

Response from the

Welsh Agri-food Partnership Organic Strategy Group

prepared by Organic Centre Wales
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30 March 2002

to the DEFRA consultation on

Quinquennial Review and Future of UKROFS

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/ukrofsbqs/index.htm>

The Welsh Agri-Food Organic Strategy Group is the official co-ordinating body for the organic sector in Wales, supported by the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Development Agency. This response was considered and agreed by the Strategy Group at its meeting on 26th March 2002.

With reference to:

- the UKROFS Quinquennial Review report,
 - the UKROFS Board response to that report,
 - the original consultation and
 - the Organic Centre Wales response to that consultation,
- the Organic Strategy Group:

1. Supports the principle of private sector certification, but with voluntary integration of certification bodies to reduce the total number to avoid both producers and consumer confusion and the need to maintain quality of service provision. There should not be an automatic assumption that new certifiers are desirable.
2. Supports the concept of official Welsh representation on UKROFS linked to the Organic Strategy Group
3. Agrees with the UKROFS Board and opposes the transfer of UKROFS' accreditation role to UKAS given the cost and expertise issues identified by the UKROFS Board and certification bodies.
4. Recommends that there should be a more in-depth evaluation of the impacts on certifiers and producers before changes in accreditation arrangements are implemented.
5. Recommends that if a real case for the transfer of accreditation responsibilities from UKROFS can be made (taking into account all the budgetary implications for DEFRA, certifiers and producers), then the IOAS alternative should be given serious consideration given a) the likely lower costs of this option and b) the accumulated organic and international expertise contained within IOAS.

6. Agrees that, whether or not UKROFS retains role of accreditation, effective structures are needed for co-ordinating standards setting involving the certification bodies. This should also involve the restoration of some form of sector body representation on the UKROFS Board.
7. Reiterates the need to develop effective IT systems to facilitate the accreditation role and to provide in-depth statistics rapidly in support of market development and research.
8. Strongly emphasises the need for adequate resources to be allocated to UKROFS to ensure that it can be effective in context of the expanding organic sector.
9. Agrees that UKROFS should continue to provide advice on R&D needs and other issues such as residue testing, but that policy advice should not become the remit of UKROFS.