

The Organic Food & Farming Targets Bill Newsletter

Issue 3, October 2000

Outstanding support for the Organic Targets.... In Parliament 239 MPs have signed the Early Day Motion (EDM) supporting the Bill – this means 46% of all the MPs who are permitted to sign up have done so - a great achievement. Support from Conservative MPs is still weak but a few more have come on board – thanks to your lobbying and our meeting with Tim Yeo MP – the Shadow Agriculture Minister. And now 84 organisations also support the Bill. You can help us generate even more support by joining in activities on our day of action, scheduled for Apple Day on October 21st. (See below for details)

As expected, the Bill ran out of time during the last session of Parliament. But with such a huge amount of support in Parliament now, we are confident that an MP who comes high up in the Ballot for Private Members' Bills in December will adopt the Bill. (See the inside pages for how you can help make this happen.) There are signs that the Government is moving agriculture in the right direction - the area of land converted to organic farming is now an official Government indicator of sustainable agriculture, and in the recent spending review the Government adopted 'an increase in the area of organically farmed land' as one of its Public Service Agreements to which it can be held accountable. Now, let's help the Government realise its aims!

Apple Day Action and the Organic Targets Bill

Apple Day is an annual celebration of apples, orchards and local distinctiveness. Initiated by Common Ground in 1990 it has been celebrated each year by people organising their own local events. It takes place on October 21st this year and the Organic Targets Bill campaign is encouraging groups and individuals who support the Bill to take part.

Over 2,000 "Aim For Organic" apple postcards have already reached MPs but we need more sent so that MPs see the huge amount of support the Bill has. So the aim of our Apple Day Action is to get as many postcards signed and sent to MPs as possible. This should persuade more MPs to sign the EDM. The kinds of things groups may be doing to attract signatures is setting up stalls in high streets or the local farmers market, organising an apple and spoon race with their local MP or taking

part in the national longest apple peel competition (organic of course!). If your MP has already signed the EDM you can still collect signatures on postcards and send them with a covering letter thanking the MP for their support and asking them to adopt the Organic Targets Bill if they are chosen in the ballot for Private Members' Bills.

The timing of Apple Day couldn't be better because it means that the "Aim for Organic" postcards will arrive with MPs just before the ballot for Private Members' Bills' takes place in December. The Organic Targets Bill will therefore be at the forefront of MPs' minds if they are chosen in the ballot.

See how you can get involved on the inside pages

Targets in other European countries

It is no coincidence that the four countries in Europe with the highest percentage of agricultural land in organic production have set targets, and developed and implemented strategies or action plans to ensure the targets are met. The UK Government should look to these countries for inspiration.

Main source: Nic Lampkin, Welsh Institute for Rural Studies, Aberystwyth

* This figure is for combined certified and non-certified land

The Swedish organic certification body, CRAV

Country	Target	% agriculture area organic when target set	% agriculture area organic 1999/2000
Sweden	10% by 2000	1.6%* (1994)	11.2%*#
Austria	10% by 2000	9.7% (1995)	10.09%~
Denmark	7% by 2000	1.5% (1995)	5.89%
Finland	5% by 1999	3.25% (1996)	5.26%

~ IFOAM

Organic farming in Parliament

We have kept organic farming at the forefront in Parliament by briefing MPs for an adjournment debate on the issue in July. The debate focused heavily on the need for a strategy and targets for the organic sector. Also in Parliament, we submitted written evidence to the Agriculture Select Committee inquiry into organic farming. (See www.sustainweb.org). We are hoping that the report resulting from the inquiry will recommend that a strategy and targets are required for the organic sector to thrive.

What you can do to get involved

The Organic Targets Bill will only become law if MPs and the Government are convinced that we – their voters – want it to. It is up to us to pressurise them to back the Bill, so please act on the suggestions below. Remember to send us copies of any responses you receive. Thanks for the responses you have already sent us!

1. Respond to your MP's letter

If you received a negative letter back from your MP, you may wish to reply using the arguments below. Don't take no for an answer!

"I don't sign EDMs because..."

... of my position

I appreciate the convention, but would still like to know which way you will vote when the Bill reaches voting stage and whether you support the Bill.

...they are ineffective

EDMs are one way of showing support for an issue and as one of your constituents I would like you to sign up to the EDM supporting the Organic Targets Bill. If you really cannot sign it, please tell me whether you support the aims of the Bill.

"I won't sign the Organic Targets EDM as it is a waste of time as the Government does not support the Bill"

The more MPs that sign up to the EDM, the more pressure will be put on the Government to support the Bill. So it is even more important for you to sign this EDM.

"I don't agree with setting targets"

Targets are widely used by the current UK Government in other areas. For example, the Government has said that 5% of electricity should be from renewable resources by 2003. Targets have also been successfully used by other European governments to increase organic farming. (*See front page for examples*)

The targets in this Bill are needed for several reasons: to put an end to the stop-start funding for organics; to focus Government's attention on developing a strategy to overcome the barriers holding back organic production; to help increase "joined-up" thinking as organic farming affects the Departments for the Environment, Health and Agriculture too; and finally to give confidence to farmers that they can enter the sector as it is set on a course of growth.

"I don't agree with the 30% target in the Bill"

The European-wide growth rate in conversion of organically managed land has been around 25% per year over the last 10 years. If this rate continues, 30% of farmland in Europe will be organic by 2010. The growth rate in the UK has been much higher than this - in the last two years it was 100%. Starting from the basis of 3% of land currently organic, the 30% target would require a growth rate of 27%, year on year, for 10 years, in the amount of land converted. So the growth required is very close to the annual European rate of increase, and much less than the recent 100% increases we have seen in the UK. Therefore the 30% target is achievable.

"I don't agree with the 20% target in the Bill"

This target is included in the Bill deliberately to ensure that there is sufficient infrastructure in place to get the new produce from the farm to the consumer.

Government support is currently heavily focussed on farm conversion, but help is also needed to develop processing facilities and distribution and marketing opportunities for the organic sector. Not all the measures recommended will cost money – for example, they could simply be helping farmers organise co-operatives.

This target will not mean retailers have to ensure that 20% of produce they sell is organic, or that families will have to eat 20% organic food. It should simply ensure that the market can take the extra supply of organic food, and make it available to consumers.

"The organic market should be left to market forces – we must not create growth that cannot be sustained"

The problem is that market forces are not working in the organic sector. British farmers only supply one third of current UK organic sales and this market is set to triple by 2003. The UK should benefit from this extra demand. However, the Government's planned funding will only triple organic production by 2006. This means that we will still have to import a large amount of organic food and the sector will remain far behind the market.

The Bill calls on the Government to develop a strategy for organic farming and this strategy should ensure that the organic market reaches its potential, without a damaging boom and bust cycle. That is the whole point of the Bill - to get sustained growth in the sector.

"It's not fair to give organic farming special attention"

Organic farming *should* be singled out as it has lower "external costs" than conventional farming. For example, total yearly costs of UK agriculture for biodiversity and wildlife losses amount to £25 million. This figure could be reduced and save the Government money in the long term were organic farming to become more widespread. The Government already acknowledges that organic farming benefits biodiversity, as the "area farmed organically" is an official MAFF indicator of Sustainable Agriculture. (*see www.maff.gov.uk*)

Most of all, having a strategy would make sure that all the good things the Government is doing will fit together so big increases in organic farming will result.

"The Government is doing enough already"

It is true that you have greatly increased funding for the organic sector, but organic research and development (R&D) is under-funded. MAFF only spends 2% (£2.1 million) of its £104 million agricultural R&D budget on organic farming, but 29% (£29 million) on GM and biotechnology. Yet organic farming has a huge market, and GM foods almost none.

2. Take part in Apple Day

To find out what Apple Day events are taking place near you and how you can get involved, get in touch with one of the groups below:

Common Ground has a full list of Apple Day events:

www.commonground.org.uk / 020 7267 2144

Friends of the Earth local groups are taking part: Jonathan Nichols: 020 7566 1691 / jonathan@foe.co.uk

HDRA is holding an Apple Day event at Ryton Gardens:

Sally Furness, 0247 630 8211 / sfurness@hdra.org.uk

Soil Association: Harry Hadaway, 0117 9142 449 / hhadaway@soilassociation.org

WWF-UK: David Aston: 01483 412300 /

daston@wwfnet.org

3. Distribute campaign postcards

Contact Sustain for copies of the campaign postcard "Aim for Organic". Can you distribute these postcards? Do you need some for your Apple Day event? Do you belong to an organisation that could distribute them?

4. Help us get the Bill back into Parliament

If your MP comes in the top ten of the ballot for Private Members Bills in November, and you are on our database, we will be writing to you to ask you to write an urgent letter to your MP. (Coming in the top ten means the MP has a good chance of securing time for their chosen Bill to be debated.) The letter should ask the MP to choose the Organic Targets Bill as the Private Member's Bill they would try to push through Parliament. If you have not already filled in a postcard, please email or send us your name and address so we can contact you when the time comes. (*Address on back page*)

5. Send us a donation

Campaigns cost money and every little helps! Please send a donation, if you can, to Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming, at the address on the back page. (Cheques should be made payable to Sustain.)

MPs signed up to the Early Day Motion as at August 31st 2000

Labour (165. 40% of Labour MPs)	David Crausby	Ivan Henderson	Austin Mitchell	Desmond Turner	Simon Hughes	Nicholas Winterton
Diane Abbott	Ann Cryer	Stephen Hepburn	Laura Moffatt	Neil Turner	Nigel Jones	
Irene Adams	John Cryer	Stephen Hesford	Doug Naysmith	Rudolph Vis	Paul Keetch	IND (1)
Candy Atherton	John Cummings	Jimmy Hood	Eddie O'Hara	Joan Walley	Archy Kirkwood	Dennis Canavan
John Austin	Lawrence Cunliffe	Kelvin Hopkins	Bill Olnier	Robert N Wareing	Richard Livsey	
Harry Barnes	Jim Cunningham	Lindsay Hoyle	Diana Organ	Brian White	Ray Michie	SDLP (1)
Anne Begg	Tam Dalyell	Brian Iddon	Ian Pearson	Betty Williams	Michael Moore	John Hume
Hilary Benn	Keith Darvill	Eric Illsley	Tom Pendry	Mike Wood	Mark Oaten	
Tony Benn	Valerie Davey	Glenda Jackson	Peter Pike	Shaun Woodward	Lembit Opik	SLP (1)
Gerry Bermingham	Denzil Davies	Barry Jones	Kerry Pollard	Tony Worthington	David Rendel	Thomas Graham
Roger Berry	Geraint Davies	Jon Owen Jones	Gordon Prentice	Jimmy Wray	Bob Russell	
Harold Best	Ron Davies	Lynne Jones	Gwyn Prosser	Tony Wright	Adrian Sanders	SNP (3)
David Borrow	Terry Davis	Martyn Jones	Lawrie Quinn	Derek Wyatt	Robert Smith	Margaret Ewing
Peter Bradley	Hilton Dawson	Ann Keen	Syd Rapson BEM		Andrew Stunell	Alasdair Morgan
Ben Bradshaw	Janet Dean	Piara Khabra	Andrew Reed	Lib Democrat (40. 85% of Lib Dem MPs)	Matthew Taylor	John Swinney
Helen Brinton	Andrew Dismore	Andy King	Chris Ruane	Richard Allan	Paul Tyler	
Russell Brown	Jim Dobbin	Oona King	Joan Ruddock	Paddy Ashdown	Steve Webb	UDUP (1)
Karen Buck	David Drew	Tess Kingham	Christine Russell	Norman Baker	Phil Willis	Peter Robinson
Colin Burgon	Julia Drown	Stephen Ladyman	Martin Salter	Jackie Ballard		Conservative (17. 10% of Conservative MPs)
Christine Butler	Huw Edwards	Jackie Lawrence	Phil Sawford	Alan Beith	Richard Body	UKUP (1)
Ronnie Campbell	Clive Efford	Bob Laxton	Brian Sedgemore	Thomas Brake	Peter Bottomley	Robert McCartney
DN Campbell-Savours	Jeff Ennis	David Lepper	Jonathan Shaw	Peter Brand	Michael Fallon	
Roger Casale	Bill Etherington	Terry Lewis	Barry Sheerman	Colin Breed	James Gray	UUP (5)
Martin Caton	Paul Flynn	Martin Linton	Debra Shipley	John Burnett	Dominic Grieve	Roy Beggs
David Chaytor	Barbara Follett	Alice Mahon	Alan Simpson	Paul Burstow	John Horam	Jeffrey Donaldson
Malcolm Chisholm	Derek Foster	Gordon Marsden	Marsha Singh	Vincent Cable	Robert Jackson	Clifford Forsythe
Michael Clapham	Michael J Foster	Paul Marsden	Dennis Skinner	Menzies Campbell	Tom King	John Taylor
Eric Clarke	Michael Jz Foster	Jim Marshall	Helen Southworth	David Chidgey	Michael Mates	William Thompson
Tony Clarke	George Galloway	Robert Marshall-Andrews	Gerry Steinberg	Brian Cotter	Andrew Robathan	Plaid Cymru (4)
Harry Cohen	Barry Gardiner	John McAllion	David Stewart	Edward Davey	Laurence	Ieuan Jones
Iain Coleman	Neil Gerrard	Chris McCafferty	Ian Stewart	Ronnie Fearn	Robertson	Elfyn Llwyd
Tony Colman	Ian Gibson	John McDonnell	Paul Stinchcombe	Don Foster	Desmond Swayne	Simon Thomas
Michael Connarty	Linda Gilroy	Kevin McNamara	Howard Stoate	Andrew George	Teddy Taylor	Dafydd Wigley
Frank Cook	Norman Godman	Tony McWalter	Dari Taylor	Donald Gorrie	Bowen Wells	
Robin Corbett	Roger Godsiff	John McWilliam	David Taylor	Mike Hancock	John Wilkinson	
Jeremy Corbyn	Jane Griffiths	Alan Meale	Peter Temple-Morris	Nick Harvey	Ann Winterton	
Tom Cox	Win Griffiths	Bill Michie	Gareth Thomas	David Heath		
	John Gunnell	Andrew Miller	Paul Truswell			
	Doug Henderson					

Early Day Motion supporting the *Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill*

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.

Who supports the campaign?

National Organisations

• Arid Lands Initiative • ASDA • Assoc. of Unpasteurised Milk Producers • Baby Milk Action • Biodynamic Agriculture Organisation • Body Shop • Booths Supermarkets • Butterfly Conservation • Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA Ltd) • Centre for Alternative Technology • Centre for Food Policy • Christian Ecology Link • Common Ground • Common Work Land Trust • Compassion in World Farming • Countryside Agency • Ecology Building Society • **Elm Farm Research Centre** • Family Farmers Association • Farm and Food Society • Farming and Livestock Concern UK • Federation of City Farms and Gardens • Food Additive Campaign Team (FACT) • Food Labelling Agenda (FLAG) • Foundation for Local Food Initiatives • Fresh Food Co. • **Friends of the Earth** • Gaia Foundation • GLOBE UK All Parliamentary Group • Green Network • Green Party in Parliament • Guild of Fine Food Retailers • Guild of Food Writers • Health Education Trust • Help International Plant Protein Organisation • **HDRA – The Organic Organisation** • Iceland • International Society for Ecology & Culture • Land Heritage • Marks and Spencer • National Assoc. of Teachers of Home Economics and Technology • National Federation of Consumer Groups • Neals Yard Remedies • N. Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke Assoc. • Organic Gardening • Organic Herb

Trading Company • Out of This World • **Pesticides Action Network-UK** • Permaculture Association • Royal Society for the Protection of Birds • Sainsbury's • SERA – the Labour Environment Campaign • Small Farms Association • **Soil Association** • **Transport and General Workers Union** • Triodos Bank • **UNISON** • Waitrose • Welsh Consumer Council • Whole Earth Ltd • Willing Workers on Organic Farms • Women's Environmental Network • **WWF-UK**

Local/Regional Organisations

Buchanan's Organic Deli • Bushwacker Wholefoods • Derbyshire County Council Sustainability Panel • Doves Farm Foods • East Anglia Food Link • Evergreen Wholefoods • Find Your Feet • Flavours of Wales • H. Weston & Sons Ltd • Harvest Forestry • Larchfield Community (the Camphill Village Trust) • Longhouse Food Consultancy • Mandala Wholefoods • Neals Yard Bakery • Organic Spirits Co. • Planet Organic • Ruskin Mill FEC • Small Producers' Agricultural Network, Herefordshire • The Queen's Head • Traders Fair World Shops • Vinceremos Wines and Spirits Ltd • West Country Graziers

Organisations marked in bold are members of the campaign Steering Group.

Campaign Diary

July 5 - Adjournment debate on organic food and farming in the House of Commons discusses Organic Targets Bill

July 21 - Bill fails its Second Reading as it runs out of time

And coming up ...

Oct - Soil Association *Organic Harvest Month*.

Oct 2 – Conservative Party Conference.

Oct 3 - Fringe Question Time event 'Organics: the future of farming?' 6-7.45pm, De Vere Suite, Royal Bath Hotel, Bournemouth

Oct 6 – 8 - Pesticides Action Network European Conference, including workshop on organic targets, Bonn (+49-40-39.91.910-22, pan-europe@t-online.de)

Oct 16 – UN World Food Day

Oct 19-20 - Food Safety in Europe Conference (020 8682 4201 www.foodsafetyeurope.com)

Oct 21 - Apple Day, Targets Bill Days of Action. (www.commonground.org.uk / 020 7267 2144)

Oct 23 - MPs back from recess, re-table Early Day Motion. The number of the EDM will change

Oct - Nov - Oral evidence sessions on inquiry into organic farming by Agriculture Select Committee

29 Nov - 3 Dec - BBC Good Food Show (0870 264 5555)

Dec - Ballot for Private members bills likely to take place.

Campaign supporters to write to MPs in the top 10, asking them to take up the Bill in the ballot

The Organic Food and Farming Targets Bill aims to encourage Government:

- To develop a strategy for the organic farming sector;
- To ensure that 30% of agricultural land in England and Wales will be organic by 2010;
- To ensure that 20% of the food that is marketed in England and Wales will be organic by 2010;
- To make organic food more affordable to all sectors of society.

Further information

For further information or more copies of this newsletter contact:
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Or Email: organictargetsbill@sustainweb.org

Please enclose an SAE with postal enquiries.

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Registered Charity No. 1018643

Steering group: • Elm Farm Research Centre • Friends of the Earth • HDRA – the Organic Organisation • Pesticides Action Network-UK • Soil Association • Transport & General Workers Union (RAAW) • UNISON • WWF-UK • **Secretariat:** Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming.