

## Jersey Organic Associations' response to RES Green Paper

### Issue PR14 Organic Farming

The JOA agrees that the CRS is not the best mode of support for organic agriculture in Jersey. The ... “Ministers' broad aim” (with the Scheme) is to “safeguard and enhance the environment”. Organic agriculture does do this but in the Scheme it is just another “module” that can be considered for funds along with hedgerow planting and bridle paths and thus patently its' importance is missed. The fact that it has taken up half the budget, financially squeezing the other projects, is another good reason that the CRS is not the correct support mechanism for it.

The Association believes strongly that organic agriculture (some may call this agro-ecological agriculture) must become mainstream and thus “supported”.

The RES Green Paper proposes support for it be through the Rural Initiative Scheme. However, just as we do not believe organic agriculture is just a “countryside” issue, we also hold that it is not just and merely another “business venture” as it is more or less perceived by the RES Green Paper. Obviously there is business involved with the production and selling of products from the land and thus welcome support on this level, but we would like to see more fundamental support and actual engagement by government. Following is our *rationale* for this view.

The world’s agriculture and food systems face unprecedented challenges. We are approaching a ‘perfect storm’ of climate change, resource depletion, diet-related ill health and population growth which is forcing us to look again at how we produce and consume food. (Soil Association)

#### **Climate change**

# Each year, world agriculture emits 10 to 12 percent of the total estimated GHG emissions (FAO)  
# Soil-carbon losses caused by agriculture account for a tenth of total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions attributable to human activity since 1850.

##### Soil carbon sequestration,

According to the **IPCC**'s scientific advisors on Land Use, the soil represents 89% of agriculture’s greenhouse gas mitigation potential.

“widespread adoption of organic farming practices in the UK would offset at least 23% of UK agriculture’s current official GHG emissions”. (Soil Association)

#### **Resource Depletion**

The current paradigm of food production is heavily dependent upon oil, phosphatic fertilizers and water. The first is running out. Phosphatic fertilizers are also mined and are estimated to last for another 60 – 90 years (Prof Carlo Leifert, University of Newcastle); and water will become problematic with current practices. (See report from Engineering the Future Alliance <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/8628832.stm>).

The Organic paradigm offers alternatives to these as it based on renewable resources and principles of

sustainability.

### **Diet-related ill health**

.... The Cabinet Office acknowledged in 2008 that 'existing patterns of food consumption will result in our society being loaded with a heavy burden of obesity and diet-related ill health' and 'existing patterns of food production are not fit for a low carbon, resource-constrained future.'

### **Population growth.**

.....The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development 2008 report, by 400 scientists and signed by 60 governments including the UK concluded that agro-ecological farming – exemplified by organic systems – represents the best prospect for feeding the world

Considering that our Island is not immune to any of these, the Association is of the view that these issues should be recognized and acted upon.

### **Economic efficiency**

In these budget-constrained times anything that delivers pure economic benefit will be of interest. Organic agriculture is by definition an “internally optimized system” with regard to agronomy but also, by extension, financially economic.

For example.....

- # It uses solar energy (free) predominately instead of oil for fertility. *How expensive is oil?*
- # It protects the main agricultural asset, the soil. *Can a value be put on this resource?*
- # It was once described as the “primary health service”. *What is the cost of ill-health to our economy?*
- # It epitomizes local trading systems. *What is the extra financial cost of the current system of food transport?*
- # It is more labour intensive. *A thriving economy is dependent on full community engagement.*

*The Jersey Organic Association would like to see organic / agro-ecological agriculture on the political agenda*

*We would like to see our Island government engage in these issues reflecting their importance by taking a lead in:*

- appropriate financial support*
- correct advisory work,*
- appropriate R & D,*
- promotion and marketing support,*
- investment in local resource support ie vraic and compost,*
- awareness raising,*

*monitoring,  
workshops, courses and development of “paths into agriculture”*