

Contents	Page number
Project updates	1
New projects	3
News from the region	3
Noticeboard	6
Activities, events and opportunities	7
New members and membership profile	8
Supporters and funders	8
Contact details	8

## New Logos

Welcome to Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire Food Group News. Most of you are familiar with the Oxfordshire Food Group logo on the front page of this Newsletter. From April 2004 we will be publishing a three-county Newsletter, to give our readers a greater variety of news and opportunities.

The food groups in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire (BBO) will work as a federation, with core activities identified in the "2004 – 2007 Business Plan".

This important change has been backed by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) with a 3-year support package. The sum earmarked for the BBO area is £137,000 over three years, starting in April 2004. This sum must be supported by a minimum of 50% match funding, from various local authorities and sponsors. A complete version of the Business Plan can be found on our website:  
[www.oxfordshirelocalfood.info/](http://www.oxfordshirelocalfood.info/)

## Project updates

### Good Food on the Public Plate

The BBO Food Group in co-operation with the Department of Hospitality, Leisure & Tourism Management at Oxford Brookes University held a one-day Conference on sustainable catering for the public services on March 24. The event was sponsored by Food from Britain, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire Food Groups, and by the Compass Group.

More than 80 people working in the food and catering supply chain attended on the day. Delegates heard from Caroline Lucas, MEP, Jade Bashford from the Soil Association, Sarah Gray from Compass Group, John Wilkins, a local meat wholesaler and Mike Rimmington of Oxford Brookes Business School who revealed the significant buying power of public sector catering in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire.



Conference lunch and refreshments were supplied by 12 local producers. Conference delegates were very pleased with the quality and freshness of the food. Those producers who supplied for the Conference had the opportunity to promote their businesses through the Conference “Local Food” exhibition.



During the afternoon, three breakout groups discussed the opportunities for more local food in schools, hospitals, and other areas of the public sector. Some good ideas and practical action points included forming co-operative marketing groups; standardising the system of due diligence compliance; and establishing a regional distribution hub and network for local produce. Perhaps the most successful aspect of the day was the opportunity to make new contacts between producers, processors, distributors and catering managers.



A full Conference Report will soon be produced by the Food Group and placed on the website. At this point, you can download the Conference presentations ([www.oxfordhsirelocalfood.info](http://www.oxfordhsirelocalfood.info)). In future, the Food Group will continue supporting and nurturing the ideas for further action and promotion of local foods onto the public plate.

### Thank You

**The Food Group would like to thank those producers who supplied the Conference lunch with their wonderful produce:**

- Abbeygold Cheese in Oxfordshire
- Bensons Fruit Juices in Gloucestershire
- Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire
- Chiltern Brewery in Buckinghamshire

- Rectory Farm in Oxfordshire
- Rumsey's Hand-made Chocolates in Buckinghamshire
- Shaken Oak in Oxfordshire
- Sheepdrove Organic in Berkshire
- Tolhurst Organic Produce in Berkshire
- Doves Farm Foods in Berkshire

### Food Directory

The 2005 Food Directory will cover all the three counties. It will be published in January 2005, and distributed widely throughout the three counties.

This year's Food Directory has been very popular with readers. 55,000 have been printed and we are already running short of them. Instead of reprinting, we will place a digital version of the Food Directory on the website in May, so that anyone can find the information they need.



During the early summer we will put the publishing contract out to tender, so that the selected contractor can start work during August-September. This will include inviting people who are growing and producing food and drinks in the three counties to be listed and/or advertise in the directory.

We would be pleased to hear from you if you have any suggestions about how the Directory could better meet your needs and we will do our best to incorporate your suggestions in the next edition.

### Tourism and Local Food project

Last year, South Oxfordshire District Council set up the South Oxfordshire Big Breakfast pilot project in partnership with the Oxfordshire Food Group and Tourism Better Business Scheme (TBBS). It encouraged local tourism businesses to serve a locally produced breakfast.

The success of the pilot scheme highlighted the scope to improve links between local food producers and suppliers, and the local tourism industry. Given the positive feedback from participating venues, SODC and partners would like to see the scheme extended to promote local food in tourism venues across the region.

*The new scheme would offer hotels, B&Bs and other outlets from all three counties business support, training and advice in sourcing local food. If you are interested in supporting this initiative or want to find out more, please call Debbie Rouget at TBBS on 01865 392411 or email [drouget@tourismse.com](mailto:drouget@tourismse.com)*

**Selling in Waitrose...** is one of our ways to support local producers to increase their market opportunities. Waitrose has been open to local suppliers, but as any supermarket with fierce competition, their criteria for success are very rigorous. Since 2003, Waitrose will accept local suppliers only if they are part of the Local Food Group.

In our last newsletter we invited local producers to join our promotional project and try to sell their produce in local Waitrose stores. Six producers expressed their interest and now the project is underway. Our Food Group has been working with all candidates trying to help prepare impressive portfolios and presentations for May 13 when they will meet Waitrose Buyers.

*The BBO Food Group will run Waitrose project rounds every 6 months, the next one starting in July 2004. Are you interested? Please, contact Tamara (01865 484116) for details. Your products will be sold with special "locally produced" ticketing and you will be able to display your own brand.*

## News from the region

### Reading Local Food Network

This new network promoting locally-produced food for people living and working in Reading, was set up with support from Reading Borough Council and the Reading Primary Care Trust in November 2003.

A small steering group is planning how the network will progress during this year, and in the meantime co-ordinator Wendy Tobitt has produced an Information Sheet giving teachers, parents, health-workers and others useful information about where to buy local food, how to source healthy food for children, and who to contact for advice about growing fruit and vegetables at school or on an allotment.

*The information sheets were very popular at the Berkshire Healthy Schools Conference and the Reading Schools Health and Fitness Fair. Further information about Reading Local Food Network from Wendy Tobitt, 0118 934 2381 or e-mail: [wendy.tobitt@btinternet.com](mailto:wendy.tobitt@btinternet.com)*

### Blossom Open Day

Cross Lanes Fruit Farm opened the gates on Bank Holiday Monday 3 May from 11am – 4pm for visitors to enjoy the beauty of the apple blossom. Sixty different apple, plum and pear varieties are grown, many of which were in full bloom. Dennis and Gill Franklin the owners of the farm were raising money for Headway Thames Valley a very worthwhile charity (No: 900591) that helps families in Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire with members who have suffered brain injuries.

*For more information see the website [www.crosslanesfruitfarm.co.uk](http://www.crosslanesfruitfarm.co.uk) or contact Gill Franklin on 0118 972 3167.*

### East Berkshire Farmers' Markets



**Maidenhead Farmers' Market** continues to attract a lot of regular customers. Their customer loyalty scheme has been running for 18 months now and apparently some customers haven't missed a month yet!

On Easter Sunday two Neustift Dairy goats made a guest appearance and were very popular with young children. In May a children's day with quizzes, competitions and a visiting "barnyard" of animals are planned. Local organic vegetable growers from Waltham Place Organic Farm will also start selling at the Market.

### Ascot Farmers' Market

April 2004 marked their second anniversary. The market is held opposite the main entrance to Ascot Racecourse on one of several large car parks - very handy for customers. Whilst it is difficult to get really local suppliers at Ascot there is still a good range of produce and the market is generally well supported from around the area.

### Eton Farmers' Market

Eton started in September 2003 and is held on a Friday. Though small and having experienced appalling weather for the first three months of the year they hope they have now turned the corner and the warmer weather will see an increase in trade in the coming months!

## **The Food, Farming and Environment Challenge 2004**

Berkshire farmers have been working with students taking part in the Food, Farming and Environment Challenge 2004. The finalists in this year's Challenge run by the West Berkshire Education Business Partnership (WBEBP) included:

- Year 9 students from *Trinity School*, Shaw near Newbury;
- Year 10 students from *Theale Green School*, Theale near Reading;
- Year 12 and 13 students from *Newbury College*;
- Year 10 students from the *Marist Senior School*, Ascot; and
- Year 9 students from *Kennet School*, Thatcham.

**The overall winners this year were a group of Year 9 students from Kennet School, Thatcham**, who worked with Waitrose supermarket to identify the most environmentally-friendly way of disposing animal by-products to meet new EU regulations.

The Food, Farming and Environment Challenge is sponsored by Newbury & District Agricultural Society, and the finalists will have displays of their work on show at the Royal Berkshire Show in September.

*For more information on WBEBP and the Food, Farming and Environment Challenge visit: [www.wbebp.co.uk](http://www.wbebp.co.uk) or call Amanda Richards on 01635 277480.*

## **New Contact in Buckinghamshire**

Nancy Pound has recently taken up the position of Economic Development Officer at Bucks County Council (formerly undertaken by Elizabeth Village). Nancy will be the main contact point for food-related matters in Buckinghamshire and will co-ordinate the Bucks & Milton Keynes Food Group.

*Contact details are as follows: Buckinghamshire County Council, 8th Floor, County Hall, Walton Street, Aylesbury, HP20 1UY. Tel: 01296 383345. E-mail: [npound@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:npound@buckscc.gov.uk)*

## **Rumseys Sponsor Easter Competition**

Rumseys Hand-Made Chocolates sponsored an Easter Competition in conjunction with the local newspaper in Aylesbury, the Bucks Herald. Each entrant had to draw a picture of an Easter bunny. The six winning children received a giant Easter bunny, a voucher for hot chocolate at Rumseys and their pictures were displayed at Rumseys Chocolaterie in Wendover.

The chocolaterie has been open in Wendover High Street since February, and is open from Tuesday to Sunday, closed on Mondays. Why not pay a visit and sample the delights and watch chocolates be made on the premises.



## **Chiltern View Nurseries –**

### **A New Approach to Growing Naturally!**

Geoff Hammond, a Franciscan Monk (on a vow of poverty!) and ex-landscape Gardener from London, is a man with a vision!

Based at Chiltern View Nurseries, between Aylesbury and Wendover, Geoff's vision is to set up an Environmental Centre with horticulture at its heart. The "centre" will grow local food, using a new natural growing system.

The CAMEO system (Cover and Mulch Environmentally Friendly Organic growing system) is perhaps not in itself a new means of growing, but it is in its application that the CAMEO system is revolutionary.

Low maintenance, low cost, non-digging approaches to organic or natural food production are not new. However, a method of growing resulting in a doubling of plant productivity for a broad range of vegetables, fruit and herbs, with reduced water, weeding and labour requirements is surely too good to be true?

Geoff's system, using a semi – permanent membrane is currently being researched in a SAVE (Support Aylesbury Vale's Environment) funded field, just outside Aylesbury (famed for its White eating duck), within Bucks.

*Anyone interested in finding out more about this fascinating project is most welcome to visit and should contact Geoff on 07950 791280*

## **Olney Farmers' Market**

In Olney, the farmers market has been running on the first Sunday of every month since September 2003. It started with 19 stalls and it has now grown to 22, with several applicants on a waiting list.

Producers from within a radius of 30 miles of Olney are permitted to sell at the market. This means that people shopping at Olney Farmers Market know that they are getting locally produced goods. And that local producers get a chance to showcase their goods without competition from outside their home area.

*For more information contact Olney Town Council, on 01234 711679.*

## **Farm Shop seeks Local Produce to Sell**

Oak Farm Rare Breeds Park would like to increase the amount of local produce it sells to members of the public from its farm shop in Broughton, near Aylesbury. Owner Helen Lear would like to hear from producers who are interested in supplying produce for the shop, and is particularly keen to sell organic foods (fruit, veg) and products with a long shelf-life, such as pickles and honey.

*For more information, contact Helen Lear at: [original@oakfarm13.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:original@oakfarm13.freeserve.co.uk)*

## Fresh and Local Food on Campuses



In February 2004 the Food Group launched two separate “local food” initiatives at Oxford Brookes University and one at Linacre College in Oxford.

The projects consist of an organic fruit and vegetables box scheme run on both campuses and a farm shop at Oxford Brookes Headington Hill Campus. Under the box scheme, staff and students can place their orders and pick up bags of fruit and/or vegetables on Fridays from their Rep on-site.

Under the Farm Shop scheme, one can place and order through the shop’s website and pick it up from the shop van on Fridays.

The box scheme proved more successful and has recent average sales of £100 per week on each site. But apparently staff at Oxford Brookes have been slower to accept the Farm Shop, with average weekly sales at Brookes of £50. We are trying to understand why: it could be too much of a change in their grocery shopping habits, or it could be the day and place that stops them from buying on-campus. Whatever the reasons, both the Food Group and the shop are optimistic that the scheme will become viable and more popular in time.



**Here are a few comments from customers about the produce they are offered through the schemes.**

**Mary Woolliams** picked her first order with the farm shop on March 25, and was,

*“very pleased with purchases - especially the free range chicken - and had the most delicious roasted chicken in years on Saturday night! Friends who came over for the meal are hoping to make an order on the following week! And the stuffing ordered to go inside was equally delicious. It’s great to be able to buy good quality local food - please use the service or we’ll lose it!”*

At Linacre College the co-ordinator Ana Frelih Larsen got a great response - with the people that she had recruited by word of mouth, 15 people joined and 8 on the waiting list.

**Kendra Strauss** says,

*“the quality of the produce is excellent and the overall set-up (delivery schedule, re-use of bags, additional touches like recipes/information provided with veggie bags) works very well. The freshness and flavour of supermarket vegetables doesn’t compare, and the bags (fruit and veggie) represent very good value for money”.*

Kendra looks forward to sampling different seasonal options as the seasons change.

We would like to launch similar projects on more campuses across the region. Building up on lessons and experiences from these first pilots, we would like to see as many campuses as possible starting local food retail programs for staff and students. **If you run a box scheme or a farm shop and know of any colleges in the area of your distribution, please let us know of your interest to start selling there. Alternatively, if you work in an academic environment and would like a similar scheme on your campus, please let us know, too.** With your support, and hopefully – enthusiastic coordinators on campuses, we can make a real difference in the local food consumption.

**If you have an event you would like included in our newsletter please let us have the details as soon as you can**

## **Your participation is welcome!**

The Oxfordshire Food Group is governed by a Steering Committee meeting every 3 months to review the progress and discuss future projects. If you are based in Oxfordshire and want to be involved in how your Local Food Group works, please join our Steering Committee. We need more producers, caterers, and retailers to broaden our vision. Let us know of your desire and we will invite you to the next meeting in July-August (tel. 01865 484116).

## **Producer Portfolios – another opportunity!**

We plan to develop a further set of these, which are used to promote our wonderful local produce to trade buyers. If you've not seen an example yet, have a look at our website [www.oxfordshirelocalfood.info/](http://www.oxfordshirelocalfood.info/).

Contact Tamara on 01865 484116 if you are interested in having a portfolio for your products.

## **Food Hygiene and HACCP Training**

If you or your staff need training regarding HACCP or Food Hygiene, contact us on 01865 484116. We will be offering subsidies to our members during 2004. All you need to do is find a course that suits you, and send us the receipt after you have paid.

## **Butchery Courses**

With funding from SEEDA, the South East Food Groups Partnership is organising a programme of butchery courses. These will run at three levels:

- Primal cutting, for complete beginners
- Retail cutting and packing for people with basic skills
- Advanced product development and alternative cutting techniques.

To express an interest in these courses please contact us [localfood@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:localfood@brookes.ac.uk). Programmes and booking forms will be available in May 2004; courses are due to start in July. Food Group members may enjoy up to 50% subsidies.

## **EFSIS Training**

Are you looking to obtain an EFSIS standard to make it easier to get into supermarkets, caterers and many other outlets? Then watch this space. Subsidised training needed to pass the audit and the audit itself will be offered to our members in summer.

More information is available from [www.sefgp.co.uk](http://www.sefgp.co.uk)

## **Updating our Database**

Please email [localfood@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:localfood@brookes.ac.uk) and give your telephone number and website address if you have one. If you are already receiving information from us by email, there is obviously no need to do this, unless your contact details have changed very recently.

# Activities, events and opportunities

---

## Free business advice for farmers to continue

Farmers will be able to call upon free support from the Farm Business Advice Service (FBAS) for another year until March 2005. FBAS offers farmers three days free consultancy including a business 'health audit' and help in drawing up business plans. The service is open to all farmers in England who have a holding number, spend at least 75% of their time working on their core farm business, which must be classified as a small or medium-sized enterprise. *For further information call 0845 600 9006, or see [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)*

## May

---

### Buffalo House Open Days

Bury Farm, Slapton

Aylesbury Vale's very own buffalo farm will shortly be launching its 2004 season of open days. Visitors can sample the buffalo milk, ice cream, mozzarella and other special products. The open days include guided tours, buffalo rides and the chance to cuddle baby buffaloes. *For more information about Buffalo House, ring 01525 220256 or visit [www.buffalogold.com](http://www.buffalogold.com)*

### Fine Food, Wine and Spirits Fair 2004

8 and 9 May 2004 at The Stables, Waddesdon Manor

The National Trust are seeking exhibitors for this event, to be held indoors and the fee for the two days is £100, including 6 foot trestle table and electricity if requested in advance. *Contact Stephanie Swann, the Public Events Officer, on 01296 653259*

### Local Food Lunch

15 May at The Royal Oak, Ramsden

John Oldman will be creating a special menu, comprised exclusively of food and drink grown or produced within 15 miles of Ramsden. Places are limited so booking is essential. *For more information ring the Royal Oak (01993 868213) or Ricahrd Lord (01993 868999)*

### Oxfordshire Young Farmers Rally

22 May in Abingdon

Abingdon YFC are devoting a whole marquee to local foods and crafts and subsidizing the cost as an attraction, so support them by attending the Rally. Other attractions will include Shetland Pony Grand Nationals, vintage tractors, hounds, YFC competitions, rural crafts. *For more info. or to book a stall contact Cynthia Napper 01235 812548, [cynthianapper@aol.com](mailto:cynthianapper@aol.com)*

### A Taste of Berkshire – Local Food Lunch

23 May from 12 noon - 3.00 pm at Wickcroft Farm Shop, near Pangbourne

The lunch features local food such as organic lamb, seasonal salads, and fresh strawberries and cream from a local fruit farm. There will be cheeses, beers and wine, plus cordials from Rocks at Twyford. Entertainment includes Eddie Winship from 107FM, skittles and a raffle. *Contact Emma Tweed on 0118 930 5336 for more information.*

## June

---

### Charlbury Farmers' Market

12 June

The market will be held on the Playing Close, Charlbury between 9 am and 1 pm. It is organised on a voluntary basis by Nick Potter, Roger Watts and Geoff Borroughs. *Contact them at Studio One, Sheep Street, Charlbury, Oxfordshire OX7 3PR. Tel 01608 811559.*

### Perfect Picnic

The Oxfordshire branch of the Women's Food and Farming Union will promote local food for 'The Perfect Picnic' at events during the summer. The Perfect Picnic may include tea, lunch, barbecue or children's lunchbox. *For more information about The Perfect Picnic contact Vanessa Hart on 01491 680359 or e-mail: [hart@checkendon.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:hart@checkendon.fsnet.co.uk)*

## September

---

### Buckinghamshire County Show

2 September, Weedon, Aylesbury

There will be a Food Group marquee at the show. *Anyone interested in having a stand should contact Richard Lipscombe at Bucks County Council, on 10296 382447, or by e-mail on [rlipscombe@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:rlipscombe@buckscc.gov.uk)*

### Wychwood Fair

5 September

Please see Application Form inserted.

### British Cheese Festival

24-26 September

If you are a cheese producer and would like to share a stand with other cheese producers, *please email: [info@buylocalfood.co.uk](mailto:info@buylocalfood.co.uk)*

The cheese producer subsidized contribution is expected to be around £100 + VAT again.

Non-cheese producers are also invited to attend the British Cheese Festival – Food from Britain Market. *For more information contact the organisers on 01608 659325*

# New members and membership profile

## New Members

Between January and April we have been very active in recruiting new members into our Food Group. We are proud to report that 22 new enterprises and organisations have joined our Group in this period. Among them:

**Mrs. P. A. Reid** from the *Down Barn Farm* who specialize in organic beef and free-range pork, and also runs a small B&B  
**Rick and Jainie Fordham** who have a farm shop in Chipping Norton selling their own beef, pork and lamb along with other local produce.

**Romain Alinat** from *Chef's Table*, a personal chef business using local produce.

**Lucy Blackwell** from *Wantage* sells her naturally reared Dexter beef at farmers markets.

**C & H Peers & Sons** are from Great Milton and produce organic meat and eggs.

**Merlin Smith** is a venison producer from Kidlington.

**Clare Pool** from *Red Kite Farms* in Henley-on-Thames is an organic dairy farmer.

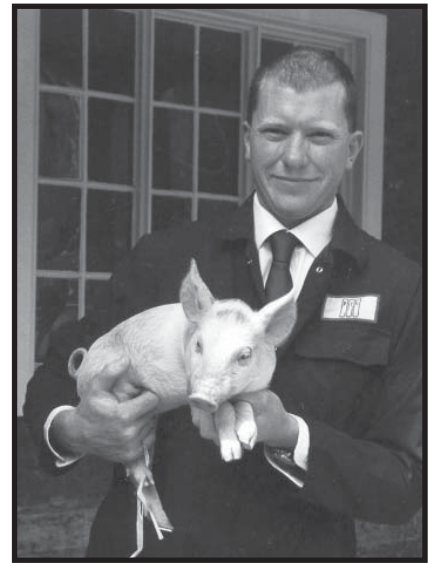
**Gavin Thomson** from *Woodstock* runs *The Feathers Hotel* and is looking to use local food in their menus.

A lot of new members joined us after attending a series of seminars organised in co-operation with the Business Link and sponsored by Leader + "Reconnecting the public with the local food supply chain". We welcome all our new members and we hope that we will be able to meet your expectations for support and networking.

*In future we plan to have our database available for our members' use from our website. At present, if you need more information about our members, please call, write or visit our website [www.oxfordshirelocalfood.info](http://www.oxfordshirelocalfood.info).*

## Producer Member Profile

Russell Kilvington in Berkshire developed his love for animal rearing while working on a pig farm in Italy. Coming back, he started a small farm in Brightwalton and developed his



first Business Plan in 1993 with the support of Princes Trust. Since then, Russell has gained a vast collection of awards and acknowledgments from the local community for his successful and ethical way of doing business, such as the 1994 Live Wire Award in recognition of an outstanding enterprise, 1996 Prince's Youth Business Trust Area Winner Award, and 1997 Young Enterprise of the Year Award. Russell used to sell his products in his own High Street butcher shop in Hungerford, but the Foot and Mouth disease almost destroyed the business and Russell has never reopened the shop again. Russell and his wife Catherine are well known in the community for their donations and sponsorships at various local events and clubs. At present they are ascending again, slowly recovering after the F&M effects and have big plans to launch new product lines, selling in local supermarkets and shops. The Food Group has been helping in developing various marketing materials. Russell is always ready to try new forms of support coming from local organisations, such as Business Link, Farm Advisory Services, the Food Knowledge & Know-how and even academic resources at universities. Says Russell: "The advice out there is mostly free and invaluable. It is easy, as a farmer, to get bogged down in your own farm and lose the "big picture". Consultancies and advisory services are there to show you this "big picture" and help you see new ways for yourself." We wish the Kilvingtons all the success and luck they deserve for their hard and honest work.

## Supporters and funders



### For further information contact:

Tamara Schiopu

The Local Food Group, Department of Planning  
Oxford Brookes University, Headington Campus  
Gipsy Lane, Oxford OX3 0BP

T: 01865 484116 F: 01865 483559

E: [localfood@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:localfood@brookes.ac.uk) [www.oxfordshirelocalfood.info](http://www.oxfordshirelocalfood.info)