

MANX ORGANIC NETWORK

MOGGYL ORGANAGH VANNIN

UPDATE: There has been some definite progress since our inaugural general meeting in November when the MON was officially launched. We now have a committee of 12, an adopted constitution, a chosen bank (after some discussion we chose the Co-operative Bank in consideration of their ethical stance and their long established history), 139 potential members with 100 fully paid up, 5 articles written about us in different island publications, an organic gardening group that meets regularly at Cregneash and quarterly Newsletters. For a voluntary organisation that has only really come together since July, we are not doing too badly. Our plans for the next 6-9 months are as follows:

1. Continue our discussions with DAFF.
2. Meet with the Fat Stock and Creamery to encourage them to recognise/support the market for locally produced organic produce and to promote it.
3. Investigate the requirements and logistics of a regular farmers market.
4. Progress a website/newspaper column with regular updates of where to buy locally produced organic and naturally grown foods.
5. Carry out a straw poll at various shopping locations on a busy Saturday to help promote the MON & increase membership while highlighting the growing market for locally produced organic foods.

We have a lot of work to do to get more people interested in our aims & objectives but if the progress we have made in the last 6 months is anything to go by, we have a lot to look forward to. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the committee for their hard work and dedicated support and for other non committee members who have also given their time, energy and enthusiasm.

Issue 2 April 2005

A Meeting with Bill Henderson.

Following Mr Henderson's talk at our inaugural meeting in November 2004 some members of MON met with the Minister at Government Offices to continue our discussions on the future of organic farming on the Isle of Man. This was a relaxed affair covering a number of ideas and suggestions. Mr Henderson once again reiterated the department's support for the organic subsidy and confirmed that they are committed to it. DAFF has already implemented a pilot agri-environmental scheme which, in a nutshell, encourages farmers, through a subsidy, to adopt certain practices which supports bio-diversity and protects natural features of the Manx landscape. 2006 will see the adoption of the Countryside Stewardship scheme which requires farmers, through a system of subsidy payments, to farm more in harmony with the environment, illustrating the move towards environmentally friendly practices into which organic farming methods lead the field. These attitudes reflect a growing trend around the world which finally recognises that to plan for the future we have to take care of our planet NOW. It was agreed at the meeting that the next important step for MON is to make a presentation to DAFF and to meet with the new chief executive, Mr. Richard Lole. A meeting will also be scheduled to take place between DAFF, the Fat Stock and MON.

STOP PRESS: MON are very pleased to confirm that they have invited the celebrity gardener, **Bob Flowerdew**, from BBC Radio 4s' Gardeners Question Time and author of many popular gardening books, for an evening of his 'No Work Garden' at the Manx Museum Lecture Theatre on **Friday 20th May at 7.30pm**. Bob Flowerdew's presentation will be followed by a question and answer session. We are also extremely fortunate that **Peter Segger, OBE**, successful organic farmer, MD of Organic Farm Foods Ltd, 7 years a member of the BBC R4 Rural Affairs committee, long time council member of the Soil Association and founder member of the International Alliance for Partnership in Ecology and Trade has agreed to do a talk entitled 'Organics: today and tomorrow'. Tickets are £7.50 each; *£5.00 for MON members*. Tickets can be purchased from Ottakar's, The Strand, Douglas; The Bridge Bookshop, Shore Road, Port Erin and Mother Nature, Parliament Street., Ramsey. *NB:* MON Members can purchase their tickets from **Susie Watson, on 825755**. Book early, only 200 seats available.

Organic Milk: New research proves organic milk is higher in vitamins and antioxidants than non-organic milk. Organic milk contains almost 3/4 more of omega 3 than its conventional counterpart. Omega 3 is a polyunsaturated fatty acid important for babies developing central nervous system, calms rowdy and disruptive behaviour in school children by helping their concentration and can help prevent blood clots, furring of the arteries and irregular heart beat in adults. Organically reared cows produce milk which is 50% higher in Vitamin E, 75% higher in beta carotene and two to three times higher in the antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthine than non organic milk. Robertson J&Fanning C, 2004 Omega 3 Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids in Organic and conventional milk (University of Aberdeen). The enhanced nutritional benefits of organic milk are due to the more natural diets of organic cows. The less intensive organic system (compared to conventional) ensure a diet high in forage, fresh grass and clover. In addition stocking rates on organic farms are lower, giving organic cows access to more fresh pasture. In contrast, non organic farmers are allowed to provide a cheaper diet which can be high in energy rich concentrates to increase milk yields. Non -organic farmers are also allowed to use GM cattle feed, urea and solvent extracted feeds and waste from food factories, all of which are banned in organic diets.

Kim and Janet meet Harvey Briggs

We drove, not without a little trepidation to Mr Briggs' farm outside Onchan. As supporters and promoters of locally produced Manx organic foods we are prepared to be subjected to tough questions and criticisms from conventional farmers. Harvey Briggs has been aware of our aims and objectives from the very start having been at the first meeting in December 2003 when the idea of an organic group was first mooted. As an attendee of that meeting he has been on our mailing list and in receipt of our minutes for a year now, but we were aware that he had reservations and was not convinced that our ideas had a chance of making any difference – a perfectly valid point of view and one which we wanted to talk with him about and to convince him otherwise. Driving into Harvey and Laura's farm, which is approached by a long muddy lane, is a chance to step back in time and walk into a farm that could be used, without props or alterations, as a film set for the 1930's. It is a testament to Harvey and Laura's love of their life in farming. There are no sounds of traffic, no trappings of twenty first century over consumerism; instead the air is filled with the strident crows from one of the many handsomely feathered, arrogant cockerels parading around the yard. Then we



met Harvey – a man defined by his well known position in the Isle of Man farming fraternity and a long time regular columnist for the Isle of

Man Newspapers – and all trepidation evaporated as he welcomed us into his warm, cosy home which was currently a little dark due to a temporary power cut. The following hour and a half sped by as we discussed our ideas, dreams and points of view. The time came to leave and it was with reluctance that we left the warm fireside and the informative and amusing company of Harvey and Laura. We were not on a mission to convert, we had come to learn about each other and gain some understanding and I think I am right that we left the richer for discovering each others points of view. (Harvey has written a wonderful book detailing his life in farming from before the 2nd World War to modern day, - **A Harvest of Memories** - we can recommend it !)

 * **Manx Organic Produce** *
 * **Vegetables:** Andrew Moore, Balladoole Farm, *
 * Castletown is currently selling from his shed *
 * White, Red and Savoy cabbages, potatoes, tur- *
 * nips and parsley. During April he will be *
 * ploughing and in May will be sowing. By mid *
 * to end of July he will have available 5 varieties *
 * of cabbage, broccoli, beetroot, turnips, potatoes. *
 * During August he will be harvesting carrots, *
 * spinach, cauliflower, parsley, potatoes and green *
 * cabbages. *
 * **Meat:** Pheric Curphey, Ballanea Farm, Kirk *
 * Michael is supplying beef and lamb to Fenton *
 * Campbells, butchers, Duke Street, Douglas. *
 * **Not certified organic but grown with no chemi-** *
 * **cals:** Brian Radcliffe can be found on the quay *
 * in Ramsey in Farmers Combine coal shed until *
 * 1st May when he will then have his stall at Ram- *
 * sey Market every Saturday through the summer. *
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Advertising Authority agrees statements to promote health benefits of organic foods.

The Committee on Advertising Practices has approved a range of statements that companies can use to promote the many benefits of organic food and farming. The approved statement acknowledge that organic food and farming is beneficial to human health, animal welfare and wildlife. The statements were cleared after months of research by the Soil Association. Among the 22 statements approved are:

- *No system of farming has higher levels of animal welfare standards than organic farms working to Soil Association standards*
- *No food has higher amounts of beneficial minerals, essential amino acids and vitamins than organic food*
- *The best method of reducing exposure to potentially harmful pesticides would be to consume organically grown food, where their use is avoided*
- *Eating organic food allows people to avoid hydrogenated fats completely*

Fair Trade Fortnight

What is Fair Trade ? It is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world. The Fair Trade mark is the only independent consumer label which appears on UK products as a guarantee that they have given their producers a better deal. *Fair Trade & Organic?* Fair Trade standards have a social goal that are primarily designed to ensure that disadvantaged producers in the 3rd world can gain more control over their lives. Environmental conditions are also important and producers are required to implement environmental improvement plans. Organic standards define the method of production. Organic agriculture ensures that workers are not exposed to agrochemicals and their associated health risks. Organic standards aim to produce high quality foods with minimal environmental and health impact but they do not, as a matter of course, seek to empower producers or guarantee special prices, although they do aim to ensure those who live and work on the land have good working conditions and decent quality of life. The two systems are complementary and many producers will benefit from both.

Straw Poll Update

A working party has been formed to gauge the levels of demand of Manx organic produce. The working party, (with the assistance of Heather Smallwood BSc DipM MCIM a Marketing Consultant and recent member of MON) has put together a series of questions that will be asked during a straw poll of the general public in the next month. We hope that the results will be able to be used to help promote the activities of the group and reflects our objective of marrying our commitment to organic produce (and ultimately an organic island) to the commercial needs and wants of our farmers and distributors. The results should be interesting and will be communicated to our members when available.

Organic category at the Agricultural Shows:

Bill Mizen, an enthusiastic member of MON, is having discussions with the organisers of the agricultural shows to include an organic category. MON has a lot of very capable organic gardeners and vegetable growers as members and we think the time is right for an organic category to be included in the shows. It is very much at discussion stage as rules will have to be set to establish the organic standards; if you are interested in entering or would like to have more details please contact Bill on 835263.

..did you know ?...Aerial spraying of bananas can occur up to 50 times a year, occasionally with workers still on the ground. In Costa Rica in 1997, half of all work related accidents occurred on banana plantations—mostly due to pesticide poisoning. Ministry of Health, Costa Rica; Bananas Trade Bulletins 9/98.

MON Gardening Group Cregneash, by Cilla Platt

Cregneash is an excellent venue for growing food and flowers organically as the farm has had a policy of growing without pesticides since it came under the control of Manx National Heritage. The Cregneash Organic Group came about after 6 years of my involvement with renovating and maintaining several gardens there. People I talked with and comments I heard gave me the feeling that the concept of traditional gardening is slipping out of our culture and that a lot of folk feel that it is impossible to eat and enjoy anything that isn't plastic looking and plastic wrapped, fresh from the supermarket shelf. The group started just for discussion and looking at what I had done during the seasons in and around the Cregneash gardens. But I felt that was unsatisfactory as it is so much easier to learn by doing rather than just talking about it. The next step, therefore, was to get a piece of ground which would need cultivating from scratch. Fortunately M.N.H. kindly agreed, and with Bill Mizens' help we have got stuck in. With a hard core of about 6 and a floating population of about 12, the ground that I first prepared by strimming was skimmed of turf and then neatly stacked. Now the area has been forked through and perennial weeds picked out. The first planting of potatoes, shallots and onion sets have been made. Bill and I are glowing with pride that our friends have turned a scruffy plot into an area where we can demonstrate to a wider audience how we grow vegetables and herbs organically.

...did you see ?...Rick Stien getting 15 butchers from Smithfields Meat Market in London to blind taste test 3 roast rolled sirloin ; A—organic Guernsey, B—best supermarket, C—cheap as chips from a high street butchers. 11 out of the 15 preferred the organic...need we say more. (BBC 2 Food Heroes, 14.3.05)

Bill's Gardening Tip

After the winter gales we have been experiencing, shrubs and rose bushes will need to be firmed back in the ground, any broken bits pruned out. It's not too late to order seeds for this year and seed potatoes will be here soon. Here are a few varieties which have good blight resistance and so particularly well suited to organic methods:

Main crop: Romano, Valor, Premiere

Late main crop: Cara

Second early: Lady Balfour, Maris Piper

Earlies: Maris Bard, Red Duke of York

Salad: Juliette' Belle de Foutenay, Pink Fir Apple.



GM ?? Genetic Modification involves the artificial insertion of a foreign gene into the genetic material of an organism in an essentially random way. There are currently 2 types of GM crops, those engineered to be resistant to herbicides in order to kill weeds and those engineered to produce toxins to kill pests. However, the natural world has infinite complexities, most of which man has little or no idea about and charging up the genetic engineering route could put us in the position of altering our priceless, fragile and irreplaceable eco system forever. GM foods are not the answer to climate change and feeding the world. GM is the answer to the agri-industries prayers-total dependence from seed to farm to supermarket to consumer. To guarantee farmer dependence these companies are researching terminator crops, which will not reproduce at all, so the third world farmer is dependent on giant western multinationals to purchase their seed as well as buy their crops which can only increase debt and hunger. As consumers we can make a protest against the GM invasion by using our buying power. To ensure that what we buy is safe and fresh we should buy directly from the producer via independent shops, from the farmers and farmers markets. Competition should be between the farmers to produce GM free, chemical free, fresh produce. Buying local protects the community by keeping the money and the jobs in the locality. Buying organic safeguards your health and the countryside. *Buy Manx Organic.*

Dates for open MON meetings, Knockaloe Farm, Kirk Patrick

Wednesday, 18th May, 7.30pm, all welcome.

Aims and Objectives of MON

- 1. To promote** awareness of the benefits of organically produced food and sustainable agriculture.
- 2. To promote** Manx organic farmers and growers by encouraging consumers to buy locally produced organic food.
- 3. To create** a network of local resources, information and advice.
- 4. To encourage** the Manx Government to continue and increase its support for organic production.
- 5. To develop** an identifiable Manx Organic Brand.

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