

The Organic Food and Farming Targets Campaign

c/o Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming
94 White Lion Street
London, N1 9PF
Tel: (020) 7837 1228 Fax: (020) 7837 1141
organictargetsbill@sustainweb.org
www.sustainweb.org

Summary of the DEFRA Action Plan to develop Organic Food and Farming in England

Embargoed: 1200 noon July 29th 2002

1. Positive elements

Targets and objectives:

- Commitment to “the UK organic market share increasing to at least 70%” (30% is current market share) This is a welcome commitment and gives the action plan direction.

Finance

- On-going payments for 5 years after the farmer has converted to organic farming will now be paid to farmers. They are extremely welcome as they should result in us competing better with other EU countries who have been supporting farmers in this way for years.
- Increase in horticulture payments under the Organic Farming Scheme from £70 to £600 per hectare in years 1-3 and £30 in years 4 and 5. This is up from a current payment of £70. This should lead to an increase in the numbers of organic orchards, and help with the high set-up costs involved
- £5 million extra on R and D over next five years (DEFRA commitment to £1 million per year. This has to be match funded so total of £10 million extra on organic Research and Development. Current DEFRA budget on organic research is £2.1 million.)

Public Procurement

- Clarified that public procurement rules do allow public bodies to source organic food on basis of minimising environmental impact
- DEFRA will get organic meals into staff canteens

Organic Standards

- States that Ministers support high standards
- New Advisory Committee on Organic Food and Farming will replace UK Register of Organic Food Standards (UKROFS). This will have wider membership and include all members of food chain, including consumer groups.

Steering group: ● Elm Farm Research Centre ● Friends of the Earth ● Henry Doubleday Research Association ● Pesticides Action Network-UK ● Soil Association ● Transport & General Workers Union (RAAW) ● UNISON ● WWF-UK
Secretariat: Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming

Information

- Will be more market information available which should help farmers who are thinking of conversion, and those already converting make decisions
- Commitment to increase consumer's involvement in standard setting
- Organic farm to be included in pilot demonstration farm network

Research

- Current levels of funding analysed
- New Research Committee on organics to advise on organic research
- Food Chain Centre will analyse organic red meat sector and identify best practice

Local Food

- Attempt to raise skills levels in small organic food processing and manufacturing businesses by securing changes to Vocational Training Scheme
- Commits to developing a strategy for a healthy and buoyant regional food sector, including local food marketing.

2. Weaker elements

- The target of 70% market share, whilst a step in the right direction, needs a date by which it will be achieved to have real teeth
- The commitment from retailers is welcome, but weaker than initially hoped for. Retailers were considering committing to targets for sourcing UK organic produce in different product sectors but finally they agreed to a survey on organic produce and a commitment to identify opportunities from this to “support producers to increase their share of the organic market”
- Nothing on offering a fair price to the farmer
- Success criteria for action plan will be drawn up later

ENDS