



% of activity relevant to the Organic sector:

22% ORGANIC ACTIVITY **571** BUSINESSES REGISTERED with Farming Connect are from the Organic sector.

Demonstration Network

Exploring the use of wood chip mulch for weed control in organic vegetable production at Square Farm focus site

Square Farm near Monmouth is a family-run business including a flourishing farm shop selling home-grown, organically produced foods as well as an expanding range of selected local produce from the Wye Valley and surrounding areas. With the ever-present challenge of weed control, a trial was established to assess whether the use of waste wood chip from local tree surgeons could be used to suppress weed growth in organically planted vegetables.

Key messages:

The trial showed that wood chip mulch applied to transplanted vegetable crops gave good weed control for a long period and did not appear to compete for nitrogen with the crop. The wood chip visibly increased soil moisture in a dry year; encouraged worm activity and several fungi also colonised the mulched plots.

After completion of harvest, the mulch can be incorporated into the soil with the crop trash and while it might compete for nitrogen with subsequent crops, this could be mitigated by using permitted manures or by growing a leguminous crop as part of the rotation. Eventually, the nitrogen would slowly be released again to benefit following crops.

Mulches are likely to be most cost effective on perennial vegetable crops including rhubarb, asparagus etc. where the soil is not disturbed for several years and may also serve to improve soil structure and drought resilience while reducing soil erosion.



To read more click [here](#).

Managing hedgerows for wood fuel production event at Plas y Cerdin focus site

The aims of the event at this organic focus site was to:

1. Improve long-term planning for the farmer and provide a platform to integrate the work programme into the farming calendar.
2. Provide improved understanding of the multiple benefits of trees.
3. Provide improved transparency on hedgerow regulation and compliance.

The benefits of a robust green infrastructure on the farm were presented and explained, covering biosecurity to livestock, health and welfare of animals, health and safety when handling livestock and how strategically placed linear woodland could improve handling and gathering practice. Future management plans were discussed as well as agri pollution and future WG directives with regard to the likelihood of regulatory practice coming into force. The facts are there for farmers to look at opportunities and take advantage of tree planting, and establishing buffer zones and linear shelterbelts to improve the environmental aspect of the farm, which will have a positive effect on farm economics.

Liver fluke monitoring at Orsedd Fawr demonstration site

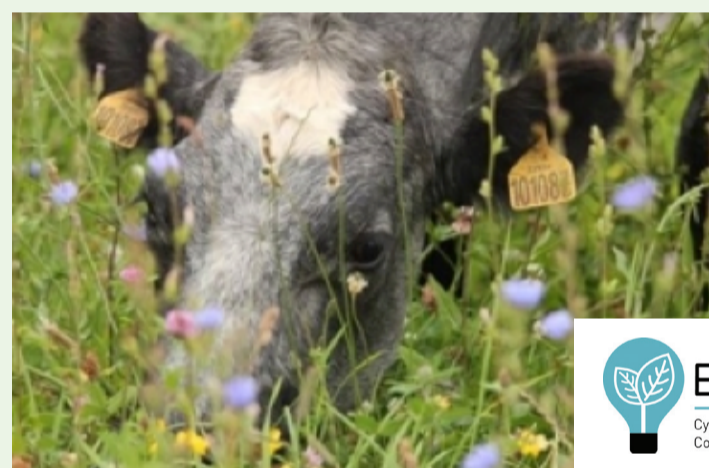
Orsedd Fawr is an organic farm that understands the practical problems of controlling liver fluke. With this in mind, they are investigating different tests for liver fluke to see which one gives the best early indications of infection on their farm. In December 2018 the calves tested positive for liver fluke using the coproantigen test, despite the faecal egg count showing a negative result. This indicated that the liver fluke was present, but because it was not at the adult stage, eggs were not being produced. Treatment could be targeted at the earlier stage of infection, limiting production losses associated with the disease.

EIP Wales

Pasture for Pollinators

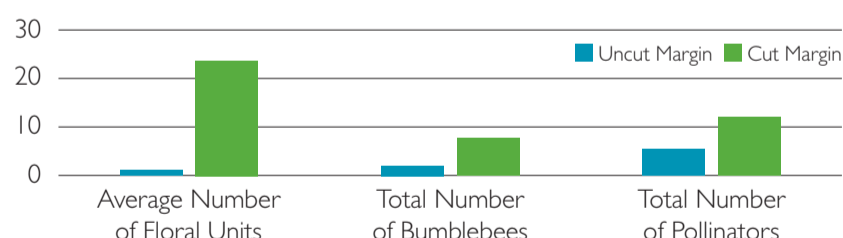
Six Calon Wen dairy farmers from across Wales are leading a project looking at how they can reverse the decline of bumblebee populations, by managing their pastures a little differently.

Working with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, the farmers are looking to improve management of habitats, such as hedgerows and permanent pastures. In addition, they are trying out different silage making routines which involve leaving uncut strips in the field, allowing the bees to access flowers in these uncut margins until the rest of the field recovers and starts flowering again.



Results so far have shown that all farms in the project have higher numbers of flowers which in turn has increased numbers of pollinators.

Number of bumblebees, other pollinators and floral units (per quadrat), August 2018



Organic Asparagus



Asparagus has good growing potential in Wales as it is a high value crop but does it stack up economically when grown organically on a small scale? This project will investigate whether the high establishment costs and the long wait until the first harvest are worth it on small scale horticultural farms.


The crop was planted in 2018, and during 2019 assessments of the crop's establishment were made. This includes assessing the development of the ferns, which give an indication of potential future yields.

KE Hub

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

-  THE USE OF THERMAL IMAGING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION
-  PRODUCING FODDER CROPS USING HYDROPONICS
-  CUT YOUR LOSSES: MAXIMISING THE BENEFITS OF A NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

The following factsheets have been produced by the KE Hub:

-  DOCK CONTROL
-  MULTI CUT SILAGE
-  IMPROVING RED CLOVER PRODUCTIVITY

Discussion Groups



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DISCUSSION GROUP MEETINGS RELATED TO THE ORGANIC SECTOR



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ATTENDEES

Case Study

North Wales Organic Dairy Discussion Group meeting with Owen Atkinson, Consultant Dairy Vet on farm, on the topic of Cow Signals.

Owen Atkinson asked each member of the group three questions to understand each other's husbandry practices

- How much (if any) experience do you have with cow signals?
- What is the first thing you look for when walking into a herd of cows?
- What is it you enjoy the most about working with cows?

Owen proceeded to discuss the necessities of a cow's needs in order to thrive.

- | | | |
|----------|----------|--|
| 1. Air | 4. Feed | 7. Health (which will follow if she has the above) |
| 2. Light | 5. Rest | |
| 3. Water | 6. Space | |

Health is of upmost importance within an Organic system in order to lessen the need for medicinal intervention.

Everyone was handed a '3-point check list' before heading out to assess the herd in the shed.

What was going well?

- Correct feed barrier measurements
- Cubicles – deep beds
- Low % of lameness
- Good BCS
- No empty cows (feed wise)
- Cows were clean
- Flight distance was below 1 meter

What was NOT going so well?

- Length of beds could be on the short side (but the cows were not too big either)
- Cows too fat possibly
- Trough capacity and pipe height
- Space per cow
- Light

What could be improved?

Practical ideas for improvement on this farm were noted. These included using a bigger trough or using a feeding platform; compact feeding instead of TMR, with twice daily delivery; creating more room for the cows.

Everyone was encouraged to take the checklist around their own farm to carry out the exercise in order to pinpoint areas of improvement.

Agrisgôp

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MEETINGS HAVE BEEN RELATED TO THE ORGANIC SECTOR

Some examples of group themes:



Understanding water treatment



From farm to plate



Visit to an organic horticulture farm



Better soil and cleaner water

Mentoring

WE HAVE **9** ORGANIC MENTORS ON THE FRAMEWORK



Mentees are being mentored on the following topics:

Converting to organic sheep production



Organic dairy production



Organic vegetable production



Increasing output from an organic system



Click here for **Alan's profile**



Click here for **Dafydd's profile**



Click here for **David's profile**



Click here for **Helen's profile**



Click here for **Hayden'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**

Management Exchange

Hywel Morgan's Management Exchange, October 2018

Topic: Low Input Farming, Organic Farming, Herbal Leys, Holistic Management and Regenerative Farming

Countries: England and Brittany

Hywel visited numerous farms in England and Brittany who practice holistic regenerative management, organic production and herbal leys, to see whether it could work on his own farm and other similar farm businesses in Wales.

He visited an organic vegetable and arable farm as well as two organic dairy farms during his visit.

Click [here](#) to read Hywel's report.

Training

There have been 4 application windows between October 2018 and September 2019 with **808** instances of training delivered during this period.

A number of instances of this training could potentially fall into the Organic sector.

E-learning

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

SOIL COMPACTION

IMPROVING SOIL HEALTH



ORGANIC HORTICULTURE



For more information on e-learning, please visit the [website](#).



www.gov.wales/farmingconnect