

The Organic Food and Farming Targets Campaign

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ORGANIC TARGETS CAMPAIGN

PRESS RELEASE

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ORGANIC RALLY CALLS FOR MORE GOVERNMENT SUPPORT As UK languishes at bottom of organic league

Hundreds of people from across the country will be in London today to urge the Government to do more to support organic farming in the UK. Despite a huge surge in demand for organic food in recent years, most is met by imports with the UK being one of the highest importers in the world.

The Organic Targets campaign wants the Government to ensure that 30 per cent of UK agricultural land is organic by 2010 and that an organic action plan is put in place. The campaign analyzed latest statistics and found that:

- . The UK market retail value for organic food is the fourth largest in Europe and one of the largest in the world [1];
- . Nearly three quarters (70 per cent) of organic produce sold in the UK is imported from abroad - one of the highest in the world [2];
- . More than half of EU countries already have targets and action plans for organic farming levels [3];
- . The UK is one of the only EU countries that doesn't give on-going payments to organic farmers once they have converted [4].

The Organic Targets Rally takes place at 2pm on Wednesday 23rd January at Westminster Central Hall. 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; and Wendy Wrigley of the Co-op. A mass lobby of Parliament will follow.

Catherine Fookes, Coordinator of the Organic Targets campaign said:

"Boosting the organic sector makes sense for farmers, retailers, consumers and the environment. Hundreds of people have come to London in support of an organic future for British farming. It is time the Government listened to them and gave organic farmers here in the UK the same levels of support as our competitors around the world."

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

Charles Secrett, Director of Friends of the Earth said

"It's absurd that organic food is being flown around the world when much of it could be produced in the UK. The Government must make organic farming a central plank in its blueprint for the future for British agriculture."

Louiza Patikas (who plays Helen Archer, from Radio 4's The Archers said:

"Shoppers in this country are buying vast quantities of organic food. Unfortunately most is imported from abroad. Hundreds of British farmers want to convert to organic farming but can't afford to do so. The Government should step in and help ensure that British farmers and the British countryside reap the benefits from the boom in organic food."

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Notes:

[1] The UK has the 7th largest market retail value for organic food worth an estimated \$445-450 million. The leading 6 countries are US, Japan, Germany, Italy, France and Canada. [Agra Europe, 24 August 2001]

[2] The UK is one of the biggest importers of organic food in the world. In a league table published by Agra Europe, August 24, 2001, only Canada (80%) and Taiwan (100%) import more. In Europe France imports the least (10 %).

[3] Organic farming targets have been set in Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Northern Ireland and Wales.

[4] Payments to converted organic farmers are given in Italy, Finland, Sweden, Greece, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, Austria, Spain, Denmark, and Ireland.

[5] 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. Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming coordinates the campaign. 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.

More information on the Organic Targets Campaign can be found at

www.sustainweb.org/homefra.htm

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