

Organic Centre Wales Producer Conference 2009: Adapt and Survive

Aberystwyth, 15 October 2009

6. Developing consumer links

Chair: Sue Fowler OCW

Introduction: Philip Jones OCW

Speakers: Phil Stocker Soil Association

Chris Jones McCartneys Brecon Market

Keith Davies, Welshpool Market

Other contributors: Steve Clarkson Organic Farmers and Growers, Ian Laurie QWFC, Phillip Morgan Livestock Marketing, Nigel Elgar Graig Producers, Beth Rees

Phil Stocker, Soil Association (Charity)

- Organic approach to farming: principles focus on 1. Health, 2. Ecology, 3. Fairness, 4. Care
- The principles are a pathway to the ideal, with respect to the animals key. Livestock markets increase stress in the animals due to the unloading and loading.
- An expansion in the numbers of organic farmers approx 10 years ago raised the question about finished stock through livestock markets, this brought about a report by the soil association looking at the role of livestock markets in organic livestock.
- Organic Farming has always had a link between the farmer and processor, with marketing groups able to negotiate the prices, using cost of production as a base. A system that has worked well.
- Livestock markets play a role with store and breeding stock, with the animals able to overcome the "stress" of unloading and loading in the market.
- There is an affect on food quality and disease risk of finished stock that encounter the "stress" of frequent unloading and loading.
- Livestock moving around too much raise biosecurity issues, and the spread of disease increases.

Steve Clarkson, OF&G / Ian Laurie, QWFC

- The DEFRA organic regulation allows finished stock to move through a livestock market without losing it's status.
- Most large processors are certified by Soil Association which don't allow finished stock to move through a livestock market.
- Some buyers are not willing to buy finished livestock that have been bought through a livestock market.
- OF&G and QWFC would like to see finished livestock going through a live market.
- Lack of fairness in disallowing a marketing route.
- Poor access to registered abattoirs for some farmers in Wales.

Producer Groups Nigel Elgar Graig Producers

- Groups of producers can negotiate price, these have been based on cost of production.
- Oversupply of organic lamb due to new conversions.
- Recession and oversupply have affected the premium received for organic lamb.

Livestock Markets: Chris Jones, Brecon Market; Keith Davies, Welshpool Market.

- Markets are monitored for animal health and welfare, trading standards, RSPCA, Animal Health, FA, Org Certification Bodies etc..
- Livestock markets role is to market farmers produce and communicate with buyers.
- Markets provide competition.
- Government regulation has increased traceability to ensure the _ of the product.
- Allowing finished livestock through a livestock market would widen the market for organic stock and produce opportunities for smaller processors.
- Markets are part of agriculture 'culture'.

General Comments / Q's

- 40% of conventional lamb is exported, is there an opportunity to export small mountain organic lamb?
- o Nigel Elgar: Graig Producers have travelled to European trade shows, and are not able to find a market.
- Supply of lamb, conventional and organic is seasonal. Need to 'bring up the shoulders' of the supply curve. Supermarkets require an even supply through year, but difficult to turn off nature.
- Continuous lobbying for the levy that organic farmers are paying to HCC to be used for organic marketing.
- SA to look at their report again, and look at standards.
- Why did markets decide to become organically certified?
- o Philip Morgan: 1998–2002 Organic farms within Development Farm programme, having difficulties finishing cattle, but also having difficulty sourcing buyers for stores, therefore markets were approached to certify as organic, and organic store sales have continued since then.
- Fairness from principles to be continued down the line of production.
- Organic produce is not the primary business of supermarkets.