

BIG OPPORTUNITY FOR UK ORGANIC BUT DEVELOPMENT OF NEW UK AGRICULTURAL POLICY WILL BE CRITICAL

Press release, 22nd November 2018

Issued jointly by: The Organic Research Centre (ORC), OF&G (Organic Farmers and Growers), the Soil Association and the Organic Trade Board (OTB)

British consumers are increasingly moving towards organic food but the industry must work together to capitalise on the full growth potential of organic in the UK, delegates of the UK Organic Congress were told.

Co-organised by several leading organic organisations including the Organic Research Centre (ORC), OF&G (Organic Farmers & Growers), the Soil Association and the Organic Trade Board (OTB), the event held in Rugby on 15 and 16 November, conveyed an overriding sense of opportunity, although the development of our future UK agricultural policy was said to be a 'seminal moment'.

Nic Lampkin, CEO of the ORC opened the event. "The UK led the global movement for organic but we're now well behind our counterparts. As a sector, we've been through a difficult period since the recession but we're now moving in an upward direction, with the domestic market estimated to be worth £2.2 billion and growing."

He challenged the sector to create a transition to move things forward. "20% of land is organic in some countries and 10% of the food market, this should be the vision for the UK."

Sue Hayman, Shadow Secretary of State for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs, gave the opening address and said the development of the new Agriculture Bill brings great opportunity for organic.

"The Agriculture Bill provides a huge opportunity to integrate environmental and food benefits. We know they're compatible, and we must make sure policy supports this," said Ms Hayman.

She said there are clear benefits to organic methods of farming and questioned why, when organic delivers in so many areas of national policy including food and public health, environmental protection and climate change mitigation, government has failed to recognise the merits of organic, unlike other countries.

"The development of a post-Brexit UK agricultural policy is a seminal moment and talking proactively is very important. Sustainability must be at the forefront of a thriving British farming, food and drink sector," said Ms Hayman.

"Shifting public support from land-based payments to the delivery of public and environmental benefits is a welcome move, but there's a need for a strategy that also safeguards food security."

The scope for growth in UK organic was reinforced by Paul Holmbeck, Political Director of Organic Denmark, who presented the remarkable progress of the organic sector in Denmark. "Organic food now accounts for 13.3% of the total food market in Denmark and over 30% of the total market for eggs, milk, flour and bananas.

Director: Prof. Nicolas Lampkin

Council of Management: M. Turnbull (Chairman), V. Agrawal (Treasurer), A. Astor, T. Bennett, A. Blackshaw, D. Peck, A. Stewart, M. Wagner, C. Watson, N. Westaway

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“More than 90% of public procurement of food in Copenhagen is now organic, with 60% an overall target for the country,” said Mr Holmbeck.

Roger Kerr, CEO of OF&G, concluded the closing plenary by calling for more efforts for greater unity in the UK, and for the positive achievements of organic farming to be emphasised without denigrating others.

END

Notes to editors:

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The UK Organic Congress took place in Rugby on 15 and 16 November. The event was organised jointly by Organic Research Centre, Landworkers' Alliance, Organic Arable, OF&G (Organic Farmers & Growers), Organic Growers Alliance, Organic Trade Board, Soil Association and Whole Health Agriculture. Further details can be found on the websites of all partner organisations and at <https://tinyurl.com/OrganicCongress2018>. Detailed proceedings will be available late November.

Photographs from the event can be found at <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmtXY2ga>, credit to Organic Research Centre.

The Organic Research Centre (ORC), established in 1980, is the UK's leading independent research charity for the development of organic/agroecological food production and land management solutions to key global issues including climate change, soil and biodiversity conservation, and food security.
www.organicresearchcentre.com



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