



ORGANIC RESEARCH CENTRE

OUR WORK IN 2019

**We combine scientific excellence
with practical experience
to deliver real impact**

Credit: Organic Arable. Photo taken at Abbey Home Farm

A message from the ORC Team

Welcome to 'Our Work 2019' which showcases some of our recent activity.

It has been a busy year, full of change for the Organic Research Centre, the U.K. and the world! Presently, the Covid-19 pandemic is highlighting the risks and challenges in our supply chains. We believe that organic farming and agroforestry are viable and valuable agroecological approaches that address public concerns about the future of food and agriculture.

Our research is of vital importance to deliver the necessary transformation of our food and farming systems and ensure their sustainability, resilience and health.

The ORC remains the UK's leading independent research charity for organic and agroecological farming. We follow the principles of diversification, integration and participation in our work whilst aiming to deliver scientific excellence and real impact. Our independence and charitable status are important in allowing us to deliver unbiased research designed to meet the requirements of the end-user without yielding to commercial, political or publishing pressures.

We hope you enjoy reading some of the highlights of our work within...



In 2019, ORC...

Managed a research portfolio of **19 projects** worth over **£3.5 million** covering our major research themes of Crop Diversity and Agronomy, Animal Husbandry, Agroforestry, Systems Assessments and Business and Markets

Integrated Knowledge Exchange in all our work to support change on the ground



Collaborated with **148 farmers and producers** to address key industry challenges in **on-farm trials** and case study research, with **over 500 attending ORC workshops**

Worked with at least **200 organisations** including **universities, research institutes** and **leaders** within the British and European agricultural sector



Presented at **78 academic conferences and industry events** and **published 43 book chapters and articles** in the scientific and grey literature

A snapshot of our work

In 2019 our expert team worked collaboratively to deliver **19 projects** across **5 research themes** all underpinned by knowledge exchange and policy

OUR 2019 PROJECTS:

- AFINET ●● / Agricolgy ●● / CERERE ●●●
- DiverIMPACTS ●●● / DIVERSIFOOD ●●●
- DIVERSify ●●● / EcoFeed ●●● / EIP Ancient Cereals ●●●
- EIP Soils ●●● / EIP WOOFs ●●● / ELMS T&T ●●●
- Innovative Farmers ●●●●● / iSAGE ●●●●●
- LIVESEED ●●●●● / Organic Plus ●●●●● / SEEGSLIP ●●●●●
- SustainFARM ●●●●● / SystemHealth ●●●●● / Whealbi ●●●●●



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Research themes

Our innovative Public Goods (PG) Tool has been adapted into a user-friendly decision support tool for agroforestry farms. All farmers, land managers and other stakeholders, such as farm advisors, can access it for free online. Users can identify the possible impacts of changing their system on performance across a full range of sustainability indicators. We produced guides on Productive Hedges and Harvesting Woodfuel from Hedges, as well as the Agroforestry Handbook. See: sustainfarm.eu/en/decision-support-tool and search on Zenodo.org

Helen Chesshire,
Lead Farming Advocate,
Woodland Trust

Over the last 12 months we have worked with the ORC to disseminate evidence and advocate the benefits of agroforestry within UK agriculture. As the interest in agroforestry from land managers grows, the ability of ORC to provide answers which are relatable to practical situations is valuable and supports the work of the Woodland Trust's 'Trees for your Farm' scheme. We really value your expertise and knowledgeable, friendly staff.

Working with ORC on a number of horticultural trials, including most recently using woodchip for soil health, has been a delight. The great, knowledgeable staff bring a relevance to on-farm trials work. I have gained a better understanding of systems of soil health and fertility and am getting increasingly interested in our earthworm populations!

Iain Tolhurst, Owner, **Tolhurst Organics**

Our analysis of PG Tool assessments from 130 sheep and 76 goat farms across seven countries showed that they are struggling with Agri-environmental management options and systems diversity. Our findings show that **future R&D in these systems needs to promote diversity** in production and marketing, better management of agrochemical use and conservation of species and habitats, whilst maintaining economic viability so that a sustainable sector can be realised. See: sageguard.net/

Research themes ●●●●●

AGRICULTURE

Agricology is an **online community of farmers and researchers sharing knowledge and best practice** to work towards more resource efficient, resilient and profitable agricultural systems. ORC developed the concept with our partners and manage the platform. It now has had more than 185k website users, over 11k social media followers and 250k views on YouTube and is growing all the time! See: agricology.co.uk

Working with ORC on Agricology is an exemplar of how our teams, involving scientists, farmers and environmentalists, can be on different floors but meet in the same lift – and then travel up together finding a shared objective to reach the top! The vision of “farming without labels” has created a potent creative force in UK farming.

Alastair Leake,
Director of Policy
and the Allerton Project,
Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust

The ORC was instrumental in establishing the Duchy Home Farm 35 years ago. They gave us the confidence to farm in a new way without chemicals that was way ahead of its time and we have continued to look to them to guide our direction of travel and challenge our thinking. I have recently enjoyed working with ORC to explore agroecological soil management and continue to benefit from the work the organisation does.

David Wilson, Farm Manager, **Duchy Home Farm**



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Research themes

Globally, we are dependent on 12 domesticated crop species for 75% of our calorie intake. We worked to increase this number by **raising the profile of forgotten and underutilised crops and increasing our knowledge** of their potential in the UK. We showed that ancient cereals such as Einkorn, Emmer and Rivet can be grown successfully in organic agriculture with reduced soil tillage. We created a database to increase access to results from across Europe on a range of underutilised crops, and a guide on how best to test them so anyone who is interested could do it for themselves. See: diversifood.eu/workplan-deliverables/ and orgprints.org/35259/



The work done by ORC for arable producers over the years has been fantastic. Their work assessing cereal phenotypes is a consistent point of reference for organic farmers and has been undertaken without any commercial bias which makes it particularly important. Current work examines how varieties perform in different situations, and under different management regimes, encouraging farmers to ask the important question: “Which varieties are the most appropriate for my system?” rather than which variety is best.

Andrew Trump, Managing Director,
Organic Arable

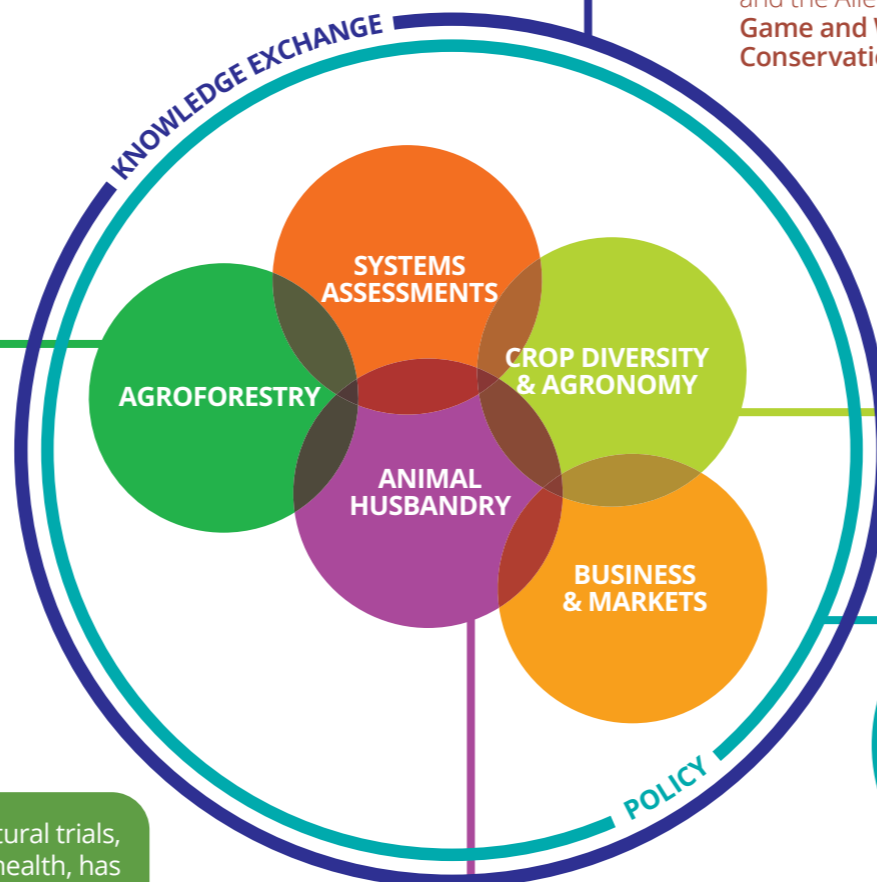


To reach the full potential of biodiversity on farm we need a regulatory framework for seeds that recognises the benefits of genetic diversity. A major step towards this is the inclusion of organic varieties and organic heterogeneous material, such as ORC Wakelyns Population, in the new EU Organic Regulation. Calling on **our knowledge and experience, we have been central to the development of the policy and legislation** that will ensure that genetically diverse seed can be legally sold and used in organic farming. See: liveseed.eu/results/wp2/

Research themes ●●●●●

The superb work of the Crops research team at the ORC has been invaluable in building sector development and helping us to generate high quality content that enhances our relationships with food and farming businesses. This includes at OF&G National Organic Combinable Crops, the largest organic farm conference in the UK, and with the collaborative grain/flour/bakery network, the UK Grain Lab.

Steven Jacobs, Business Development Manager, **OF&G**





Thank You to all the individuals and organisations that have supported our work in 2018-19. Without your generosity, our groundbreaking research would not be possible.

Your support matters

Our top priority is to help farmers produce healthy, affordable food for all through better farming.

Organic farming helps to secure food supply, combat climate change, protect our health and safeguard wildlife.

But we can't do it alone. We need to raise £150,000 every year to support our work to redesign and deliver healthy, fair and sustainable farming systems.

Your support is needed for:

- innovative farmer-led projects
- shaping policy, influencing debate and making the case for organic
- building our research network for farmers and businesses
- new technical guides, workshops and digital resources.

Get involved

There are lots of ways for you to get involved and support us.



Please call us on
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