

Your quarterly update of Organics news and issues from your NFU Food Chain team. Please remember to quote the NFU as the source of information if any of the content of this newsletter is forwarded on.

News in Summary

[Latest – Review of EU Organic Regulations](#)

The EU Commission is still in the process of drafting its proposal to the European Council. The proposal is expected to be released in March 2014. Key concerns are the possible requirement of 100% organic holdings, the removal of the derogation for 5% non-organic feed and ban on national logos. [Read more here.....](#)

[Organic sales turn a corner in 2013](#)

Sales showed 0.6% growth year on year to August 2013. Dairy continues to be a strong performer showing like for like growth of 2.2%. [Read more here.....](#)

[Organic September a great success](#)

The Soil Association needs you to "Discover Organic". [Read more here.....](#)

[What are you allowed to say about organics?](#)

The Soil Association has issued a new report containing positive statements in support of organic food [Read more here.....](#)

[Commodity Board Elections – How to get involved](#)

If you have a desire to represent your respective commodity from the organic perspective then get involved! [Find out more here...](#)

[The NFU Organics Group](#)

The NFU Organics Group is a formal working party to NFU Food Chain Unit, to represent organic specific concerns across the sector. [Find out more here...](#)

[New Food Chain Adviser – Covering Organics](#)

The Food Chain Unit has recently appointed a new Food Chain Adviser, Tom Lander. [Find out more here...](#)

[Your Suggestions & Feedback](#)

We are eager to hear your views and feedback, good or bad regarding the Organics Newsletter. [Read more here.....](#)

[Food Chain Contacts](#) - [Find out more here...](#)

Review of EU Organic Regulations

You will recall that last year a briefing document which summarised the background and current situation to this review. Embedded within that briefing document were further documents which identified the Commission's three options for amending the regulations, the most radical of which caused some concerns for us, including the need for 100% organic holdings, the removal of the derogation for 5% non-organic feed and a ban on national logos.

We fed your views back to our Brussels office and we updated COPA who were meeting the day before. We are glad to say that our views were widely shared within COPA and while there were some disagreements across different member states, the consensus was that many of the proposals laid out by the Commission were either unworkable or could damage production.

This view was ably presented by COPA in the Advisory meeting and was (again, pleasingly) shared by many other industry representatives at the meeting. In fact, the Commission got quite a grilling during the 4 hour meeting and were left in no uncertain terms that while there were elements within each proposal that were appealing, the only 'package' that could be supported was the 'improved status quo'

The Commission is now in the process of drawing up a formal proposal this year, expected to be released around March. We are keeping a close eye on the situation to see if they have taken our views on board and what the exact outcomes of their proposals are.

We shall update you accordingly when we hear any news on the proposal.

[Back to top](#)

Organic sales turn a corner in 2013

Sales of organic food and drink have edged up this year – ending a period of decline as a result of the recession – as shoppers have returned to the products for their authenticity and traceability following the horsemeat scandal earlier this year.

More than half of all organic food and drink now bought in the UK is sold through just two supermarkets (Waitrose and Sainsbury's), according to the independent sales data which also reveals that the sector has finally stabilised and could be heading for recovery, having been badly hit by the economic downturn.

Sales of organic food and drink year on year to mid-August crept up by 0.6% from £1.22bn to £1.23bn, after falling for successive years.

The independent figures were produced by Nielson for organic food and farming body the Soil Association, which hailed them as a step in the right direction and the first sign of longer-term recovery.

The small rise reverses the ongoing slide in the face of ongoing tough economic conditions. Last year sales fell by 1.5% and in the previous year they slumped by 3.7%. At their height in 2008, before the start of the recession, sales of organic products totaled £2.1bn.

The sales figures were published as the organisation – which also certifies organic products in the UK through a network of licensed producers – said it had received the go-ahead from the Advertising Standards Authority to use new advertising guidelines to promote organic produce. The guidelines will be available to any organisation selling organic products and will aim to provide a clearer message to consumers.

The new figures from Nielsen (for the year to the end of 17 August 2013) reveal that the dairy sector continues to be the strongest performing category, as sales of organic milk – which accounts for the highest overall value of any organic product at £143m retail value – grew by 2.2%. In grocery, tea and yoghurts are also showing solid year-on-year growth at 19% and 9% respectively, while organic babyfood remains dominant in its category with a 57% share of trade.

Peter Melchett, policy director of the Soil Association, said: "There is little doubt that consumers are reappraising the organic offer in stores and making choices which guarantee a high level of sourcing integrity. Organic poultry is having a revival after a few slow years – a real sign that food assurance is becoming more relevant to shoppers."

Melchett said he hoped the sector would get a further boost from licensed farmers and food producers now being able to use a range of rigorously researched statements which have the ASA's backing. He said: "The Soil Association has worked for many years with the ASA to get to this point and I am delighted that we can now share these new statements – which clearly demonstrate the compelling reasons for consumers to choose organic – with organic food producers."

He said some of the evidence was also supported by government data: "For example, it's great to be able to say with confidence that the UK government has said that organic farming is better for wildlife, causes lower pollution from sprays, produces less carbon dioxide and fewer dangerous wastes."

[Back to top](#)

Organic September a great success

Organic September - The Soil Association needs you to "Discover Organic". And again this year we have a whole month to celebrate all things organic as National Organic Fortnight has been replaced and has now become Organic September.

The message is to promote organic and encourage shoppers to discover their own favourite organic products - and there are lots to choose from. So, swap your usual supermarket foods for organic products. Be kinder to yourself, your wildlife, and create an overall healthier planet.

So ... how can you take part in Organic September? Well, there are lots of ways!

Why not make a pact to replace just one of your everyday products each month with an organic one instead. You could replace food items, beauty products, clothing or household goods and before you know it you could be completely organic! The Soil Association has lots of helpful ideas about how you can shop for less and if you join The Soil Association you can get access to exclusive offers via Organic Connect a directory of independent retailers and suppliers.

You could even have an organic box, filled with fresh fruit and veg, delivered straight to your door. Or, if a friend or family member's birthday is coming up, eco gifts are a great alternative.

Have you ever thought about having an organic holiday? By visiting The Soil Association website you can find a beautiful place to stay for a fabulous holiday - you could choose from a working organic farm, where you could find out more about organic farming, an organic campsite, yurt or cottage - something for everyone! For more information about activities and how you can get involved go to [Organic September](#) for the details.

[Back to top](#)

What are you allowed to say about organics?

The Soil Association has issued a new report containing positive statements in support of organic food and farming having sought guidance from the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) Copy Advice Team.

The statements, available to anyone selling organic products, help demonstrate the many positive benefits of organic food and farming and why shoppers should choose organic.

The report is being published at the same time as new data from Nielsen - also announced at the Trade Briefing - showing that the organic sector continues to grow at a rate around 1% over a 12 week period to 17 August 2013.

Rob Sexton, Chief Executive of Soil Association Certification Ltd said:

"I'm delighted to share this report with our licensees. With the market in recovery, the Soil Association believes this is a crucial moment for everyone in the organic movement to come together with a clear call to consumers – organic is food you can trust, better for the environment and animal welfare."

Find out more: <https://www.soilassociation.org/trade/marketing/support/advertisingclaims>

[Back to top](#)

Commodity Board Elections – How to get involved

The election process for the NFU Combinable Crops, Dairy, Horticulture and Potatoes, Livestock, Poultry and Sugar Boards is currently underway. If you have a desire to represent your respective commodity from the organic perspective then please do get involved by clicking [here](#).

Each board has different rules and procedures for the election process but the above web link provides the necessary guidance to apply.

Please note that the majority of board elections close during February so if you are keen, do not hesitate.

The NFU Organics Group

The NFU Organics Group is a formal working party to NFU Food Chain Unit, to represent organic specific concerns across the sector.

The group is chaired by the NFU Vice President, Adam Quinney and has 18 appointed members who represent all regions and sectors. There is additional representation from the Soil Association, Organic Farmers and Growers, and the Organic Research Centre. They meet 3 times per year.

In the coming weeks we shall be sending out an update informing members who makes up our Organics Group and a brief summary of their involvement is within the organic sector.

[Back to top](#)

New Food Chain Adviser

The Food Chain Unit has recently appointed a new Food Chain Adviser, Tom Lander. Tom shall be taking over the role of representing organics within the NFU whilst working closely with Rebecca Wells in the BABS office to represent the UK organic sector at European Level.

Tom previously worked in the poultry sector covering a breadth of issues including IPPC, Internal and External Audits, Traceability and supplier relations. He is a keen supporter of British produce and wants to see a more self-sufficient yet sustainable UK food industry.

Please feel free to contact Tom if you have any organic related queries at Tom.Lander@nfu.org.uk and follow him on twitter [@TLanderFC](https://twitter.com/TLanderFC).

[Back to top](#)

Your Suggestions & Feedback

As this is the first publication of the Quarterly Organics Newsletter we are eager to hear your views and feedback, good or bad!

If there are any particular areas, sectors or information you would like to see included in future publications then please email these to Tom.Lander@nfu.org.uk.

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[Back to top](#)