

# *The Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill Campaign*

Sustain, The Alliance for Better Food & Farming  
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## **PRESS RELEASE**

EMBARGOED UNTIL 0001 HOURS FRIDAY 3rd MARCH 2000

### **Government urged to adopt Organic Targets Bill**

Supermarkets add voices to campaign

FRIDAY 3rd MARCH 2000, 10.00 am, Media Briefing on the Organic Targets Bill and organic brunch

The Farmers Club, Eastwood Room, 3 Whitehall Court, SW1A (Tube – Embankment / Westminster)

Today an unprecedented alliance of over 200 MPs and 50 organisations including supermarkets, trade unions, consumer groups and environmental pressure groups urges the Government to support the Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill which is due for its second reading in the Commons this afternoon.

The Bill aims to ensure that:

- 30% of agricultural land in England and Wales is organic by 2010;
- 20% of the food that we consume is organic by 2010; organic food becomes more affordable to more people.

At an organic brunch this morning Steven Esom, Director of Buying for the supermarket Waitrose will explain why the Bill is so important to the company and its customers. He will say:

*"The Organic Targets Bill represents an important signal to all those UK farmers considering organic conversion. The growth of the organic sector at Waitrose is running at over 40% per year and our reliance on imports is currently over 70%. Our vision is that by the end of 2000, 20% of our produce sold within Waitrose will be organic. This Bill will help us to ensure that more of that produce comes from UK suppliers."*

The Second Reading of the Bill comes after the Prime Minister's recent announcement of a target for organic production. Until now the Government has resisted calls for setting targets for organic production, as it believes the

market should be left to respond to consumer demand. Catherine Fookes, Campaign Co-ordinator of the Organic Targets Bill says:

*"We are asking the Government to increase their inadequate target of 9% by 2006 to 30% by 2010. Trebling organic production to 9% will not even supply current demand in England let alone the demand that will exist by 2006. It is very disappointing that a government which champions 'joined-up thinking' has failed to grasp the multiple benefits that the organic revolution could bring."*

Speakers at the press briefing will be:

Paul Tyler MP, Lib Dem, North Cornwall, Sponsor of Bill  
Joan Ruddock MP, Labour, Lewisham Deptford  
Steven Esom, Director of Buying, Waitrose  
Tony Juniper, Policy and Campaigns Director, Friends of the Earth

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### **QUOTES FROM SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS:**

Rodney Bickerstaffe, UNISON, General Secretary: *"This Bill will create jobs, promote healthy living and provide greater food choice especially for people on low incomes."*

Tony Juniper, Friends of the Earth, Policy and Campaigns Director: *"The Bill will deliver many of the solutions that the Government has been talking about for rural areas: it will deliver benefits to farmers, the environment and rural economies. It will also ensure that more people have access to healthy and safe food, and will help wildlife recover from the terrible effects of chemical farming. The Government must grasp this opportunity to turn its promises into real solutions and give this Bill the backing it deserves."*

Gundula Azeez, Soil Association, Policy Manager: *"Organic food is in great demand in the UK, but the inadequate and irregular funding approach of the UK Government means this demand is not being met by UK production. It is highly regrettable that, although very many farmers want to convert, the Government has completely stopped funding the conversion process this year. If the Government wants this country and not foreign countries to benefit from our growing organic market, it is time it adopted ambitious targets and a proper strategy for the sector's development."*

Lawrence Woodward, Elm Farm Research Centre, Director: *"Surely the Government must realise that there is no way that the organic sector can develop without dealing with problems that are holding back growth, such as inadequate funding for research and infrastructure. There are also severe shortages in some areas such as organic seed which could be ironed out if the Government adopted this Bill."*

Alan Gear, HDRA, Chief Executive: *"It is vital that much more of the organic food we consume, particularly fruit and vegetables, should be grown in the UK. This Bill would send out a clear signal that the Government intends to give proper support to the organic sector."*

Waitrose, Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer support the campaign.

The Organic Targets Bill steering group consists of Elm Farm Research Centre, Friends of the Earth, HDRA, Pesticides Trust, Soil Association, Transport & General Workers Union (RAAW) and UNISON. The secretariat for the campaign is Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming.

Prime Minister's speech to the National Farmer's Union conference, 1st February 2000 stated that "we envisage a trebling of the area under organic farming by 2006." Currently 3% of agricultural land is organic or in conversion. Therefore a trebling of organic area would lead to 9% of agricultural land being organic by 2006.