

New organics centres in U.K.

A new organic research, training and advisory, centre is being set up in Wales. The Centre, to be called Abewstwyth Centre for Organic Husbandry, and Agroecology, is being organised by a coalition of Welsh academic and research centres, including the University of Wales at Aberystwyth and Bangor, the Welsh Plant Breeding Station, the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service at Trawsgoed, the Welsh Agricultural College and the Carmarthenshire College of Technology and Art.

A series of research projects are already underway, covering economics and marketing issues. A number of field trials are to be established in the spring. Organic training courses, funded by the European Social Fund and the Training Agency are operating at both WAC and CCTA. Close liaison is being maintained with the organic organisations and collaborative projects are being developed with both Elm Farm Research Centre and the Hens, Doubleday Research Association. The Development Director of the Centre is Nic Lampkin who, until recently, was a Soil Association council member, and continues to chair the Education Committee.

. and in Scotland

The Edinburgh School of Agriculture and the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Human Ecology have created an Organic Farming Centre, based in Edinburgh and at Jamesfield, a 280 acre farm near Newburgh in Fife. The farm is two thirds converted to Soil Association

Symbol standards, with the remaining one third in conversion. The Centre has achieved funding of approximately \$300,000 for its first two years of operation from Safeway plc, the Scottish Development Agency and the European Commission.

The project will cover research into organic beef and organic vegetable production, a whole farm monitoring program and a wide range of demonstrations of organic techniques. Complementing these will be an information, advice and training service, working closely with the Organic Advisory, Service and the Agricultural Training Board. A Europe-wide database will be created, and information disseminated through computer networks, publications, videos and technical notes. In addition, a UK wide market survey will take place.

The regional nature of the project is demonstrated by the funding bodies, each of which having contributed in approximately equal parts. Scotland is represented by the SDA,

which has agreed to fund a full-time person for two years to develop the Scottish Organic Producers Association. Areas of particular interest are market development and food processing.

The UK as a whole is equivalent to the funding from Safeway, which needs a much greater increase in, and security of, supply of high quality organic produce. The company's correct aspirations are for a 300 per cent increase in sales of organic produce over the next three years, and a stabilization of wildly fluctuating premiums. Thus Safeway have a particular interest in marketing and research into vegetable production.

The EC is interested to assess the contribution of organic farming can make to extensification and environmental protection.

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