

# August Newsletter



Our annual Open Day at the end of July was a huge success with more people coming than any previous year. It's great to see so many people at the farm making a connection with where our food comes from. The weather was perfect, sunny but not too hot and at the end of the day 9 full tractor and trailers had taken hundreds of people around the farm, visiting the compost site, the cattle in the fields and some arable crops. Back in the farmyard visitors munched their way through dozens of burgers and sausages, plus some very tasty vegetarian kebabs, whilst the children had their faces painted and tucked into ice-creams and home-made organic cakes. This year we had several new stall-holders, many of whom are customers of the farm. See you all next year!

Harvest started this year at a snail's pace, going round our first field of oats once last Sunday afternoon, we then found we could not empty the grain tank owing to the activity of a combine mouse feasting himself on the wiring! Having repaired this on Monday morning things went rather better, completing the first field and getting two rounds cut around the next field. Tuesday morning kicked off to a cloudy start, and after the dew had lifted, a hefty shower of rain came down. So, having enjoyed the rest of the day pulling ragwort, we are looking forward to an improvement in the weather. The sun is now shining weakly through the clouds. This is farming!

Whilst busy with the combining, our Gloucester Old Spot sow, Honey, had her latest litter of piglets on Sunday. She is best left alone with them for the first few days, so you will have to wait until next month's newsletter for some photos of the piglets, but mum Honey is pictured above.

Our next date for your diary is Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September, when you are all invited to the farm for a walk around the organic vegetable field, followed by an organic BBQ and drinks back in the farmyard. This event coincides with the Soil Association's Organic Fortnight. This is a ticket only event, so please let Jill or Alison know if you plan to attend. The cost of the tickets will remain the same as last year - £6 for adults and £3 for children to cover the cost of the food and drink. A vegetarian option will be available as well. More details will come in your boxes and be posted on the website. Harvest will hopefully be becoming a dim, distant happy memory by this time.

Lastly we feel obliged to print on the back of this newsletter some responses from the Soil Association to the Food Standards Agency's organic review regarding organic food.

Happy summer holidays to you all from everyone at the farm.

05.08.09

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Since the Food Standards Agency briefing on their organic review, the Soil Association has been working around the clock to respond to press and TV coverage.

We would like to add our personal view that we would prefer to eat and enjoy our food without anything added or taken away and so would prefer to eat food free from any chemical cocktail. We believe that consumers choose to buy and eat organic food for reasons far wider than the simple fact that it will make them healthier.

Here are some of the responses from the Soil Association:

Recent EU research has found that regular buyers of organic food (who buy about 80% of all organic products) have a much more sophisticated understanding of the range of benefits that organic farming and food deliver. The Food Standards Agency are not organic enthusiasts. But even their just published research found very high levels of extra beneficial nutrients in organic food.

Organic farms have on average 30% more species and 50% more wildlife like birds, butterflies and bees. Compassion in World Farming, the recognised experts, say organic farming has the potential for the highest animal welfare standards. Other environmental benefits are self evident – there's less dangerous waste on organic farms and almost no pesticide use (none at Luddesdown!). Artificial nitrogen fertiliser is banned in organic farming, so there's less run off of nutrients that cause algae blooms in coastal waters.

There are more women and younger people involved in organic farming and organic farmers are more optimistic about the future. That future will be dominated by climate change. Here organic farming is leading the way, insisting on using solar powered fertility through crops like red clover that fix nitrogen into the soil for subsequent crops (as practised at Luddesdown).

**For our own health and the health of the planet, organic food and farming will play a big part in our future.**