



Organic Centre Wales
Canolfan Organig Cymru

Response from the Welsh Agri-food Partnership Organic Strategy Group
prepared by Organic Centre Wales, IBERS, Aberystwyth *University* SY23 3AL
to the Welsh Assembly Government consultation on

Proposed Second Environment Strategy for Wales Action Plan

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultations/currentconsultation/envandcouncurrcons/environmentstrategy/?lang=en>

“The strongest feature of organic agriculture is its reliance on fossil-fuel independent and locally-available production assets; working with natural processes increases cost-effectiveness and resilience of agro-ecosystems to climatic stress,”
FAO paper *Organic Agriculture and Food Security*, presented at an International Conference on Organic Agriculture and Food Security (3-5 May 2007)

We are providing brief comments on the consultation document. Our general comment relates to the educational and engagement value of supporting food growing, and the benefits of promoting organic husbandry both for gardening and amenity purposes.

1. Biodiversity

This is clearly a priority key theme which contains some useful actions; however, we would like to see actions to increase biodiversity not only in designated habitats, such as through the use of organic husbandry in public parks and gardens. Also, more natural and perennial planting in green urban spaces would considerably reduce spending, particularly on peat-based composts and pesticides.

In the wider environment, more strategic timing of cutting verges would greatly enhance the chances of road-side verges becoming beneficial habitats.

3. Access

We have not had sight of the CCW green space toolkit, so cannot comment on this aspect, but hope it might address some of our comments under Biodiversity, above.

8. Community Engagement

[26,27] Here we consider a major opportunity for community engagement is missed, in that the recent concern over food supplies has created a great increase in gardening especially food growing. Gardening is an excellent means of engaging people with the natural world, and support for gardeners, allotment holders and support to them in using organic techniques would enhance the environment and increase awareness of natural processes, which is likely to lead to greater awareness of other environmental issues.

[30] Organic Centre Wales is currently preparing a bid to the Supply Chain Efficiencies scheme of the RDP, and this contains an action to implement a progressive plan for organic farm access, particularly for ethnic minorities and socially excluded groups.

[31] We are unfamiliar with the Well-being tool, but hope that it considers the impact of diet on health, and the wider environmental impacts of food choices (see 35, below).

9 Partnership

[35] We hope that this includes the impacts of food purchases on the environment. Procuring organic foods both reduces the amount of pesticides used in food production and provides consumer reassurance through the legal system regulating organic production.

10 Environmental Quality.

The Second Organic Action Plan for Wales contains an action to engage with the agencies involved in health education in Wales in order to stress the commonality of message and interests.

General

We also note the lack of mention actions to tackle fly-tipping, which causes trouble and expenses for farmers and land-owners, as well as potential pollution and environmental and water-course contamination.

A final comment relates to the issue of noise, which came out strongly during the initial consultation process for the Environmental strategy but there seems to be an absence of actions to tackle this.

Organic Centre Wales (OCW) was established in 2000 as a focal point for the dissemination of information on organic food and farming to producers and other interested parties in Wales. In 2003, it was agreed that it should extend its focus to public education, public procurement, policy and strategy development, thus providing support to the whole of the organic community in Wales. It is based at Aberystwyth University.

OCW is run by a partnership of three organizations actively involved in organic farming research and knowledge transfer in Wales: ADAS, The Organic Research Centre Elm Farm and Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences at Aberystwyth University.

The funding for OCW comes from the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and Farming Connect (with additional support from the European Union EAGGF Objective 1 funds) to carry out the co-ordination functions, with additional funding for delivery through a separate WAG Organic Conversion Information Service contract and the Farming Connect Organic Development Programme.