



The Netherfield Centre

for Sustainable Food and Farming



Summer 2005 Newsletter Issue 6

The Netherfield Centre has launched a new initiative the **Producer Networking & Marketing Hub.**

We aim to assist producers in adding value & marketing their produce through local outlets. We can help retail outlets source local produce.

The Netherfield Centre is steadily building a picture of local producers and retail outlets. When a butchers shop calls the Centre looking for a source of traditionally produced local meat we can begin to facilitate a direct link between them and the farms. We can also give producers interested in diversifying an idea of the local demand. Free range pigs and table poultry are an example of products that are enjoying renewed popularity.

Identifying a source is only part of the role of the Netherfield Centre. We follow up transactions and make sure the producer, the butcher and his customers are happy. This information can also help inform our training programme eg: we run a one day course in the autumn (10th November) on 'Selection of Finished Livestock and Carcass Quality', to enable farmers to acquire or improve their skills.

In addition to butchers we have received a wide range of enquiries; helping a farm shop to source locally produced milk, cream, and eggs; a greengrocer looking for local asparagus, and a spit roast company seeking local, native breed porkers.

The Producer Networking and Marketing Hub also networks producers, helping businesses to source or sell breeding stock, store animals, rams, bulls, weaners, or fodder crops. These first links can lead to more developed networking between businesses and a sharing of resources, knowledge and marketing. This can be essential to improving the efficiency of many farm businesses in the region.

This Marketing Hub is part of a new programme of work awarded funding from the European LEADER + programme, the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, Plumpton College, Common Cause Co-operative and Rother District Council. West Sussex County Council are also providing support to enable West Sussex businesses to access The Netherfield Centre services.

UNDERSTAND YOUR SOIL

Soil underpins the health of our grasslands, crops & woodland. The benefits of a healthy soil are also integral to the health of our animals. How well do you know your soils?

Current legislation demands accurate soil records for compliance purposes, right across the spectrum from conventional to organic farming systems.

The Netherfield Centre has two courses in September to offer a better insight into the fundamentals of understanding soil.

**Introduction to soil analysis & care
27th September**

This will look at soil textures, the relevance of liming, phosphate & potash, interpreting soil analysis results, and digging a soil profile pit.

Soil Fertility & The Albrecht Soil Analysis Techniques 29th September

This course is ideal for those people who have attended the first course. We will look at understanding and enhancing the relationship between micro-organisms, humus, and nutrients to provide a better balanced soil and to improve plant growth and health.

The aim is to pass on these soil management benefits to improve the quality of your grazing and fodder and to reduce (and eliminate where possible) reliance on expensive feed supplements.

The Netherfield Centre can help:

- ✓ **Farmers**
 - ✓ **Smallholders**
 - ✓ **Growers**
 - ✓ **Retailers**
- sourcing local produce**
- ✓ **First time land owners**
 - ✓ **Anyone employed or considering being employed in farming & growing.**

Making contact with The Netherfield Centre, Netherfield Place Farm Battle. TN33 9PY

**Centre Co-ordinator
Topsy Jewell - email:**

topsy@thenetherfieldcentre.co.uk

**Training & Advice
Co-ordinator**

Simon Bishop - email:

simon@thenetherfieldcentre.co.uk

Telephone: 01424 775615



This project is being part financed by the European Community WARR Partnership Leader+2000-2006 Programme, supported by The European Agriculture Guidance & Guarantee Fund of the EU. The project is also funded by Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, Common Cause, Rother District Council & Plumpton College.



STAMCO IS PLEASED TO SUPPORT PLUMPTON COLLEGE OUTCENTRE WITH DONATIONS OF TIMBER

Stamco, suppliers of quality timber, building & garden products. Telephone

01424 456800 or 01273 400505



WEALD GRAZING NETWORK

Wildlife habitats such as grasslands, heathlands and wetlands benefit from grazing. Without grazing, or some other kind of management, these habitats would undergo vegetational succession to woodland and their biodiversity would be lost. The Weald Grazing Network has been set up to help support the owners of important sites. If you have land of conservation value that needs grazing you are welcome to join the network. If you are an owner of livestock who would be interested in helping nature conservation then we would like to hear from you too. Some local sites are at: Hawkhurst 6.7ha, Pembury 1ha, Rotherfield 0.8ha, Wadhurst 1.5ha, Hellingly 1.5ha and Hurstpierpoint 12ha.



In either case please download the survey form and return it to the freepost address provided. www.highweald.org/caring/conserving/weald_grazing.asp. Or telephone Caroline Fitzgerald 01580 879 959

PUT YOUR PRODUCTS ON THE WEB



BigBarn is a website promoting local produce. The site has over 5,500 icons locating producers on

the BigBarn map and receives over 1,000 visitors a day. Producers can register for free or pay a membership for additional promotions. Big Barn has formed affiliate partnerships with the NFU & MLC as well as local food groups and some commercial websites such as Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's www.rivercottage.net. This means if you are on BigBarn you are also on all these other websites. Big barn also offers website services. For more information please visit the BigBarn website: bigbarn.co.uk



NVQ LEVEL 3 AT NETHERFIELD

Plumpton College at Netherfield is now running a NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) Level 3 in Agriculture. This is a flexible day release course, aimed at those in a position of responsibility. It is assessed mainly through evidence gathered from the workplace with assistance given to help build the portfolio. The Netherfield Centre Training Courses are designed to assist learners to gather the knowledge and expertise needed for the award and can be attended as part of the day release system. For learners under 25 years old the course can be taken as part of an Advanced Apprenticeship, in which case all course fees are paid. For learners over 25 the fee is £430 plus £110 for registration and assessment fees. Telephone Simon Bishop 01424 775615 or 838620 for more information



NEW MARKETS



Hove Farmers Market - The market will run on the 4th Saturday of the Month, from 10am to 3pm. We hope to run the first market on 23rd July. George Street is ideal for a really vibrant market with lots of producers. Contact: Katharine at Common Cause telephone 01273 470900 or email katharine@commoncause.org.uk

New Farmers Market in London
The London Borough of Camden has developed a new and purpose built market site, situated in Swiss Cottage, London. For further information or to book in please contact Larry Wilks 07960 938 732.

OUTDOOR PIGS RULE OK

Outdoor pigs can comply under the single farm payment scheme. The National Pig Association has received confirmation that DEFRA does not wish to penalise welfare-friendly outdoor pig units unless there are significant breaches of cross compliance rules. According to Farmers Weekly outdoor pig units now account for an estimated 35% of breeding and production systems in the UK. As long as units are not overstocked or kept on unsuitable steep sites, outdoor pig units should not have any problems complying with the terms of the SFP system.



Herbs are they good for you?

Research by the Netherfield Centre into the scope of options for farmers to diversify into producing medicinal herbs found that they may be a potential option for some producers for diversification, although there are numerous obstacles. A short report stemming from this research has been compiled highlighting some key issues on the growing and marketing of medicinal herbs. For your free copy please contact the Netherfield Centre.

MAKE USE OF MAGIC



Is the first web-based interactive map to bring together geographic information on key environmental schemes and designations including: nitrate sensitive areas, soilsapes and ancient woodland .
MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) is a partnership project involving seven government organisations who have responsibilities for rural policy-making and management, the facility is available to anyone over the Internet. www.magic.gov.uk

Capital to Sustain Farming



The food and farming charity

Sustain are working on a development plan to establish a sustainable food centre (or centres) in London.

The centre would potentially take food from participating suppliers and farmers from counties near London and offer storage, packing, washing, meat cutting and cooking facilities. The Food Centre could market and sell the produce to a variety of public and private sector clients, and handle tracability, hygiene and quality control requirements, as well as arranging invoicing and payments, to keep paperwork to a minimum.

To help the development plan, an internet survey form asking questions about produce supply capacity and farmer support needs can now be viewed on Sustain's web-page, www.sustainweb.org/chain_survey.asp

Your response to Sustain's Survey will also help inform the London Hospital Food Project. This is a partnership project between the London Food Link, Sustain and the Soil Association.



The goal is to supply at least 10% of four NHS hospitals food requirements from local and/or organic sources. We are already well on our way and have nearly achieved this target with our first hospital. In order for us to succeed, we need to establish the availability of the raw materials. This is where we need your help. By completing the Sustain survey, we will know what is available, where it is and how much is available. We can then start the work to develop new marketing channels for local producers.

www.sustainweb.org/chain_survey.asp or contact Sarah Blackford on 07990 524559. No personal details will be made available to third parties.



SUPPORT FOR NEW ENTRANTS

One of the objectives for the South East regional Government's Plan for Sustainable Farming and Food, is to support new entrants to farming with training and mentoring. Here at the Netherfield Centre we have designed our training and support to meet the needs of both established farmers and growers and those who are new to farming.

In June this year, Richard Bengé's first Sussex calf was born. Richard and his family moved to Mill Bank Farm in Hooe, East Sussex just over a year ago. Richard grew up in the area and has built a successful groundwork preparation business. The 100 acre farm has ancient hedgerows and typical small sloping fields with about 20 acres on the marshes.

Over the past year Richard has attended the Netherfield Centre Starting a Beef

Herd, Grassland Management, and Managing a Beef Herd training courses. The Netherfield Centre sourced a small breeding herd (cows, heifers and calves at foot) of Sussex Cattle and has provided on going mentoring and coaching – especially needed during the past weeks when the cows were calving. Richard has also decided to put his land into organic conversion and the Netherfield Centre has provided advice and support in preparing the farm's conversion plan.



Don't waste your wood.

Free on site consultations in renewable heat supply from wood. The recent successful installation of a wood fuelled heating system at Ivyland Farm run by Plumpton College has prompted Woodlots, Bioenergy Technology Limited and Conker Conservation to provide this free event on 28th October. There will also be an opportunity to view and discuss reed bed installation. Booking is essential, for more information and to book in please contact The Netherfield Centre, 01424 775615.

TRAINING AT THE NETHERFIELD CENTRE

The following is an extract from our autumn training diary:

- Kate Walker's**
- Food Smoking Course**
- Starting A Sheep Flock**
- Starting A Pig Herd**
- Forge Analysis and Winter Rationing for Livestock**
- On Farm Selection Of Finished Livestock / Carcass Quality**
- Pork Butchery Skills.**
- Sausage Making:**
- Bacon Curing:**
- Lamb Butchery Skills.**

Contact us for more information. telephone 01424 775615 or email: info@thenetherfieldcentre.co.uk

"The Lamb Butchery Course was just what we needed. Following the course I was able to convert joints previously not selling into hot selling BBQ cuts, before the course I could not have done this. We are storing and transporting our meat differently too and can now present it better at the markets. Thanks to all at The Netherfield Centre you are doing a great job, great facilities and everyone is friendly." Kirstie & Mark

Organic Gardening Courses

Merryweather's Herbs offer the following one day courses during July, August and September: Vegetable growing for beginners, plus follow-up course; using your garden as a sustainable resource, and wildlife friendly gardening. For more information and to book in please contact Liz O'Halloran telephone 01323 831726 or email info@morethanjustagarden.co.uk or visit www.morethanjustagarden.co.uk

KEEP MONITORING YOUR COSTS FOR MORE PROFIT

At Netherfield Place Farm the early 12 cows have calved over a period of 21 days, producing six bull calves and six heifers. We only have the bull in with the cows for four weeks before he moves onto the next herd in our network. He comes back here to go in with our later calving herd. We scan all the early cows and if necessary can give them a second try.



The cattle are turned out all together in the spring and the growing calves, now around 10 months old naturally wean themselves as their mother's milk dries up. Once the cows calve down the yearlings will often wander over to view the new arrival. When the new calf is a couple of days old mother and calf are walked to an adjacent field that has been specially shut up to allow the grass to grow. Warm sunshine and fresh, rich grass gets the milk flowing and the new calves quickly start to grow and establish their deep red glossy coats so synonymous with the Sussex Breed.

The Sussex breed do really well grazing outside and having access to adlib forage and hay or silage indoors. When selling our beef through the Wealden Farmers Network (WFN) we emphasise our concentrate free regime and that all our forage is home produced.

Organic Concentrates

Although Netherfield Place Farm is organic, as we do not feed any concentrates we are not overly concerned about the ending of the allowance for approved non-organic feeds from August 2005. Currently as a cost saving it is common practice to feed up to the maximum non-organic allowance even when an organic product is available. In August this will change and will result in higher feed costs to the organic producer but should result in better returns for the organic arable farmer.

Monitoring Costs

Costs associated with all the WFN beef and sheep enterprise are closely monitored, particularly as they are no longer directly supported by production subsidies. We have calculated that the finished price for beef needs to rise by 63p per kg deadweight and 62p per kg dw for sheep – in order to replace the subsidy money. A 300 kg dw beef carcass needs to increase from

200p/kg to 263p/kg making the value of the beef carcass rise from £600 to £789. Last year, on average an 18kg lamb carcass was valued at £2.50/kg dw which would mean a rise to £3.12/kg (from £45 for the carcass to £56.16). Prices are generally higher at this time of year.

Benefits of training

At the Netherfield Centre Managing a Beef Herd' course we discussed the importance of keeping on top costs, drawing up and understand gross margins for each of your enterprises, setting targets against them and monitor progress towards these.

Simon Bishop

The Wealden Farmers Network

is four Sussex farms who have pooled their resources to achieve a network of advice, land, animals, machinery and feed production that benefits each holding. They act as a mini co-operative between themselves. If you would like advice or to see how this networking initiative works, contact Simon Bishop email simon@thenetherfieldcentre.co.uk, telephone 01424 775615.

FOR SALE AND WANTED



Paid work wanted - Experienced in planting, picking & weeding. Willing, flexible & quick to learn. But would prefer organic environment. Contact Zoe Salvesen 01273 530544

For Sale - Pure bred, pasture reared Suffolk Rams. Uckfield. Contact Simon Lohrey 07785 583186.

For Sale - Organic point of lay Rhode Island Red x pullets. Locally reared to Soil Association certification. Contact Richard Reading 01434 830249

For Sale - Sheep turnover crate. Contact Erica Bargman 01403 822219

Wanted - Second hand Kubota tractor 25hp+ for organic smallholding near Chichester.

Contact Maggie Haynes 07977 536684

Wanted - Producers or organic meat and all other sustainably produced food to sell in our retail outlet in West Sussex. Contact Simon Croft 07840 489 129. Email crumbsofsussex@dsi.pipex.com

Situations Vacant Hastings Area - Community Enterprise Development Worker - Delivery Driver/Box Scheme Worker -Admin/Finance Worker. For more information please contact Maresa Bossano, The Community Fruit & Veg Project, PO Box 124, St Leonards on Sea. TN38 9WH. Telephone 01424 457109. Email: maresa.bossano@hs-pct.nhs.uk