

# The Organic Food & Farming Targets Bill Campaign Newsletter

Issue 1, December 1999

This newsletter follows the launch on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1999 of the *Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill*. The Bill was presented to the House of Commons on 26<sup>th</sup> October. So far, 203 MPs have signed the Early Day Motion showing strong, cross-party support. The campaign now aims to raise further support for the Bill and this newsletter can help you get involved. It includes:

- Information / background about the Bill and organic food and farming
- A list of those MPs who have signed the EDM
- A template letter to send to your MP, and other ideas for action
- A list of contacts for more information

**The Steering Group thanks you for your support (see back page for Group members and supporting organisations)**

## The issue:

Farmer and consumer interest in organic food and farming has never been higher. 1 in 10 farmers have expressed interest in converting and consumer demand for organic food is growing at 40% per year. Yet only around 1.5% of UK farmland is organically managed and we import about 70% of the organic food sold. Organic production is one of the best ways of tackling the adverse effects of conventional intensive farming such as land and water pollution, soil erosion, loss of wildlife, declining rural communities and overproduction of unhealthy food. Unlike other forms of sustainable farming, organic farming has common standards which are legally enforced and which ensure environmental, animal welfare, and health benefits.

## Why a Bill?

As so many different factors affect the development of the organic sector, an overall strategy and target is needed to focus all the relevant policies. A parliamentary Bill is the only way to ensure a legal target is set and statutory policies are put in place to achieve it. Given the prominence of food issues, *this Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill* is appropriate and timely.

## Why a target?

Targets in the Bill require that by 2010 *‘not less than 30 % by area of organic land in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is certified as organic or is in .... Conversion; and not less than 20 % by volume of food consumed... is certified as organic’*. These targets would, for the first time, commit the Government to a plan ensuring that organic farming is (a) given the infrastructure, research and financial support it requires and (b) is affordable to all sectors of society. This will help: farmers, the environment, consumers, water companies, rural and urban communities, food retailers and processors, and the Government.

- Other countries have introduced targets and initiatives to achieve them such as Denmark at 50% by 2010, Sweden at 10% by 2000 and Wales at 10% by 2005. Overall European organic farming has increased by 25% per year over the last 10 years.

## The benefits of organic food and farming

### General environmental benefits

Organic farming enhances the natural environment by protecting land and wildlife, improving soil structure and fertility and reducing pollution, as it works with natural systems to enhance productivity. Artificial pesticides and fertilisers are prohibited so organic farming helps reduce pollution from these chemicals. Organic farms often work to produce more food for local sale so less food will be transported around the UK and around the world thereby reducing congestion on the roads and fuel use.

### Wildlife and landscape benefits

Agricultural land occupies over 70% of total land mass in the UK. Research studies show that organic farming, more than any other system, enriches biodiversity at the farm level and across the whole farm, not just around the edges. Independent studies on wild plants, animals and birds indicate a significant increase in populations on organically farmed land.

### Employment, economic and farmer benefits

Studies show that organic methods of food production, processing, marketing and retailing have greater labour requirements and can enhance local economies. Organic farmers tend to buy farming inputs from local suppliers and so maintain jobs. Between 10 and 30% more jobs can be created in organic systems. A more integrated organic policy will be better for existing organic farmers, will encourage others to consider the organic option and support them through the tricky conversion period.

### Animal welfare benefits

Unlike conventional farming, national organic standards prohibit the routine use of many pharmaceuticals such as antibiotics, and practices that cause distress to animals, such as mutilations, excessive stocking levels and battery cages.

### Human health benefits

There is growing evidence linking pesticide residues to human health problems such as reduced fertility, diseases of the nervous system and cancer. Legal levels allowed for any pesticide residue in all infant milk formulae have just been reduced to 0.01mg/kg, showing government recognition that these residues can cause health problems in babies. Organic produce, being grown without the use of artificial pesticides or growth promoting antibiotics, avoids farm worker exposure, reduces the risk of antibiotic resistant bacteria, and significantly reduces the public consumption of such chemicals. Recent research suggests that organic produce contains more of certain vitamins and minerals needed for a healthy diet.

## What has happened on the Bill so far?

So far, 203 MPs have shown their support for the *Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill* by signing up to an Early Day Motion (EDM) tabled in November 1999 by Joan Ruddock MP.

*The EDM is No. 51 - the full text is shown in the box on the right.*

The Bill is currently available to all MPs for review and Paul Tyler MP (Lib Dem Cornwall North) has adopted the Bill. This means it gets presented for its Second Reading in Parliament on May 5th 2000. If the *Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill* has been shown to be popular with the public and MPs, it stands a much better chance of becoming law.

The Steering Group has contacted all MPs who are eligible to sign the EDM (excluding Ministers, shadow Ministers and the front bench. **Now we need you to contact MPs to ask them to sign up to the EDM and show their support for the Bill.** Widespread public, media and MP support will make it impossible for the Government to ignore this call for organic targets.

Media interest in the launch of the Bill was high and we intend to maintain that interest over the coming year – particularly in the local and regional media. Sending a letter to your MP will support this work and ensure more MPs sign up to the EDM.

### Early Day Motion No. 51 Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill 1999

That this House supports the Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill which would require the drawing up of policies to ensure that by 2010, at least 30 per cent of UK farmland will be organic and that at least 20 per cent of the food consumed in the UK will be organic; notes that such an increase in organic farming will provide innumerable benefits for consumers, farmers, the environment, and animal welfare; further notes that demand for organic production is increasing by at least 40 per cent each year, but that 70 per cent of the food consumed in the UK is imported; and notes approvingly the inclusion in the Bill of the clauses concerning the need to implement measures to ensure all sections of society have access to affordable organic food and that the market demand is met by the new UK production.

**NB: The targets in the Bill apply to England and Wales – a separate Bill will be presented to the Scottish Parliament. But all MPs can sign up to the current Bill and show their support for greater organic production.**

## Has your MP signed up?

Below is a list of the MPs who have signed in support of the Bill (by signing EDM 51 by 29<sup>th</sup> Feb 2000). Please write to your MP encouraging them to sign up and/or to attend the Second Reading on May 5th. A possible form of words is given below.

Irene	Adams	Paisley North	Lab
Paddy	Ashdown	Yeovil	LD
Candy	Atherton	Falmouth & Cambourne	Lab
John	Austin	Erith & Thamesmead	Lab
Norman	Baker	Lewes	LD
Jackie	Ballard	Taunton	LD
Harry	Barnes	Derbyshire North East	Lab
Anne	Begg	Aberdeen South	Lab
Roy	Beggs	Antrim East	UUP
Alan	Beith	Berwick-upon-Tweed	LD
Hilary	Benn	Leeds Central	Lab
Tony	Benn	Chesterfield	Lab
Gerry	Bermingham	St Helens South	Lab
Roger	Berry	Kingswood	Lab
Harold	Best	Leeds North West	Lab
Richard	Body	Boston & Skegness	Con
David	Borrow	Ribble South	Lab
Peter	Bottomley	Worthing West	Con
Peter	Bradley	Wrekin, The	Lab
Thomas	Brake	Carshalton & Wallington	LD
Peter	Brand	Isle of Wight	LD
Colin	Breed	Cornwall South East	LD
Helen	Brinton	Peterborough	Lab
Russell	Brown	Dumfries	Lab
Karen	Buck	Regent's Park & Kensington N	Lab
Colin	Burgon	Elmet	Lab
John	Burnett	Torrige & West Devon	LD
Paul	Burstow	Sutton & Cheam	LD
Christine	Butler	Castle Point	Lab
Vincent	Cable	Twickenham	LD
Menzies	Campbell	North East Fife	LD
DN	Campbell-Savours	Workington	Lab
Dennis	Canavan	Falkirk West	Lab
Roger	Casale	Wimbledon	Lab
Martin	Caton	Gower	Lab
David	Chaytor	Bury North	Lab
David	Chidsey	Eastleigh	LD
Malcolm	Chisholm	Edinburgh North & Leith	Lab
Michael	Clapham	Barnsley West & Penistone	Lab
Eric	Clarke	Midlothian	Lab
Harry	Cohen	Leyton & Wanstead	Lab
Iain	Coleman	Hammersmith and Fulham	Lab
Micheal	Colvin	Romsey	Con
Michael	Connarty	Falkirk East	Lab
Frank	Cook	Stockton North	Lab

Robin	Corbett	Birmingham Erdington	Lab
Jeremy	Corbyn	Islington North	Lab
Brian	Cotter	Weston-Super-Mare	LD
Tom	Cox	Tooting	Lab
David	Crausby	Bolton North East	Lab
Ann	Cryer	Keighley	Lab
John	Cummings	Easington	Lab
Lawrence	Cunliffe	Leigh	Lab
Jim	Cunningham	Coventry South	Lab
Cynog	Dafis	Ceredigion	PC
Tam	Dalyell	Linlithgow	Lab
Keith	Darvill	Upminster	Lab
Edward	Davey	Kingston & Surbiton	LD
Valerie	Davey	Bristol West	Lab
Denzil	Davies	Llanelli	Lab
Geraint	Davies	Croydon Central	Lab
Ron	Davies	Caerphilly	Lab
Terry	Davis	Birmingham Hodge Hill	Lab
Hilton	Dawson	Lancaster & Wyre	Lab
Janet	Dean	Burton	Lab
Andrew	Dismore	Hendon	Lab
Jim	Dobbin	Heywood & Middleton	Lab
David	Drew	Stroud	Lab
Julia	Drown	Swindon South	Lab
Huw	Edwards	Monmouth	Lab
Clive	Efford	Eltham	Lab
Bill	Etherington	Sunderland North	Lab
Ronnie	Fearn	Southport	LD
Paul	Flynn	Newport West	Lab
Clifford	Forsythe	Antrim South	UUP
Derek	Foster	Bishop Auckland	Lab
Don	Foster	Bath	LD
Michael J	Foster	Worcester	Lab
Michael Jz	Foster	Hastings and Rye	Lab
Barry	Gardiner	Brent North	Lab
Andrew	George	St Ives	LD
Neil	Gerrard	Walthamstow	Lab
Ian	Gibson	Norwich North	Lab
Linda	Gilroy	Plymouth Sutton	Lab
Norman	Godman	Greenock & Inverclyde	Lab
Donald	Gorrie	Edinburgh West	LD
Thomas	Graham	West Renfrewshire	SLP
Bernie	Grant	Tottenham	Lab
James	Gray	Wiltshire North	Con
Dominic	Grieve	Beaconsfield	Con
Jane	Griffiths	Reading East	Lab

Win	Griffiths	Bridgend	Lab
John	Gunnell	Morley and Rothwell	Lab
Mike	Hancock	Portsmouth South	LD
Nick	Harvey	Devon North	LD
David	Heath	Somerton & Frome	LD
Doug	Henderson	Newcastle-upon-Tyne North	Lab
Ivan	Henderson	Harwich	Lab
Stephen	Hepburn	Jarrow	Lab
Stephen	Hesford	Wirral West	Lab
Jimmy	Hood	Clydesdale	Lab
Kelvin	Hopkins	Luton North	Lab
John	Horam	Orpington	Con
Lindsay	Hoyle	Chorley	Lab
Brian	Iddon	Bolton South East	Lab
Eric	Illsley	Barnsley Central	Lab
Glenda	Jackson	Hampstead and Highgate	Lab
Barry	Jones	Alyn & Deeside	Lab
Ieuan	Jones	Ynys Mon	PC
Jon Owen	Jones	Cardiff Central	Lab
Lynne	Jones	Birmingham Selly Oak	Lab
Martyn	Jones	Clwyd South	Lab
Nigel	Jones	Cheltenham	LD
Paul	Keetch	Hereford	LD
Piara	Khabra	Ealing Southall	Lab
Andy	King	Rugby and Kenilworth	Lab
Tom	King	Bridgwater	Con
Tess	Kingham	Gloucester	Lab
Archy	Kirkwood	Roxburgh & Berwickshire	LD
Stephen	Ladyman	Thanet South	Lab
Jackie	Lawrence	Preseli Pembrokeshire	Lab
David	Lepper	Brighton Pavilion	Lab
Terry	Lewis	Worsley	Lab
Martin	Linton	Battersea	Lab
Richard	Livsey	Brecon & Radnorshire	LD
Elfyn	Llwyd	Merionydd Nant Conwy	PC
Alice	Mahon	Halifax	Lab
Gordon	Marsden	Blackpool South	Lab
Paul	Marsden	Shrewsbury & Atcham	Lab
Robert	Marshall-Andrews	Medway	Lab
Chris	McCafferty	Calder Valley	Lab
Robert	McCartney	North Down	UKUP
John	McDonnell	Hayes and Harlington	Lab
Kevin	McNamara	Hull North	Lab
Tony	McWalter	Hemel Hempstead	Lab/Coop
Alan	Meale	Mansfield	Lab
Bill	Michie	Sheffield Heeley	Lab
Ray	Michie	Argyll & Bute	LD
Austin	Mitchell	Great Grimsby	Lab
Laura	Moffatt	Crawley	Lab
Alasdair	Morgan	Galloway & Upper Nithsdale	SNP
Doug	Naysmith	Bristol North West	Lab
Mark	Oaten	Winchester	LD
Eddie	O'Hara	Knowsley South	Lab
Bill	Olner	Nuneaton	Lab
Lembit	Opik	Montgomeryshire	LD
Diana	Organ	Forest of Dean	Lab
Peter	Pike	Burnley	Lab
Kerry	Pollard	St Albans	Lab
Gordon	Prentice	Pendle	Lab

Gwyn	Prosser	Dover	Lab
Lawrie	Quinn	Scarborough & Whitby	Lab
John	Randall	Uxbridge	Con
Syd	Rapson BEM	Portsmouth North	Lab
Andrew	Reed	Loughborough	Lab/Coop
David	Rendel	Newbury	LD
Andrew	Robathan	Blaby	Con
Peter	Robinson	Belfast East	UDUP
Chris	Ruane	Vale of Clwyd	Lab
Joan	Ruddock	Lewisham Deptford	Lab
Christine	Russell	City of Chester	Lab
Bob	Russell	Colchester	LD
Martin	Salter	Reading West	Lab
Adrian	Sanders	Torbay	LD
Phil	Sawford	Kettering	Lab
Brian	Sedgemoor	Hackney South & Shoreditch	Lab
Barry	Sheerman	Huddersfield	Lab
Debra	Shipley	Stourbridge	Lab
Alan	Simpson	Nottingham South	Lab
Marsha	Singh	Bradford West	Lab
Dennis	Skinner	Bolsover	Lab
Robert	Smith	W Aberdeenshire & Kincardine	LD
David	Stewart	Inverness E. Nairn, Lochaber	Lab
Ian	Stewart	Eccles	Lab
Paul	Stinchcombe	Wellingborough	Lab
Howard	Stoate	Dartford	Lab
Andrew	Stunell	Hazel Grove	LD
Dari	Taylor	Stockton South	Lab
David	Taylor	Leicestershire North West	Lab
John	Taylor	Strangford	UUP
Matthew	Taylor	Truro & St Austell	LD
Teddy	Taylor	Rochford & Southend East	Con
Peter	Temple-Morris	Leominster	Lab
Gareth	Thomas	Clwyd West	Lab
William	Thompson	Tyrone West	UUP
Paul	Truswell	Pudsey	Lab
Desmond	Turner	Brighton Kemptown	Lab
Neil	Turner	Wigan	Lab
Paul	Tyler	Cornwall North	LD
Rudolph	Vis	Finchley & Golders Green	Lab
Joan	Walley	Stoke-on-Trent North	Lab
Robert N	Wareing	Liverpool West Derby	Lab
Steve	Webb	Northavon	LD
Brian	White	Milton Keynes North East	Lab
Dafydd	Wigley	Caernarfon	PC
John	Wilkinson	Ruislip-Northwood	Con
Betty	Williams	Conwy	Lab
Phil	Willis	Harrogate & Knaresborough	LD
Mike	Wood	Batley & Spen	Lab
Shaun	Woodward	Witney	Lab
Tony	Worthington	Clydebank & Milngavie	Lab
Jimmy	Wray	Glasgow Baillieston	Lab
Tony	Wright	Cannock Chase	Lab
Derek	Wyatt	Sittingbourne & Sheppey	Lab

## How to contact your MP and what to include in the letter

Find out your MP's name through your library, newspaper or the House of Commons Public Information Office (tel: 020 7219 4272, web: [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)). Letters should be sent to (XXX) MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA. Use a separate envelope for each MP / Minister. The letter can be short, but should at least include the first paragraph of the suggested text below

Dear (XXX) MP,

I am writing to urge you to support the Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill which would require 30% of farmland in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to be in organic production or conversion, by 2010. The Bill is due to be presented for its Second Reading by Paul Tyler MP on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2000 so please can you attend on that day, do everything possible to encourage other MPs to keep the preceding debates brief and vote to give the Bill a Second Reading, if the opportunity arises. Please could you also show your support by signing EDM No. 51 if you have not done so already.

Organic farming has proven benefits for the environment by reducing chemical pollution of soil and water, and providing a vital habitat for wildlife. It also provides food without chemical residues or GM ingredients. Farmer and consumer interest in organic is at an all time high yet the Government is clearly failing to maximise on the potential that organic farming has to offer. We are currently importing around 70% of the organic food we buy - this represents a serious environmental cost as well as lost opportunities for growers, rural communities (organic employs more people) and consumers.

For a Government that claims to promote businesses it is illogical that it will not allow organic and non-organic farmers to realise their potential. The money for the level of organic conversion and a stronger market infrastructure, training etc, required in the Bill represents only a small percentage (5%) of the total spending on agriculture (£3 billion). By failing to support organic farming, the Government is in danger of missing the prime opportunity to make substantial inroads into the organic market as well as tackling essential environmental, rural development and health objectives. Yours sincerely, etc

## **Letters to Nick Brown, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Tony Blair, PM**

The Prime Minister and Ministers in general are answerable to everyone, not just constituents. Please write directly to Nick Brown and Tony Blair at the House of Commons asking them to support the Bill.

## **Letters to organisations, food companies, local and health authorities**

We also need the support of other organisations to show the wide range of interests that would be served by the Bill, and also to generate more action. Food companies such as food shops and supermarkets, manufacturers and farming organisations should be pressed to show their support. Local authorities and health authorities should be urged to support the Bill. Increased organic farming and marketing in their region will help them achieve local community, employment, environmental and health objectives. Please contact as many of these groups as you can, stating your support for organic and locally produced food at affordable prices and asking about the company's policy/future plans for stocking/producing organic food.

**Please send us a copy of any replies that you get whether from MPs, Ministers or other organisations. We can then advise you on how to respond to replies. Gathering responses will also help us to monitor the progress of the campaign.**

## **Meet your MP face to face**

Some MPs hold 'surgeries' in their constituencies. Find out when these are and ask your MP face to face why they have not supported the Bill, or why they are not being more proactive over the Bill's promotion.

## **And in the mean time ....**

You can still do your bit for organic food and farming. Why not:

- Buy organic produce whenever you can;
- Buy your vegetables from a local Farmer's Market - contact the Soil Association (0117 929 0661) to find out the nearest one to where you live;
- Ask your supermarket why they aren't stocking more UK organic produce and at a reasonable price;
- Sign up to a local 'Vegetable Box' scheme - have organic food delivered to your door. Contact the Soil Association for more details (0117 929 0661);
- Encourage your friends to write to their MPs about the Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill
- Join a local group such as a Friends of the Earth local group (Contact: 0171 490 1555 for details) to campaign on all aspects of food production.

## **Who is running the Campaign and how is it funded?**

The Campaign is being co-ordinated by Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming and has a core Steering Group of members: Elm Farm Research Centre, Friends of the Earth, Henry Doubleday Research Association, Pesticides Trust, Soil Association, Transport and General Workers Union (RAAW), and UNISON.

**Other organisations which have shown their support:** ● Arid Lands Initiative ● Assoc of Unpasteurised Milk Producers ● Baby Milk Action ● Biodynamic Agriculture Organisation ● Campaign for Real Ale ● Centre for Alternative Technology ● Centre for Food Policy ● Christian Ecology Link ● Common Ground ● Common Work ● Compassion in World Farming ● Derbyshire County Council Sustainability Panel ● East Anglia Food Link ● Ecology Building Society ● Family Farmers Association ● Farm and Food Society ● Farming & Livestock Concern UK ● Federation of City Farms and Gardens ● Find Your Feet ● Flavour of Wales ● Food Additive Campaign Team ● Food Labelling Agenda (FLAG) ● Fresh Food Co ● Gaia Foundation ● Green Network ● Green Party in Parliament ● Health Education Trust ● Help International Plant Protein Organisation ● International Soc. for Ecology & Culture ● Land Heritage ● Longhouse Food Consultancy ● Marks & Spencer ● National Association of Teachers of Home Economics. & Technology ● National Federation of Consumer Groups ● Neal's Yard Remedies ● N. Ireland Chest, Heart & Stroke Association ● Organic Gardening ● RSPB ● Sainsbury's ● Small Farms Association ● Triodos Bank ● Vinceremos Wines & Spirits Ltd ● Waitrose ● Welsh Consumer Council ● West Country Graziers ● Willing Workers on Organic Farms ● Women's Environmental Network ● WorldWide Fund for Nature (WWF UK)

**££ We are in need of Campaign funds for printing, photocopying, research, phone calls, etc. For details of how you can help financially, contact Sustain. Every little helps!**

### **Further information**

For further information, Steering Group contact details, or more copies of this newsletter contact:

**Organic Food and Farming Bill (OFFB) at Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming at 94, White Lion Street, London, N1 9PF Tel: 020 7837 1228 Fax: 020 7837 1141**

**Email: [organictargetsbill@sustainweb.org](mailto:organictargetsbill@sustainweb.org)**

**Website: [www.sustainweb.org](http://www.sustainweb.org)**