

# OF&G Manifesto

ofgorganic.org



## Organic's four pillars for change

The UK's approach to our food and farming systems requires radical transformation if we are to tackle the monumental environmental and public health crises that we face.

By embracing the four core values of the organic movement - Health, Ecology, Fairness, and Care<sup>1</sup> – OF&G set out to redefine our relationship with the land, the food we consume and each other.

By establishing a framework for an ambitious policy overhaul, organic can make a valuable contribution to resolving the huge disparity in our food and farming systems and so help to restore balance and equity to the world around us.

The long term effects of recent government policies are still unfolding so the need for action is urgent. One thing is clear: we must aspire to accomplish more.

Through decisive legislation that supports organic's established and legally binding position we can build greater resilience and integrity within the nation's food and farming systems.

### Health

*Organic agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of the soil, plants, animals, people and planet as one inseparable entity.*

The nation's health depends on the quality of the food we consume. A wholesale shift to sustainable agricultural production could globally create £8tn of benefits a year, in terms of improving human and environmental health<sup>2</sup>.

Organic farming produces high quality, nutritious food that is evidenced to deliver preventive health care and wellbeing by prohibiting the use of synthetic chemicals and fertilisers and the prophylactic use of antibiotics, all of which are associated with numerous health risks.

The prevalence of highly processed foods, high in sugar, salt and fat, is increasingly recognised as having had a serious and damaging impact on the nation's health. Almost two-thirds of the population are overweight or obese, and there is an almost 20-year discrepancy in life expectancy between the richest and poorest members of society<sup>3</sup>.

Shockingly, the government's lack of the ambition to step away from this flawed food system has left us all at the tipping point of an environmental and human health crisis which has the potential to be catastrophic unless decisive action is taken urgently.

By prioritising organic produce and improving accessibility we can mitigate the £19.6 billion burden on the NHS caused by poor diets<sup>4</sup> and increase the nutritional value of what we eat, ensuring a healthier future for all.

Extensive research highlights organic's nutritional benefits and health outcomes:

- Organic meat and dairy contains up to 50% more beneficial omega-3 fatty acids than conventionally produced products<sup>5</sup>.



- Organic meat has lower concentrations of potentially harmful saturated fatty acids<sup>6</sup>.
- Organic crops (cereals, fruit and vegetables) have significantly higher concentrations of antioxidants and phenolic compounds when compared to the same non-organic products<sup>7</sup>.
- The occurrence of detectable pesticide residues is four times higher in non-organic crops<sup>8</sup>.
- Analysis detects 48% lower concentrations of the toxic heavy metal cadmium in organic crops<sup>9</sup>.
- Nitrogen concentrations, linked in some studies to an increased risk of certain cancers, are found to be significantly lower in organic crops<sup>10</sup>.

#### THE ASK:

- **A food partnership and plan in every local area;**
- **Drive food reformulation with a new levy to help make our food healthier;**
- **Policy with long-term strategic goals to ensure healthy and sustainable food for people in care (children, the sick and the elderly).**



OF&G  
Old Estate Yard  
Shrewsbury Road | Albrighton  
Shrewsbury | Shropshire  
SY4 3AG

01939 291 800

@ofgorganic

info@ofgorganic.org

/organicfarmers

ofgorganic.org

## Ecology

*Organic agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.*

The value of our shared natural environment must not be disregarded. The impacts of climate change are already upon us. In the UK we're already failing to meet 17 of our 20 biodiversity targets<sup>11</sup> while record rainfall is drastically reducing yields, with AHDB reporting a 15% decrease in wheat production since November 2023, oilseed rape down 28%, and winter barley down 22%<sup>12</sup>.

In a global context, food is the biggest economic contributor to breaching planetary boundaries<sup>13</sup>, with current food systems risking fuelling emissions that could lead a 2.7°C temperature increase by 2100.

Alarming, the unchallenged status quo demands that we constantly aim for higher yields through ongoing intensification of our farming systems regardless of the consequences. This is both economically and environmentally unviable. We must recognise that sustainable outcomes, such as those proven to be delivered by organic farming, are equally as important measures as aiming for the highest possible yield.

Changing this state of affairs for the good of the planet and people is possible. Carbon sequestration, biodiversity loss, climate change, soil degradation and natural resource depletion can all be addressed if we reduce our dependence on the intensive, input-reliant monocultures, that underpin our food system at present.

Organic's restorative approach within the context of other farming systems is evidenced to counteract the harmful effects of degenerative and exploitative farming practices<sup>14</sup>.

OF&G's Land Use Framework identified how a three-fold increase in organic land use area would reduce total agriculture-related greenhouse gas emissions equal to the carbon sequestered by a third of a million acres of broadleaved woodland.



Introducing targets to reach 10% organic land area would significantly deliver environmental benefits. In organic systems arable plant species have been evidenced to be up to 95% higher, field margin plant species to be up to 21% higher, farmland bird species increased by 35%, pollinators up by 23% and earthworm species increased by 78%<sup>15</sup>.

Biodiversity, soil fertility, and resilient ecosystems are crucial in the face of climate change. Organic farming practices, which emphasise crop rotations, natural pest controls, and polycultures, contribute significantly to ecological health. These methods reduce pollution and improve soil health, making farms more resilient to weather extremes while also reducing agriculture's carbon footprint.

### THE ASK:

- **A Land Use Framework – that incorporates a new food and farming strategy and including a strategy for horticulture to increase our self-sufficiency;**
- **Increased funding for agroecological and organic farming research, development and advisory support;**
- **An Organic Action Plan to achieve organic on 10% of England's agricultural land.**

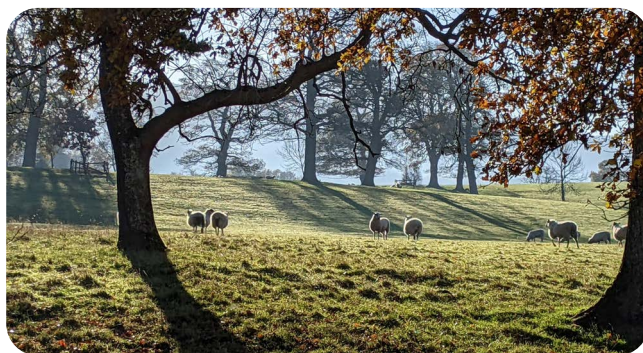
## Fairness

*Organic agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to our common environment and life opportunities.*

The principle of fairness is fundamental to ensuring that food production benefits everyone, from farm workers to consumers. Yet the margins made on food are disproportionately weighted in favour of those further up the supply chain. This inequity must be addressed with urgency.

Recent protests outside Westminster and the Senedd would indicate that farmers are acutely aware that their livelihoods are under threat.

Largely unable to influence pricing, many farmers have rationalised their production to remain economically viable by cutting costs or increasing yields and frequently both. Across all types of farming we've seen volatile ex-farm prices, higher land prices and higher rents rather than improved farm profitability.



Constant revisions and policy updates have only served to undermine the precarious position that many farmers find themselves in. This is highlighted by the low subscription rates to newly introduced environmental schemes, which means that government has underspent hundreds of millions from the £2.4bn farming budget<sup>17</sup>.

The system simply doesn't stack up. Farming needs a plan – it is so fundamental to our future existence and simply cannot be left to the short-term thinking of supermarket buyers to decide.

A move towards a fairer and more equitable system of distribution, where the environment is seen alongside food production as a key component in measuring productivity, is crucial for genuine food security.

Organic production manages natural and environmental resources in a way that is socially and ecologically just. Through robust standards, organic delivers farmers a level of protection against rising - largely imported - input costs.

Providing tangible safeguards against cheap, often inferior, food imports while incentivising the availability of home-grown produce would help give farmers greater assurance and security they so desperately need.

## Care

*Organic agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and wellbeing of current and future generations and the environment.*

Organic represents a multi-faceted approach to balancing food production while protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Shifting patterns of production and consumption to achieve food security cannot come at any cost. Consideration for the wellbeing of people and the planet should always be prioritised over profit and increased risk.

In leveraging the UK's regulatory freedoms post-Brexit, the Genetic Technology Act has significant implications for environmental management, food safety and transparency. The impact of these changes on the UK's agricultural landscape and trade relationships, especially those with the EU, remains a contentious issue.

The long-term environmental impacts of gene edited organisms are not yet fully understood, raising justifiable concerns about unintended ecological consequences. These must be properly addressed.

Organic agriculture seeks to enhance efficiencies and increase productivity without jeopardising health and wellbeing. We believe that precautionary and vigorous regulatory oversight are essential attributes in the development and implementation of all evolving technologies. We clearly see the manifest risks of ignoring the fundamental principle of precaution.

Safeguarding organic agriculture as healthy, safe and ecologically sound is paramount to raising the bar. While minimising risk is key to protecting food's integrity and building greater trust, consumers must be able to make informed choices through transparent production and clear labelling.

When we consider that the diet prevalent in the global north requires using Earth's resources at three times capacity and that around 30% of food harvested is wasted<sup>18</sup>, we all need educating in caring more about our impact. We all have a responsibility as custodians of the planet and our own health.

To secure food sovereignty, our food system needs to

deliver a robust, fair, and transparent trade policy and supply chain there must be a greater commitment to delivering substantive support for our farmers that treats them fairly.

### THE ASK:

- **Strengthened Grocery Code Adjudicator;**
- **Establish an environmental label, based on clear metrics calibrated by experts in agronomy and environment. A label that corresponds with a credible scenario to achieve an ecological transition of our eating habits;**
- **Implement open and transparent contracts within the supply chain that ensure risk is shared.**



work for all, it must be environmentally, nutritionally and economically sustainable.

Organic already delivers integrity, transparency and a fairer and more balanced food system. A system that builds climate resilience, enhances biodiversity and supports human health.

But more can be done to spread these benefits more widely. For too long organic and extensive systems have been severely underfunded. With the right capital investment we could all enjoy transformative outcomes.

With sufficient investment in research and development with the provision of advisory and support services, there is an opportunity to substantially improve crop yields and to deliver even greater ecosystem services within organic systems. The extent of this opportunity will be proportional to the scale of the investment. Since there has been significant under-investment over many years, the opportunity is clear.

### THE ASK:

- **Deliver a mandatory co-existence framework that is robust and transparent to ensure all businesses can operate with confidence and to allow consumers an informed choice as to whether or not to consume genetically modified and/or gene edited foods;**
- **Ensure the 'precautionary principle' is enshrined in UK law;**
- **Deliver a clear trade policy that ensures a level playing field for farmers, producers and consumers by ensuring trade deals protect high health, welfare and environmental standards for food production.**

## Looking to the future

Organic operates to the highest level of compliance and delivers on all four of the principles outlined.

The Green Finance Institute has recently reported that the deterioration of the UK's natural environment could result in a 12% loss to GDP. This is comparable to the economic outcome of the Covid-19 pandemic and more than double the impact of the 2008 financial crisis<sup>16</sup>.

As the gold standard for sustainable agriculture, organic's legally binding and globally recognised standards embody the only certified agricultural system that offers quantifiable climate and biodiversity outcomes.

By advocating for policy changes that support these principles we can create a sustainable, equitable, and healthy food system.

This call for a shift towards organic agriculture is not just about changing farming practices but about championing a profound, positive impact on our society and the planet. By upholding organic's principles we can choose a path of sustainability and equity to ensure a healthy and prosperous future for the generations to come.

---

## Endnotes

- 1 [The Four Principles of Organic Agriculture | IFOAM](#)
- 2 [Home - Food System Economics Commission](#)
- 3 UK Government. Health and life expectancies. Accessed 2023.
- 4 [Tackling poverty and the cost of food | NHS Confederation](#)
- 5 [Organic and non-organic milk and meat - Press Office - Newcastle University \(ncl.ac.uk\)](#)
- 6 [Nutritional Benefits from Fatty Acids in Organic and Grass-Fed Beef - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)
- 7 [Higher antioxidant and lower cadmium concentrations and lower incidence of pesticide residues in organically grown crops: a systematic literature review and meta-analyses - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)
- 8 [Higher antioxidant and lower cadmium concentrations and lower incidence of pesticide residues in organically grown crops: a systematic literature review and meta-analyses - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)
- 9 [Higher antioxidant and lower cadmium concentrations and lower incidence of pesticide residues in organically grown crops: a systematic literature review and meta-analyses - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)
- 10 [Higher antioxidant and lower cadmium concentrations and lower incidence of pesticide residues in organically grown crops: a systematic literature review and meta-analyses - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)
- 11 [State of Nature 2023 - report on the UK's current biodiversity](#)
- 12 [Next few weeks crucial for farmers as survey confirms drastic reduction in crops | AHDB](#)
- 13 [Planetary boundaries - Stockholm Resilience Centre](#)
- 14 [Restoring agricultural soils - POST \(parliament.uk\)](#)
- 15 [Land use policy - Organic as a multifunctional component for England | OF&G \(ofgorganic.org\)](#)
- 16 [British farmers want basic income to cope with post-Brexit struggles | Farming | The Guardian](#)
- 17 [One third of food produced globally does not get consumed | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](#)
- 18 [REPORT \(greenfinanceinstitute.com\)](#)