

Supporting the Organic Research Centre



Facilities and Resources

Introduction

The Organic Research Centre is the UK's leading independent research centre for the development of organic and agro-ecological food production and land management. We deliver work in eight programme areas, each of which need underpinning by high quality staffing, facilities and other resources. For further details please see our Activities Review: <http://tinyurl.com/jck7s9u> This year our funding needs include:

Fundraising

Funding Required: £30,000 per year

In order to strengthen the Organic Research Centre as an organisation, we are investing in fundraising beyond bidding for restricted funds for each specific programme. We aim to empower ourselves to raise sustainable, core income that will benefit all aspects of the charity and have taken on a major donor fundraiser to help us achieve this. This expanded effort will cost us £30,000 in 2016 but it is likely to be 2017 before we see the full benefits.

Project Development and Bidding

Funding Required: £50,000 per year

Bidding for restricted funds for our programme areas involves pre-bidding stages that are not covered by the programme funding itself. This includes staff time spent on proof of concept work, pilot trials, literature reviewing and staff development and training costs, all of which are required to develop projects to a stage of being ready to submit an application.

Farmhouse Refurbishment Planning (New)

Funding Required: £10,000

The Organic Research Centre has a Farmhouse on site at Elm Farm, which currently provides accommodation for interns and staff based further afield. We aim to fully realise the potential of this property asset and we are in discussion with developers regarding refurbishment and extension. We need around £10,000 for specialist architectural and planning work to identify and secure planning permission for the improvements required, and to prepare a prospectus for the refurbishment project. We have raised £6,500 towards this so far in 2016.

Unrestricted and Core Support

Funding Required: £150,000+

As a charity the most valuable form of financial support is an unrestricted donation. This enables us to direct resources flexibly, towards the most strategically important needs, and to maximise opportunities for the development of organic and agro-ecological food production and land management. We require at least £150,000 unrestricted or core funds annually. With major support of around £500,000 we would be able to rebuild our accessible reserves and substantially improve our ability to benefit the organic community in future years.

Communications and IT Infrastructure (New)

Funding Required: £10,000

Despite our proximity to Newbury, we currently have very poor landlines and internet access, relying on satellite provision. It is likely that we will get access to Ultrafast Broadband on a fibre to property basis early in 2017. To take full advantages of this, our phone and internet systems will need upgrading, to include capital items such as a translation box, as well as the costs of roadside works in order for the broadband to reach our buildings at Elm Farm.

Financial Management (New)

Funding Required: £5,000-50,000 per year

We have recently invested in a new financial system, Exchequer, which has an annual running cost of £4,000. The system will bring us greater efficiency and functionality. Financial management of the charity also incurs staff costs of the Finance Officer, and in the longer term we need to appoint a part-time Finance Director to free up the Executive Director to undertake more outward facing activities.

To make a donation towards one of the above areas of our work, please contact: Atul Srivastava, Major Gifts Officer, on atul.s@organicresearchcentre.com, 01488 658298 Ext. 541, or 07519 69248

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Agroforestry

Introduction

Agroforestry is the integration of shrubs and trees with crops and livestock to benefit from the complementarity between the different species. The focus of this research programme is the evaluation of a range of agroforestry systems in terms of their productivity, environmental and economic impacts, and their potential for agri-environmental policy. For further details please see our Activities Review: <http://tinyurl.com/jck7s9u> Within this programme we require funding for the areas of work listed below.

Long Term Agroforestry Monitoring

Funding Required: £30,000 per year

While EU funded research projects have supported the establishment of a new agroforestry and hedgerow system at Elm Farm, with cycles of project funding lasting for limited periods of 3-4 years, it is essential to secure long-term resources to monitor, assess and maintain the systems. This will allow us to collect baseline data, such as the impact of agroforestry on biodiversity, soils, climate, animal welfare and local economies, which will be valuable to farmers in understanding the performance potential of agroforestry as a sustainable, agroecological approach to food production. A longitudinal approach will also enable us to further develop the Agroforestry network.

Conservation work at Elm Farm (New)

Funding Required: £30,000 per year

A coherent approach to conservation at Elm Farm is needed, integrating habitat management work with updates to the farm trail resources and interpretation boards. This will enable us to position Elm Farm as a demonstration site with best practice examples of conservation, maximising hedgerow and tree resources and livestock production.

For example, at Donkey Field we have a pond area with wildlife value that requires management that could involve goats and pigs, which would need a water trough. Conservation work could be achieved through increased use of local volunteers, led with increased staff resource required to take into account cultural aspects of the site and the ancient oaks trees.

Agroforestry technical guide (New)

Funding Required: £5,000

Over many years, through practical trials and research projects, ORC has accumulated an in-depth knowledge of agroforestry systems in the UK. This information needs to be distilled and collated into a practical guide for farmers who are thinking about implementing agroforestry systems on their own farms. The work would be undertaken with our Swiss partner organisations, FiBL, who will produce German and French language versions of the guide.

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Supporting the Organic Research Centre Business and Markets



Introduction

All farmers need to earn sufficient income to ensure their businesses are sustainable. This programme focuses on the analysis of farm incomes and costs of production, the availability and quality of organic market data, sector/market developments, and consumer attitudes, behaviour and willingness to pay. Our work aims to help producers, food businesses and policy-makers to make better informed decisions. For further details please see our Activities Review: <http://tinyurl.com/jck7s9u> The next projects that require funding in order to progress are listed below.

Organic Market Observatory (New)

Funding Required: £50,000

At present, there is a lack of consistent, reliable data about the organic market and documentation of trends from farm to fork. It is likely that this lack of data prevents business opportunities on farms and in the processing and retail sectors from being realised. ORC aims to set up an organic market observatory that will provide a regular, good quality 360^o overview of the organic sector in the UK, from organic production to retail markets and other aspects of the supply chain. We are seeking development funding of £50,000 to establish the initiative and produce initial reports to generate subscribers.

Following the establishment of the Organic Market Observatory, our long term plan is for the project to become self-financing through a combination of income sources including Government contracts, consultancy and corporate subscriptions.

Organic Farm Management Handbook 2017 (New Edition)

Funding Required: £10,000

Our handbook is normally published every two years, and is sold to around 1,500 farmers, consultants, researchers and students. The last edition in 2014 needs updating, presenting new sponsorship opportunities including front cover logos, and up to full page adverts on the back cover, inside cover and central pages to promote your business to the organic sector. Further details of sponsorship and advertising packages are available on request.

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Environment, Sustainability and Health



Introduction

Food and agriculture have major impacts on the environment and health, both as a result of the production methods employed and the quality of the food produced. Our research investigates the impacts of organic farming on the environment, methods of assessing sustainability on farms, and explores concepts of health applicable to individual organisms and ecosystems. The public benefit from this work also includes the advancement of agricultural and ecological knowledge, contributing to food security, climate change mitigation, sustainable development and biodiversity. For further details please see our Activities Review: <http://tinyurl.com/jck7s9u> Within this programme the next projects that require funding in order to progress are listed below.

Farm Sustainability Assessment – roll out of Public Goods and SMART tools

Funding Required: £50,000

Our Public Goods (PG) Tool developed in recent years established a rapid assessment methodology to increase farmers' understanding of public goods and the provision of these on their farms. Eleven strands were identified including reducing electricity and water consumption that can save farmers money as well as provide public goods. However, a second phase is required to understand how this information can lead to practical changes by farmers to benefit themselves as well as provide public benefits. This work is potentially also relevant for organic certification, agri-environmental policy and business communication. We are working with the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture to make their SMART Tool available in the UK for commercial farmer and supply chain assessments. We need for funding to support the establishment phase including training and marketing of the new service.

Sponsor a Researcher: Human Health and Food Quality (New)

Funding Required: £35,000 per year

We are currently members of the international Food Quality and Health (FQH) organisation and have attended and hosted conferences and workshops relating to organic and sustainable diets. To develop this area of work, we need to fund a researcher who can lead our engagement with the network and engage in project bids. This would allow us to further develop research methods to understand the inter-relationships between production methods, food quality and human health, including the wider issues around diet and the role of vegetables, pulses and proteins, as well as previous work carried out by Newcastle University and others focussed on vitamins and the nutritional value of organic food, as well as the negative health impacts of non-organic food through processes such as bioaccumulation. The funding sought (to cover staff, expenses and support costs) will be matched by £15,000 per year for three years from the Mary Langman Bequest, which has been designated for this purpose.

Promoting Biodiversity on Farms Handbook (New)

Funding Required: £15,000

Building on an initiative of our partner, the Swiss Research Institute of Organic Agriculture, we are seeking funds to produce a fully illustrated guide on how organic and other farmers in the United Kingdom and Ireland could manage their systems to enhance biodiversity on farms, both to conserve wildlife and habitats and to encourage the ecosystem service provision through biodiversity provision, benefiting agriculture through improved soil fertility, pollination and pest control.

Study Tours for Farmers with Health and Environment focus (New)

Funding Required: £10,000 per year

A small international training and exchange project for farmers and growers will support practitioners to see new and innovative approaches that their colleagues in other European countries have successfully implemented to deliver environmental and health goals. The funds will part-fund 5-day study tours of UK farmers to visit best-practice systems in other countries, learning from each other and building up a network for knowledge exchange and sharing experience to increase efficiency and innovation.

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The Organic Research Centre is the trading name of the Progressive Farming Trust Ltd. Charity no: 281276. Company no: 1513190.

Supporting the Organic Research Centre

Knowledge Exchange and Communication



Introduction

The Organic Research Centre is the UK's leading independent research centre for the development of organic and agro-ecological food production and land management. Our knowledge exchange and communications work emphasises a participatory process aimed at supporting organic producers and food businesses, professionals and students. For further details please see our Activities Review: <http://tinyurl.com/jck7s9u>

Annual Organic Producers' Conference (2017 Event)

Funding Required: £15,000

This event attracts 200 producers, agricultural advisers, researchers and students, sharing knowledge and innovations in sustainable farming systems. The total cost is £40k, mostly covered by participant fees. Benefits for sponsors include publicity, stand space and networking with decision makers. Trade stand and sponsorship packages range from £300-£6000. A separate sheet with details is available.

Communications and Dissemination

Funding Required: £20,000

Across all of our programme areas we engage with farming and scientific communities in ways that are not funded fully by specific project grants. Dissemination of results continues well after project grants have ended, otherwise the achievements will be rapidly forgotten. Costs include staff time to prepare presentations and write articles, travel, event fees and publication rights for open access, peer reviewed journals. Staff time is also required for engagement with the peer review process, research networks, and representation on boards and committees.

ORC Technical Guides (New)

Funding Required: £25-50,000

With support of £5,000 per guide we can produce technical guides summarising best practice recommendations for farmers on topics such as soil fertility, cover crops, weed control, agroforestry, biodiversity and protected cropping, livestock nutrition and health, farm sustainability assessment and other topics.

New ORC Website and Publications Database

Funding Required: £20,000

We need to bring our main website up to date and enhance the content, with information for research, policy and media audiences, complementing the Agricollogy website with its focus on producers. The costs include both website development and design as well as updating content. Additional funding would enable us to allocate staff time to collate an easily accessible database of output from ORC and related research.

Training Events and Bursaries

Funding Required: £10,000 per year

Our training events are aimed at organic producers, professionals and students. Event sponsorship is needed for £500 plus per event day. Bursaries enable young people to attend these events and our conference, building the next generation of organic specialists, at a cost £100 per event day.

Intern Grants and Volunteer Co-ordination (New)

Funding Required: £20,000 per year

We receive many applications annually for intern positions, some but not all of which are funded by Erasmus grants or project staff budgets on a minimum wage basis. An intern grant scheme would enable us to support unfunded individuals and contribute to the costs of supervision, travel, expenses and training. Funding for staff time for volunteer co-ordination would enable us to expand our work with volunteers.

ORC Bulletin

Funding Required: £5,000

We aim to restore the regularity of our bulletins from 2 to 4 per year. To achieve this, we now offer opportunities for advertising in the printed and online versions of the Bulletin to promote your business to the organic sector.

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Supporting the Organic Research Centre



Livestock Systems

Introduction

Organic farming systems aim to improve animal welfare through access to pasture and to promote health through good animal husbandry. This research programme supports the provision of practical solutions to production challenges on a farm level. Our research so far has confirmed the importance of farmer-led research. The public benefit of our research includes the advancement of animal welfare, as well as contributing to food security and climate change mitigation through improved utilisation of on-farm resources. For further details please see our Activities Review: <http://tinyurl.com/jck7s9u> In 2016-17 our funding needs include:

Sponsor a Researcher: Livestock (New)

Funding Required: £50,000 per year

Keeping livestock is an integral part of many organic farming systems. Following the shift in focus of our funded research from dairy to sheep, we need to fund a dedicated researcher to develop on farm trials with livestock producers, developing solutions that benefit dairy, pig and poultry producers. The researcher will build relationships with livestock farmers, support producer-led trials and produce technical notes that are transferable beyond the group of farmers directly participating. S/he will build on the knowledge gained from previous projects, address issues that cross different programme areas, and further develop solutions for key issues such as reductions in the use of antibiotics, feed value from the range, alternative protein sources, and making best use of pasture. Costs for the researcher include a proportion of organisational overheads and supervision.

Ruminants: Mob Grazing (New)

Funding Required: £30,000

Mob grazing is an intensive rotational grazing system, which is based on the idea of grazing a large amount of cattle on a small amount of land, for a very short period of time. As a technique for grassland regeneration it has been a topic of interest in the organic community, but still needs rigorous assessment in order to understand its potential for organic farmers. This would be suitable for a PhD student to carry out a full literature review before developing an assessment methodology, definitions and applications. Costs for the Mob Grazing PhD student include fees, living expenses, laboratory analysis, travel a proportion of organisational overheads and supervision.

Livestock health technical guide (New)

Funding Required: £5,000

There has been an increase in research in recent years on methods for reducing prophylactic and other uses of antibiotics and anthelmintics (antiparasitics) in livestock production. This information needs to be distilled and collated into a practical guide for farmers who are concerned about these issues or are needing to meet requirements for organic certification, in particular the US market where antibiotic use is prohibited for organic livestock. The work would be undertaken with our Swiss partner organisations, FiBL, who will produce German and French language versions of the guide.

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Plant breeding for crop resilience



Introduction

Mainstream plant breeding methods are focussed on high input, intensive agriculture and frequently result in genetic monocultures that become susceptible to pests and diseases. Variety development for organic and low input farming is severely lacking. Our plant breeding programme focuses on increasing genetic diversity to produce crops that are more resilient to variations in climate, weather, weeds, pests, diseases and other challenges. We are also searching for cultivars (varieties produced by selective breeding) and landraces (locally adapted varieties) that are more suited to low input farming systems, to use as alternatives to modern elite lines and also as breeding sources. This brings economic benefits to organic farmers by improving the overall stability and resilience of their systems. For further details please see our Activities Review: <http://tinyurl.com/jck7s9u> In 2016-17 our funding needs include:

Commercialising our Composite Cross Populations

Funding Required: £30,000 per year

The successful development of the genetically diverse 'ORC Wakelyns Population' wheat crop was the result of a series of UK and EU-funded research projects. We now need to develop a longer term strategy to move towards commercialising the seed crops and develop approaches to composite cross populations that work for other crops such as barley and grain legumes. We need a 0.5 FTE researcher to take ownership of this, including methods for long term maintenance of CCPs, as well as research and development. In the long term we also aim to empower organic farmers to become plant breeders in their own right, breeding diverse and resilient populations suited to their own environments.

Developing Wheat and Barley Varieties for Organic Farming (New)

Funding Required: £30,000 per year

Our role in the WHEALBI project aims to find solutions to low input and organic agriculture for wheat and barley. Funding from the EU covers our work comparing 10 specific 'accessions' or types within species of wheat and barley. However, ORC's additional research outside of the project has been unfunded so far, but has identified genetic accessions specifically developed / adapted for low input farming systems that perform better than those 10. With additional funding we can build on this to support a UK systematic approach to breeding and selling these accessions.

Land Rental for Trials

Funding Required: £10,000 per year

Across all our programme areas is a need for funding to enable us to rent land for field trials. This is particularly important for our work on plant breeding, and will enable us to pilot trials to identify gaps in research and knowledge based on new developments in the organic sector. For example, with recent increases in demand for British grown quinoa as an alternative source of protein, field trials are required to establish a baseline understanding of how to grow this crop organically in the UK.

Equipment (New)

Funding Required: £20,000+

Across all our programme areas is a need for new capital items and equipment, including improved grain storage and around £5k for equipment, such as: quadrats, sieves, shelves and ceptometers for measuring leaf areas, and IT equipment including tablets for use in the field. We are in the process of restoring a research space for crop analysis and require a further £5k to cover the benches, tables, and equipment to complete the refurbishment. With major investment we could also purchase our own plot drill and plot combine to support our trials work and generate income from this approach in the longer term.

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Policy Development and Evaluation



Introduction

The Organic Research Centre is working to develop improved organic and ecological approaches to food production to achieve our vision of a world which meets the nutritional needs of current and future generations with safe, affordable, high quality food, produced in a way that sustains and enhances the natural environment, and ensures the health and wellbeing of all. The benefits need communication to policy makers and the broader public in order to bring about real change. For further details please see our Activities Review: <http://tinyurl.com/jck7s9u> Our policy work includes the following funding needs in 2016 and 2017:

Policy Advocacy Programme (New Post)

Funding Required: £50,000 per year

Government and EU policies and regulations impact on organic producers and consumers, and we aim to engage more effectively in order to facilitate the sound development of the organic sector in the UK and internationally. This includes dissemination of our research results and providing evidence to UK Governments, the EU Commission and non-governmental organisations to influence policies such as support payments for organic producers, organic regulations and standards.

To respond to the Brexit challenges, we need a new Policy Officer post to support our senior staff through the development of discussion papers, evidence brief and consultation responses, and this expanded effort will cost us £50,000 per year to engage effectively at national and international levels. We have already secured £10,000 from the A Team Foundation towards this in 2016.

100 Benefits of Organic Farming (New Publication)

Funding Required: £5,000

We are planning to work with our Swiss partners the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture to produce a summary of the 100 key benefits of organic farming, with links to the regulatory requirements and supporting evidence for the benefits. £5000 will help cover translation production, design and printing costs for printed and on-line versions of the document.

Evidence Reviews (New)

Funding Required: £25,000-50,000 each

Making the case for organic farming and other agroecological approaches requires in-depth evidence reviews conducted to meet exacting international standards, for example with respect to productivity, climate change, biodiversity, soil and water conservation, food quality and health, labour use and financial performance. Undertaking these reviews has long been an aspiration of ORC – a start has been made with the report on Agroecology and Sustainable Intensification we undertook for Scottish Natural Heritage (www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A1652615.pdf). However, given the extensive research that has been undertaken internationally in recent years, each topic deserves a fuller review, with the aim of publishing recognised peer-reviewed publications evaluating the evidence.

Book: The Case for Organic Farming (New)

Funding Required: £30,000

A book aimed at the popular market, rather than professionals and academic experts within the food, agriculture and environmental sectors, is needed to set out the case for organic farming, based on sound science and evidence. The book will explain how organic farming can meet global food security, social, health and environmental challenges, with the aim of influencing policy as well as public attitudes and behaviour on organic food as a step towards realising our vision.

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Soils and Cropping Systems



Introduction

Human health and food security are reliant on designing systems that produce a diverse range of healthy crops, quality food and sufficient yields. Our work in this area is focussed on the development of productive organic cropping systems including the use of legumes, cover crops and reduced tillage systems without the use of herbicides. For further details please see our Activities Review: <http://tinyurl.com/jck7s9u> The next projects that require funding in order to progress are listed below.

Diversifying Diets (New Crops)

Funding Required: £30,000 per year

ORC is part of an EU funded partnership project, DIVERSIFOOD, to embed novel and underutilised crops into the value chain to both improve crop diversity and food diversity. The crops selected for agronomic screening within sustainable farming systems include quinoa, chickpeas, buckwheat and ancient wheat species such as einkorn and emmer. We would like to build on our role in the project with independent research testing the performance of additional crops in UK organic systems, as well as testing the nutritional quality of these crops to help demonstrate the health benefits to the consumer. Additional funding would enable us to communicate the benefits to human health of diversifying diets based on organic methods in the food chain. These novel crops offer potential for organic farmers through discovery of low input adapted species/varieties, and by creating markets for speciality products.

Soil Organic Matter (New)

Funding Required: £15,000 per year

ORC is currently a partner in the GREAT Soils project, funded by the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, aimed at exploring new and improved tools for soil assessments. However, we need to deliver stand-alone research specifically regarding soil organic matter in order identify methods for organic farmers to measure and improve this crucial factor. Research will be practical and delivered through a participatory approach that builds on the GREAT Soils partnership.

Organic Recommended Lists (New)

Funding Required: £40,000 per year

Unlike for farming in general, there are currently no recommended lists of crop varieties specific to organic farmers. With investment of around £40,000 per year ORC would be able to provide reliable data from multi-site trials that can form a recommended list for organic farmers. For example, farmers would benefit from being able to choose from a recommended list of arable crop varieties for organic farming, taking into account factors such as yield, weed competitiveness and disease resistance. This would involve co-ordinating multi-site crop trials to gather data through a partnership approach. Organic producers would benefit from results, such as which crop varieties (old and new) perform best in organic systems, with long term data on crop performance across the UK.

Organic Arable Yield Depression (New)

Funding Required: £30,000

Organic arable yields in the UK are stagnating, and more data is required to understand the reasons behind this. With investment of £30,000 we can conduct testing and data collection through monitoring soils and tissue analysis. Results will benefit organic arable farmers in their efforts to better understand this issue.

Individual crop technical guides (New)

Funding Required: £5,000 each

Work with our Swiss partners, FiBL we are looking to produce English language technical guides for individual organic crops, starting with wheat and potatoes. The series will be extended to other crops as funding permits.

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