

SOIL ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE 2008

Transition:

Food and Farming in 21st century Britain



CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

18 and 19 November 2008
THE PASSENGER SHED, BRISTOL

 Soil Association

Welcome

Transition:

Food and Farming in 21st century Britain



Theme

Fossil fuel depletion, climate change, diminishing soil and water resources and population growth present an unprecedented threat to global food security. To address these challenges Britain and every country in the world needs a future food plan.

Workshops

The conference includes a series of workshops exploring responses to the issues raised. Themes include: soil, carbon, energy, transport, trade, skills, culture, transition planning, money, and livestock

Who should attend?

The Soil Association's 2008 conference will bring together everyone who cares about the future of food, from farmers, food manufacturers and retailers, to policy makers and citizens. The aim is to create a 'Food Plan for the Future' – a manifesto for feeding Britain.

Building on the success of previous conferences the 2008 event takes place in the Soil Association's home city of Bristol. It is an opportunity for delegates from around the world to listen, debate and inspire a plan for feeding Britain.

Don't miss:

Art exhibition

One of the highlights of past conferences, the art exhibition will again include a collection of exhibits inspired by organic food and farming. Pain tings, photographs and sculpture will be on show and available at affordable prices. An excellent opportunity for some early Christmas shopping so bring your chequebooks!

Screening of the award winning short film 'One Planet Food'

Tuesday 18 November 5.00pm
Three young secret agents are briefed to investigate the impact of food and farming on the environment. Their assignments take them to classified locations where they discover facts about where our food actually comes from. They find out whether it is possible to opt for One Planet Food.

Chill out zone

Spiezia and Budock Vean Hotel will be running a treatment room alongside the conference, giving mind and body a chance to relax in the midst of the jam-packed programme.

'Another Kind of Silence'

Tuesday 18 November 6.00pm
Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring* in 1962 – overcoming the opposition of government, industry and her own failing personal health in order to alert the world to the careless use of chemicals in our environment.

The actor Liz Rothschild trained at the Bristol Old Vic and worked at Derby Playhouse, the Sherman Theatre and Theatre Clwyd. This theatre piece enables a contemporary audience to appreciate the courage of Rachel Carson once again.

Slow food dinner

Tuesday 18 November
Bordeaux Quay will be hosting the 2008 Soil Association Conference Slow Food dinner. Come and sample the exceptional food created with some of the best produce the region has to offer. Drawing from a wealth of organic and 'slow' food Barny Haughton and his team at Bordeaux Quay are compiling a food extravaganza at which you will not only be able to sample a wide range of products, you will have the unique opportunity to discuss them with the producers themselves as they serve a fantastic taster meal that ranges over two floors and three courses.

A night not to be missed.

Speaker biographies



Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP

Hilary Benn was elected as Member of Parliament for Leeds Central in 1999. From 1999-2001 he sat on the Environment, Transport and the Regions Select Committee and was Vice-Chair of the Backbench Education Committee of Labour MPs. In June 2001, he was appointed as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development. In May 2003 he was appointed as Minister of State for International Development and in October that year was made Secretary of State for International Development. Hilary was appointed to DEFRA as Secretary of State in 2007, when Gordon Brown became Prime Minister and leader of the Labour Party.



Julie Brown

After several years working at Friends of the Earth, Julie set up a Community Supported Agriculture Project (CSA) working with a farm in Buckinghamshire in 1993. This developed into Growing Communities – a community led box scheme and London's first organic box scheme. Julie set up the first organically certified market garden in London in 1997. Growing Communities now runs a thriving community-led box scheme, three organic market gardens and an all-organic farmers' market.



Patrick Holden

Patrick studied biodynamic agriculture at Emerson College, and started a community farm in west Wales in 1973. He has worked for the Soil Association since 1988 and as director since 1995. During this period, UK sales of organic food have increased from £50 million to £1.6 billion and the area of organically managed land, as a percentage of agricultural land, has risen from 0.1% to 3.4%. In 2005 Patrick was awarded a CBE for services to organic farming.



Rob Hopkins

Rob is currently researching a PhD at Plymouth University looking at how communities can prepare for climate change and peak oil. He is founder of Transition Town Totnes, the first transition town project in the UK, and has been a teacher of permaculture and practical sustainability for 10 years. Rob has built with straw-bales and cob and has a particular passion for walnut trees.



Professor Tim Lang

Tim Lang has been Professor of Food Policy at City University since November 2002. He was Director of the Centre for Food Policy at Thames Valley University from 1994 to 2002, before it moved to City University. He was Director of Parents for Safe Food, 1990-1994 and before that Director of the London Food Commission, 1984 to 1990. In 2006, he was appointed Natural Resources and Land Use Commissioner on the UK Government's Sustainable Development Commission. He is a regular advisor to the World Health Organisation at global and European levels. In 2006-07 he was an advisor to the Foresight Obesity programme, and since 2005 has been a member of the Royal Institute of International Affairs 'Food Supply in the 21st Century' working party.



Dr Jeremy Leggett

Chief Executive of Solarcentury, the UK's leading solar solutions company, Jeremy began his career at Imperial College, consulting for the oil industry and researching earth history. An active environmental campaigner, he won the US Climate Institute's award for Advancing Understanding. He is author of *The Carbon War* and *Half Gone* (US title, *The Empty Tank*). As a director of the world's first private equity fund for renewable energy, Jeremy helps investors finance the technologies of a survivable future.



Dr Caroline Lucas

Dr Caroline Lucas is Principal Speaker for the Green Party and was elected as one of the Green Party's first MEPs in 1999. She is a member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, and a member of the Committee on International Trade – work includes being rapporteur for a report on EU/China trade relations and Vice President of the Health and Consumer Intergroup, Animal Welfare Intergroup and Peace Intergroup. Caroline won *The Observer's* Ethical Award for the UK's most ethical politician in 2007 and Michael Kay Award for European Animal Welfare, and is included in the Environment Agency's Top 100 Eco-Heroes of all time.



Peter Melchett

Soil Association's policy director, Peter also runs an 890-acre mixed organic farm in Norfolk. He was a Labour Government Minister from 1974-79, at the Department of the Environment, Department of Industry and in Northern Ireland, responsible for education, health and social services. A trustee of the WWF UK (1977-84), Peter was also chair of Greenpeace UK (then executive director 1985-2000) and chair of Greenpeace Japan (1995-2001). Peter sits on the BBC's Rural Affairs Committee and the Government's Organic Action Plan Group, as well as on the board of the EU research project 'Quality Low Input Food.'



Judith Redmond

Judith Redmond is co-owner of Full Belly Farm in Yolo County, California, and President of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers.



Dr Vandana Shiva

In 1982 Dr Shiva founded The Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology in India. She is a world-renowned environmental thinker, author, feminist and activist. A leader in the International Forum on Globalisation, Shiva won the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. Her books include *Stolen Harvest: the Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* and *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution and Profit*.



Professor Pete Smith

Pete Smith is Royal Society Wolfson Professor of Soils & Global Change, having previously worked at the MAFF Central Science Laboratory, and as Senior Research Scientist at Rothamsted Research. His main areas of expertise are in modelling greenhouse gas and carbon mitigation, bio-energy for fossil fuel offsets, and biological carbon sequestration. He is co-leader of the Environmental Modelling Group.



Cathrine Sneed

Cathrine started her original gardening program while working as a counsellor at the San Francisco County Jail. Prisoners grew organic vegetables and donated them to soup kitchens, the program thrived and in 1992 Cathrine saw the need for a post-release program. So began The Garden Project. The mission of The Garden Project is to offer structure and support to former offenders and at-risk youth through job training in gardening, counseling, and assistance in continuing education.

Programme of events

Tuesday 18 November

8.00

Registration and coffee

9.00 – 10.30

Plenary session one

Britain's food systems: the need for a change

Chair: Rosie Boycott, London Food Authority

Policy: Dr Caroline Lucas, Leader, Green Party

Energy: Jeremy Leggett, Executive Chairman, Solarcentury

Soil: Professor Pete Smith, Chair, Plant and Soil Science, University of Aberdeen

Food: Patrick Holden, Director, Soil Association

10.30 – 11.00

Coffee (art exhibition and chill-out zone open)

11.00 – 13.00

Workshops session one

Developing resilience: key challenges

Choose from: (full descriptions overleaf)

1. **Soil Fertility**

2. **City Food Plans**

3. **Livestock**

4. **Trade**

sponsored by 

13.00 – 13.50

Lunch

13.50 – 14.00

Lorraine Awards presentation

Awarded to three farms for achievements in nature conservation and organic farming

14.00 – 15.30

Plenary session two

Feeding Britain: current strategy

Rt. Hon Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Followed by feedback from Food for Life Partnership student ambassadors (aged 14–16)

Panel discussion with morning speakers

15.30 – 16.00

Tea

16.00 – 17.00

International lecture

Dr Vandana Shiva: Soil not Oil

17.00 – 18.00

Delegate free time

Art exhibition

Chill-out zone

One Planet Food short film

Another Kind of Silence

19.30

Slow Food dinner

at Bordeaux Quay

Wednesday 19 November

8.00

Registration and coffee

9.00 – 11.00

Plenary session three

National food planning

Campaign: Peter Melchett, Policy Director, Soil Association

Policy: Professor Tim Lang, Food Policy, City University

Society: Rob Hopkins, Founder, Transition Network

Community: Julie Brown, Growing Communities

11.00 – 11.30

Coffee

11.30 – 13.00

Workshops session two

Developing resilience: systems

Choose from: (full descriptions overleaf)

5. **Soil Carbon**

6. **Farm Energy**

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7. **Money**

sponsored by 

8. **Going public**

sponsored by 

13.00 – 14.30

Lunch

14.30 – 16.00

Workshops session three

Developing resilience: people

Choose from: (full descriptions overleaf)

9. **Faith In food**

10. **Community Farm links**

sponsored by 

11. **The great reskilling**

sponsored by 

12. **Agri-culture**

sponsored by   

16.00 – 17.00

Closing plenary session

Transition America

Community Supported Agriculture

Judith Redmond, Full Belly Farm, California

Healing through horticulture: The US prison experience

Cathrine Sneed, Counsellor

Workshop guide

1 Soil: taking action

Organic farmers and growers sequestering carbon – and the phosphate challenge ahead

Pete Segger and Thomas Harttung talk about reducing soil carbon through practical action. With Peter Melchett and Carlo Leifert.

2 City food plans

The challenge of feeding people in cities

Most of us live in cities. How do we feed the people of London or Leeds in future, and what is the Soil Association doing to put new ideas into practice?

3 Livestock

Tackling the arguments for reducing meat consumption and livestock production

Examining the organic options and the place of livestock within sustainable and climate-friendly food and farming.

4 Trade

Business as usual or change

Business representatives explore how current trade models may need to adapt to future challenges and if more localised, community led models are feasible in a global economy.

5 Soil: myths and facts

The importance of soil carbon in combatting climate change

With Pete Smith, the UK's leading soil scientist, and featuring an extract from Deborah Garcia's new film 'In Good Heart: Soil and the Mystery of Fertility'.

6 Farm energy

Reducing reliance on fossil fuels

Exploring the new challenges and opportunities for farmers to play a central part in renewable energy supplies.

7 Money

New models for financing food systems

How can we ensure our food systems remain viable in the current financial crisis, and reflect our aspirations for producer/citizen reconnection and mutuality in financial models that support increased food and finance security at a local level?

8 Going public

Currently transforming school food culture, and poised to engage caterers in all sectors, come and see how you can get involved in the Food for Life Partnership.

9 Faith in food

Reconnecting Britain's faith communities with their food

Representatives from the Muslim, Hindu and Christian faiths discuss ways faith communities can deepen their connection with food and the environment, and be mobilised around their food.

10 Community farm links

Building partnerships between citizens and producers

Examining practical models and approaches to building relationships between food producers and local people, changing our food culture and helping build resilient food systems.

11 Reskilling

Learning practical skills and inspiring the next generation of farmers and growers

How new farmers and growers can best access the knowledge and experience of existing producers.

12 Agri-culture

More than food from farms

Exploring how organic farms can provide more for society than just wholesome food, through education, training and cultural activities.

Sponsors

Without the generous support of our sponsors this event simply would not have been possible. The Soil Association wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the funding provided by all our sponsors including:



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The Food for Life Partnership is a network of schools and communities across England committed to transforming food culture. Led by the Soil Association, the Food for Life Partnership brings together the practical expertise of the Focus on Food Campaign, Garden Organic and the Health Education Trust.

Assisted places

The Soil Association wishes to thank **Vocational Training Scheme (VTS)** and **Good Energy** who have enabled some of our producers to attend.

VTS is operated by Duchy College Rural Business School and is a Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) funded initiative.



Soil Association

The Soil Association is the UK's leading environmental charity campaigning for a global shift to sustainable, organic food and farming practices.

Founded in 1946 by a far-sighted group of farmers, doctors and concerned citizens, the organisation is dedicated to bringing about change by creating a growing body of public opinion that understands the direct link between farming practice and plant, animal, human and environmental health.

Today the Soil Association is an internationally respected authority on sustainable agriculture and recognised champion of healthy food, which uniquely represents and offers practical solutions to everyone involved in the food chain – farmers, food processors, retailers and consumers.

The Soil Association is reliant on the support of its members, donors and the public to carry out its work. You can help grow the organic movement, by joining the Soil Association you will be part of a dynamic organisation pressing to change the predominant food culture in this country. Single UK membership costs just £24 a year.

To join, visit www.soilassociation.org or call 0117 914 2447.



Soil Association

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