

English Organic Forum

c/o the Organic Research Centre, Elm Farm, Hamstead Marshall, Newbury, RG20 0HR

NEWS RELEASE

1st February 2017

Farm minister offers promising words on the future of UK organic support

UK organic leaders have said they feel encouraged after Defra minister George Eustice announced that the government would continue to offer the sector its support post-Brexit.

In a meeting with the English Organic Forum on Tuesday (31 January), Mr Eustice told senior industry representatives that he was keen to see the UK organic sector continue to thrive.

He, also, said that he did not want to un-do any existing organic regulations or standards which had so far encouraged UK organics to grow. The EU organic regulation would be incorporated into UK law.

In a positive meeting, Mr Eustice indicated he was keen to support farming systems which used a tailored approach to production.

This included soil management, legumes for nitrogen fixation and rotations, and farming systems which balanced traditional techniques with modern breeding practices.

He also said that he did not see the need to make any significant changes once the UK had left the European Union, as he wanted to ensure UK organics remained compliant with EU rules.

He confirmed that organic conversion and maintenance support in its current form would continue to be available under Countryside Stewardship until the UK leaves the EU, including windows in 2017 and 2018 for five-year agreements starting in 2018 and 2019.

The meeting was part of the English Organic Forum's efforts to clarify how government support for the sector may take shape in future, and to highlight areas of concern where the impact of Brexit might affect producers. Organic food consumption is growing strongly across the globe and this offers a significant opportunity both domestically and internationally for the UK organic sector.

EOF members present at the meeting included the Organic Trade Board, the NFU, Organic Arable, the Biodynamic Association, Organic Food Federation, the Soil Association, OF&G and the Organic Research Centre (ORC).

Forum chairman and ORC director Nic Lampkin, speaking at the start of ORC's annual organic producers' conference in Birmingham, said Mr Eustice's comments were extremely positive.

"This was a valuable opportunity to bring the organic sector together to air their concerns and aspirations for the industry, and it was encouraging that the Minister was obviously prepared to listen and take them on board," he said.

"With the right support, the organic sector can continue to provide valuable public goods and services, supported by the market, which Mr Eustice seemed to recognise.

"The Minister also recognised the value of the organic brand in developing trade opportunities for UK businesses.

"We hope that this is the start of a meaningful dialogue with government over how we can work together to help encourage organic producers post-Brexit.

“The conference will be focusing on the key issues that need to be raised as part of that dialogue.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

This press release was published by OF&G and ORC on behalf of the English Organic Forum.

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The English Organic Forum consists of the following organisations:

- Abacus Agriculture Ltd.
- Biodynamic Association
- Garden Organic
- Institute of Organic Training and Advice
- National Farmers Union Organic Forum
- Organic Arable
- Organic Farmers and Growers CIC
- Organic Food Federation
- Organic Growers Alliance
- Organic Milk Suppliers Co-operative
- Organic Research Centre
- Organic Trade Board
- Soil Association
- Triodos Bank
- UK Organic Certifiers Group