

The Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill Campaign

Sustain, The Alliance for Better Food & Farming
94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF
Tel: (020) 7837 1228; Fax: (020) 7837 1141
organictargetsbill@sustainweb.org

PRESS RELEASE

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CAMPAIGNERS WELCOME MPs CALL FOR ORGANIC ACTION PLAN

And calls for government targets to increase organic farming.

The Organic Targets Bill campaign welcomed today's report by the Agriculture Committee backing an action plan for the organic farming sector. This will help the sector develop in a sustained way, rather than in fits and starts. However campaigners are extremely disappointed that the Committee failed to recommend targets for increasing organic production in the UK. Ten European countries have already set targets, including the four countries that now have the highest percentage of land in organic production.

Simon Thomas MP (Plaid Cymru, Ceredigion) has introduced the Organic Targets Bill as a Private Member's Bill, and the second reading debate is scheduled for February 9th 2001. The bill calls for a strategy or "action plan" for organic farming and for 30% of agricultural land in England and Wales to be organic by 2010.

Catherine Fookes, the Organic Targets Bill Co-ordinator from Sustain said:
"We are delighted that the Committee agrees that an action plan is needed for organic farming. The Minister of Agriculture has already agreed that an action plan would be useful so now we need them to put words into action. Without an action plan UK farmers will continue to lose out to overseas competitors."

Sandra Bell, Food Campaigner from Friends of the Earth said:
"We are disappointed that the Committee's report falls short of recommending a target for organic farming. However, it contains some sound advice, not least that a more strategic approach is needed to develop the organic sector and more resources should be put into training and research to maximise the considerable benefits of organic farming."

David Prentis, General Secretary of UNISON said:

"There are several sound reasons for supporting the Organic Targets Bill. For example, by creating up to 16,000 jobs the Bill will benefit rural economies and in reducing pesticide use it will help the environment and wildlife."

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CONTACTS

Catherine Fookes, Campaign Co-ordinator, Sustain: 0207 837 1228 / 07979
534050

Neil Verlander, Press Office, Friends of the Earth, 0207 566 1649 / 0771 284
3209