

Organic Futures

October 2007

"The threats posed by climate change are widely recognised, but few people realise that the food and farming sectors are responsible for 20% of the UK's total greenhouse gas emissions."

Soil Association

Welcome

This month I'm going to make this *welcome* entirely self-centred - completely unashamedly! I have just completed, with two friends, a cycle ride from Land's End to John o' Groats – a journey of 1000 miles in 14 days. The emphasis on the ride was to do it eating local organic food where possible, wearing organic clothing and encourage more young people in to farming and growing.

It was an incredible journey and brought us all so many different experiences – mostly positive. We rode through some amazing landscapes, ate some wonderful food (and you can eat a hell of a lot when expending so much energy!) and met some inspiring people.

We visited 14 different organic farms, staying on 5 of them. In discussion with our hosts, the subject of the lack of young people in farming and growing kept coming up and was evidently a huge concern (either personally or as a wider concern) to everyone we talked to.

There was a lot of interest in the recently formed Organic Apprenticeship scheme, with a lot of farmers and growers saying they would be keen to take on their own apprentices. One thing is clear – there are going to have to be many many more enthusiastic people starting careers on the land in the near future if we are to avoid some very negative consequences for rural Britain.

Sitting on a bike for 1000 miles teaches you a lot about the ease with which we get ourselves from A to B using the internal combustion engine and really brings in to focus the carbon footprint debate.

I worked out the carbon emissions I used to get back from John o' Groats to the Isles of Scilly totalled up at around 300kg, or 7% of my annual carbon footprint. The journey up was, of course, much much less – just a boat trip from Scilly to Penzance and the extra CO₂ emitted from burning more food.

So, my advice for October has to be: cycle more! And really get to grips with your carbon footprint – more on that below. Have a look at our website for more information and photos on our ride at www.powertopedal.org.uk. In case you were going to ask, no there wasn't any severe saddle sore!!

Jonathan Smith



Power to the Pedal cyclists at Valehead biodynamic farm, Kinver

NGO focus

Rainforest Foundation

The Rainforest Foundation supports people living in and around the world's rainforests to protect the environment and fulfil their rights to land, life and livelihood. The work of the Rainforest Foundation spans all major tropical rainforest regions with projects in 18 countries.

In 15 years the Rainforest Foundation has already protected over 115,000 sq km. Current projects aim to save nearly 1 million sq km of rainforest - an area the combined size of UK, France and Ireland.

They run many campaigns to protect rainforests from destruction and are currently involved with trying to get a ground-breaking new law passed in the Democratic Republic of Congo to "guard against the discrimination, exploitation, and violence endured by indigenous peoples". In effect, this would mean not only good news for the indigenous people who live in rainforests but also the rainforests themselves through recognition of land and natural resource rights. Sign their petition [here](#).

Carbon footprints

"Wake up and smell the carbon", announced Jonathon Porritt at the Soil Association conference in January 2006 in London. His timing was impeccable – 2006 was the year "carbon footprint" entered the English vocabulary, after years of environmental groups campaigning for us as a society to recognise the amount of CO₂ being pumped in to Earth's atmosphere.

Whether it has actually changed people's behaviour on a broadscale is debatable, but undoubtedly carbon is firmly *on the agenda*. It is no coincidence that the 2007 Soil Association conference in Cardiff was titled 'One Planet Agriculture'. This was the weekend that opened the organic movement's eyes to the critical

importance of reducing our own carbon footprints and preparing for a post peak-oil agriculture.

So, where do we start? Undoubtedly the most important place is your own carbon footprint. How do you work it out, what do you do about it and does it matter? Follow this guide:

1. For a good carbon footprinting guide, use the [Resurgence Carbon Calculator](#) – it is much more accurate than many simpler ones.
2. Bear in mind that the UK's average CO₂ emissions are 10tonnes(t)/person/year, **but** sustainable emissions for a world of 6 billion would be about 2t/person/year
3. Work to reduce your footprint. Consider your biggest usage of carbon – which will be travel, home, food and manufactured goods. All of these can be cut, some of them very easily. Look at [Carbon Footprint](#) for some advice.

The carbon debate will go on, develop and probably become increasingly important - especially as the availability of oil decreases and the price of oil increases. It will also strongly lead the direction of food production, probably in a manner that we do not appreciate at the moment. Peak oil will bring about enormous changes to our lives and our planet.

Get your own house in order, get informed and make a difference!

Organic Heroes

Get some inspiration from "[organic heroes](#)" - stories compiled by the Soil Association of people making it happen. It changes regularly and embraces farmers, growers, bakers and many others.

Jobs and opportunities

For all opportunities in organic agriculture, horticulture and food, use the following websites:

[Soil Association classifieds](#)

Soil Association [land exchange](#)

Biodynamic Agricultural Association [website](#)
[O-people](#)

Information

The Soil Association [Library](#) has lots of very useful and interesting articles

Lots of technical information on the Soil Association's [Food and Farming](#) pages

Get [Today's News](#) from the Soil Association to keep bang up to date with news from home and abroad

[Podcasts](#) available from the Soil Association

[Garden Organic/HDRA](#) have lots of good information for gardeners and growers

[Organic Inform](#) from Elm Farm Research Centre has interesting information and latest research



Organic Fiesta apples

Apple day

Common Ground initiated [apple day](#) 18 years ago to celebrate the diversity and distinctiveness of local apple varieties, orchards and culture. It's all about keeping it local; events are held across the country every year in October.

Apple day is an example of an event that has become a national institution that is multi-layered in its meaning. On a basic level it is enjoyable for all ages – apple peeling, apple bobbing, tasting, walking through orchards, drinking juice and cider, etc.

But on deeper levels it intimately connects us to our local area. Orchards are a classic example of a cultural landscape – every orchard was planted for a reason and all with different varieties, often highly distinctive that area.

Apple day is October 18th, but events happen right through October. Find an [event](#) happening near you and experience the magic of apples, orchards and the culture that surrounds both.

Organic Futures...

www.soilassociation.org/organicfutures

- Is a ground-up movement led by young people
- Aims to break down the barriers preventing young people entering the organic food and farming professions
- Provides inspiration, facilitates networking and offers information
- Wants to engage with interested people of all ages and levels of experience
- Wishes to help foster a new, positive culture of farming and growing in Britain