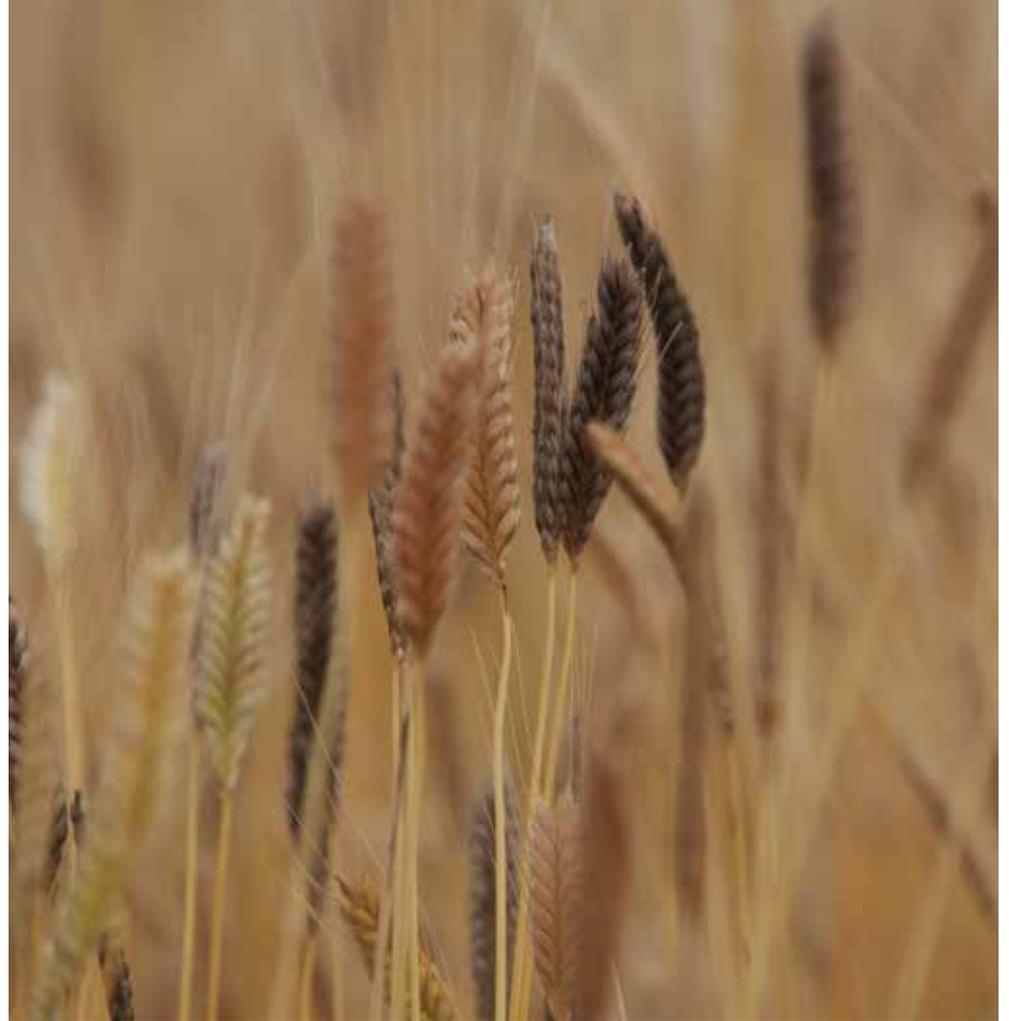


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Cover photo

*Einkorn Composite Cross Population,
grown as part of DIVERSIFOOD trials*



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Bulletin

NOCC17 Special 2017



Team ORC cycles the Magnificat

ORC staff and interns (Nic Lampkin, Alex Jackson, Nicola Smith and Michel Turbet Delof) will be cycling the Newbury-based Magnificat cycle sportive on 9th July 2017, featuring Standard (66 mile) and Epic (100 mile) routes. The funds raised will support ORC's parent charity Progressive Farming Trust Ltd.

<https://mydonate.bt.com/events/teamorcmagnificat>

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For better farming, food and health**



Policy news in brief

One step closer to a new organic regulation

On the 28th June, the European Commission, Parliament and Council of Ministers reached a political agreement on the new Organic Regulation. The compromise text is subject to some technical and legal checks and still needs to be endorsed by the Council and by both the Parliament's Agriculture Committee and plenary.

If all this happens, the new organic regulation will replace the current Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 and is likely to apply from 2020 onwards. From September 2017 on, the institutions and the organic stakeholders will start focussing on the implementation part of the new regulation: the delegated and implementing acts which would replace the current Regulations (EC) No 889/2008 and (EC) No 1235/2008.

This long process showed the complexity of the EU law-making process based on the Treaty of Lisbon that involves many institutions and actors, partly with divergent positions, needs and requests, that all have to be considered in the negotiations.

Trying to sum up key differences to the current regulation is not easy, as many issues changed during the negotiation period up to the last minute. Defra believes there have been some gains from a UK perspective. ORC is involved in working through the detailed text for technical consistency and will explore the impact the new regulation on organic operators and the control procedures, as well as its incorporated into UK law after Brexit.

New Organic Action Plan for England

Organic organisations met with Defra officials, including the new head of the organic unit Kathleen Kelliher, on 29th June for the first meeting of the new Organic Roundtable.

The meeting started the process of developing an industry-led organic action plan for England, to be launch early in 2018. Roundtable meetings will take place quarterly in the meantime, with subgroups working on specific elements. Priority themes include: future conversion and maintenance support payments; international trade; research and information; organic food and procurement; regulations and equivalency; and small-scale/short supply chain approaches.

The Roundtable and the action plan development will provide an opportunity to engage with Brexit policy discussions as preparations for the Repeal Bill, which will incorporate the EU Organic Regulation into UK law, and the new Agriculture Bill, which will set out the basis for future agricultural and agri-environmental support, are made.

The Organic Roundtable has been established as a joint initiative between Defra and the English Organic Forum, which is co-ordinated by the Organic Research Centre and represents all the organic organisations, including Biodynamic Association, Garden Organic, LWA, NFU Organic Forum, Organic Arable, OF&G, OFF, OGA, OMSCo, OTB, Soil Association, as well as Abacus, Triodos Bank, Future Sustainability and ECOS consultancy.

If you would like to be involved with the action plan development process, please contact Nic Lampkin (nic.l@organicresearchcentre.com). ORC would also welcome financial support for the work that will be needed to develop the action plan and engage with the ongoing Brexit policy debate – if you can help, please do!

Organic Research Centre at National

We are partners in NOCC 2017. This year we are more involved than ever, bringing our expertise on intercropping, cereal diversity, use of on-farm woody resources, and measuring the life in your soil to the event. We round up our activity at NOCC17.

Soil assessment and soil biology

We all know about the importance of soil biology and soil organic matter to our cropping systems, but how do you assess the life in your soil? Simon Parfey of SoilBioLab will introduce soil biology and show samples of roots colonised with Mycorrhiza and some other interesting organisms under the microscope. ORC researcher Anja Vieweger will demonstrate practical soil assessment methods indicative of soil biology including; simple spade tests, visual soil assessment (colour, smell etc.), and earthworm counts.



GREATsoils – Growing Resilient Efficient And Thriving Soils

The overall aim of this AHDB-Horticulture-funded project is to inspire and support growers to develop the ability and confidence to assess the health of their soils and take practical action to improve their soil management strategies. Equipped with an improved understanding of soil health, they will be able to choose appropriate methods to enhance and maintain the health of their soils; which is key to good crop health, yield and quality. The project is coordinated by the Soil Association with ORC and Earthcare Technical as partners. See back page for GREATsoils events.



EIPsoils - Agroecological soil management

Various new soil analysis techniques and associated soil recommendations are commercially available to organic and agroecological farmers, as well as the standard pH, P, K, Mg analysis used by conventional farmers. None of these techniques have been systematically assessed for their suitability to provide sound recommendations for soil management and nutrient availability in organic and agro-ecological farming. This project will address this major deficiency in our understanding by 1) instigating monitored field trials which will assess the validity of the current Index targets for organic farming and 2) the commercial case for management recommendations arising from the use of alternative soil analysis techniques.





Organic Combinable Crops 2017

“Better together”!

We know from plant ecology that in nature diverse communities generally work better than uniform ones. In agroecosystems the growing of two or more crops together simultaneously in the same piece of land has been shown to be beneficial in terms of yield stability, increase in total yield, pest and disease management, weed management, erosion control and soil fertility.



ORC have been investigating the potential of intercropping as a practice for building resilient cropping systems. Trials at the University of Reading's Sonning Farm, as part of the DIVERSIFOOD project, are looking at spring wheat and beans in combination, with different spatial arrangements (alternate or mixed rows). A spring version of the ORC Wakelyns population is also being tested, to compare its performance in an intercropping situation compared to a standard elite line, as well as to apply a selection pressure in order to encourage adaption as an intercropping component. The spring population has been developed by continued spring sowing of the winter population which has selected for genotypes with lower vernalisation requirements and a shorter growing season. Plots that include both a bean and a wheat population will continue to be grown each season to monitor both adaptability and yield stability. Results from this experiment will be available in a future Bulletin issue.

As well as the trial at Reading, various intercropped plots have been drilled at the NOCC site and will be on show. We have again included various wheat and bean mixtures (all mixed rows), two elite bean cultivars - Vertigo and Fuego - and a bean composite cross population developed in the SOLIBAM project. There is a spring wheat population as well as two elite lines, Mulika and Paragon. The idea is to look at how varietal selection can make a difference when designing crop partnerships and to think about some of the other key considerations including spatial arrangement, drilling rates and canopy height. Research has shown that a 50:50 mix is not always the best performing. In order to show something a little different this year we have also included plots of various spring cereals (wheat, barley, oats and triticale) and pea mixes from Western Seeds Combicrop blends, although unfortunately at the time of writing the peas had failed to come through, possibly due to the very dry spring conditions. It could be argued that this is one of the benefits of an intercrop as risk is spread so that if one crop fails a second is able to take its place and continue to provide the farmer with a crop.

The idea behind mixing a cereal and grain legume is to provide a feed high in both protein and starch, giving a boost to protein by up to 50% above that of a straight cereal. Foliar disease risk in the cereal is reduced, and residual nitrogen is left by the peas for the following crop. The cereal-legume canopy architecture is complimentary, with the cereal providing support for the pea to climb. Peas will ripen a little earlier than the wheat or oats but will hold on until the cereal component is ready to harvest. The peas and barley should come at the same time. These cereal pea blends can

be combined dry, crimped or wholecropped, and the straw is also very palatable. Growing these mixes could help reduce or even eliminate the need for bought-in-concentrate.

Finally, although not part of the intercropping showcase, a plot of carlin peas (*Pisum sativum var. arvense*), also known as black peas or black badger peas has been drilled, and despite the dry conditions has come through very well. Carlin peas are being grown by Hodmedod's, the innovative British pulse and grain retailer, and can provide a very suitable British-grown substitute to both chickpeas and lentils.

An intercropping event was held at the beginning of June at Shimpling Park Farm, as part of the OK-Net Arable knowledge exchange project, with farmers from France experienced in intercropping practice sharing their experiences. Presentations, videos and photos from the day will be uploaded onto www.agricology.co.uk soon.

Plant Teams

A new research initiative led by Scotland's James Hutton Institute is set to explore innovative mixed-species crop systems, or 'plant teams', in a drive to tackle a global challenge: how to feed a growing population from finite resources without wrecking our planet. The €5m DIVERSify project, short for 'Designing InnoVative plant teams for Ecosystem Resilience and agricultural Sustainability', aims to optimise the performance of cereals grown with legumes.



The adoption of crop species mixtures - or 'plant teams' - requires crop scientists to devise novel cropping systems for farmers to increase resource-use efficiency and reduce nutrient loss to groundwater; provide new knowledge and tools for crop breeders to develop suitable varieties, and provide information for agronomists to optimise the management on-farm.

The DIVERSify consortium, which includes ORC, comprises 23 partner organisations, representing scientists, farmers, advisors, breeders and technology providers, from 14 countries in Europe and worldwide. ORC will work with stakeholders, through a series of meetings (to be announced soon) to identify tacit knowledge, bottom-up innovations and strategies for best practice, and develop knowledge exchange to promote the adoption of successful plant teams.

The project will also develop a suite of tools to aid adoption of plant teams. These include a novel modelling tool for design of innovative plant teams, and agronomic specifications for plant teams, including farm machinery adaptations. A web-based and mobile-phone friendly decision aid will be produced for practitioners to select suitable plant teams in different regions and farm types. A comprehensive programme of activities for project communication and knowledge exchange with the farming and breeding sectors, science and the public will promote the adoption of successful plant teams into the future.

Contact: diversify@organicresearchcentre.com

<https://www.plant-teams.eu/>



Retro wheats for food diversity in organic systems

Einkorn, emmer and rivet were all once widely grown and now, as part of the Diversifood project, ORC



is undertaking research into these ancient wheat species to evaluate their suitability for organic production in the UK.

The project aims to increase the diversity of crops on farm and, as a result, the diversity of food on our plate. Einkorn looks to be the most promising species for UK cultivation, with its strong ability to tiller, to mine nutrients, its disease resistance and its competitiveness. In trials at Doves farm the ancient wheats have outperformed the bread wheats in almost every category. What remains to be seen is whether this will translate into higher yields, especially since due to the much taller nature of the ancient wheats, lodging can be an issue.

Experience has shown that some of these accessions could be very useful as a second or third cereal in a rotation or for areas of the farm where soil conditions are poor.

Something else we have learnt this year is that on higher fertility land, the risk of lodging is high and if seed rates are not adjusted accordingly then the ancient wheats can fall down. This year for NOCC, we have drilled plots of einkorn, emmer and rivet but unfortunately, as a result of the high fertility in the field, slightly high seed rates and wet and windy weather in mid-June these have all lodged. We have even seen lodging in the Wakelyns Population, which no-one at ORC has encountered before. What this does highlight is that species and variety selection should be farm specific and what may prosper somewhere will not necessarily perform in other environments. In fact, for the demo plots at NOCC17, the best looking crops are unsurprisingly the crops the farmer has in his rotation, showing that there is no substitute for trial and error and your own experience.

One aspect that will be explored in by Diversifood project partners is the nutritional and nutraceutical properties of the grains, with some research already suggesting increased levels of phytochemicals beneficial for health including antioxidants such as phenolics, flavonoids and carotenoids. In fact the flour of both einkorn and emmer is a creamy yellowish hue due to the high carotenoid content. The einkorn flour can be used in bread but is of particular interest for malting to make beer. Emmer flour can be used in bread, biscuits and cakes. Rivet wheat, a close relative of durum,



Skyfall, surrounded by Einkorn plots - Doves Farm

and believed to be brought over to Britain by the Normans, is being grown with the expectation that it can be used to provide a source of flour for British grown pasta. The straw is also strong and can be used for thatching. Rivet wheat is free threshing and therefore doesn't pose the processing issues that hulled wheats like spelt, einkorn and emmer do.

Certainly with the demands and risks agriculture is facing in the 21st Century, and the ever decreasing diversity of species and genetics both on-farm and on our plates, continuing to look back to the future for sources of food is going to be vital.

CERERE – Cereal Renaissance in Rural Europe

Incorporating partners from the UK, Ireland, France, Italy, Denmark, Hungary, Finland and Spain, CERERE, a new 3-year Horizon 2020 project, aims to 'embed diversity in organic and low-input food systems'. The project aims to gather and synthesise a wide range of information about best practice in organic and low-input farming systems, with a focus on maintaining and improving diversity. This will then be communicated to the relevant people through events at a national and regional level. An example is the recent Let's Cultivate Diversity meeting in Belgium.



Sustainable sourdough

ORC Wakelyns Population flour is giving a Nottinghamshire baker a unique chance to strengthen relationships across the supply chain and produce a more sustainable loaf of bread.



Kimberley Bell

Photo: OF&G

Thanks to her links with BBC Food and Farming nominees, Hodmedod's, Kimberley Bell of the Small Food Bakery in

Nottingham is using flour from the Organic Research Centre's Wakelyns Population wheat to bake a very special variety of sourdough bread. Now ORC is working with Kimberley to find out how easy the crop's resulting flour is to bake with, and whether it results in a tasty loaf which has a strong story to tell consumers about how their bread was produced.

"I started using the Wakelyns flour after Hodmedods sent me a bag," says Kimberley. "When I tried it I realised that it might be an interesting type of grain from its flavour, so I asked Hodmedod's what it was, and that's when I discovered its incredible story."

For Kimberley, aside from the flavour, the flour from the Wakelyns Population connects heavily with her bakery's ethos to produce better-tasting food which is not only more sustainable for the environment, but has strong links to primary producers. By ensuring her farmer suppliers are given fairer prices for their produce, Kimberley wants to help shorten supply chains and build relationships with growers so that her customers can get a better understanding of where their food comes from.

"The Wakelyns wheat has the most incredible set of credentials," she adds. "People often argue that wheat production can never be sustainable, but the Wakelyns wheat seems to be part of the solution to our environmental problems of mono-cropping and using so many inputs. (Source: OF&G)



ORC Wakelyns Population



Harvesting ORC Wakelyns Population. Photo: Mark Lea

Seed of the **ORC Wakelyns Population** is on sale for this autumn. This is a good opportunity to get a new concept of wheat into your field.

What is it? It is not a variety, as individual plants are not identical, and it is not a mixture either. Think of it as a crowd, in which each plant is different from each other. It is the outcome of 107 crosses between 20 parents, selected to be either high quality or high yielding, bulked and reproduced year after year in organic farms.

How does it work? Its performance builds upon 'four Cs': **Capacity**, as it has high phenotypic variation; **Complementation**, as different individuals can complement each other; **Compensation**, as, if some fail, others will take their place and the whole will recover, and **Change**, as evolutionary changes make the best performing types to be prevalent in response to environmental selection.

How does it grow? Thanks to the 'four Cs, it performs well in organic farms, because that's where it has been reproduced, being productive, stable and resilient. In fact, the Wakelyns population is able to withstand stresses thanks to its diversity. For instance, it resists to pests and diseases for two reasons: first, being a crowd of different types, it does not offer a uniform breeding ground for pests and diseases to spread; second, having been reproduced in organic farms in the UK, it 'knows' the local pests and diseases it has been exposed to better than us, as it selected itself to be resistant to them. It is also able to withstand all those unpredictable stresses that commonly threaten the performance of common varieties. Several times we have seen it performing very well when sown in suboptimal conditions, e.g. much later than recommended, whereas common, uniform varieties sown in the same place and in the same way have completely failed.

How does it taste? It has a good baking quality, it is as nutritious as most common milling varieties and it is suitable for animal feed as well. As for all organic wheat, it is difficult to standardise a bread-making process, and it is more relevant to know the flour and build the processing on this knowledge. That is what some innovative bakers have done, being now able to produce wonderful loaves that will be available for tasting at the NOCC17.

How do I get it? Leave your contact details at the ORC stand at NOCC17, or write to crops@organicresearchcentre.com

comment@organicresearchcentre.com

LIVESEED - boosting organic seed

This 4-year EU funded project aims to boost organic seed and plant breeding efforts, and increase the availability of cultivars adapted to organic growing conditions. The project will help to establish a level playing field in the organic seed market across Europe, improve the competitiveness of the organic seed and breeding sector, and encourage greater use of organic seeds by farmers. LIVESEED will improve guidelines for cultivar testing and strategies for ensuring seed health. It will develop novel breeding approaches suited for organic farming. Finally, it will investigate socio-economic aspects related to the use and production of organic seed and their interaction with relevant (EU) regulations. The LIVESEED project is coordinated by IFOAM EU and consists of 35 partners from 18 countries.



Trees, hedges and agroforestry

Trees and hedges can present management challenges for farmers, but could be an untapped resource. Researchers Sally Westaway and Jo Smith from the agroforestry team at the ORC will be joined by William Hamer, forestry consultant and director of Hampshire Woodfuel Cooperative, to discuss the pros and cons of managing on-farm woody resources including hedges and small woodlands as a productive part of the farm enterprise.

AFINET

We are forming a new agroforestry innovation group in the UK. The purpose of the group is to improve practice in agroforestry by sharing existing knowledge and by identifying gaps where more information or research would be helpful. This is part of a wider European project, AFINET, led in the UK by Abacus Agriculture and the Organic Research Centre.

As a start we have put together a short survey to establish a list of people interested in finding out more and/or getting involved and to understand a bit more about peoples interests and motivations. www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CCNKR7B



AGFORWARD

The overall goal of the project is to promote agroforestry practices in Europe that will advance sustainable rural development, i.e. improved competitiveness, and social and environmental enhancement. ORC is responsible for developing participatory research and development networks centred on silvopoultry systems (such as Woodland Egg producers) and silvoarable systems within the UK.



SustainFARM

The main objective of SustainFARM is to enhance agronomic, environmental and economic performance of integrated food and non-food production systems (IFNS) by optimizing productivity and valorizing woody components, residual wastes and co-products.





Join our Farmer and Business Supporters' Group today!

The Organic Research Centre is at the forefront of UK research on organic and other agroecological approaches to sustainable and healthy food production, including knowledge exchange and policy advocacy on behalf of organic farmers and businesses. While much of this work is supported through project funds from the EU, governments and foundations, we rely heavily on donations from individual supporters to provide vital support for our work.

Regular monthly or annual donations help us to plan ahead with greater confidence about our ability to undertake new initiatives on behalf of organic farmers and food businesses.

Will you join the growing band of farmers and businesses willing to support us like this?

We're not just asking for your support – we're offering something in return to say thank you!

Members of the group have:

- The opportunity to attend the FABS annual event (next scheduled for Bradwell Grove Farm, Glos., 27 September 2017) to hear about current activities and discuss your priorities for research, information and policy initiatives¹
- Opportunities to participate in bids and funded projects;
- Networking opportunities and events; including the OF&G National Organic Combinable Crops event (this year on 6th July 2017) which features many ORC projects;
- Pre-publication access to research reports, technical guides, bulletin articles, conference papers and other publications, with an invitation to feedback comments where appropriate;
- Access to the research team and a regular updates on progress and staff news, with links to on-line resources, for each of the main areas of ORC activity²;
- Links to and (optional) membership of relevant on-line discussion forums;
- Discounted access to ORC conferences and events, including our annual conference.
- Free subscriptions to ORC's printed Bulletin, monthly e-bulletins and the Organic Farm Management Handbook every two years (2017 edition now available).

Please give us your support and sign up today!

To join the ORC FABS group, please pledge a **regular annual donation** (or monthly equivalent) of at least:

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You can still support us by subscribing to the Bulletin or as a Friend of ORC – see overleaf for details.

¹ While ORC would not be able to guarantee to undertake such work, the priorities identified would feature in attempts to secure funding, as well as in the research consultations and priority setting initiatives that ORC takes part in.

² Plant breeding; soils and cropping systems; livestock systems; agroforestry; environment, sustainability and health; business and markets; policy development; knowledge exchange and communication.

³ For VAT purposes, £35 of the annual contribution is zero rated (publications), £25 is standard rated (events) and the remainder is a donation outside the scope of VAT. ORC's VAT registration number is GB314 6681 59

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This platform is part of a project that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 652654. The information contained within this knowledge platform reflects the views of the authors. The Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.

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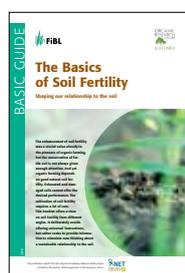
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contact Programme Leader Dr Lou Ralph
Email: lou.ralph@sruc.ac.uk | Tel: 01224 711218

Events

- 12 July 2017: Wakelyns Agroforestry Open Day - Suffolk.** In conjunction with Hodmedod's.
- 17 July 2017: GREATsoils field day - Lincs.** Rotation strategies across farms for soil health and fertility.
- 18 July 2017: GREATsoils field day - Lancashire.** Using green manures to optimise nitrogen availability for brassicas.
- 26 July 2017: GREATsoils Trial Demonstration Top Fruit - Kent.** Assessing the health of your soil.
- 19 September 2017: Agroforestry for growers.** Tolhurst Organic, Oxon. AFINET/AGFORWARD
- 27 September 2017: ORC Farmer and Business Supporters' Group annual event.** Bradwell Grove Farm, Glos. Members only.
- 9-11 Nov 2017: 19th IFOAM Organic World Congress.** New Delhi, India.
- 20 November 2017: Wonderful woodchip!** Tolhurst Organic, Oxon. SustainFARM.

Technical guides

- Sustainability and quality of organic food
- The Basics of Soil Fertility
- Creeping thistle: Successful control in organic farming
- Organic potatoes (coming soon!)



2017 Organic Farm Management Handbook



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You can buy the new edition at the special NOCC17 price of £15. After NOCC17, the price will be £20 plus postage.

For trade and bulk (5 copies or more) orders, discounted rates of £14 per copy plus P&P at cost are available. Please contact elmfarm@organicresearchcentre.com to order.

Available from ORC stall