



local food

grown with Nature in mind

Wholesome Food Association Ltd.

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www.wholesome-food.org.uk

what is the Wholesome Food Association?

- We are a network of growers, processors, suppliers and distributors of authentic, locally-grown, wholesome food.
- We are a campaigning organisation, promoting smaller-scale, sustainable food production.
- We provide a low-cost labelling scheme for marketing locally grown food, without the expense and complications of 'organic' certification.

our purpose:

- To promote food production by sustainable, non-polluting methods using a 'local symbol' scheme.
- To educate people about the health, social and economic benefits of eating fresh, locally grown, wholesome food.
- To help to rebuild and renew local economies and communities by encouraging people to produce and purchase food locally.

our principles:

1. Wholesome food is grown and processed using sustainable, non-polluting methods as close as possible to those found in nature.

- growing methods should nourish and enrich the soil
- no artificial inputs in the form of synthetic pesticides, herbicides or fertilisers
- pest control should be benign to the overall ecosystem
- genetic diversity should be maintained, including wild plants and wildlife habitats
- no genetically engineered seeds or plants
- animals should be raised using the highest standards of welfare
- animal feed should be free from pesticides, artificial fertilisers, GMOs and antibiotics
- herbal, homeopathic or other eco-benign remedies should be used whenever possible
- renewable sources of energy should be used wherever possible
- packaging should be recyclable

2. Wholesome food is, wherever possible, traded and consumed within a short distance of where it was grown.

- people are encouraged to grow at least some of their own food, where space is available
- close links are encouraged between growers and consumers
- consumers, retailers and distributors are encouraged to give preference to food grown in their locality

3. Wholesome food is an integral part of life and community, rather than merely a commodity for profit.

- control over food supplies should be in the hands of growers and consumers, not corporations
- food crops and growing methods should take account of local growing conditions, local culture and local needs
- everyone involved in food production and processing should be able to attain a quality of life which meets their basic needs and allows an adequate return and satisfaction from their work
- production, processing and distribution of food should be socially just and ecologically responsible

We do not set and enforce standards in the same way that organic certification bodies do. Instead, we have adopted a set of principles that address the vital issues of 'food miles' and the renewal of local economies and communities.

We consider that anyone who produces food according to these principles will be using wholesome, sustainable growing methods, and will also be mindful of the importance of localising food production.

All WFA affiliates are expected to espouse the above principles and apply them in the growing, preparation and processing of all food sold under the WFA symbol.

our vision:

We believe that everyone should have access to land and the opportunity to grow at least some of their own food. Most of what they cannot grow, they should be able to obtain locally from people they know and trust.

By growing some of our own food and sourcing the bulk of the rest locally, we can make a huge impact on the extravagant energy costs of shipping food around the country and around the world. By using environmentally benign growing methods that nurture and feed the soil, the soil will, in turn, nurture and feed us. By embracing an attitude of reverence for all living things, we must necessarily treat the planet and everything on it and within it with respect and love.

Our definition of the term 'local' cannot be a rigid one. It must take into account both city dwellers who must look further afield for production capacity to meet their needs, and the most rural areas which have much greater capacity than can be absorbed by their local communities.

Nevertheless, if we are to make the changes we urgently need to reduce energy consumption and pollution, food miles must be dramatically reduced overall. There is no sense in flying beans in from Kenya – even 'organic' beans – that could just as easily be grown domestically. It is absurd to import thousands of tons of apples from New Zealand while equally good apples lie rotting in English orchards. It is patently ridiculous to export about as much butter as we import, and there is no excuse for inflicting unnecessary cruelty on animals by sending them abroad while simultaneously importing meat from Argentina.

The WFA is aimed mainly at the smallholder and small-scale farmer, as this group is the most disadvantaged by the current political climate, which promotes the economies of scale over the values of 'small and local'. We feel that the countryside in general and rural economies in particular will be enhanced and strengthened by encouraging greater diversity in both the crops grown and the people growing them.

In the Western world, agriculture has become increasingly divorced from the lives of ordinary people. UK farmers are leaving the land at the rate of about 20,000 per year, yet at the same time, there is a growing number of people who operate sustainably-managed smallholdings and small-scale farms with the aim of supplying quality food to their local communities. We believe that they hold the key to the regeneration of our agricultural system and that they deserve our support and encouragement.

the WFA local symbol scheme – how it works

The WFA local symbol scheme has three components:

- The WFA **symbol** to affix to products
- A personal **pledge** to uphold the WFA principles
- The unique WFA '**open gate**' policy.

the WFA symbol

The WFA symbol may be used by affiliated producers, who pledge to follow the WFA principles. The certificate of affiliation should be displayed on or close to produce on display for sale in shops, at the farm gate, at farmers' markets and elsewhere as appropriate. Affiliates may also use the symbol on their letterhead, publicity material and web site. (Digital copies of the symbol are available from WFA.)

the WFA pledge

All affiliates wishing to use the WFA symbol must complete a signed pledge detailing their production methods, having checked that they comply with WFA principles. **This pledge must be made available for inspection** by customers, retailers and distributors. Producers selling at farmers' markets or farm gate should keep a copy of their pledge and the principles available to show their customers.

the 'open gate' policy

Because we want to make the WFA local symbol accessible to even the smallest-scale producers, we keep costs as low as possible. This means that we do not employ inspectors. Instead, we have adopted an 'open gate' policy, founded on trust.

Growing land and production facilities must be available for viewing at agreed (and reasonable) times by any WFA producer, supporter, WFA director, any retailer or distributor, or any of their customers. There may be exceptions due to possible contamination of animal housing.

The minimum requirement for WFA producers is to hold one open day per year. Open days are opportunities to generate more customers among your local community and to form links that may not otherwise occur. They are especially valuable for producers who find it inconvenient to arrange ad hoc visits by customers during normal working hours.

(No food assurance system is 100% secure: if people are determined to cheat, they will find a way. We believe that the great majority of people who join the WFA are trustworthy and fully support our aims and principles, and that by making a public declaration to this effect they are unlikely to risk the shame of exposing themselves to criticism from their peers and neighbours by renegeing on it.)

some benefits of joining us:

- **benefits to our affiliated producers**

WFA affiliated producers can use the WFA symbol to identify their products as having been grown according to WFA principles, i.e. without the use of synthetic chemicals, artificial additives, etc., and as originating from a local source, without the expense of organic certification. The low cost of the WFA symbol encourages even the smallest food producers to use it as a local marketing aid. Our website contains a producer/product directory and each producer/retailer/beekeeper may have their own web page designed and hosted free of charge. Tuckers Seeds offers the WFA a 10% discount on certain seed categories.

- **benefits to consumers**

By buying WFA produce, consumers are assured of quality, wholesome food from a traceable, sustainable and local source, with the added assurance that they can personally check on production methods. Each producer must make his/her WFA pledge available on request, which details their growing and/or production methods. Consumers can demonstrate their support for WFA principles by becoming WFA supporters.

- **benefits to local communities**

By encouraging people to buy their food from local sources, a greater proportion of income stays in circulation within local economies. This will tend to strengthen local economies and help to alleviate social and economic deprivation in rural communities.

- **benefits to the environment**

WFA producers, following WFA principles, make a substantial contribution to the enhancement of the environment through their environment-friendly growing practices. Conservation of both plant and animal species is encouraged, wildlife is preserved, and the soil enriched through the use of natural, sustainable growing methods. By reducing the distances over which food is transported ('food miles'), we will also reduce energy use and associated pollution.

- **social benefits**

The WFA encourages social cohesion by rebuilding the links between producers and consumers.

how to join us:

- **Complete the enclosed application form and return it to the address below with the appropriate payment.**
- **If you are joining as a producer, please also complete the pledge form. If this is not enclosed, we will be happy to send you one by post, or you can download it from our web site.**

If you have Internet access, we invite you to join our email list, which enables you to receive updates by email. You will also be able download various articles and our quarterly newsletter.

If you have any questions, please contact us as indicated below.

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meat, poultry, fish, egg and dairy production

WFA affiliated producers wishing to use the WFA symbol on any of the above products are expected to comply with WFA principles.

This requires that producers source all feed either from their own land, from other WFA producers or from certified organic suppliers and do *not* routinely feed their animals products containing antibiotics or other medications (only prescribed veterinary medicines are permitted) or GMOs.

However, we recognise that in some areas sufficient supplies of suitable feedstuffs are currently not available, or only at a price that would endanger the economic viability of the farm. In these cases, we expect producers to declare their sources and types of feed on their pledge and to ensure that all feed is free from GMOs and antibiotics. No-GMO soya and maize must be from "identity preserved" sources. As of January 2009, EU organic animal feed may contain up to 0.9% GMO. This is unacceptable according to WFA principles.

Producers can help each other by arranging joint purchases in order to obtain quantity discounts

sustainable beekeeping

Beekeeping is a traditional part of smallholding and the WFA welcomes beekeepers who use sustainable practices in the management of their hives.

We consider sustainable practices to include:

- The use of renewable, natural materials in hive construction (e.g. wood from sustainable sources in preference to polystyrene)
- No synthetic chemical or medicinal treatments (i.e. no pyrethroids, no prophylactic treatments including antibiotics, no organo-phosphates). Organic acids (e.g. oxalic, formic) and powdered sugar are permitted.
- Allowing the bees to build their own comb in preference to the use of foundation
- Top bar hives in preference to framed hives
- Honey sold either in the comb, or cold extracted and strained but not fine filtered to remove pollen grains

Please refer to www.biobees.com for details, or ask for our Sustainable Beekeeping leaflet.

permitted fungicides and pesticides

The term 'natural' is inadequate to differentiate between the permissible and the proscribed, as some of the most toxic substances known are products of nature. Our attitude to 'chemical' inputs is that **we do not approve the use of any substance that is considered to be persistently toxic**, or that is likely to have measurable effects beyond the specific control of a pest or disease that presents a serious and imminent threat to a crop. **We do not expect our growers to lose a crop rather than use a relatively benign treatment, as long as customers are given accurate information.**

Transparency and traceability are integral to the WFA approach, as defined by the pledge and the open gate policy. This is particularly important to people who are highly sensitive to certain chemicals, as they will seek out local WFA produce in preference to distantly-sourced 'organic' because they can have direct contact with the grower and ask questions.

Well-known American organic gardener and writer Eliot Coleman, who has expressed his support for the WFA, says,

"Don't worry about pests. Relax, bugs are indicators, not enemies. They tell us that something isn't quite right with our soil or growing conditions. If you keep the soil aerated and fertile your plants will be less stressed and they'll attract fewer pests. Pay attention to your garden and learn from what it has to teach you. Look and see how Mother Nature does things, and take your cue from her. Share what you learn. Farmers and gardeners shouldn't hoard secrets. An idea expands when different growers try it out. Information is like compost; it does no good unless you spread it around."

These are the plant treatments we currently consider to be acceptable for emergency use only:

Sabadilla is derived from the seeds of the sabadilla lily (*Schoenocaulon officinale*). The active ingredient is an alkaloid known as veratrine. Sabadilla is considered among the least toxic of botanical insecticides.

Pyrethrum is a widely used botanical insecticide. The active ingredient, pyrethrin, is extracted from the chrysanthemum plant, *Dendranthemum cinerariaefolium*, grown primarily in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Ecuador.

Neem is a botanical pesticide derived from the seeds of the neem tree, a native of India. The neem tree supplies at least two compounds, azadirachtin and salannin, that have insecticidal activity, and other unknown compounds with fungicidal activity. Neem has been used for more than 4,000 years in India and Africa for medicinal as well as pest control purposes.

Sulphur is probably the oldest known pesticide in current use. Homer described the benefits of pest-averting sulphur 3,000 years ago. Sulphur can be used as a dust, wettable powder, paste or liquid. It is used for disease control because it is effective against powdery mildews, certain rusts, leaf blights and fruit rots. However, spider mites, psyllids and thrips also are susceptible to sulphur.

Lime sulphur is made by boiling lime and sulphur together. This mixture is used as a dormant spray for fruit trees to control such diseases as blight, anthracnose and powdery mildew, and certain insects such as scales, eriophyid mites and spider mites.

Bordeaux mixture is a product of the reaction between copper sulphate and calcium hydroxide (lime). It is not approved for use by organic growers. First used in Bordeaux, France, as a control for downy mildew, this mixture is primarily used as a fungicide to control bacterial leaf spots, blights, anthracnose, downy mildews and cankers.

These are not limited to emergency use only

Horticultural oils are highly refined so that compounds toxic to plants are removed. Considered effective and safe, they can be used to control insects as well as diseases.

Soaps have been used for 200 years or more and are effective against soft-bodied insects such as aphids, some scales, psyllids, whiteflies, thrips, mealybugs and spider mites.

Baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) has been found to have fungicidal properties. Researchers at Cornell University discovered that a combination of baking soda and Sunspray horticultural oil applied to rose leaves infected with powdery mildew or black spot will significantly reduce the incidence of disease.

Diatomaceous earth (DE) is a non-toxic insecticide mined from the fossilized silica shell remains of diatoms. Diatoms are single-celled or colonial algae in the class Bacillariophyceae.

(Extracted and adapted from *Friendly Pesticides for Home Gardens* no. 2.945 by L.P. Pottorff Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, Fort Collins, Colorado.)

background

UK food assurance schemes

In the UK there is a range of "assurance" schemes that cover most agricultural products including animals, produce and arable crops. In addition, there are nine organic certifying bodies. The cost to the producer ranges from about £70 minimum, and around £500 for full organic certification. Some fees increase in proportion to the size of the production area. There is even an overall standards organisation providing a standard for the standards organisations!

Analysis of the above organisations reveals a bias toward larger businesses, making it very difficult for the smallholder/small farmer to enter the local economy successfully, especially the start-up organic grower, who faces a minimum two year "in-conversion" waiting period while still being required to pay the fees.

The WFA keeps costs down by:

- Dispensing with the need for paid staff
- Implementing our 'open gate' peer review inspection system
- Communicating via email where possible
- Maintaining our web site as a source of up-to-date information

The WFA motto is "small and local."

WFA history

The WFA was formed in Hartland, Devon and officially launched in September 1999. It quickly became apparent that this was an idea whose time had come: enquiries came in from all over the UK, most with the same story, *"we want to sell our organic produce but we are too small to afford full organic certification."*

Administrative assistance from the International Society for Ecology & Culture (ISEC) was given to launch the WFA as a national organisation. Phil Chandler, while working for ISEC, took on the project, created the structure, and contributed to the guidelines. Phil created the first website and served as Managing Director for two years. He is currently developing a sustainable beekeeping project (see www.biobees.com).

the future

We believe that smallholders and small and family farmers have a vital role to play in the localisation of our food supplies and the regeneration of rural economies. We offer a means for growers and manufacturers to demonstrate their commitment to local and sustainable food production, for which there is a proven, growing demand.

We are currently constituted as a non-profit company limited by guarantee, which means that we have no shareholders and exist solely for the benefit of our affiliates.



The Good Gardeners Association (GGA) is a national, membership-based charity whose founding aim is to improve and encourage horticulture. Established since 1966, we promote the 'no dig' method which relies on compost. We also carry out experimental research and run educational projects.

The GGA believes there is a connection between the way we grow our food, the loss of essential nutrients – including vitality – and the rise in chronic degenerative disease. Our current project, 'Moving Beyond Organic', is about educating through nutritional research. It aims to demonstrate how, if we co-operate with the life in the soil, we can significantly increase the nutritional qualities of the food we grow and eat.

Food and health have become separated and independently they consume an un-sustainable amount of natural resources. We may be living longer than people did 100 years ago but is it sustainable? According to Dr. P. Clayton, *by the time we get into our 60's a staggering 5 out of 6 of us has one or more of the chronic degenerative diseases such as heart disease, cancers, diabetes, poor bone development and mental ill health. The one in six who do not consume more vitamins and minerals*¹. There is also worrisome evidence that our children are increasingly suffering from chronic degenerative diseases too². Health, it appears, is slowly being eroded along with the depletion of natural resources such as soil, air and water.

Since the 1940s we have lost over 40% of key minerals from the food chain.³ This ties in with the birth of chemical agriculture which began in the mid 19th Century. Today 99% of food and drink consumed in the UK is grown this way.⁴ Many consumers are turning to organic food as a more nutritious option. However, to date there is still no 'accepted' evidence that organic food is healthier and as EU organic standards^{5,6} are continually eroded the potential to make this link will be lost forever. In response the GGA believe its time to Move Beyond Organic and learn how to guarantee the food we grow is nutritious and sustainable.

Redefining food quality based on its nutritive value, as opposed to yield, will eliminate many current issues surrounding food production its distribution and processing. Growing food for nutrition will involve a deeper understanding of soil life with the aim - to create symbiotic relationships between soil life and the plants/food we grow to increase the flow of essential nutrients in our diets. Creating a standard that includes *freshness* or *vitality* along with more easily measurable nutrients such as minerals, vitamins and proteins, etc, would guarantee the food you eat to be naturally healthy and sustainable.

GGA membership is not just for gardeners. It is open to all who have an interest in getting better nutrition from food and promoting a more sustainable planet. Supporters of our projects are inspired with new knowledge from a quarterly news journal which aims to educate through our nutritional research and education projects. As we collectively learn together we believe we can deepen our understanding of nutrition and make a positive contribution towards sustainable development by demanding nutritiously grown food. To learn more and enquire about membership please contact GGA (and WFA) Director **Matt Adams** by post, telephone or internet.

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¹. Clayton, Dr P; Health Defence, 2001; accelerated learning systems Ltd.

². National statistics, *Mortality Statistics: Childhood, Infant, and Parental*, London, HMSO, 1999

³. Thomas D. E., A study on the mineral depletion of the foods available to us as a nation over the period 1940 to 1991, *Nutrition and Health* Vol. 17: No. 2, 2003, The Journal of the McCarrison Society for Nutrition and Health. Note: The data used as the basis for this study was published in 5 Editions, initially under the auspices of the Medical Research Council and later the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Foods and the Royal Society of Chemistry: Authors R.A. McCance and E.M. Widdowson.

⁴. Soil Association, *Organic Market Report 2005* - executive summary, (<http://www.soilassociation.org/web/sa/saweb.nsf/librarytitles/20686.html>)

⁵. Elm Farm Research Centre Bulletin, *Organic Integrity being Destroyed by Derogation*, July 2005, No.79.

⁶. Organic Consumers Association, 2006, www.organicconsumers.org

