



**Nafferton Ecological Farming Group (NEFG) –  
New Website, Newsletter and Organic Industry Support**

**LOOK AT Website: [www.nefg-organic.org](http://www.nefg-organic.org)**

**Tel: 01661 830222 Email: [organic@nefg.net](mailto:organic@nefg.net)**

**Introduction from Professor Carlo Leifert:**

Welcome to a new venture for NEFG, which I hope you find useful. It is designed to help:

- organic businesses to keep up to date with relevant research findings
- organic businesses to keep in touch with each other
- raise consumers awareness of why and where to buy organic food in the north of England

The Nafferton Ecological Farming Group has been carrying out research for the past 5 years on several DEFRA projects and on Quality Low Input Food Systems on behalf of the EU. It is important that the results of this work are used by you real farmers and growers and also your customers. This newsletter is to make you aware of the new low key, low cost, support service that we are now setting up at Nafferton. We will be:

- keeping the website up to date with relevant material for organic businesses, consumers, schools and researchers
- offering a telephone support and signposting service for farmers and interested consumers

These services will be provided by volunteers and the Nafferton team, coordinated by Kate Gascoyne. Please ring or email us if you have any time to help with this, or have ideas and contacts that might help.

We will be working closely with organic producer groups in the area, all of the certification bodies and the Soil Association producer services department – but we need direct responses from you to know if the Nafferton service is valued and where it needs adapting.

The website will have to pay for itself ultimately through a registration fee for businesses of £30.00. WE ARE OFFERING FREE REGISTRATION TO YOU UNTIL THE END OF OCTOBER.

Please register and let us know if you find it useful or not and what you would like to see on the site! **If you cannot get onto the website, please email or ring us..**

We will be emailing the next newsletter towards the end of this year and SO PLEASE REGISTER YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS ON OUR WEBSITE TO RECEIVE IT. If you don't have email, or access to the website, please phone to let us know ASAP.

I look forward to hearing from you and seeing the results of our work together....

**Carlo Leifert, Professor of Ecological Agriculture, Newcastle University**

**Encouragement from Phil Stocker:**

I am delighted that the Nafferton Ecological Farming Group (NEFG) are able to continue some of the information and technology transfer work needed in the north of England, now that the Yorkshire Organic Centre, and the North West Organic Centre have closed, and the North East Organic Programme has a short 6 months left to run. We will be working in partnership with the NEFG so that some of the activities can be seamlessly continued. We will also be working together on updating relevant technical guides, using relevant research findings.

I hope that your organic businesses will benefit from communicating through the website and newsletters, and these forums will allow you to make the most of the Soil Association programmes that are still happening in the north, Community Supported Agriculture and the Food for Life Partnership, as well as our normal producer membership services.

It is 10 years since the first meetings of the Northern Organic Food Initiative, which identified local needs and I chaired before all of the aforementioned programmes were put into place and

delivered by Soil Association. There's no doubt in my mind that all the effort put in then, and since, by so many people have made a huge difference to the advancement of organic food and farming in the 3 regions.

I am very pleased that Gillian Butler from Northumberland, Ainsley Baker from Cheshire and Alan Schofield from Lancashire have been able to commit some of their time to the farmer and grower board of the Soil Association and to represent your interests there. I look forward to seeing some of you again before too long.

**Phil Stocker, Soil Association Director of Farmer and Grower Relations.**

**Phil will be at Garthorne Farm, Darlington on 14<sup>th</sup> October and at Low Sizergh Farm, Kendal on 20<sup>th</sup> October, both 2-4pm**, as part of a national SA Producer Roadshow, where you can raise issues and find out more about future SA activities. Book your place on 0117 914 2400. See the SA website for more details.

**Research Topic from Gillian Butler, researcher at Nafferton: *Organic milk is cream of the crop***

A study by Newcastle University proves that organic farmers who let their cows graze as nature intended are producing better quality milk. Results of this study into UK dairy production were published in the Journal of Science of Food and Agriculture.

The NEFG study found that grazing cows on organic farms in the UK produce milk which contains significantly higher levels of beneficial fatty acids, antioxidants and vitamins than their conventional 'high input' counterparts. During the summer months, one of the beneficial fats in particular – conjugated linoleic acid, or CLA9 – was found to be 60% higher.

But...Unfortunately, in the north of England this benefit varies through out the year, with differences in nutritionally desirable fatty acids and antioxidants being highest during the summer, when the cows are eating fresh grass and clover. There is little difference between milk from different systems when cows are on winter diets. (A prompt here for future research work!). Further details of this and other findings on milk quality from the Quality Low Input Project can be found on the QLIF web site and the NEFG website.



**Food Education - Farm Links from Alison Quigley:**

The Food for Life Partnership is a network of schools and communities across England committed to transforming food culture. Led by the Soil Association, the Food for Life Partnership brings together the practical expertise of the Focus on Food Campaign, Garden Organic and the Health Education Trust. Part of our work involves supporting 180 Flagship Schools and Communities across England. The Farm Links element of the project is offered to all these schools and builds on the hard work of farmers who already provide educational visits to schools. It is essentially the establishment of an ongoing link between each of our schools and a local farm. **In a nutshell we want to:**

- Help pupils make connections with where their food comes from
- Give pupils a meaningful experience of daily life on a farm, year round
- Build on existing links and develop positive *ongoing* links between schools and local farms

If you are a farmer or producer in the North of England that offers educational visits (or would like to embark on offering educational visits - we can help fund CEVAS training) and would like to be involved in the Food for Life Partnership, please contact Alison Quigley, Northern Farm Links Officer Food for Life Partnership. **Tel:07827925380 Email: [aquigley@soilassociation.org](mailto:aquigley@soilassociation.org)**

**Supplying schools with produce:** If you are interested in supplying schools enrolled on the Food For Life Partnership, contact Caron Longden, Northern Food Sourcing Coordinator, **Tel:07796 998041, [www.foodforlife.org.uk](http://www.foodforlife.org.uk)**

## Regional round up: what has been going on in your area and the events coming up

### **Northumbria Organic Producers reports and events, by Carron Craighead:**

#### NOP AGM 18/05/09 at Kirkley Hall

The Chairman reflected on last year's AGM when we had 50 paid up members. The NEOP finished last March and to May 09 we have had 11 subs paid. The Chairman was going to make more effort to get members subs in. The most recent farm walk was in March, at Thistleyhaugh by kind permission of Messrs Nelles, looking at their deferred grazing system, the corral system for their suckler cows, winter shearing of Lleyne ewes, replacement easier care gimmers and their Shearwell EID system.

#### Guest speakers:

Mr Paul Flynn from Food for Life gave us all an update on the different bronze, silver and gold merit marks scheme awarded to schools for local and organic sourcing of food.

Mr Duncan Sheil from Godscraft gave our members a good insight into his farming philosophies. Running 1500 ewes and over 120 sucklers as a one man band, easy care was very important. Deferred grazing and outwintering of his suckler cows was of interest. His sheep flock based on Lleyne genetics had over the last 2 years had wool shedding genetics introduced and almost 50 % of the flock were not going to require shearing this year, although he did mention that some of the conformation of the finished lambs had slipped as a result. Mr David Hugill who completed a Nuffield scholarship on carbon sequestration, particularly relating to hill and peat moors, gave us all an insight into why the hill grykes and ditches were in need of work to prevent more carbon being leached out of the soils .

The Holistic farm management event at Thirsk was also mentioned when Mr Neil Dennis from Sunnybrae Mentoring gave a talk on his holistic pasture management in Canada.

#### Training

A questionnaire was presented on Lantra training opportunities which could meet up to 70% of the training cost. A popular option was the one-to-one training in the use of Planet software for nutrient management. This would be for a limit of 15 members, analysing 10 soil samples with results available on the training day to update your field records. The nutrient management and NVZ implications from farm manures could then be incorporated into the plan to create an up-to-date NVZ plan. For members in NVZ areas, they would then have their plans in place for March 2010. We would like to hold a training day at the end of September/ Early October, providing we get the interest from members.

Training in 'Accessing YOUR Marketplace' was also another popular option, which would cover potential customer streams and trends in consumer needs etc. On the livestock side, there was a consensus for more work looking at liver fluke in suckler cows.

**Please try and give some time to considering whether you would be interested in the Soil analysis and Planet training package.** We need 12 -15 members committed. The cost of training and up to 10 fields analysed would be £148 for non members but we are planning to offer the same package for £130 subsidised by NOP for paid up members; so what are you waiting for? Best wishes, Carron Craighead 01661 872825

### **Cumbria Organics events and reports:**

#### Livestock market report from Susan Woof, Cumbria and NW:

Livestock: It's been quite a difficult few months for many reasons. Following the cold spells in March-May many have reported poor grass growth with silage being of good quality but lacking in quantity. With many producers using all their fodder stocks to cover the extended period of stock being inside the quantity was especially important this year. Let's hope second/third crops are bumper ones!

One highlight has been the lamb price with new season lamb at £4.40/kg for week ending 19<sup>th</sup> June. Conventional and organic prices have dropped considerably over the last few weeks - week ending 31<sup>st</sup> July at £3.20/kg. Store cattle seem to have all found homes at £1.50-£1.70/kg but buoyant conventional prices have often caused the organic margin to be minimal and in some cases the price for stock has been higher conventionally through the auctions. Finished cattle remain around the £2.85/kg mark.

Milk: Not good news for all DFOB producers in our area, either. The demise of DFOB has left many with a cash flow shortfall of approximately 5 weeks milk money and loss of their investments with the company. Fortunately, two days before the company went into receivership DFOB had entered an organic alliance with Omsco. One of the contract clauses was that Omsco would offer a contract to all DFOB members. This duly happened and all but six of the members signed up with Omsco resulting in approximately 80% of the organic milk field in this country being part of the alliance. At the moment the milk in the Cumbrian area is going conventionally but it is hoped this will change later in the year. All of the producers I've spoken to have been very philosophical about the situation and are trying to look forward to a new beginning. Contact Susan Woof on 015396 21343 [bandswoof@btinternet.com](mailto:bandswoof@btinternet.com)

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September at 10.30am - Cumbria Organics visit to Low Stanger Farm and Market Garden: Low Stanger is a 54 acre lowland farm in the Lorton Valley, approximately 2 miles South of Cockermouth. We grow fruit and vegetables on a small scale, which are certified organic. Produce is sold through our own box scheme (established in 1997), as well as farm-gate sales and through local businesses.

We grow vegetables on a temporary bed system, which are managed by hand after initial cultivation and preparation. This suits our scale, but we are gradually mechanising where possible to improve productivity. We have limited protected cropping, which we use for early season, plant raising and tender crops like tomatoes. The orchards are young (planted in 2007/2008/2009), but are quite extensive, certainly for Cumbria. Varieties are a mixture of proven types, newer commercial types and a few heirloom trees. Guided farm walks over the pasture, meadow and fen fields will also be offered. We have just started an HLS agreement for the farm. Directions to Low Stanger Farm CA 13 9TS see [www.lowstanger.co.uk](http://www.lowstanger.co.uk) or [www.cumbriaorganics.org](http://www.cumbriaorganics.org)

Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October – Harvest Supper at The Watermill, Little Salkeld, 7pm.  
See CO website or ring Ana for more details, 01768 881047.

The shared Cumbria Organics stand at Countryfest in May was a great success – would you like to sell some of your produce and help to speak to consumers at other events? Apple Day? Contact Amanda Gorton on 01524271397 or [info@manserghhall.co.uk](mailto:info@manserghhall.co.uk)

Training Needs In Cumbria: the 2 Local Action Groups for the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE funds), are surveying farmers and foresters to find out what training is needed. It's important that your needs as organic businesses are heard at this stage, in order to fund any informal training that you need over the next 4 years. Please contact Viv Lewis on 01931713335 or Mob: 07748185049

**New Producer Group in Lancashire:** if you are interested in being part of a new organic farming group in Lancashire, please get in touch with James Hadwin, Tel: 01995 642255 Ext: 2206 or email: [JHadwin@myerscough.ac.uk](mailto:JHadwin@myerscough.ac.uk)

£1000 is available for North West farmers as part of the government's 'Real help for businesses now' campaign. The grants are to assist farmers in marketing their products and will be of particular interest to those dealing directly with consumers. Eligible businesses must be based in the North West and employ 5 - 250 people (includes full time & part time staff). To find out more contact Julie Housby, Director of Limekick Marketing on 0800 756 5567

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