



**Duchy Originals
Future Farming Programme**

Introduction

The world has woken up to the challenges that agriculture faces from resource scarcity and environmental change. Farmers are feeling the heat from rising input costs, with N and feed grain prices doubling between 2007 and 2011.

This has galvanised scientists around the world. Yet in the UK as in many other countries, only a small fraction of agricultural research responds directly to farmers' needs and much is devoted to developing new inputs that farmers pay for year after year.

The Duchy Originals Future Farming Programme helps redress the balance, focusing on low-cost, sustainable solutions that rely on management practices or renewable resources. It is a concerted drive to boost innovation in organic and other low-input farming, aiming to improve productivity and environmental benefits.

The programme puts farmers in the driving seat, involving producers around the country in practical, farmer-led R&D, and working with the big science funders to win farmers a real say in the research that is done in your name.



Who is involved

The programme is funded by the Prince of Wales's Charitable Foundation, and is delivered by the Soil Association in partnership with Duchy Originals from Waitrose and the Organic Research Centre (ORC).



The Soil Association is a charity that promotes healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use. The organisation engages directly with thousands of farmers and food businesses, providing technical guidance and, through its trading subsidiary, inspecting them to organic standards.



The Soil Association's lead research partner is the Organic Research Centre (ORC). Based at Elm Farm near Newbury, ORC is an independent research centre dedicated to the development of sustainable food systems based on organic/agro-ecological principles.

Duchy Originals was founded by The Prince of Wales in 1990 with an aim that every product "is good, does good and tastes good". Following the signing of a licensing and distribution agreement with Waitrose, the Duchy Originals from Waitrose brand launched in Waitrose stores in September 2010. Duchy Originals and Waitrose believe in the value of organic food, grown and produced sustainably.



A donation from the sale of all Duchy Originals from Waitrose products is given to The Prince of Wales's Charitable Foundation, and to the Countryside Fund.

The Prince of Wales's Charitable Foundation was established by The Prince of Wales in 1979. The Foundation operates primarily as a grant making trust and aims to use income raised from its trading subsidiaries to support charitable causes and make a strategic impact for good.

The programme is advised by an independent steering group of leading scientists and farmers, who are introduced overleaf.

The independent steering group

The programme is advised by an independent steering group of scientists and farmers from within and outside the organic movement. We want this group, chaired by Professor Charles Godfray, to challenge us from the outside. Their critical scrutiny will help us make sure that our approach is practical and that we are rigorous in evaluating its results.



Prof Tim Benton, UK Champion for Global Food Security, Prof of Population Ecology, University of Leeds

Stephen and Lyn Briggs, Director of Abacus Organic Associates, and farmer and organic inspector

Adrian Dolby, Farm Manager, Barrington Park Estate

Prof Maggie Gill, University of Aberdeen

Prof Charles Godfray (chair), Director, Oxford Martin Programme on the Future of Food

Prof Nic Lampkin, Executive Director, Organic Research Centre at Elm Farm

Prof Erik Millstone, SPRU, University of Sussex

Dr Michel Pimbert, Rachel Carson Centre for Environment and Society at the University of Munich

Dr Duncan Pullar, Director, DairyCo

Adam Quinney, Farmer and Vice President, NFU

Prof Nigel Scollan, Waitrose Chair of Food and Farming, IBERS

Iain Tolhurst, Grower, Tolhurst Organic Produce

Prof Robert Watson, former CSA, Defra.

Making it happen

Field labs. At the heart of the programme are farmer-led workshops, open to all (both organic and non-organic), where producers examine innovative agroecological approaches, share existing best practice, learn how to run effective DIY trials and identify real gaps where academic research would make a crucial difference. They are inspired by the farmer field school approach, pioneered among low-input farmers in Asia and Africa, which has helped millions of farmers develop low-cost, sustainable practices. The field labs are hosted by farms that are already trialling new techniques, and see the same group of farmers meet 2-4 times through the season to monitor progress and discuss alternative approaches.

Priorities and partnerships. The research needs identified in the field labs will feed into a formal process of reviewing research priorities in agroecology, involving farmers, researchers and other people with a stake in farming, led by ORC. Through its Participatory Research and Demonstration Network, ORC will broker partnerships between research centres and farmers to pursue these priorities. We will also track relevant research developments and communicate these to farmers.

Research fund. The themes identified by ORC will shape the priorities for a small new research fund. The fund will support farmers to get involved in research projects and, where appropriate, pilot work to provide a launch pad for larger research projects.

Organic sector road maps. The research priorities will also feature in broader reviews of the challenges facing each major sector (e.g. poultry) and the contribution that ecological and organic farming can make to addressing them. These road maps will be developed in consultation with farmers, growers and other stakeholders, and will set out shared aspirations and action plans.

Farm data network. Soil Association Certification's IT and inspection infrastructure currently collects data from 2,400 farms certified to Soil Association standards. We aim to develop this resource to help participating farmers to benchmark their performance.

Policy and communications. The work on the ground is intended to inform and inspire policies affecting research and innovation for sustainable agriculture. Instead of just telling policy-makers about the programme's farmer-led approach, we are showing them, inviting relevant decision-makers to visit the farms involved.

Progress so far

A first wave of field labs. Between field labs, farm walks and producer workshops, we have reached 570 farmers and growers in the programme's first six months, on track for our target of 1,000 by April 2013.

“It was brilliant to meet other growers facing similar challenges and to hear how they approach problems. The field lab was a great springboard for planning our own trials next year.”

Kate Collyns, grower at Hartley Farm
Field lab participant

“It is great to get involved with hands-on trials, designed and run by farmers with simple, digestible results. The idea that this study will be improved with the input from researchers means that next year I'll plan a better study.”

Stephen Bosustow, Trerise Farm
Field lab host

Initial field lab topics

In progress	Peat-free compost materials for seed propagation
	Taking poultry through the moult to benefit productivity and welfare
	Microbial soil amendment to boost nutrient availability
	Applying biochar for plant and soil health
	Cereal varieties for higher productivity in low-input and organic production
In the pipeline this year	Mineral nutrition of dairy cows for animal health and milk quality
	Yield and crop quality impacts of applying anaerobic digestate
	Evaluating alternative weeding techniques used in field scale vegetable production
	Slurry application and uptake in grass from improved storage and management
	Reducing antibiotic use in dairy for animal health, milk quality and cost efficiency
	How the growth stage of red clover affects the productivity of grazing sheep
	Mob grazing to increase beef productivity and carbon sequestration from pasture

Field labs online. Each field lab has a dedicated web-page, which outlines the aim of the experiment, the approach being trialled and developments through the production season.

As the field labs progress, the pages will include research findings, lessons learned and videos.

Finding out what farmers need. The Organic Research Centre has surveyed the innovation priorities of organic and low-input farmers. Initial analysis highlights weed control and identifying varieties for low-input systems as top priorities in arable, and reducing reliance on imported feed as a high priority in dairy (the dairy survey is in collaboration with the EU SOLID project).



About the programme

The programme involves farmers across the country in developing innovative techniques and best practice, aimed at improving productivity, quality and environmental performance in organic and low-input agriculture. We want to showcase a practical approach to R&D that inspires larger research funders to take an ecological approach and give farmers a real say. [More about the programme...](#)

Events

➔ **Field lab: Biochar added to soil as a fertility builder**
25 August

Hankham Organics, Hankham,
East Sussex, BN24 5BE

➔ **Farm Walk: Crouch Farm - West Sussex**
29 August

Crouch Farm, Barlavington,
Petworth, West Sussex GU28
0LQ

➔ **Field Lab: Non mechanical weed control in field scale vegetables – foam weeding and electrical weeding**
30 August

Home Farm Nacton, Unit A,
Camilla Court, The Street, Nacton,
IP10 0EU

How can we help you?

While this programme is about improving the long-term sustainability of British agriculture for everyone's good, we know it will only succeed if getting involved offers real benefits for farmers and growers. Here's how you can get involved why it should benefit your business:

Host a field lab. If you'd like to trial a new approach on your farm, get help from a scientist to learn as much as possible from the time or money you're investing in that experiment.

Attend a field lab. Compare notes with other farmers testing new ways to tackle the same problems you're trying to crack, get tips on running effective trials and tell researchers where you really want their help.

Get research help. We will soon be launching a research fund and are finalising the details of who will be eligible – let us know if you're interested.

To get in touch please contact Astrid Toner:

Email: atoner@soilassociation.org

Direct line: 0117 914 2400

Web: www.soilassociation.org/fieldlabs

