



newsletter

Issue 7, September 2006

Welcome to the seventh edition of the Manx Organic Network newsletter, designed to keep you up to speed with MON's activities, achievements and strategies for furthering the organic cause in the Island.

A bright future for Manx organic produce By Janet Bridle

I'D LIKE TO kick off this issue by sharing with you my optimism about the future of organic production in the Isle of Man. As you read through it, you'll see how we're continuing to make progress in this area. Not progress of the miraculous overnight transformation variety, but very real progress nevertheless.

Star of the shows

Having recently attended *The Blue Point County Fair* and *The Southern Agricultural Show*, I was really encouraged by people's response to the Manx Organic Network. Many of our leaflets were picked up and we had lots of conversations with interested consumers. As in previous years, we heard over and over again the mantra, "Where can we buy local organic food and why isn't there more of it?"

Satisfying healthy appetites

We think there is going to be more of it. We are increasingly being approached by farmers and growers interested in what we have to say: that there's a burgeoning market for organic produce out there, and more and more consumers from all walks of life want to buy it.

This is largely the result of consumers being more interested than ever before in health, food miles and environmental issues. But as very little Manx organic produce is currently available, the benefit of this market is lost to the Island's economy.

Learning from the past

So, we know there's an opportunity and we're committed to making the most of it. But in doing so, we must avoid the



MON at the Southern Agricultural Show

mistakes made in the UK in the early 1990s. Farmers were encouraged by DEFRA to take up generous grants, but the market wasn't prepared for the resulting flood of organic produce – in particular organic milk. Prices crashed and many turned back to conventional farming if they hadn't gone bust.

The picture in the UK's organic dairy sector is very different today, with demand outstripping supply to the extent that organic milk is being imported. Obviously, it's important that we avoid such extremes, by helping to ensure that:

- Manx production expands to meet demand in a planned way, and doesn't exceed demand

- Manx organic produce succeeds in the marketplace, ending the current situation in which a disproportionate amount is imported

- the Manx organic sector develops a product of integrity, with distinct 'Isle of Man Organic' branding for sale both on and off-Island – these two markets to be developed in tandem

- the industry makes a strong contribution to the sustainable environmental management of the Island's agricultural land and water resources.

We think this is a justified approach to a significant and growing market that should be developed as a future opportunity for the Isle of Man, with the following benefits:

- Being produced to legally enforced standards and subject to tight controls on inputs, organic food keeps increasingly aware consumers satisfied.

- Bringing the organic market to the fore encourages consumers to take more interest in how land is farmed, and can help forge a sense of community between buyer and seller, town and country.

- Organic production ensures high standards of animal welfare and benefits rural employment through farming practices and developing new marketing systems.

There are many other well-documented potential benefits, and among those particularly relevant to the Isle of Man are eco-tourism and public health.

Successful visit by OF&G Chief Executive By Viv Davies

IN JUNE, MON hosted a successful visit by Richard Jacobs, Chief Executive of leading organic certification body Organic Farmers & Growers (OF&G). It fell to me to organize the visit and accompanying someone so well versed in his subject was inspiring.

With 19 meetings in just over three days, the scope of Richard's itinerary was as diverse as it was exacting: farm visits, Manx Radio, Government, Fatstock, Creamery, practice and Government vets, butchers, organic producers, MNFU and a Small Producer Group – not to mention MON members and a visit to the Green Mann market.

So it's fair to say that Richard's suggestions – summarized below – come

from an in-depth insight into the Isle of Man and its issues. It was clear that he genuinely warmed to the Island and was very excited by the future for organic farming here.

Richard did not 'sell' organic to the people we met, he made the point repeatedly that it is a choice: a choice to be taken in the context of the individual and the environment. However it was clear that a number of producers are looking very carefully at the option and in some cases are poised to take the next step towards the certification process.

As Richard commented, "I was very impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of all those involved

with organic in the Island. With the growth of organic demand and the demise of import restrictions in 2011, the Island has now to become a player on the world stage.

"This will be a difficult process for many of the Island's farmers, who have previously enjoyed a very protected environment. I realise that some will see the changes as threats, but with vision and leadership they can be viewed as challenges to meet and overcome."

MON's role remains crucial in demonstrating that demand continues to grow and helping the relevant parties tackle the issues involved in providing an infrastructure for long-term local organic production.

Richard Jacobs on organics in the Island

Richard made some invaluable suggestions following his visit, many of which MON has already starting considering. Here are some of the key points from his summary:

- As the demand for organic produce increases and the supply base rises to the challenge of meeting that demand, a Manx Organic Action Plan Group (MOAPG) should be formed to steer the development of the organic sector on the Island.
- The Manx Organic Action Plan will set the scene for the development of the Manx organic sector and where possible will relate the objectives to existing Government policy. The Plan will define the targets for the Island's organic sector and the actions required to achieve those targets. Politicians should be encouraged to support the plan.
- One obvious objective for the MOAPG is to replace imported organic goods with home-produced. Therefore, quantifying the amounts imported in each sector and estimating current and expected demand will provide targets to aim for.
- In order to match supply to demand in all sectors, a study needs to be conducted to quantify current and expected demand. This study would then inform policy with regard to encouraging new conversions (bearing in mind the two-year conversion period).
- Poultry production (eggs and meat) is proving to be one of the biggest growth areas for UK organic. As this trend is likely to be reflected in the Isle of Man, it should be examined.
- A Manx Farmer/Grower Group could be set up to provide a forum for discussion of areas of mutual interest and to investigate mutual assistance such as 'buyers groups'.
- A Manx Small Producer Group is already forming and now needs to be given the impetus to push forward.

Play your part in making change happen

As MON members and Manx residents, we can use our voices and our votes to make change happen. Here is a selection of questions you might want to ask your candidates for the House of Keys.

1 Consumers are more interested than ever before in health, food miles and

environmental issues when buying food. They are increasingly demanding foods produced to legally enforced standards. For many, certified organic foods are the answer.

With very little Manx certified organic produce currently available, the benefit

of this market is lost to the Island's economy. How would you seek to address this issue?

2 Many imported organic products could be produced locally – eg, vegetables, dairy, pork and poultry products. How would you ensure

that Manx certified organic produce succeeds in the marketplace, ending the current situation in which an unnecessarily disproportionate amount is imported?

3 Would you call for assistance and grants for farmers willing to use organic methods?

4 A great deal has been made of 'Freedom to Flourish' and 'I love Manx'. Within these campaigns would you support the development of Manx-branded, certified organic products, for sale both on and off-Island – with both markets being developed in tandem? What practical steps would you take to achieve this?

5 'Growing your own' vegetables is a healthy pastime, which invariably also saves the grower money: a 'win win' situation.

The Isle of Man Government and Parish Commissioners could encourage this by creating allotments for rent.

This would be an inexpensive project and there are many successful UK examples that could be followed. If elected, what would you do specifically to encourage the creation of new allotments Island-wide and in your constituency?

6 Better food in schools has become an imperative, yet many Manx schools are still providing unhealthy food. Would you be willing to champion local and organic produce in school meals?

7 As the demand for Manx organic produce increases and the supply base rises to the challenge of meeting that demand, a Manx Organic Action Plan should be formed to steer the development of that sector on the Island. Would you sign up to support that action plan?

Organics go down a treat at School Eco Day

By Janet Bridle

FOLLOWING THE successful pilot project at Ballakermeen High School in 2005, the Eco partnership held its 2006 Eco day at Ramsey Grammar School on 3 July.

Co-ordinated through the One World Centre, the Eco partnership is a coalition of Manx environmental organisations committed to raising awareness of the local environment and issues related to conservation and sustainable development on the Island.

Organic options favoured

Seven volunteers from MON spent the day taking groups of children through the basic principles of organic farming, organic growing and tasting of conventional versus organic food.

It's always rewarding lining children up in front of foods which generally look pretty similar and getting their senses to do the test. Many children have an aversion to things like tomatoes, raw carrots and dried apricots, but with a little persuasion we had most children trying everything.

Their verdict was clear: around 75% preferred the organic option. Many were surprised that organic food isn't all mung beans and prunes, but includes everyday favourites ranging from ketchup to chocolate.

Thumbs-up for organic feast

The grand event of the day was the totally organic lunch. This was no mean feat, with more than 600 meals being served to pupils, staff and Eco day volunteers.

The menu

Spaghetti Bolognese made with Manx organic meat

Lettuce locally grown to organic principles

Cheese or ham sandwiches

Yoghurt, fruit, juice and a muesli bar

The verdict

The general consensus on both the tasting and the lunch was "Delicious!" Here is a small selection of the comments made by individual students:

"I really enjoyed the bread."

"I usually eat yoghurt but this was so much nicer."

"The bolognese was great."

"The Manx Organic Network made a major contribution to the Eco day," says teacher John Craine. "Even though our school meals do include healthy options, students were made more conscious of the importance of the history of what is being eaten. The staff were impressed too, with many inquiries about where the organic bread had been bought.

"The teaching sessions were also very well received. Students enjoyed the mix of practical activity and discussion about organic food. The timing was spot on for the organic food area and the group sizes were just right."

A team effort

A big thank you must go to the school's kitchen staff, who embraced the concept with huge enthusiasm. Also to the retailers and growers who generously donated or supplied food at cost: Holland & Barratt, Manx Co-op, M&S, Radcliffe Butchers, Shoprite, Tesco and local growers Ian Davies and Jimmy Lawton.

Fact

The global market for organic food and drink was worth an estimated £16.7 billion in 2005 – a three-fold rise on 2004.

*Soil Association 2005
Organic Survey*

MON website goes live By Ian Davies

AS MANY OF you will know, our website manxorganicnetwork.com was launched in mid-August - a major step forward for MON in terms of our ability to communicate between members and really 'network' quickly and effectively for the first time.

We hope you will visit it regularly and make the most of all the updates, and we're confident that you will help drive the developments we have planned over the next 12 months.



As website editor I will be looking at expanding the site to include a members only section, featuring special interest groups (Poultry and Bees immediately come to mind), discussion boards... the sky, or

should I say the ether, is the limit! I look forward to getting your feedback via the email link on the site.

To help advertise the website and get more members on board, please use the car sticker you will receive. If you know someone personally who would like to join, encourage them to visit the 'Join us' section of the website and download the membership form.

Fact Retail sales of organic products in the UK were worth around £1.6 billion in 2005, a 30% increase on 2004.
Soil Association 2005 Organic Survey

Manx farmers produce world's first ever organic Loaghtan lambs

WE'RE DELIGHTED to report that Manx farmers Paul and Lindsey Hotchkiss have produced the first organic Manx Loaghtans to be bred in the world.

Paul says, "The Manx Loaghtan is the Island's indigenous breed of sheep and we are pleased to help give it the profile it deserves. Thanks to the efforts of the Loaghtan Society, there is a demand for this product throughout the UK and hopefully we can now add the organic version."

Having worked hard to convert to organic status over the last two years, Paul and Lindsey have opened an exciting new chapter for this historic breed.

An opportunity for Manx agriculture

"The conversion was not as difficult as one might imagine," says Paul. "The key is to choose the right breed for the environment. The organic production of such speciality breeds is, in my view, one of the ways forward for Manx agriculture, especially in view of the changes which will take place in 2011."

"What pleases me is that I have produced the lambs, I know what they have eaten and what their life cycle has been. We have also been very lucky in



that 60% this year were twins. I put this down to the kind loan of one of Diana Steriopolus' prize rams, which was clearly on top form!"

Putting organic Loaghtan lamb on the menu

Certified by OF&G, eight males out of the 19 lambs will go into the Island's abattoir in around a year's time: a small but significant step towards meeting the ever increasing demand for Manx organic produce.

"This is really is very exciting," says MON's Janet Bridle. "Paul and Lindsey expressed their interest in converting following their contact with MON, so this is a first for us too. As a hardy mountain breed, it feels right that Loaghtans should be organic."

Did you know...

- Loaghtan sheep have been in existence on the Isle of Man for over 1,000 years.
- They usually have four horns, but can have up to six.
- The name is thought to have come from the Manx words 'lugh' (meaning mouse) and 'dhoan' (brown).
- Loaghtan lambs are born black, only turning brown after two weeks.
- Usually left undyed, the wool is used for lightweight garments including Manx tartans.
- The dark coloured meat is low in both fat and cholesterol.



Isle of Man Organic Small Producers Group update

Following our meeting with Richard Jacobs, a proposal is being put together on raising funding for the group – any ideas would be very welcome.

If you grow your own produce and would like to become registered as organic, but have not yet attended our meetings, please call Caroline Perry on 490488.

Manx organic butchers ahead of the game

You may be surprised to learn that the Isle of Man is streets ahead of the UK when it comes to certified organic butchers.

A not-so-grand total of 63 butchers in the UK have gone through the organic certification process, including just two in London. Yet in the Isle of Man, both Fenton Campbell's in Douglas and Radcliffe's in Castletown have been fully certified by DEFRA-accredited inspection body Organic Farmers & Growers (OF&G).

MON's persistence pays off

This enviable situation was a direct result of MON's efforts with DAFF, Fatstock and the butchers involved. Those efforts reflect our determination to avoid the scares around so-called organic meat that persist in the UK.

As recently reported on the BBC News website, 'Nine in every 10 [UK] butchers claiming to be selling organic meat may be breaking the law. The Soil Association is warning that butchers must apply for certification before advertising meat as organic. Organic sales are booming, but consumers may find it hard to work out which products are genuinely organic.'

The genuine article

Our butchers' certification means that organic Manx meat maintains its thread of integrity from the producer, through the certified fatstock, then the certified butchers, to our plates.

As MON Chairman Janet Bridle says, "Due to our size and community we have a fantastic opportunity in the Isle of Man to maintain a product of the highest integrity. And the fact that we have the same number of certified organic butchers as the UK's capital city is without doubt something for the Island to be proud of."

MON members make a big impression at Sulby show

By Ian Davies

OK, so the Sulby Horticultural Show may not be the most competitive on the Island. But this year's show on 6 August saw great strides made by MON members involved in 'growing your own' to organic principles (no pesticides or artificial fertilisers).

Young MON member sets shining example

The greatest stride was made by 10-year-old Alfie Leach, a MON family member and pupil at Sulby Primary



School. In the Vegetable section, he won seven First prizes, five Seconds and two Thirds. He also walked away with the much-coveted (and aptly named) Alfie Garrett Memorial Shield, awarded to the individual with the most exhibits in Flowers/Vegetables.

If there are any more Alfies out there, we'd love to hear from you in order to set up a children's section on the MON website – just get in touch via the site's email link.

More MON successes

There were some successes for one or two MON adults as well. The highly professional Bill Mizen carried off several trophies, five First prizes, five Seconds and a Third, while I managed four Firsts (including a Highly Commended), three Seconds and two Thirds.

What I really delighted in was marking all my entries with slips of paper saying 'Grown to organic principles without pesticides or artificial fertilisers'. I was equally pleased to find that when the judging was completed and the entry cards turned over, these slips were left on top of the cards for all to see.

Have you renewed your MON membership?

Your continuing support as a MON member is vital to our success, so if you haven't yet renewed your membership from the start date of 1 August, please do so as soon as possible.

If you've mislaid the form we sent out with the last newsletter, don't worry. Simply log on to www.manxorganicnetwork.com and download a membership form from the 'Join us' section. Or give Membership Secretary Susie Watson a call on 825755.

When deciding between Individual or Family membership, we'd suggest Family membership for households of more than one person. Please detail everyone by name and let us know the children's dates of birth. This is to help us develop tailor-made MON activities that will involve them more directly.

If you'd like to add a donation to your membership fee, this would be very welcome. All donations go towards our efforts to attract new members and achieve our objectives. The Manx Organic Network is a non-profit making organisation run entirely by volunteers, so you can rest assured that your subscription money is used prudently and effectively.

MEMBERS' NEWS

Upcoming 'show your own' opportunities for members

Two more local shows coming up in the North are Maughold on 16 September and the Andreas Root Show in October. These are great opportunities to 'show your own', so go on, have a bit of fun and spread the word about growing to organic principles. You never know, it may catch on!

Get involved in the first MON calendar

Do you have a favourite recipe that uses organic ingredients? If so, we'd like to hear from you. We are aiming to produce a Manx Organic Network 'In-season' calendar for 2007 featuring organic produce-based recipes.

We'd like to sell the calendar in the run-up to Christmas, so please send your recipes to Sharon Jamieson

at Ballakilley@manx.net or Ballakilley Farm, Church Road, Port St Mary, IM9 5LW.

Come and celebrate Organic Week

Remember, the next MON open meeting is on Thursday 7 September at Knockaloe Farm, Patrick, from 7.30pm.

Come and celebrate Organic Week with a fun evening which will include an entertaining talk on organic growing by Robert Watson of Watson's Nurseries, followed by a tasting of delicious organic produce.

Potential MON members are welcome too, as are produce contributions for the tasting (the main tasting will be of tomatoes, but all accompaniments would be welcome).

Organic wine tasting

Another not-to-be-missed event is our organic wine tasting evening on 9

November – the ideal opportunity to sample some fantastic organic wines not normally available in the Island, and stock up for Christmas.

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

Please note: the deadline for receipt of news for inclusion in the next issue (December) is Friday 27 October.

WHERE TO BUY ORGANICS

A new source of local produce in the south

FOLLOWING IN the footsteps of the Green Mann market in the west of the Island, a new source of local produce grown to organic principles has sprung up in the south.

Sharon Jamieson and Bill Mizen will be selling in-season vegetables from the farm gate at Ballakilley Farm.

Current opening hours are **3 to 5pm Wednesdays and Fridays** – at the gate if weather is fine, or in the barn in inclement weather.

As with the Green Mann, the produce is not certified organic, but has been grown without the use of pesticides or artificial fertilisers.

The venture is spearheaded by MON member Sharon Jamieson. Last year, with the help of Cilla Platt and Bill Mizen, Sharon tried out vegetable production in her garden and was successful with a range of produce from lettuce to raspberries. This spurred her on to expand into a half-acre patch in one of her adjoining fields.

The rest is history. A sizeable

proportion of the populations of Port Erin and Port St Mary is now enjoying Sharon's delicious fresh produce from her first season of growing on a field



scale. This currently includes salad crops, carrots, onions, courgettes, leeks, parsnips, turnips, pak choi and other winter brassicas. And judging by requests to date, Sharon and Bill won't be able to meet demand this season.

It's still early days, but Sharon and



Bill hope to expand this venture and set up a box scheme for next year. If you're interested, please email Ballakilley@manx.net indicating which vegetables you would like to buy.

Ballakilley Farm is located opposite Rushen church, just up from the Four Roads roundabout in the direction of Peel. For more information, visit <http://ballakilley.googlepages.com>



Organic cotton and Fairtrade

By Leni Lewis, Shakti Man Fairtrade shop, Ramsey

THE WORLD Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that as many as 20,000 deaths and three million chronic illnesses are caused by poisoning related to pesticides globally each year. A further 200,000 farmers commit suicide as a result of debts from buying pesticides.

For MON members, these are good reasons to support organic farming by buying organic food. But does our commitment to the organic movement extend to questioning where our clothing comes from and how it is produced?

Worldwide, conventional cotton farming uses only about 3% of total farmland but consumes 25% of the chemical pesticides and fertilizers used globally. In India, it's as much as 50% of pesticides used on as little as 5% of the total agricultural land.

Fairtrade in fashion

November 2005 saw the Fairtrade mark appearing on products made with Fairtrade certified organic cotton, grown by small farmers mainly in India, Peru, Mali and Senegal.

Like any other agricultural commodity producers, these farmers are at the sharp end of exploitation and injustice in international trade. Fairtrade certification guarantees them a minimum price (30% above the market rate on average), plus a further premium towards community development projects.

Beware of bandwagon-jumpers

While this is undeniably a milestone, it's worth digging a little deeper to unravel the varying standards within the Fairtrade organic movement. In the race to re-invent themselves in the eyes of increasingly discerning consumers, many big companies are busy building a more ethical image.

Their motives and methods are sometimes questionable. While they may be buying raw organic Fairtrade

cotton from farmers, there may be limited or no standards in place around the rest of the production process – dying, spinning, weaving and making the cotton into clothing.

Fair through and through

At the other end of the scale, Fairtrade pioneers like People Tree, Gossypium and Traidcraft work closely not only with the farmers, but also with the garment workers at every stage of production.

In this scenario, transparency is fundamental in relation to every person, factory and community within the supply chain. Suppliers are treated fairly and respectfully through a clear and fair buying procedure. Everyone in the production chain



Baby clothing from Gossypium

works reasonable hours in safe, clean conditions, and receives a decent wage.

Shop with confidence at Shakti Man

At Shakti Man, the Fairtrade shop in Ramsey, we believe we have a responsibility to educate consumers about the origins of their clothes. The production of man-made fibres from oil is not sustainable. Fast to make and slow to degrade, sweatshop-produced

fashion may be cheap, but it comes at a high human and environmental cost. Moving towards zero environmental impact, clothing made from ultimately biodegradable materials is kinder both to people and to the planet.



As the big brands start using organic Fairtrade cotton, the role of the smaller brands becomes even more important. Vote with your wallet to show your commitment to Fairtrade, organic farming and deep level change.

You'll find a growing range of organic Fairtrade cotton clothing at Shakti Man, including underwear for men and women, yoga wear and T-shirts.

For more information, call Leni on 815060 or email shaktinepal@hotmail.com

Fact

In 2005 there were 550 farmers' markets in the UK, with a combined annual turnover of £220 million.

Soil Association 2005
Organic Survey

Green Mann Market update

By Stephen and Jenny Devereau

The Green Mann market, every Thursday 11.30am - 3.30pm

SEPTEMBER SEES the welcome return of organic farmer Andrew Moore to the Green Mann market at Ballabrooie.

As well as Andrew's delicious potatoes, beetroot and turnips, you'll find runner beans, spinach, Swiss and rainbow chard and other assorted autumn vegetables on sale.

And don't miss Jimmy and Nadine's apples – more than 100 mouth watering varieties available through until next spring.

More produce coming soon...

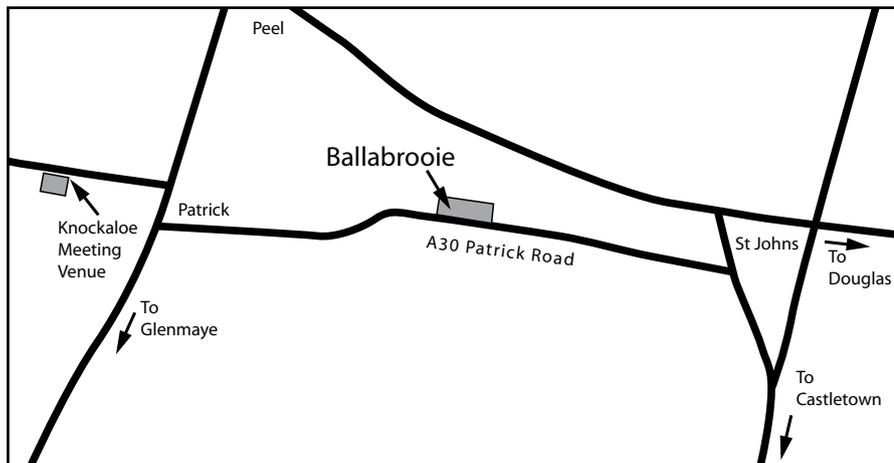
- Perennial herbs including rosemary, thyme, chives, fennel, French tarragon, sage, basil and various mints.
- East and West Indian lemon grass.

- Spring onions, cabbages, sprouts, courgettes and pumpkins.
- Salad crops including baby spinach, rocket, wild rocket, rucola, lettuces and mixed salads – plus winter salads available throughout winter.

Organic eggs available in future

As we got started a bit late this year, the range and quantity of our produce has been limited.

But all this will change for next year. We've just started the process of organic registration and will shortly be starting commercial organic egg production – so the range of Manx organic produce will increase at the Green Mann and across the Island in 2007.



EVENTS CALENDAR

Details of events coming up...

Thursday 7 September

Manx Organic Network open meeting, Knockaloe Farm, 7.30pm

Saturday 16 September

Maughold Social Club Annual Produce Show

Thursday 12 October

Kirk Andreas produce show (Andreas Root Show), closing date for entries is 7 October.

Thursday 9 November

Organic wine tasting, Knockaloe Farm 7.30pm.

Fact

In 2005, the farm gate value of organic meat and poultry was an estimated £129 million, 59% up on 2004.

Sales of organic milk top 200 million litres and are worth around £100 million a year.

Soil Association 2005 Organic Survey

Fact

Three years ago it was reported that approximately half of consumers were knowingly buying organic food. That figure has now risen to 65.4% - nearly two in three shoppers.

Soil Association 2005 Organic Survey

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:

456 and growing. For more membership forms to pass on to friends and relatives, please get in touch with Membership Secretary Susie Watson on 825755.

Contact:

Janet Bridle, Chair, 835436 or jbridle@manx.net

Viv Davies, Secretary, 882332

MANX ORGANIC NETWORK, c/o THE SPINNEY, HOWE ROAD, PORT ST MARY, IM9 5AU

www.manxorganicnetwork.com