

Date: Wednesday 17 April

COMMITTEE POLICY REVIEW OF ORGANIC FARMING

Purpose

1. To consider a draft terms of reference and suggested approach for the proposed Committee policy review of organic farming.

Background

2. As part of its work programme for the coming year, the Committee has indicated its wish to undertake a review of organic farming in Wales. This paper sets out a draft terms of reference for the inquiry and a suggested programme.

Draft terms of reference

3. The Committee is invited to approve the following draft terms of reference:

To assess the future prospects for organic farming in Wales, the achievability of current Welsh Assembly Government targets and consequent implications for policy and resource allocation within the budget for agriculture and rural development.

Next steps

4. Subject to the approval of the terms of reference, an invitation to submit written evidence by the end of May will be issued immediately. A list of proposed contacts will be prepared by the Secretariat and circulated to the Committee for comment. During the course of this consultation, key bodies would be invited to provide oral evidence to the Committee, such as:

- Agri-Food Partnership Organic Strategy Group
- Soil Association
- Farming Unions
- Food Standards Agency

- Crop Protection Association
- Representatives from the supermarket sector

5. Additional oral submissions would be invited as the Committee feels appropriate on the basis of the written responses received.

6. To further inform the review, it is proposed that the Committee visit the following:

Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research, Abertystwyth

The Institute conducts research into sustainable food production systems and ways of lowering inputs into agriculture through breeding and management, much of which would be relevant to the Committee's work.

Rachel's Organic Dairy, Borth

Rachel's Organic Dairy originated from a family farm, which was the first certified organic farm in the UK. The visit would provide an opportunity to examine some of the practical implications of organic production and processing.

7. Members have already been contacted about their availability for such a visit on Friday 10 May.

Action for the Committee

8. The Committee is invited to comment on and agree the draft terms of reference in paragraph 3 and the next steps set out in paragraphs 4 to 6. Members are also asked to indicate any other individuals or bodies they feel should be invited to submit evidence and particular issues on which to concentrate during the inquiry, so that the Secretariat can tailor the programme accordingly.

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Committee Secretariat April 2002

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OUTLINE TIMETABLE

Wednesday 17 April	Agree terms of reference, Issue consultation letter
Wednesday 1 May	Oral consultation session with the Agri-food partnership Organic Strategy Group
Friday 10 May	Visits - Insititue of Grassland and Environmental Research, Rachel's Organic Dairy
Wednesday 15 May	Oral consultation session
Wednesday 29 May	Oral consultation session
Wednesday 19 June	Oral consultation session
Thursday 11 July	Potential additional slot for Committee activity
Wednesday 17 July	Consideration of draft recommendations
First meeting - Autumn term	Consideration of first draft of report
Second meeting - Autumn term	Committee signs off draft report