Keynes. The event is a key date for organic arable farmers across the UK and is the largest on-farm event aimed directly at all members of the cereal supply chain, from seed companies to millers, feed merchants, retailers and more.

The event has secured a good line up of guest speakers including newly-elected NFU Deputy President, Minette Batters, Waitrose Agriculture Manager, Duncan Sinclair, and market data specialist, Ed Garner, providing topics of interest for everyone in attending.

The NFU Food Chain Team will be present at the show along with our Brussels organic representative, Rebecca Wells. Feel free to drop by our stand and have a chat. We look forward to seeing you there.

Click [here](#) to find out booking details.

NFU and OF&G affinity deal reminder

NFU organic farming members can save money on their certification scheme thanks to a continued [affinity deal](#) with organic control body Organic Farmers & Growers. Members not yet certified with OF&G who take up this offer can take advantage of a 20% discount on their first year annual certification cost.

The offer will remain valid until 16th August 2014. From the 16th August 2014 onwards, new and existing OF&G members who are also NFU members can benefit from 5% discounts on their subsequent annual certification costs during the term of the agreement.

This affinity deal provides a tangible benefit for many of our organic members and an incentive for our non-organic members who are considering entering the sector, offering a reduction in their costs should they wish to take this particular route to market.

Click [here](#) to find out how to take advantage of this offer.

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Market report – UK organic market shows growth

The Soil Association has released its [market report](#) for 2014 which shows a positive trend for the UK organic grocery sector. The sector has shown growth of 1.8% over the last year with a total worth of £1.25 billion.

Retailers such as Ocado, Waitrose increased sales of their organic products by 10.4%, 6.5% respectively. Sainsbury's also saw sales grow by 7% on their own label organic range.

The organic grocery market broken down by product shows that dairy is the key driver with 30.2% of the market share. Fruit and vegetables make up 23.7%, canned/package food 13.9 %, meat, fish and poultry make up 11% and baby food 10.4% of the market.

Multiple retailers are still leading the way selling 71.3% of all UK organic products, with box schemes and other independent retailers making up 10.8% and 14.5% respectively. Catering and farm shops contribute only 3.4%. According to a poll carried out by Yougov, consumers under the age of 34 are inclined to spend more for organic products.

Full details of the Soil Association market report can be found by clicking [here](#).

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Soil Association farm walks

The [Soil Associations farms walks for 2014](#) are well underway with a total of 25 farm walks being held at various locations throughout the UK. The aim of the walks is to provide an opportunity for producers, organic or non-organic, to meet up and discuss all matters farming and share knowledge. Attendance is free at the farm walk events albeit you must book prior to attending.

You can download the farm walk calendar [here](#) to see when a walk is taking place near you.

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Tim Downes NFU organic farmer takes on Celtic Challenge

On the 2nd May Tim Downes took on the almighty [Celtic Challenge](#), which involved rowing 90 nautical miles Arklow in Ireland to Aberystwyth on the Welsh coast. The challenge is known as the “world’s longest true rowing race” and is an extreme test of fitness and endurance.

Tim’s team the “Shropshire Red” came 5th out of 22 racing boats partaking in the event, completing the crossing in an impressive time of 18 hours and 55 minutes, beating their target time of 20 hours. Recovering from blistered hands, he is naturally elated to have completed the event and has raised over £900 for charity in the process.

Tim was fundraising for the farming charity [RABI](#) which is a fantastic organisation helping the farming community, in particular those who are retired and struggling to get by on low incomes. If you would like to make a sponsorship donation in respect of his fantastic effort, you can do so on his secure just-giving web page by clicking [here](#).

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Agriculture on the Cayman Islands

NFU organic member, Erica Bargman has recently visited the Cayman Islands to see friends and understand how agriculture is carried out on the islands.

Her visit involved meeting numerous farmers, understanding how they farmed on land which is predominantly swamp. She also met with the Agricultural Ministry to see how the government supported farmers. Some key facts that Erica picked up during her trip were

- There are no dairy farmers on Cayman .
- 90% of food consumption is from imports.
- 60% of Cayman is swamp land.

You can read Erica's full report of her trip by clicking [here](#).



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Suggestions & Feedback

If there are any particular areas, sectors or information you would like to see included in future publications then please email these to Tom.Lander@nfu.org.uk. We value your feedback.

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