

The Organic Food and Farming Targets Campaign

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PRESS RELEASE

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TOP SUPERMARKETS BACK CALL FOR MORE ORGANIC FARMING GROUPS CALL ON TESCO TO JOIN CAMPAIGN

Seven of the country's top supermarket chains - who between them control more than a third of the UK's grocery retail share [1] - are supporting a campaign for a massive increase in organic farming. But the UK's largest retailer, Tesco, which recently committed itself to £1 billion worth of organic sales by 2005 [2], has so far failed to give its support. The Organic Targets Campaign is calling on Tesco to show its commitment to UK farmers by backing the campaign before a major London rally on 23rd January.

The Organic Targets Campaign, contacted UK supermarkets, asking them to back its call for 30 per cent of UK agricultural land to be organic by 2010. Despite a boom in organic sales in this country, around 70 per cent of organic food is imported from abroad. Currently about three per cent of UK agricultural land is under organic production. ASDA, Booths, Co-op, Iceland, Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury's and Waitrose have so far responded positively. If the campaign succeeds supermarkets could source more British organic food. Safeway has also failed to give its backing.

On Wednesday 23 January, hundreds of people from across the country are coming to Westminster to attend the Organic Targets Rally and to lobby their MPs for government action to support organic farming [3]. The campaign is already supported by 144 MPs.

Catherine Fookes, co-ordinator of the Organic Targets Campaign said:

"We are delighted that so many supermarkets are backing the call for a massive increase in Britain's organic farming. But we are extremely disappointed that Tesco, the UK's biggest food retailer, has so far failed to give its support, particularly as it has committed itself to an enormous increase in organic sales. Almost three quarters of organic food comes from abroad. Increasing the amount of British agricultural land under organic production will benefit British farmers and reduce the levels of pesticide sprayed in our countryside."

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

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[1] Figures from IGD Press Release 3rd December 2001, December 2000, Market Share Figures, www.igd.com

[2] Press Release: 1 November 2001. TESCO £1BILLION ORGANIC CHALLENGE
"Tesco today announced a new target to grow its organic market to £1billion within 5 years and challenged British agriculture to help achieve the goal."

[3] The Organic Targets Rally and Lobby takes place at 2pm on Wednesday 23rd January 2002 at Westminster Central Hall and the Houses of Parliament. Speakers include: Louiza Patikas (who plays Helen Archer, from Radio 4's The Archers); Joan Ruddock MP; Charles Secrett of Friends of the Earth; Patrick Holden of the Soil Association; Wendy Wrigley of the Co-op.

The Organic Targets Campaign is supported by more than 100 organisations including retailers, trade unions, environmental and consumer groups, as well as many back-bench MPs. Steering group: Elm Farm Research Centre, Friends of the Earth, Henry Doubleday Research Association, Pesticides Action Network-UK, Soil Association, Transport & General Workers Union, UNISON, WWF-UK, Secretariat: Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming. More Information on the Organic Targets Campaign can be found at www.sustainweb.org/homefra.htm

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