



# newsletter

Issue 6, June 2006

Welcome to the sixth edition of the Manx Organic Network newsletter, another bumper issue of news and features reflecting our mission to put organics on the agenda in the Isle of Man.

## More Manx organic please! By Janet Bridle

Well, we started something and now it's taking off. We've amazed even ourselves at what can be achieved with some passion, perseverance and commitment – and, of course, facts! As you read this newsletter you'll see how much we've been doing to further our main aim: to increase the availability of Manx organic produce.

But achieving this is not only about committee initiatives. It's something we can all play an invaluable part in. Here's how you can make a difference...

### Get recruiting!

We must increase our membership significantly in order to be a body that will be taken even more seriously in the future. We know there are many more people out there who share our views and we need to persuade them to join us.

Membership forms are enclosed, so please encourage family, friends and colleagues to join us. If they want to be active members, great. If they simply want to help by showing solidarity and swelling the numbers, that's great too.

### Renew your membership

With membership renewal coming up on 1 August, please renew yours when you get your form through the

post. Individual membership is still £5 and we have introduced a new family membership of £10, regardless of numbers – a fantastic deal!

The reasoning behind the family membership is that we want to be able to quote true figures on MON membership, including all members of the household – so first names are important too. We're also asking for birth dates for children under 16 because we plan to increase our initiatives for younger members.

### Make yourself heard

In the end it's consumers who bring about change, and these changes can happen very quickly – witness the big retailers' current responses to consumer concerns about everything from organic produce to ethical production.

When you're out shopping, ask if the organic produce on offer is Manx. If we ask the retailers, they will ask the producers and then, just maybe, much more Manx organic produce will be gracing the shelves.

We really are grateful to you, our members, for your support and encouragement. We're currently working on some projects you might enjoy getting involved in – read on to find out more.

## Putting Manx organic meat on the menu By Ian Davies

Recently, I've learned a thing or two about the availability of local organic beef and lamb. I hadn't realised that there is a virtual famine between February and June, which just goes to show how much I know about farming.

There was a flurry at Easter when a single beast hit the shops, but that

wasn't enough to meet demand – and you probably missed it! It's all to do with calving/lambing times, growth and feeding issues, etc, etc. One butcher had the capacity and foresight to freeze a few lambs, but that was all.

Sadly, the rest of the organic beef and lamb on sale is currently imported.

## MON to host extended visit by OF&G Chief Executive



MON has been instrumental in bringing Richard Jacobs, Chief Executive of OF&G, to the Island for a five-day visit.

Richard has been inspired by our efforts to increase local organic production to meet increasing demand, and will be here from 19 to 23 June. We have arranged a full programme of meetings involving our existing certified producers, farmers and growers interested in certification, Government officials and private and Government vets.

The visit illustrates yet again our ability to make networking happen, with the aim of getting every part of the chain working together to achieve sufficient, sustainable local production of organic foodstuffs. We are aware of the complexities involved in realising this aim, but this is a very positive step and we look forward to continuing to work with Richard and OF&G.



## MON gives 2010 Committee some food for thought

The 2010 Committee has been set up to determine a long term strategy for Manx agriculture in view of the 2010 meat derogation – as reported on in the last issue.

The Committee is made up of representatives of DAFF, the MNFU, the IOM Agricultural Marketing Society, the Fatstock and the Milk Marketing Association.

The MON committee felt strongly that no strategy could be formed without consideration of the growing organic market, so we put

our heads together and produced a comprehensive and compelling argument for the organic cause.

The 2010 agreed to hear our thoughts on ‘the objectives and strategies for the long term direction of the Manx agricultural industry’. Our presentation was made to them on 12 May at Rose House, DAFF head office, by Janet Bridle, Viv Davies and Alison Jones. We believe this was well received and await the Committee’s decision – watch this space.

## Ramsey Grammar School set for Eco Day

Following last year’s successful pilot project at Ballakermeen High School, MON will be taking part in the next Eco Day, scheduled for July 3 at Ramsey Grammar School.

### What is the Eco Day?

This one-day event gives Year 7 students a unique opportunity to experience a ‘circus’ of environmental workshops and activities within the framework of their school day.

### Who’s involved?

The Eco Day is organised between the host school and the Eco Partnership: a coalition of Manx environmental organisations co-ordinated through the One World Centre.

These organisations include Curragh’s Wildlife Park, IOM Friends of the Earth, Department of Forestry and Fisheries, Department of Local Government and the Environment, Fairtrade Island IOM, Island Agenda 21, the Manx Wildlife Trust and, of course, the Manx Organic Network – to name but a few.

All are deeply committed to raising awareness of the local environment

and some of the issues and concerns related to conservation and sustainable development on the Island. They aim to encourage a personal response through change of lifestyles and practice that will have positive global impact.

### What does it do?

The Eco Day helps raise awareness of local environmental issues in a fun, informal way, with interactive workshops looking at personal accountability in a global context.

Activities initiated extend far beyond the day itself – for example, with school-based organic gardens and recycling projects.

The Eco Day also helps raise awareness of local environmental groups among both students and teachers, encouraging involvement in these groups’ activities.

*If you want to be involved in the Eco Day, or would like more information, please contact Janet Bridle on 835436 or [jbridle@manx.net](mailto:jbridle@manx.net)*

## New MON appointments and committee changes

Following our AGM in March, there have been some changes to our committee line-up.

We had resignations from our Treasurer, Gary Lamb, Cilla and George Platt and Anne Thomsett. We thank them wholeheartedly for their input and hard work, which will be missed. However, we have been assured of their continued support as members.

Under the powers invested in the committee by the constitution, we have voted on four new committee members and appointed officers. The new committee line-up is:

Janet Bridle, Chairman  
 Viv Davies, Secretary  
 Jeremy Bridle, Treasurer  
 (new committee member)  
 Susie Watson, Membership  
 Secretary (new committee  
 member)  
 Caroline Perry  
 Clare Lewis  
 Pheric Curphey  
 Andrew Moore  
 Kim Lamb  
 Alison Jones  
 (new committee member)  
 Sharon Jamieson  
 (new committee member)

We look forward to another busy and rewarding year.

**WANTED:**

**YOUR news and views**

- **Do you have an organic-related story that we could feature?**
- **Is there anything you’d like to see more – or less – of in the newsletter?**
- **Is one issue every quarter enough? Too much?**

This is YOUR publication, so if you have any comments, questions or news, please contact Janet Bridle by email on [jbridle@manx.net](mailto:jbridle@manx.net)

NB: the deadline for news for the next issue (September) is Friday 28 July (TBC).

# Organics mean business in the global marketplace

A review at Biofach 2006, Europe's largest organic exhibition, by Janet Bridle

IN FEBRUARY, Sharon Jamieson and I attended the Biofach organic exhibition in Nuremburg – not in an 'official' MON capacity, but rather out of personal curiosity about the progress being made in organics across Europe.

Billed as the most important organic exhibition in Europe, Biofach 2006 exceeded all our expectations. 116 countries were represented, spread over eight large halls in Nuremburg's state-of-the-art Congress Centre. Two of the biggest halls were dedicated to the German market, one hall to natural care products, four to international markets and one wonderful hall to organic wines – so many to taste, so little time!

## A force to be reckoned with

What struck us immediately was the vibrant, up-to-the-minute, permanent feel of the exhibitors. It was clear from the impressive stands, products and merchandise that this was about major investment, and that the old chestnut 'organic is just a fad' couldn't be further from the truth.

Now a force to be reckoned with in the global marketplace, the organic industry in Europe in particular is a sexy, progressive, big money-making one. And it's obviously growing. Germany has a very strong national market and the Mayor of Nuremburg has pledged that food for the international youth camp during the World Cup will be 100% organic.

## Emerging markets

As Country of the Year at the exhibition, Poland was particularly significant. Their claim of soil unpolluted by modern agricultural methods is interesting – can we expect the mass importation of cheap organic grain and milk from an EU-empowered Poland in the not-too-distant future?

We eventually found the UK contingent: eight small, rather disappointing stands. These were mainly hosted by importers and distributors rather than producers, reflecting the fact that 70% of UK organic produce is imported – something that doesn't sit easily with the ethos of organic production,

or with the UK government's plan to produce 70% of organics at home.

## International inspiration

We spent two full days in the Congress Centre, meeting many enthusiastic and committed producers who were proud to share experiences of farming in harmony with the environment. I was particularly impressed by the sugar producers of South America and the North African growers with their small, intense, deep purple olives.

Many of these producers were members of co-operatives that have improved livelihoods and communities for future generations. We spoke with people who started out as dedicated, small family companies. To their delight, the products they had so much faith in and nurtured so lovingly have found a growing market worldwide.

In addition to the organic chocolate samples, we came away with a very important message: ignore the organic market at your peril.

## Organics in the news by Janet Bridle

Organic issues and organic-related topics are appearing more and more in the media, particularly as front page articles. Most of these are encouraging and reflect the growing market for organic produce.

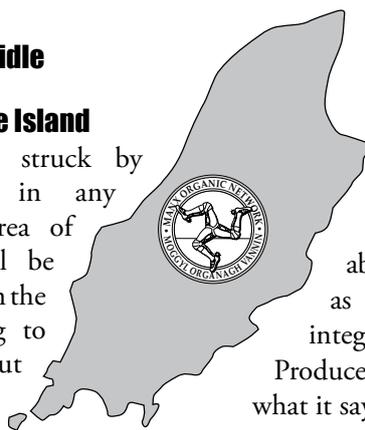
### Organic scams

However, when a recent headline in The Times caught my eye, my heart sank. It was an article I expect every organic certifying body has been dreading. 'Shoppers duped in organic meat scam', it shouted accusatorily from the front page. As I read through it, I imagined the backlash and crowds of delight from all those sceptics and finger-pointers we have met on our travels with MON.

### Opportunity for the Island

But then I was struck by something. Yes, in any movement and area of change, there will be people who jump on the bandwagon, trying to make money without putting in the necessary effort and commitment.

But here is a real opportunity for the Isle of Man. Our unique situation rules out this kind of scam. Our Island is ring-fenced by its very geography. Farmers know each other. We have one abattoir and one Creamery processing all the meat and dairy products.



### The best of the best

This means that our organic produce could stand head and shoulders above that of any other country as a foodstuff of complete integrity, free from suspicion. Produce that can be trusted to be what it says it is: Manx Organic.

What a fabulous USP, both locally and for export. Even in our own market, which in years to come may be flooded with imported organic produce, Manx Organic would stand out as a transparent and true product. In short, yet another good reason for our producers to consider certification more seriously.

# Isle of Man Small Producers Organic Group gets underway

IN EARLY APRIL we held an initial meeting to discuss whether the Isle of Man could become the first area to successfully run a small producer's organic certification scheme. The meeting was attended by farmers and growers who have relatively small holdings but are trying to produce organically.

The cost of organic certification and the work required to achieve it are both barriers to these smaller producers becoming registered. Members of a group scheme would benefit from reduced certification fees, help with the preparation of plans and organic application forms, support with marketing and regular group meetings.

This meeting was followed up by another one on 27 April, attended by Peter Lawlor of Organic Farmers and Growers (OF&G). Peter, who carries out organic inspections for OF&G, confirmed that they were very supportive of the planned scheme. He also answered many of the technical and administrative questions asked by the producers at the meeting, which included:

**Q: How long is the conversion period?**

A: Two years, regardless of acreage.

**Q: Are there any exceptions to this rule?**

A: It is possible to get a reduction of up to four months from the date of first application by proving that chemicals and fertiliser have not been used. The inspector will have to verify this by checking weed species etc. A 12-month reduction is possible if you can prove the land has been inspected by an official body – eg, DAFF - for the past two years.

**Q: What is the status of non-organic seed sown in organic soil?**

A: While organic seed should be sown into organic soil, this combination is not always available. A derogation can be given to sow undressed non-organic seed into organic land with no penalty – this needs to be obtained prior to sowing. Dressed seed is a no-no.

**Q: Is it possible to get a reduction on the conversion period for pigs and poultry?**

A: As pigs and poultry get most of their food from sources other than the land they live on (ie, most of the food is bought in), it's possible to get a 12-month reduction for the land. Remember, all bought-in foods must be organic.

The next meeting will be held at 7.30pm, Tuesday 20 June at Knockaloe Farm and will be attended

by Richard Jacobs, Chief Executive of OF&G. The meeting is open to all small producers who are interested in having their holdings organically certified in order that produce can be sold as 'organic'.

*For more information, please contact Caroline Perry on 613478 or [carolineandphil@manx.net](mailto:carolineandphil@manx.net)*

## Open meetings for all MON members

AS PROMISED at the AGM, we will have four open meetings a year. These will enable members to discuss progress with the committee, get involved in decision-making and enjoy a good get-together!

The first of these will be on Thursday 7 September, at Knockaloe Farm. This will double as a tomato tasting event, with Robert Watson of Watsons' Nurseries giving a talk on tomato growing – along with a more general chat on organic vegetable growing in the Island. Please bring your own 'organically' grown tomatoes!

This will be followed up on Thursday 9 November with an organic wine tasting evening – same time, same venue. More information will follow in the next newsletter, together with a date for the next open meeting in late January 2007.

## Chemical reactions: your help needed!

Several MON members with health conditions ranging from ME to hay fever have reported that this time of year is difficult for them. They feel that the routine spraying of footpaths and verges with weed killers could be contributing to heightened symptoms.

Last year the survey we carried out among members on these



chemical sprays provoked a strong response. We even heard from people whose dogs seemingly react badly to the sprays.

On behalf of all the sufferers out there, we are doing some further information gathering, so if you have any research or insight into this issue, please contact Janet Bridle on 835436, or [jbridle@manx.net](mailto:jbridle@manx.net)

## Growing for showing By Bill Mizen

I have been growing vegetables and flowers for shows for many years and have won my fair share of prizes! It still gives me a lift to start again early in the year, with spring just about in sight.

While not everyone will become as keen on showing as I am, you can start off with just a few entries and get a lot of pleasure from it. To begin with, take the view 'I'll have a go at it for a bit of fun'. You'll still have to make sure you meet the standards set down for judging by the Royal Horticultural Society, but you won't have a reputation to lose!

### Check out the competition

For starters, it's a good idea to visit a local show and do a little reconnaissance. Check out what has won in the classes you hope to enter at the next show.

Incidentally, many local shows have seen a sharp fall-off in entries in recent years – I'm told that in the Ramsey and Sulby shows last year there were no entries at all in some classes. So if you live in the north and already have plants on the go, there is a real opportunity for you to have a go at showing this year. You may even win a prize first time out!

### Keep it simple

If you're a first-timer I'd suggest you concentrate on one or more of potatoes,

lettuce, beetroot, carrots, beans and peas. The number will depend on how much time you have and how much ground you can give over to vegetable production – although all these can also be grown in containers.

### Growing tips

While I haven't always been an organic grower, I am a convert to the benefits of organic growing methods. Some tips:

- Vital to successful vegetable growing is soil with a good 'heart', so work plenty of compost into the top six inches.
- To feed my vegetables I use a Maxicrop plant growth stimulant, which is approved for organic growing and can be found in local nurseries and garden centres.
- To keep pests at bay, try crushing some garlic, keeping it in a container for a week, then adding water. After straining out the bits, you can spray it onto your plants three times a week.

### Presentation tips

When you do start showing, don't enter too many classes at once, as good presentation is essential. It takes time to prepare your produce and arrange it attractively on the show bench. Some dos and don'ts:

- All entries must be fresh, with no wilted leaves (a common problem

with lettuce), so a good tip is to place a polythene bags over the roots to keep the moisture in. Always remove old and discoloured leaves.

- When showing carrots, two to three inches of foliage must be left on each carrot, then bunch-tied with green string.
- Make sure you select produce of uniform size and colour. Any blemishes or marks will lose you points, so be particular with your selections.
- Remember, everything must be clean, with no soil left on the roots.

I hope this article has whetted your appetite and provided some inspiration. But remember, there's nothing like the real thing. So why not come along to one of the two short practical presentations I'll be giving: at the Davies' in Andreas on Sunday 18 June, or at Ballakilly Barn, opposite Rushen Church, Port Erin, on Saturday 8 July.

*For directions to the Andreas presentation, please call Viv or Ian Davies on 882332.*



## Seaweed: is it safe? By Sharon Jamieson



Seaweed is a valuable commodity to the organic gardener as a fertiliser and soil conditioner. And for us in the Isle of Man it's free and abundantly available from our beaches. But how safe is it to use?

I contacted Dr P McKenna, Senior Scientific Officer at our Government Laboratories to find out. He was very helpful and directed me to the most recent report, Radioactivity in Food and the Environment.

Conducted in 2004 by the UK

Environmental Department and Food Standards Agency, this concludes that there is no significant hazard to human health through the transfer of radioactivity to crops grown on soil to which seaweed has been applied.

The good news is that radioactivity levels have fallen dramatically since 1995 and, while there will always be some low level activity, there is no evidence of these having a significant effect on the food chain. The choice is yours...

# A MARKET FOR ALL SEASONS Green Mann update 12-4pm every Thursday

As the seasons change, so does the Green Mann market, which continues to go from strength to strength.

Winter and spring vegetables have now come to the end of their season, but as the weather turns warmer there will be a whole range of local seasonal produce on offer to tempt our tastebuds. Here's what we can look forward to:

## Early June

Rhubarb, spinach, potatoes, lettuce.

## Late June

Spring onions, radishes, onions, garlic, baby carrots, strawberries, globe artichokes.

## June into July

Raspberries, gooseberries, red/white/blackcurrants, cherries, beetroot, peas, beans, potatoes, parsnips, carrots, tomatoes.

## July into August

Sweetcorn, courgettes, runner beans, apples, plums, cabbage, broccoli.

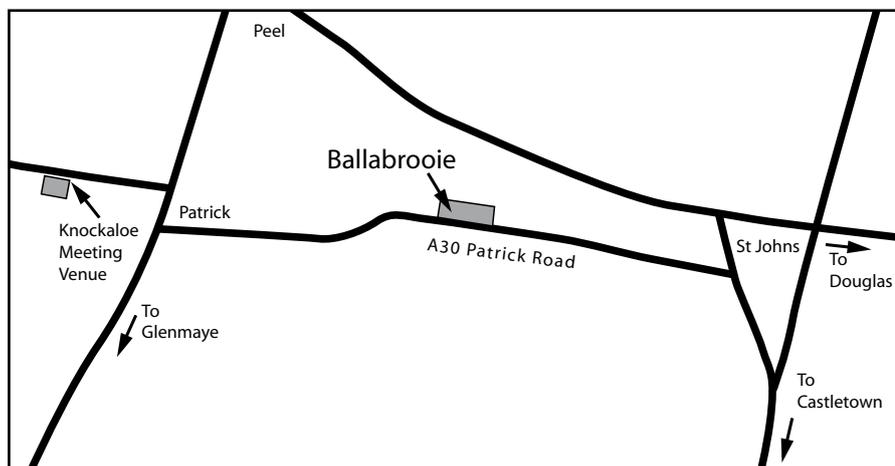
Herbs are in abundance for much of the year, so if you don't see the one you want, Jimmy will be happy to pick you a bunch. Seedlings and small plants are also available for your herb gardens and vegetable patches.

All in all, there's something for everyone. A big thank you to everyone

who supplies and supports the market – long may it continue!

The Green Mann market is held every Thursday from 12-4pm. For more information, call Jimmy Lawton on 843738.

PS: Don't forget to keep on supporting our organic butchers: Fenton Campbell's in Douglas and Ratcliffe's in Castletown (if you can get in the door on a Saturday!)



## Manx Organic Network in a nutshell



### Aims and objectives:

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

### Membership:

300 and growing. For more membership forms to pass on to family and friends, please get in touch with Membership Secretary Susie Watson on XXXX

### Contact:

Janet Bridle, Chair, 835436 or [jbridle@manx.net](mailto:jbridle@manx.net)

Viv Davies, Secretary, 882332

MANX ORGANIC NETWORK,  
C/O THE SPINNEY, HOWE ROAD,  
PORT ST MARY, IM9 5AU

## EVENTS CALENDAR

Details of events coming up in the next few months...

### Sunday 18 June

Practical presentation on vegetable growing for shows by Bill Mizen, plus general get-together for northern members. At the Davies', Andreas, 2-5pm.

### Sunday 18 June

Young Farmers Field Day, Knockaloe Farm, Kirk Patrick, 2-5pm.

### Sunday 25 June

Manx Wildlife Trust fundraising event, Mooragh Park, Ramsey, 2-5pm.

### Saturday 8 July

Practical presentation on vegetable growing for shows by Bill Mizen, Ballkilley Farm, Port Erin, 2-4pm.

### Saturday 22 July

Country Fair, Ayre Clay Pigeon Club, Blue Point, 10am.

### 29 & 30 July

Southern Agricultural Show, Castletown.

### 11 & 12 August

Royal Manx Agricultural Show, Sulby

### Thursday 7 September

Manx Organic Network open meeting, Knockaloe Farm, 7.30pm