



May 2020

BDA certification & Demeter UK country report

Certification overview

BDA Certification & Demeter UK is in the unique position of being able to offer certification to EU Organic and Demeter standards. This has provided us with a voice in the UK Organic sector working alongside other UK certifiers such as the Soil Association and Organic Farmers and Growers (OF&G). This gives Biodynamics a certain legitimacy in the UK enabling us to develop the Demeter brand, and allow us to have a voice in UK Organic policy.

We are accredited to ISO 17065 (*Conformity assessment for bodies certifying products, processes and services*) by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service on behalf of Defra (UK competent authority)

We are made up of 8 inspectors who are self-employed, 2-full time management staff and 3-part time technical staff.

Our budget is approximately £235,000 per year.



BDA certification staff training day, using compost preparations

Demeter & Organic standards

We have adopted the Demeter combined standards in April 2019, Alysoun Bolger has edited them to make them more user friendly the English to be more suitable for the UK. We updated BDA certification Organic standards and Demeter combined standards in April 2020.

We are beginning to prepare for the new EU Organic regulation originally planned to be implemented in 2021, but now looking likely to be delayed one year. We will be doing a gap analysis between our current standards and the new EU regulations. Demeter UK would be keen to join the Demeter international/IFOAM EU working group standards development.

Operations

Total 262

133 producers, of which 90 are Demeter

124 processors, of which 49 are Demeter

Product approval 5



Opportunities

Despite the current situation we are receiving enquiries for certification. We have introduced a discounted fee for the conversion period which has helped us remain competitive. Before the lockdown we had begun the process of setting up farm development talks which was met with positive responses, once possible we will pick up this work again to nurture the network of farmers. We have identified a need to offer more advisory services, we are working with the BDA charity to develop this.

Challenges

Brexit continues to give great uncertainty to the certification status of UK operators. We are working closely with Defra and the other organic control bodies to apply to the EU commission for inclusion in annex IV of EC 1235 to be recognised as a third country control body. This is still in progress and dependant on organics being included in the free trade agreement currently being negotiated between the EU & UK.

Physical inspections are on hold in response to the current health emergency, we are proceeding with risk assessed remote inspections and intend to return to physical inspections as soon as it is safe to do so. The economic impact of this crisis on our licensees remains to be seen.

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The Biodynamic Association country report

BIODYNAMIC ASSOCIATION AND RECOGNITION IN THE UK

Recognition of biodynamics and Demeter as part of the agro-ecological and regenerative agriculture movement in the UK is beginning to grow. The organic share of the food market is only 1.5% and biodynamics is about 1% of that. Organic land is at about 4% and Demeter certified about 1% of that at 3880 hectares. Public awareness for organics is growing and with it Demeter/biodynamics is raising its head as best quality bit by bit.

BDA Membership holds at a fairly constant 880, with the new BD Gardening Club started a year ago in May 2019, brings in more members, an extra 250 so far. There are the licensees both organic and Demeter on the Certification side – some of whom are also members.

ACTIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BDA

FIVE YEAR STRATEGY AND DEVELOPING A CHARITABLE BUSINESS PLAN

Thanks to some grant and legacy funding we are able to develop and expand our work. This year we have increased the BDA (charity side) team to 6, with another part time post to come during the year. This will make it around 4.5 fte in 8 people from its long time level of 2-3 posts - about 1.5 full time equivalent. The new posts cover communication, fundraising and marketing with supply chain development for Demeter and BDA organic. To that we have added a Garden sector manager and are looking to develop the same for the Farming sector to provide better support for farmers and for conversion to BD. We have eleven trustees who give great support for overview and strategic direction plus good governance and procedures.

We ran a much appreciated biodynamic conference last October. 110 attendees at the Glass House College, a Ruskin Mill Trust centre in Stourbridge, kindly offered for the conference.

This increase in capacity is enabling a more ambitious 5 year Strategic Plan with the key aim of increasing biodynamic activity and recognition by various means.

DEVELOPING GARDENING AND THE BD GARDENING CLUB

In partnership with the Ruskin Mill Trust and others we have promoted gardening courses around the country which are taken up with enthusiasm and are raising general awareness of biodynamics in many places.

We launched our suite of 5 short gardening videos earlier this year and they are getting thousands of viewings and are much appreciated. They can be found on our youtube channel or via a link on our website. Weleda and their garden expert Claire Hattersley, have been instrumental in this great success with Claire in the star role.

Our unique online BD Gardening Club is becoming much appreciated by members and allows us to share all sorts of gardening and biodynamic tips via the facebook members page and the quarterly e-magazines.

We hope to find similarly effective (but possibly different) ways of interacting with farmers in the future.

DEVELOPING BIODYNAMIC FARM SUPPORT AND SERVICES

As part of our strategic development over the coming year we are planning to develop a proper biodynamic farm advisory and consultancy service and to provide better support for farmers and those wanting to convert to biodynamic farming or horticulture, to encourage more farm and bd garden visits via a number of open day events and some workshops. Some of these will be in partnership with organic organisations.

In spite of slow growth in the sector we have a shortage of young bd farmers and growers to fill the needs on biodynamic farms and assure succession. In cooperation with our UK biodynamic partners we are seeking how we can remedy this.

DEMETER, SUPPLY CHAINS AND MARKETING

Chickens versus Eggs: we recognise that if there is more demand and a higher premium for biodynamic produce here in the UK it will encourage more farmers to engage with our approach. At present there is demand but it is not strong enough and in most areas the premium is not sufficient to make that difference. So we have created a post to develop solutions and systems, to provide connections, networks and encouragement so that consumers, traders, processors and producers can connect and meet each other's needs better and meet the 'market'. Things are starting to move and many connections are being made and we have an additional website to serve this need. We are working with the International Demeter Marketing group both to support their work and that their efforts support ours.

PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN AND BEYOND THE BIODYNAMIC MOVEMENT

The BDA is developing the working together of the key organisations promoting and supporting biodynamic activity and knowledge:

- BDA Certification to organic and Demeter standards,
- the Biodynamic Agriculture College,
- the Biodynamic Land Trust,
- the Seed Cooperative,
- the BDA Board of Studies is a sub-committee of the BDA that does the quality assessment of the content of biodynamic trainings of all sorts in the UK.

Together we meet several times a year to share, support and develop our work and the reach of biodynamics in the UK and to see how we can meet its needs.

We are also, as the BDA, and as a movement, building partnerships within the sustainable, agroecological and regenerative agriculture organisations such as Sustain, Agricolgy, Sustainable Food Trust, the Real Farming Trust, Garden Organic, Land Workers Alliance, Access to Land.EU, Eat Better, Marinette, and more recently Farm Ed and Farming the Future. We participate annually at the Oxford Real Farming Conference and other regenerative farming events and were due to present at Groundswell this year.