

## Eye-opening project

For many families a visit to the local supermarket is the closest contact they have with the food supply chain. But what if children could see for themselves where the food on their plates comes from?

Soil Association Scotland's education project, *Seeing is Believing*, aims to bring food production to life for children, and encourages them to consider the effects their food choices have.

Education Officer, Claire Taylor, has created two classroom workshops for primary school pupils. One workshop explains the importance of healthy soil and investigates sustainable farming methods. The other reflects on how our food choices affect not just our own health but that of the environment.

Pupils enjoy the hands-on nature of the workshops; teachers value the fact that the children use many skills and cover several topics during the sessions. The project is now well into its second year and, so far, around 1,700 children have taken part.

Claire has also been helping to organise

farms which host school visits, where children can discover the link between the Scottish countryside and healthy food. There are now several organic farms in Fife, South Lanarkshire, the Highlands and Islands, and Dumfries and Galloway that welcome school groups.

This year, Soil Association Scotland hopes to build on the success of the *Seeing is Believing* project. Claire said:

"We are keen to encourage as many school groups as possible to visit farms this year but appreciate that travel costs can be a concern. If your local primary school would like to arrange a visit, we have a project fund to partially reimburse schools for bus costs, issued on a first-come first-served basis."

For more information about farm visits and Soil Association Scotland's educational programme, contact Claire on 0131 666 2474 or email [ctaylor@soilassociation.org](mailto:ctaylor@soilassociation.org)

*Seeing is Believing* is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Executive and the Mackintosh Foundation.

## Farming futures

Earlier this year the Scottish Executive launched a consultation paper on its Rural Development Programme (RDP) for Scotland 2007 – 2013. Farming and food production are crucial to determining the future of Scotland's rural communities.

Carey Coombs, Soil Association Scotland's policy manager, argues that the RDP should tie in closely with the Executive's strategy document *Choosing our future: Scotland's sustainable development strategy*. Dealing with key issues such as energy usage, climate change, travel, food, pollution and waste, this strategy aims to identify solutions as well as problems.

Carey said: "It's important that the themes of this strategy are carried through to rural development plans. Environmental, social and economic ambitions can all be met by encouraging organic food and farming initiatives."

**Keep in touch with current policy work by visiting [www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org)**

## Organic celebration

In early November, Glasgow will play host to Scotland's first national Organic Food Festival. And this new event on the Soil Association calendar looks set to cause quite a stir in the Scottish food scene.

The festival will be held on 4-5 November in the Old Fruitmarket, in the heart of the Merchant City area.

It promises to be a busy weekend with organic growers, producers and retailers displaying everything from the freshest fruit and vegetables to delicious meats, cheeses, chocolate and wine. There will be a varied programme of cookery demonstrations, and talks and tasting sessions, as well as a colourful health, beauty and textiles fair.

Glasgow's festival will feature many of the elements that have made Bristol's annual Organic Food Festival so popular, including a lively line-up of entertainment and mouth watering organic catering.

We hope you will come along and support Scotland's first national celebration of organic fare and ensure that it becomes a regular feature of our events calendar. Whatever your taste in food and drink, the Glasgow Organic Food Festival will be an event worth savouring.

For more information, see our Events listing overleaf.



# A life-long passion

With a rich family history of Highland crofting, and a passion for protecting the environment, Donnie Macleod has found his niche in life as an organic farmer.

Donnie took over the running of the family's Kylerona Farm at Ardersier in 1998, due to his father Alistair's ill health. Now his Macleod Organics business is a main non-supermarket distributor for organic produce to and from the Highlands. The organic farm centre includes a café, shop, box scheme and tourist accommodation. And with Donnie's son Steve also involved in the business, three generations of Macleods are farming at Ardersier.

Donnie said: "My family were crofters from the island of Raasay and we moved across the country to Ardersier, near Inverness, about 25 years ago. When I took over the farm, small-scale agriculture in the Highlands of Scotland was at a crisis point, mainly due to the industrialisation of food and farming.

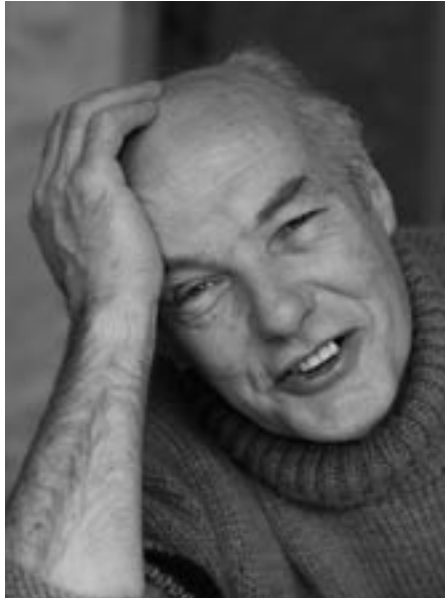
## Boxing clever

"So my intention was to create a marketplace for small-scale farms, such as our own, so we wouldn't be in direct competition with supermarkets, and that's when we set up the box scheme and organic centre.

"The main reason for converting to organic production was for environmental reasons – when my father had been farming he never used sprays. He used artificial fertilisers, but he never used sprays or pesticides."

Kylerona is a mixed farm covering 130 acres, with crops including cereals and root vegetables. There is also a flock of laying hens, sheep, cattle and two polytunnels. Around 700 families subscribe to the box scheme and local people can also purchase produce from the farm gate.

And over the years, many WWOOFers have been attracted to the farm. This is a world-wide exchange network where people get bed, board and practical experience in return for work. As Donnie explained: "We're a WWOOF host farm with luxury accommodation. The WWOOFers get involved in everything from packing boxes to pulling weeds. We get volunteers from all over the world."



## Our choice

Donnie feels that the future of food and farming has been compromised by the industrialisation of the farming system and people can either make a choice to support this, or they can choose to support an alternative, which is local food and local farming.

He said "People have that choice every time they buy a food item. When they buy a non-organic supermarket chicken, they are saying, 'we want birds to be kept in inhumane conditions, which are bad for the future health of our country'. People should be aware of the consequences of their choices. If they buy organic, they are making a choice to support a system which delivers real benefits to the environment, to our health and the future of the landscape for generations to come."

## Current climate

A long-time environmental protester/campaigner, Donnie was involved in a successful fight against local GM crop trials, and he has also stood as a Green Party candidate for the Scottish Parliament.

"Up until recently, the protest movement was something which tried to force the political movement to do something. Now, we have a state of play where the protest movement is taking part in the political process itself."

## Events

### Organic Fortnight 2-17 September

One of the highlights of the organic calendar. Two weeks of special events and food promotions across the country. Why not hold your own organic event and join us as we celebrate all things organic? Contact us on [contact@sascotland.org](mailto:contact@sascotland.org) and let us know what you're planning. We can offer help, advice and materials, and will promote your event on our website.

### Glasgow Organic Food Festival 4-5 November, Old Fruitmarket, Merchant City

Promising to be a vibrant and exciting event featuring the very best of organic produce. Thousands of products to choose from and a full programme of cookery demonstrations, and talks and tastings. For more information and updates visit [www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org) or [www.organicfoodfairs.co.uk](http://www.organicfoodfairs.co.uk)

### An interesting read?

We hope you enjoy our newsletter but we want to make sure that the content is of interest to you. Are there any aspects of our work that you'd like to know more about? What other topics might we include? We would value your feedback. Write to us at the address below or email [contact@sascotland.org](mailto:contact@sascotland.org)



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