

Aim for Organic

The newsletter of The Organic Targets Campaign

Issue 6 February 2002

Organic rally bang on target!

Thank you for a fantastic lobby and Rally of Parliament. Over 700 campaign supporters packed Westminster Central Hall in London at the rally on January 23 and ensured Parliament heard the message loud and clear: we need a target for organics in this country.

A line-up of ten lively speakers ensured we covered organics from farm gate to dinner plate. A Danish organic campaigner told us how the Danish Action Plan and targets had benefited farmers and consumers. **Simon Jones**, a Lincolnshire organic farmer shared his experience of converting his farm and called on the government to set targets for organic farming. Other speakers included **Wendy Wrigley** from the Co-op, **Dr Vyvyan Howard**, **Charles Secrett** (FoE), **Joan Ruddock MP**, **Patrick Holden** (Soil Association), **Barry Leathwood** (TGWU) and **Professor Tim Lang**. Finally **Louiza Patikas**, who plays **Helen Archer**, manager of Ambridge Organics, in the

"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"

Louiza Patikas, who plays Helen Archer in the Archers on BBC Radio 4, at the rally.

Archers, led the crowd over to the House of Commons to lobby our MPs.

Many MPs signed up to the campaign on the day of the lobby and many more are signing up all the time. (over 180 as we go to press) These MPs are lobbying a crucial Government Minister on your behalf. So the message is really getting through - bang on target!

A massive **thank you** to all of you who came to the rally. Check out our website www.sustainweb.org/homefra.htm for the latest photos of the rally. We've had so much positive feedback from speakers and supporters. People said it was a

great day out (despite the rain) and that they valued being part of the democratic process. **Now we must build on the momentum we've generated and make sure that MPs stick to their promises.**

See overleaf for **what you can do** (even if you did not make it to the rally).

The Curry Report on Farming and Food

What's what on organics

The eagerly awaited report in to the future of farming was launched on January 29. The Organic Targets Campaign was delighted to see an organic action plan, one of the campaign's policies, in the recommendations. And a major leap forward to reduce organic imports was recommended – an organic "stewardship" scheme (payments to producers after they have converted to organic farming in return for the environmental benefits they provide to the public).

We will be working hard to ensure that rates here are high enough to compete with EU farmers, most of whom have been receiving these payments for years.

However, a significant omission was a 30% land target for the action plan.

The action plan must have targets. Without them, how will we know if the action plan is working? How can we hold the Government to

account? A target will give the farmers, processors and retailers the confidence to convert to organic systems and imports will reduce. More than half of the countries in the European Union have targets and action plans – can they all be wrong?

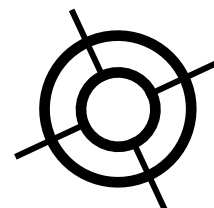
Check the **"What you can do"** section overleaf to see how you can help ensure that the action plan does have targets.

The Organic Targets Campaign

c/o Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming

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Aim for Organic

What can you do?

If you came to the rally and lobbied your MP please send us:

- your feedback form (the page with questions to ask your MP at the lobby)
- letters received from your MP

Both are crucial to the campaign. Even letters or forms that seem negative or inconclusive are essential and will enable us to advise you on responses to send to MPs. Please send these to us at the address overleaf.

If you were not able to come to the rally and lobby

You can still make an impact. Please write to your MP. You may wish to use the letter shown, but amend as you wish. If you don't know your MP's name call 0207 219 4272 or visit www.locata.co.uk/commons

- If you would like to receive the letter by email, please email camillaf@foe.co.uk and ask for the Organics letter, giving your name, address, postcode, telephone number and your MP's name.

- It doesn't matter whether your MP has signed Early Day Motion 366 or not. The letter is applicable either way. If your MP has signed, your letter will confirm their support and remind them that the issue is still important to constituents. If your MP has not signed, your letter will encourage them to do so.

- Please send copies of letters you receive from your MP to our address overleaf.



"Recently at a farmers market I was talking to a chap who had been ploughing since 1943. I asked if there were any differences he noticed with ploughing today apart from air conditioning and full suspension in his tractor. He said "No seagulls behind the plough!!" I said, "But seagulls aren't extinct" He replied, "No, but the earthworm nearly is."

Simon Jones, Organic Farmer, speaking at the rally.

.....MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

YOUR ADDRESS

Dear..... MP

We must set targets to boost organic food and farming in this country.

Other EU countries are reaping the rewards of organic farming. Our farmers and our countryside are losing out. It seems only fair that our farmers should benefit from domestic demand for organic produce. Yet nearly three quarters of the organic food we consume is imported which means that money is going to farmers abroad.

We need to follow the example of our EU neighbours by having an action plan and setting targets for organic farming.

Please join more than 180 MPs who have shown their support for the Organic Targets Campaign by:

1. Signing Early Day Motion 366 in support of an organic target and an action plan or letting me know if you support (a) a target for 30 per cent of agricultural land to be converted to organic farming by 2010 and (b) the need for the Government to develop an action plan to ensure the market for organic food develops as well as the supply.
2. Please write to Margaret Beckett MP asking for a 30% target to be put in place with the action plan for organic farming. Although the recent Food and Farming Policy Commission report recommends an organic action plan, it must have targets to judge whether the action plan is succeeding.

I would be most interested in seeing Margaret Beckett's response.

Yours sincerely...

"It is possible to set a target to increase the amount of home-produced organic food for the UK market"

Michael Meacher, Minister of State, DEFRA, 25 January 2002

The Organic Targets Campaign calls for:

- an action plan for organic food and farming in England and Wales
- 30% of agricultural land in England and Wales to be organic by 2010

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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