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Changes to EU organic regulation triggers ‘grow local’ research for feeding pigs and poultry

Research partners from 11 countries throughout Europe visited the Organic Research Centre in Berkshire recently to launch a new EU-funded project, which aims to help organic pig and poultry farms achieve the goal of 100% use of organic local and regional feed.

This significant new project called **OK-Net EcoFeed**, was largely triggered by the potential end of an EU derogation, which currently allows the use of 5% non-organic protein feed for pork and poultry.

An important element of organic farming is that animals are fed with feed produced at or near the farm but this is difficult to achieve in large parts of Europe. Currently feed for pigs and poultry is imported from regions far away from where animals are raised. Very often the market is reliant on imports from outside Europe (for example, China, India, Argentina, and the Ukraine), where unexpected yield losses can make it difficult for organic farmers to obtain animal feed.

Organic farming has a long tradition in Europe. In the last two decades, the market for organic food has shown vigorous growth in most parts of Europe and this growth is still accelerating. However, Organic pig and poultry farmers frequently suffer from difficulties in sourcing protein feed of organic quality.

This growth is particularly challenging for organic pig and poultry producers, who, to comply with EU regulations as well as maintaining consumer confidence, will in future need to source organic feed that is produced at or near the producers farm. The aim of OK-Net EcoFeed is to help farmers and stakeholders achieve 100% use of organic feed at local and regional level.

Dr. Bram Moeskops, OK-Net EcoFeed project coordinator said, “Increasing the availability of organic local and regional feed will further improve the sustainability of organic agriculture. OK-Net EcoFeed will work with farmers, breeders and the organic feed industry to make practical solutions available to improve the use of organic and regional feed.”

Dr Bruce Pearce, Deputy Director at the Organic Research Centre and one of the project partners said, “As part of this project, the UK’s Organic Research Centre will work with 11 innovation groups across Europe to facilitate knowledge exchange among farmers, stakeholders, researchers and advisors. The innovation groups are amongst the most pioneering in organic pig and poultry production and we are delighted to be at the sharp-end of this research to ensure that solutions from the project work in the ‘real world’ of farming and business.”

Director: Prof. Nicolas Lampkin

Council of Management: M. Turnbull (Chairman), V. Agrawal, A. Astor, A. Blackshaw, A. Jedwell, D. Peck, A. Stewart
M. Wagner, N. Westaway, D. Wilson

Patrons: C.A. Bielenberg, The Duchess of Richmond and Gordon, Peter Kindersley, Juliet Kindersley,
Yvonne Pye, Jan Sundt

Similar to most problems there are always solutions. Bruce Pearce explains, “This new project will offer some really positive outcomes for organic pig and poultry producers. As well as working with farmers we will investigate how we can marry up producers with UK growers of organic feed such as Lucerne and other protein crops, maize and cereals. These crops can all be grown in the UK – especially in Southern England and as demand grows we hope this will also open up new markets and opportunities for organic growers of these crops too.”

Bruce Pearce continues, “Unfortunately we do not know what organic regulations will continue to operate in the UK post-Brexit, although Defra is currently commissioning a new project to look into this issue. In the meantime, OK-Net EcoFeed will not only help European farmers it will also help to ensure the sustainability of the UK organic pork and poultry market by helping UK producers become 100% self-sufficient in the use of organic local feed for their animals and not reliant on feed from imported sources. This will, for the first time, be good for the UK industry as well as boosting consumer confidence in organic pork and poultry.”

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Photocaption: Research partners from 11 countries throughout Europe visited the Organic Research Centre in Berkshire recently to launch a new EU-funded project, which aims to help organic pig and poultry farms achieve the goal of 100% use of organic local and regional feed.

For Further information on this press release, please contact: Morag Walker on 07736 124097 or email: morag@moragwalkerpr.co.uk

Notes to editors:

The Organic Research Centre (ORC): established in 1980, is the UK’s leading independent organic research charity. It works both nationally and internationally, to:

- research and develop practical, sustainable land management and food production systems based on organic and agro-ecological principles
- foster knowledge exchange with and between current and future producers, food businesses and related professionals
- influence policy and public debates on the future of food and farming based on sound evidence.

www.organicresearchcentre.com

OK-Net EcoFeed: is coordinated by IFOAM EU and involves 19 partners from 11 countries throughout Europe. The project is financed by Horizon 2020, the EU’s main funding instrument for research and innovation. OK-Net EcoFeed is funded under the umbrella of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI). This policy instrument aims to foster innovation by connecting farmers and researchers. OK-Net EcoFeed started in January 2018 and will run until December 2020. The project’s kick-off meeting took place at the Organic Research Centre in Newbury, UK in January.

OK-Net EcoFeed will build on the experiences of the OK-Net Arable project that established the OK-Net knowledge platform. The OK-Net knowledge platform exists for farmers and farm associations to find practical solutions in organic farming and at the same time discuss how it works in the field, in their geographic and climatic conditions.

The partners of OK-Net EcoFeed are: IFOAM EU (Belgium), ICROFS (Denmark), FIBL (Switzerland), Organic Research Centre (UK), The Soil Association (UK), ITAB (France), CRAPL (France), ITAVI (France), FNAB (France), Bioland & Bioland Beratung (Germany), AIAB (Italy), SLU (Sweden), Danube Soya Austria & Danube Soya Serbia, Ecovalia (Spain), Univeridad de Cordoba (Spain), CIHEAM Naro (Italy).

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