

PRESS RELEASE – 29/10/14

Release: Immediate

9th ORC Organic Producers' Conference

Practical research and innovation - diversity in practice

Wednesday 26th to Thursday 27th November 2014, St. John's Hotel Solihull

This year for the first time we are bringing together two popular organic events to allow more people to participate in both. The Soil Association's [National Soil Symposium](#) (25th November) will be focusing on resilience. The ORC conference has producer-focused technical and business workshops on the first day (26th November), and a more specific focus on current research and innovation activities on the second day (27th November), with the aim of bringing producers, researchers, advisers and students together to make change happen!

What is sustainable intensification? A ruse for corporate techno-fix interests to regain the political highground or a serious attempt to address future food needs sustainably while respecting the environment? And what contribution can organic food and farming make, if any, to delivering sustainable intensification? Leading agricultural and food policy speakers, including professor Allan Buckwell (Institute for European Environmental Policy) and Patrick Holden (Sustainable Food Trust), will present contrasting perspectives to stimulate debate during the conference.

Practical workshops will focus on maintaining profitability of organic businesses and emerging opportunities in organic supply chains. Can micro-dairies work? How best to design a successful agroforestry system? Breeding for organics – what is the potential of diverse populations in arable production? The challenges won't be shirked: what will be the implications of CAP reform and the new EU organic regulation? How do we respond to the GM threat? How can we secure the future and make succession work?

The Duchy Originals Future Farming Programme has been putting the producer at the heart of research, innovation and knowledge exchange. On day 2 of the ORC Organic Producer Conference we will draw on the experiences of farmers involved in range of field labs and practical research projects in including use of legumes for fertility-building and breeding for dairy production. We will also look at the potential use of innovation clubs and operational groups to help producers improve their business, drawing on the inspiration of those such as French farmer Victor Leforestier from BASE.

There will also be opportunities for postgrad students to discuss the challenges of doing research within the context of organic systems. A workshop on conversion planning and organic farm management will celebrate 30 years of organic farm management and with the likelihood of conversion/business planning being a requirement for participation in organic support schemes in future, discuss how we can use that experience to make these plans worth doing? What are the best tools to assess and improve the sustainability of farming systems?

Recent research has once again opened the question of whether organic food quality is better than non-organic, but what difference does this make to health and how do the food and other choices made by organic consumers also influence health? This will be debated in the Mary Langman memorial workshop on Organic food quality and health.

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Nic Lampkin, Director of the Organic Research Centre organising the conference, said: ‘

With the tide turning in terms of organic market demand and policy support, we are delighted to be able to bring these two popular events together under the same roof, for an inspiring three days. ORC’s annual Organic Producers’ Conference has always put producers first and at the heart of every session. By focusing on practical research and innovation with producers and researchers working closely together, we can all contribute to creating better farming systems for people and planet.’

More information at http://www.organicresearchcentre.com/?i=events.php&event_id=288

ENDS.

Notes for Editors

The Organic Research Centre based at Elm Farm near Newbury is the UK’s leading independent research centre dedicated to the development of sustainable food systems based on organic/agro-ecological principles. Further information on our activities can be found at www.organicresearchcentre.com

This series of Organic Producers’ Conferences was initiated at the end of 2006 with financial support from Defra and the EU for the Organic Inform project. Since 2010, the conference has been self-financing and attracts 200+ participants annually. Further details can be found following the links from our website homepage.

The Duchy Originals Future Farming Programme supports innovation in sustainable agriculture. The programme helps British farmers identify and adopt practices that improve their productivity in an environmentally responsible way. The programme is funded by the Prince of Wales’s Charitable Foundation and is delivered by the Soil Association in partnership with Duchy Originals from Waitrose and the Organic Research Centre (ORC). To find out more [here](#)

The Soil Association was founded in 1946 by farmers, scientists, doctors and nutritionists to promote the connection between the health of the soil, food, animals, people and the environment. Today the Soil Association is the UK’s leading membership charity campaigning for healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use. To find out more visit www.soilassociation.org

Further information about this year’s conference can be obtained from:

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[Phil Sumption: phil.s@organicresearchcentre.com](mailto:phil.s@organicresearchcentre.com) 07759 318942

Press passes will be available for the conference – if you would like to attend, please contact [Phil Sumption](#).

The Organic Producers’ Conference can be followed on twitter [#ORC14](#) and [@OrgResCent](#).

The conference is sponsored by Triodos Bank and the Woodland Trust with the active support of IOTA, Organic Growers Alliance, Nafferton Ecological Group, Soil Association, National Trust, Organic Centre Wales and SRUC.

£20+VAT per day discount on booking form prices available to English producers, and others reliant on agriculture or agricultural products, for the Organic Producer Conference through the RDPE. Bursaries are available from various sources. See website for details.

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