

**Sent out on behalf of Organic Targets Campaign, C/o Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming**

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## **SUPERMARKETS FAILING TO BUY BRITISH ORGANIC PRODUCE**

The vast majority of organic food sold in UK supermarkets comes from overseas - even though UK-produced supplies are often readily available [1] a new survey reveals today. The findings come days before publication of a Government action plan aimed at boosting UK organic production (expected on Monday 29 July) [2]

The survey, conducted by the **Organic Targets Campaign** [3] (see table) reveals that:

- n The worst offender is **Tesco**, the UK's largest food-retailer, which sources a massive 80 per cent of its organic produce from overseas;
- n Best performers are **Waitrose** who currently source 85% of its organic produce from the UK. **Marks & Spencer** also do well with 60% coming from UK sources
- n Overall, 70% of organic food sold in the UK is currently imported [4].

The Organic Targets Campaign is calling on supermarkets to set targets to increase the amount of UK-sourced organic food, which would reduce organic imports to 30% by 2010. So far only **Sainsbury's** and **Waitrose** have committed to targets. Sainsbury's aim to reduce imports of organic food from 60% to 45% by 2004 [5] and Waitrose aim to source 100% organic produce from the UK when in season [6]. It is hoped that the Government's Organic Action Plan will also set a target for increasing the market share for UK organic produce.

**Catherine Fookes, Co-ordinator of the Organic Targets Campaign and member of the DEFRA Organic Action Plan group says:**

*"Supermarkets must do much more to ensure that their organic produce comes from the UK. They should commit themselves to ensuring that 70 per cent comes from UK sources by 2010. This would ensure that our environment, our economy and our hard-pressed farmers all benefited from the organic revolution."*

**Sandra Bell, Food Campaigner from Friends of the Earth said,**

*"We are hoping for a boost for organic farming from the Government when it announces its Organic Action Plan. But it seems that most of the big supermarkets are not prepared to play their part in helping British farmers. If supermarkets are going to keep buying imported organic food, farmers here will be very wary of converting no matter how many carrots are dangled in front of them by the Government"*.

#### Notes to editors:

1. Organic milk for example is currently in over-supply however Tesco sources own-label organic butter from Denmark and cheese from Germany
2. DEFRA's Organic Action Plan is due to be released on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> July. Catherine Fookes is a member of the Stakeholder Group that has advised DEFRA on the Organic Action Plan
3. The Organic Targets Campaign is calling for a target of 30% of land to be organic by 2010, and an action plan for organic farming. It is supported by a majority of backbench MPs and over 100 organisations. Elm Farm Research Centre, Friends of the Earth, Henry Doubleday Research Association, Pesticides Action Network-UK, Soil Association, Transport & General Workers Union (RAAW), UNISON and WWF-UK are the Steering Group and the Secretariat is Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming
4. Soil Association, Organic Food and Farming Report, Bristol 2001
5. Press release, 25 January 2002, Sainsbury's pledge further support for British organic farming
6. Alan Wilson, Waitrose Personal Communication, July 2002

#### League table on imports of major retailers

No	Supermarket	% organic imports	Notes
1	Waitrose	15% [1]	In primary agriculture organic target is to source 100% from the UK when in season
2	Marks and Spencer	40% [2]	Imports in some areas as low as 3% (dairy)
3	Sainsbury's	60% [3]	Target to reduce imports to 45% by 2004
4	Co-op	66% [4]	
	<i>Total UK organic imports</i>	<b>70% [5]</b>	
5	Safeway	75% [6]	All standard organic potatoes now from UK
6	Tesco	80% [7]	

#### Notes to table

1. Verbal communication, 25 July 2002
2. Press release, 23 July 2002, Marks & Spencer leads retailers in its support of UK organic market
3. Press release, 25 January 2002, Sainsbury's pledge further support for British organic farming
4. Verbal communication, July 2002
5. Soil Association, Organic Food and Farming Report, Bristol 2001
6. Written communication, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2002
7. Grocer, January 2002

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