



Organic advice and conversion

OAS, OCIS and IOTA

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ORC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mark Measures, Phil Sumption,
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INITIATIVES

- Organic Advisory Service (OAS)
- Organic Conversion Information Service (OCIS)
- Institute of Organic Training and Advice (IOTA)

Over the last 40 years the ORC offered many additional pioneering services which included providing advice on organic farming - supporting farmers, growers, landowners, research centres, colleges, and other businesses.

In 1985 Elm Farm Research Centre launched the UK's first advisory service for organic farming, the **Organic Advisory Service (OAS)** which offered technical, management, marketing and business support to farmers and growers on conversion planning and subsequent ongoing organic management. The work of the OAS included the government funded the **Organic Conversion Information Service (OCIS)** which was launched in 1996 and ran until 2011, delivering over 10,000 visits. The objective of the service was the provision of impartial expert information direct to producers on their farms. The service was free, and at the time of its launch, Sir Martin Doughty, chair of Natural England said: "One of the potential barriers to conversion is a lack of knowledge by non-organic producers about organic principles and production methods – a barrier which OCIS, delivered by the Organic Research Centre, will help to remove".



The OAS team of advisers in the late 1990s

The **Institute of Organic Training and Advice (IOTA)**, a professional body for organic trainers and advisers was launched in 2005 with support and funding from ADAS, ORC, Organic Centre Wales and Soil Association. Set up by Mark Measures and aimed at raising the standard of advice and the management of organic farms, IOTA enabled farmers searching for advice, access to a list of accredited advisers with accredited expertise. IOTA ran as an independent organisation for 10 years, before amalgamating with ORC. Speaking in a recent ORC bulletin on ORC's services, Mark Measures said: "What ORC has contributed to, and in many instances has secured, are the many commercially successful organic farmers and growers in the UK, some now run by their third generation".

FURTHER READING

1. Where to Go Now for Advice? tinyurl.com/2p7h58en
2. 40th Anniversary Podcast - Episode 4 with OAS and IOTA: tinyurl.com/wbrh24u4
3. OAS - Organic Advisory Service (Elm Farm Research Centre): tinyurl.com/47kvxuxp



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