ORGANIC DASHBOARD

October 2020 – September 2021

FARMING connect
cyswllt FFERMIO

% of activity relevant to the Organic sector:

23% ORGANIC ACTIVITY **632** OF BUSINESSES REGISTERED WITH FARMING CONNECT \ARE ORGANIC

Knowledge Exchange Hub

The following technical articles have been produced by the KE Hub:

- LAND MANAGEMENT AND GRAZING FOR UPLAND FARMS: INCORPORATING MORE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY
- ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR): CAN PRECISION TECHNOLOGIES HELP?
- DUNG, DRUGS AND DISEASE: THE INTERACTION BETWEEN DUNG BEETLES AND FARMING
- ELECTROPHYSICAL AND NON-CHEMICAL WEED CONTROL: CURRENT TO CUT CHEMICALS?

Strategic Awareness Events

36 Events held

Key topics included:

- Innovation and diversification: Internet of Things on Welsh farms
- Farming the environment: engaging with farmers
- Glastir small grants – Landscape and pollinators

*Strategic Awareness Event themes are often cross sectoral that tend to attract farmers from all sectors.

Demonstration Network

Gate Farm: Investigating min-til methods to increase sward diversity in organic grazing leys

Gate Farm is a 300 acre organic dairy farm near Abermule, Powys. They have 170 cows plus followers on an all-year-round calving system. The grazing and silage fields already contain herbal leys and Focus Site farmer Glenn Lloyd who farms at Gate Farm is keen to utilise sustainable tilage methods during new reseeding activity to preserve the soil structure while increasing the productivity of the swards.

The project is comparing a slot seeding drill, a harrow/broadcast roll type drill and a direct drill to overseed an existing ley with a herbal seed mixture. This took place on 29 July 2021 and by 23 August, there was evidence of young clover, chicory and perennial ryegrass in the sward. In addition, a Redstart rape/kale hybrid was direct drilled into an old pasture.

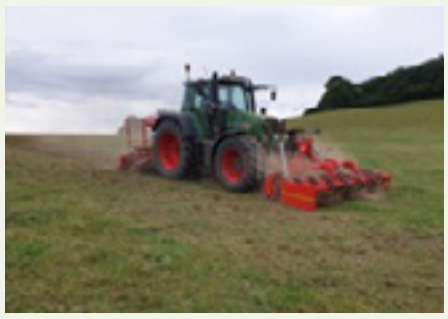

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

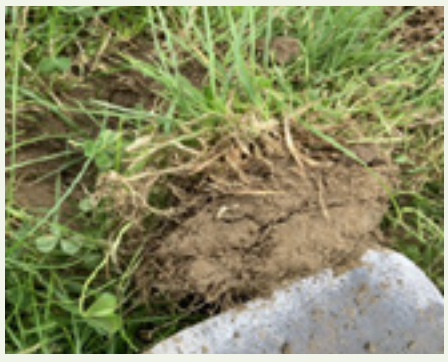

Figure 3. Horizontal cracking due to compaction.

One concern is compaction in the fields as demonstrated by the horizontal cracking in figure 3 and this will be remedied with an aerator and sward lifter.

The overall aim of the project is to increase productivity of the swards through improving soil structure and regular monitoring of grass growth will be undertaken using a plate meter.

Glebelands Market Garden: Evaluating the benefits of the Terrateck wheel hoe with bio-discs for weed control in vegetables.

Glebelands Market Garden is a 10 acre organic enterprise near Cardigan, supplying a farm shop onsite plus local restaurants, shops and other businesses. Crops grown include spring greens, pak choi, spinach, broccoli, salad leaves, beans, leeks, cauliflowers, fennel, courgettes, lettuce, squashes, cucumber and herbs.

Weed control is a constant challenge in small and medium sized vegetable growing ventures that routinely depend on hand hoeing techniques requiring significant time and labour input. The business currently deploys two Glaser wheel hoe models which are used alongside hand hoeing but would find benefit in examining how to reduce or eliminate the hand hoeing altogether.

This project will evaluate the benefits of a French made Terrateck wheel hoe with Bio-Discs which appears to address several significant problems for smaller growers:

- Challenges of efficiently cultivating around drilled crops/earthing up small transplants
- Problems of using tractor mounted kit on sloping or uneven ground
- The lack of horticultural kit for small to medium growers (and lack of UK manufacture)
- Comparison with the well-known Glaser (Swiss) wheel hoe and similar older models which are still widely used.

Figure 4. The Terrateck hoe fitted with Bio-discs.

The wheel hoe will be specifically trialled on leek transplants at Glebelands where around 10,000 plants are set, normally followed by hand and Glaser wheel hoeing and spring tine cultivating, all several times. Use of the Terrateck wheel hoe has the potential to reduce the hours involved on the hand hoeing markedly, and time and labour cost comparisons, plus efficiency of weed control observations, will be made between the two systems.

In addition, the sooner a cleaner crop can be achieved, the earlier under sowing with ryegrass can be carried out. This is an important soil protection action which needs to be precisely timed to minimise competition with leek plantlets but aim to provide adequate growth to protect soil from winter weather, particularly soil erosion associated with an intense rainfall incidence.

Surgeries

64 SURGERIES HELD

Key topics included:

- Legal
- Marketing and diversification
- Planning
- Business

A business received advice through a business surgery as they were in the process of transferring to an organic system. They wanted to look at their business financially as they make the transition to an organic business.

Agrisgôp

48 MEETINGS HAVE BEEN RELATED TO THE ORGANIC SECTOR

Some examples of group themes:

- Horticulture
- Soil management
- Organic and beyond

EIP Wales

An examination of the practical and financial potential for growing small scale asparagus organically in south Wales

Asparagus has good potential in Wales as it is high value and is a good draw for farm gate sales. Crop value is high at up to £18 per kg as a quality organic product. The crop benefits from freshness and short supply chain markets that supermarkets are generally unable to compete with. This project investigated the establishment costs, agronomy, labour and harvesting costs on two small scale organic farms.

- Total establishment costs were high at £15,800 for the 2 hectares that were planted.
- Weed control was one of the biggest challenges and required high labour input on the organic farms.
- Yields were affected by the weather and were lower in 2021 due to the late spring.
- On one of the farms returns in 2021 were £10.7k/ha compared to £21.6k/ha in 2020.
- Overall, the value of this product makes it a worthwhile investment providing sufficient labour is available during the harvesting period.

Discussion Groups

45 DISCUSSION GROUP MEETINGS RELEVANT TO THE ORGANIC SECTOR held with **764** ATTENDEES

An Organic Dairy Discussion Group from North East Wales invited Tom Greenham MRCVS from Advanced Milking to address the group on Maximising Organic Milk Quality.

Tom started his address by stressing that optimum animal health is based on preventative management and good husbandry, something that most organic systems hold at the core of their herd management strategy. Maximising the natural health of the animal and minimising disease pressure and stress should be the main aim.

The key focus of the meeting was management of mastitis within the herd, and its effect on milk quality. Tom outlined the importance of recording cases, making note of individual cow IDs and date of infection. This data can then be used to identify the following areas of risk:

- Dry period vs lactation
- Environment vs disease transferral
- Cow age – heifers/ cows/older cows
- Seasonality
- Groups
- Housing

Every farm differs, and recording data will pin-point sources of infection – which can then steer a plan of preventative action. Balancing the challenge against the defence is the objective, keeping the challenge low and defence high; this will optimise the ability to overcome the cases of infection when they arise on farm. Achieving this will lessen the need for antibiotic use in the continued management of the herd.

The different types of infection bacteria were discussed, and when antimicrobial use is needed:

E. coli – Tends to have incidence of low-grade mastitis, low to moderate bulk tank somatic cell counts. E. coli has a high self-cure rate and only supportive treatment will be required.

Streptococcus Uberis – Moderate incidence (or contagious outbreak patterns), lower cure rates than E. coli. They will be moderate in severity but with moderate to high bulk tank somatic cell counts. Bad cases will usually need antibiotic treatment to address, but with a very low cure rate in lactation.

Staphylococcus Aureus – Low to moderate incidence of mastitis, which will vary in severity. There will be sustained elevations in somatic cell counts. Antibiotics will be needed to cure this strain.

The group members agreed that the points raised were a good reminder of excellent herd husbandry, and felt that, as organic farmers, they were a 'step ahead' in considering environmental factors and risks to work towards preventing mastitis infection in the first instance.

Mentoring

We have **10 Organic Mentors** on the framework

Click here for **Alan's profile**

Click here for **Dafydd's profile**

Click here for **David's profile**

Click here for **Haydn's profile**

Click here for **Helen's profile**

Click here for **Jim's profile**

Click here for **Keri's profile**

Click here for **Phillip's profile**

Click here for **Richard's profile**

Click here for **Romeo's profile**

Topics discussed:

- Manage more effienctly and welfare on organic ground to use in my meat boxes
- Organic dairy enterprise
- Organic beekeeping

Training

There have been **five** application windows between October 2020 and September 2021 (excluding reapplications for Covid) with **866** instances of training delivered during this period.

The following courses could potentially fall into the Organic sector:

- Conservation Grazing
- Soil Quality
- Maintaining and Improving Soil Health

E-learning

Some of the e-learning courses completed within this period potentially relating to the Organic sector:

- ORGANIC HORTICULTURE
- SOIL HEALTH
- CLIMATE CHANGE AND LAND MANAGEMENT

For more information on e-learning, please visit the website.

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European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas
Llywodraeth Cymru Welsh Government