



Client: OF&G Yellow News
Source: Somerset County Gazette
Date: 21/03/2019

Keyword: Business
Page: 26
Reach: 10365
Size: 415
Value: 1568.70

Should you be going organic?

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A SUPPORT service has been launched to provide free advice and technical guidance to organic farmers and those considering organic conversion.

The Organic Advice, Support and Information Service (OASIS) has been developed collaboratively by independent farm consultancy Abacus Agriculture and OF&G (Organic Farmers and Growers), who certify over half the organic land in the UK.

With 60 years' experience in the sector Abacus Agriculture and OF&G are aiming to help farmers decide whether organic conversion is right for their business, as well as providing existing organic farmers with the latest management and technical guidance.

Ian Knight, director at Abacus Agriculture, says a key objective of OASIS is to encourage farmers to carefully consider organic as a viable and sustainable option for future prosperity.

"It's about making the conversion process a success and reducing commercial risk," Mr Knight said.

"Many producers and growers we speak to question



ADVICE: Abacus Agriculture director Ian Knight

whether organic is right for their business and want to know more about what it takes to successfully convert.

"We've created OASIS to help answer some of these fundamental questions, allowing farmers to assess whether the changes required to become certified organic could suit their farm."

OASIS' new website offers accurate information about organic conversion, says Mr Knight.

"We have a simple self-assessment questionnaire to help farmers decide if it's the right choice, along with a step-by-step guide to aid successful conversion.

"Technical resources are also available for existing organic farmers, to keep up-to-date with the latest research."

Steven Jacobs, business development manager at OF&G, says there's huge opportunity for organic in the UK and globally.

"The UK organic market has grown at around five per cent year-on-year for the past eight years and as a regenerative food production system it provides a viable business option for many. But conversion is a significant commitment.

"It can take around two or three years and the decision to switch must be backed up by sound economic sense."



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MAKE A CHANGE: A new service offering advice to farmers on the logistics and practicalities of introducing organic farming has been set up