



Our work in 2021

Changing the future of food and farming

About ORC

We are a small charity, yet we are the UK's leading independent research organisation for agroecological farming approaches; we drive our own research agenda to tackle global issues by acting locally, finding community-based solutions for farmers and their supply chains.

Our vision
**Together
we'll deliver
the transition
to naturally
healthy and
resilient
farming
systems.**

We deliver
this by



Leading change by connecting and collaborating internally and externally across our networks of researchers and farmers



Bringing new thinking to the mainstream by developing nature positive solutions through pioneering and rigorous independent research



Empowering people to embrace different ideas by translating our research into practical application and advice, influencing policymakers, farming communities and wider society



Demonstrating the economic as well as the environmental rationale for an alternative approach to improve livelihoods and social impact

**In 2021...
we managed
a research
portfolio of
20
projects**



worth over
£475,000
working with
**150
organisations/
partners**

We work closely and in cooperation with farmers, exploring what the future of agriculture could look like together.

At the ORC we are committed to sharing research results and processes through our knowledge exchange team, exploring new tools to help facilitate two-way communication between farmers and industry members.

Dr Ambrogio Costanzo
Deputy Head of Research at the ORC



A message from our Chair

Tim Bennett

As shown at COP26, it has never been more important to work together to achieve joint goals such as mitigating climate change, protecting the natural environment and enhancing biodiversity.

Although a small charity, ORC continues to be the UK's leading independent research organisation for agroecological farming approaches – driving our research agenda to tackle global issues and influence policy, whilst also working with farmers to equip them with the tools they need to deliver naturally healthy and resilient farming systems.

2021 continued to be impacted by COVID-19 and the start of the year saw ORC's operations remaining mainly homebased. Despite this our CEO, supported by the team, successfully organised a number of external events, with one of the highlights being our 40th anniversary celebration which was held at FarmEd in September. The day brought together both old and new friends of the organisation, giving us the opportunity to share our work and reconnect with one another again after the frustrations of lockdown.

I am confident that the year ahead will see us continue to build on our successful year of work in 2021.

By working together with our partners, industry stakeholders and the farming community, we'll deliver the transition to naturally healthy and resilient farming systems that is needed for British agriculture to flourish in the coming years.

A message from our CEO

Lucy MacLennan

2021 was the ORC's 40th anniversary year and a pivotal year for British agriculture, as the industry adapted to life post-Brexit and an agricultural policy framework focused on delivering environmental benefits.

Low input and regenerative agriculture have become buzzwords in recent times, but I am proud that ORC's work doesn't just seek solutions for low input agriculture, we wish to push the boundaries by exploring no input agricultural practices to deliver truly sustainable food production for the whole agricultural community.

This past year has seen positive, planned change for the ORC, with considerable time and investment focused on areas including developing our communications programme, implementing new financial and governance systems as well as working on a new fundraising strategy which will help us continue to successfully obtain future funding bids.

This review highlights some of the key achievements made in 2021, a year in which we continued to bring new thinking to the mainstream, empowering people to embrace different agricultural approaches and demonstrating the economic as well as environmental benefits available.

I want to take this opportunity to thank ORC's trustees, staff and our supporters for their continued hard work and support – together we will continue to deliver the transition to naturally healthy and resilient farming systems.



Our work in 2021 to deliver our vision

Participatory research

We deliver and co-innovate practical, sustainable land management and food production solutions

We identify and drive our own research agenda using seed funding to pump-prime ideas to proof of concept

We gain recognition for scientific excellence and collaboration with a broad network of like-minded partners working nationally and internationally

Sharing our knowledge

We provide unrivalled access to robust information that can be applied in the field

We disseminate past, present, and future research outputs that are accessible to all via a range of tested tools

We understand the importance of peer-to-peer exchange in driving change and deliver practical solutions for real impact



In 2021...
the crops team
worked closely with
20 farms
15 on LiveWheat
5 on Living Mulch
4 on LiveOats

The **EIP Ancient Cereals** project was successfully completed. Working with a group of Welsh farmers, ORC tested spring modern and heritage wheats under organic management with the aim of supporting local bread supply chains.

We continued our work on the "Living Mulch" Field Lab funded by Innovative Farmers and Organic Arable, focusing on establishing no-till arable rotations, with annual crops grown into an established clover understorey.

We designed and secured funding for a programme of research and monitoring into the benefits of **Optimum Shelter Belts (OSBs) for livestock** as well as crops, biodiversity, and other environmental goods. We will work in collaboration with Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West (FWAG-SW) and in support of a trial of over 30 different farms in the Cotswolds where shelterbelts are being planted.

Our **Agricology** programme supports farmers and growers to transition to more resilient, diverse sustainable farming systems by sharing knowledge via an online platform. During the 2020/21, the website agricology.co.uk attracted double the interest of the previous year. The YouTube channel had 67,648 video views and gained 678 new subscribers during the year. 3,461 users downloaded podcast resources.

ORC supported the delivery of a package of advice and guidance – **Future Farming Resilience** – for farmers transitioning to the Government's Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme, including farmer-to-farmer webinars, developing a library of on-line resources, and designing surveys to measure the impact of one-to-one advice.

AGRICOLGY
SUSTAINABLE PRACTICAL FARMING



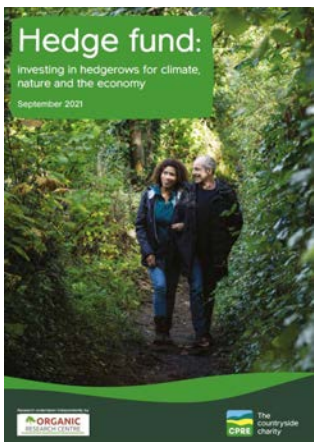
Agricology YouTube
Channel 2020/21
67,648
video views
678
new subscribers
3,461
users downloaded
podcast resources

Influencing policy

We build our reputation for providing sound evidence based on past and present research

We create an evidence base on which others can advocate the need and mechanics of change

We seek strategic collaborations to influence policy rather than acting in isolation e.g. through the English Organic Forum

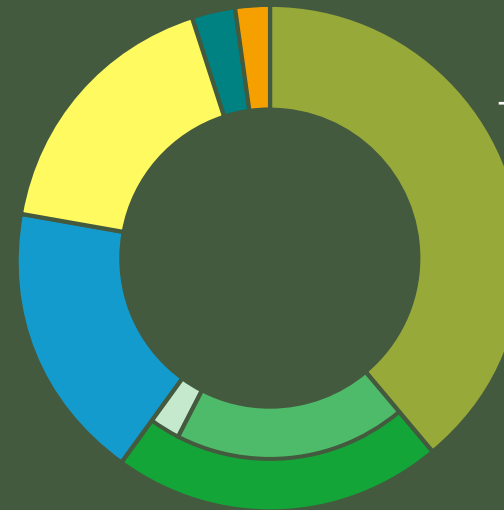


To inform the design of support options for agroforestry within **Environmental Land Management (ELM)**, and as part of Defra's Tests & Trials co-design process, ORC worked with the Woodland Trust, Soil Association and Abacus Agriculture to run a series of fact-finding regional workshops. We gathered evidence on past barriers to agroforestry uptake and what these teach us about the building blocks needed to encourage uptake in the future.

In collaboration with CPRE The Countryside Charity, ORC modelled the environmental and economic **benefits of increasing the UK hedgerow network** by 40%, resulting in a report that was the focus of a high-profile launch in the Houses of Parliament in September and underpins CPRE's ongoing campaign for the reestablishment of new hedgerows across Britain

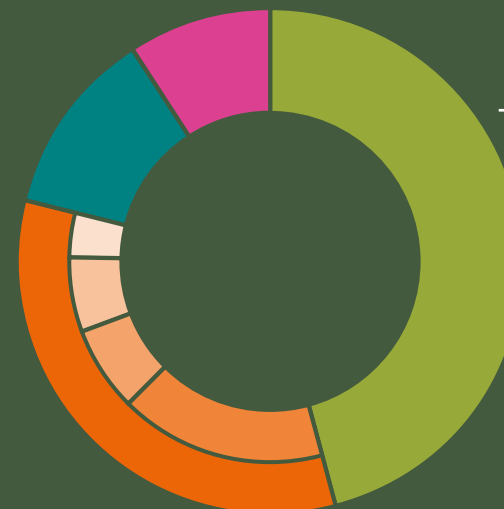
Financial Performance

Over the past year there has been continued investment into ORC, but despite this we have significantly reduced our dependence on income from actual cash reserves to 3%. This forms the initial part of our strategy to return the business to breakeven. In addition, expenditure has been tightly controlled with central costs reduced from 42% to 33% YOY.



Income

- 39% Research Projects**
- 21% Cash Reserves**
 - of which
 - 18%** Proceeds of Farm Sale
 - 3%** Actual Cash Reserves
- 18% Gain on Investment**
- 17% Donations & Legacies**
- 3% Knowledge Exchange**
- 2% Other Trading** (inc Inv Income)



Expenditure

- 46% Research Projects**
- 33% Central costs**
 - of which
 - 17%** Salaries
 - 7%** Office & IT
 - 6%** Legal & Professional
 - 4%** Other
- 12% Knowledge Exchange**
- 9% Fundraising**

ORC Our work in 2021

We have conveyed our message and findings to the farming, industry, policy and scientific arenas in **over 35 conferences, seminars, and workshops**



Session at **Oxford Real Farming Conference**, **150 attendees** from farming, industry, civil society, and policy



Two contributions at **Organic World Congress 2021**, **over 2,000 attendees** worldwide from farming, industry, policy, and academia



Presentation to **National Organic Combinable Crops**, **over 100 attendees** from farming, industry, and policy

11 peer-reviewed journal papers published in 2020-21, as well as **8 papers** in conference proceedings and **1 book chapter**



ORC's Dr Lindsay Whistance

ORC continues to participate in a **12-year project investigating the benefits of silvopasture**, which featured in BBC's flagship **Countryfile** programme

Thank you

We would like to thank all the individuals and organisations that have supported our work in 2020-21. One of our ambitions has been to take greater control of our research agenda and your support has enabled us to do this.

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The Garfield Weston Foundation
The Ratcliff Foundation
The Saintbury Trust
The Tedworth Charitable Trust
The Yarrow Trust



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