



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Expert Group on Organic Production biographies of the chairperson and members

Chairperson - Professor Christine Watson

Christine is an experienced Chair of both national and international committees and is currently a Professor of Agricultural Systems at Scotland's Rural College (SRUC). She holds the KSLA Wallenberg Professorship at SLU (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences).

Her research focuses on the management of micro and macro nutrients in organic and conventional agri-food systems at a range of scales from local to continental. Over the past 5 years much of her research has focused on assessing and developing legume-based farming systems in Europe and Africa.

She is also a co-chair of SRUC's Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team, and a member of their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Formally she was the President of the UK Association of Applied Biologists and the European Society for Agronomy.

Members

Keith Ball

Keith has over 40 years of experience in technical roles related to food and drink. He was previously with Soil Association Certification Ltd for 10 years latterly as Technical Director. He has more recently worked for Acoura and Organic Farmers & Growers CIC. Keith's work has largely concentrated on auditing, food processing, accreditation and standards.

He was also a member of the EU's Expert Group for Technical for Organic Production (EGTOP) for almost a decade, advising the Commission on aspects of organic production.

Paul Barnes

Paul is currently an estate manager in Lincolnshire. He has worked in the organic farming sector for over 15 years and has a wealth of practical farming knowledge, largely focusing on organic cereal, vegetable and livestock production.

Andrew Burgess

Andrew is the elected head of the NFU Organic Forum and is a trustee of the Soil Association. He has 40 years' experience as a strategic agronomist and has been directly involved in organic farming for 25 years.

He has worked with multiple retailers all his career which has given him much experience of the needs of customers, consumers, processing and international supply chains.

Gillian Butler

Gillian has over 40 years of experience in agriculture, working in roles across the spectrum of livestock and other farming systems. She initially worked as a ruminant nutritionist and has since conducted research to identify key elements of animal management for producing healthy, sustainable food.

Gillian is currently a senior lecturer in Sustainable Livestock Production at Newcastle University.

Nicola Cannon

Nicola is Associate Professor of Agriculture at the Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester. She has over 30 years of experience in the organic sector, from practical farming through to roles in organic certification bodies and certification assurance.

Nicola has led many organic research projects, mainly in arable cropping systems, in areas ranging from weed management, undersowing, crop establishment techniques and varietal characteristics.

Robin Fransella

Robin is currently Programme Manager of the Organic Observatory's Anti-fraud Project for the Alliance for Organic Integrity.

He previously spent 14 years as a Policy Advisor in Defra's Organics Team, where he supported the international trade of organic goods, including establishing the UK's organic import database and helping set up the European Informal Working Group on Organic Imports.

Teresa Garzon

Teresa has over a decade's experience working within the fishery industry, from research in both fresh and seawater health to the salmon production and supply chain. She holds a

PhD in Biology. She was a senior scientist at VeroMara and worked for MOWI and now PatoGen.

Teresa is the Chair of the Women in Scottish Aquaculture board (WISA), an organisation whose aims are to assist women to develop their full potential within the sector and encourage a recognition of the positive benefits this has in the remote areas of Scotland.

Sarah Hathway

Sarah has worked in the organic sector for over 25 years and has a wealth of a practical knowledge of farming and horticulture. She is currently Head of Technical Manager at Soil Association Certification Ltd and has previously worked as an inspector and certification manager.

She brings with her in-depth knowledge and experience in organic regulations, product review as well as organic production and processing.

Mark Palmer

Mark has over 25 years of experience in the organic sector, working as an advisor, processor and inspector. He has in-depth practical farming experience and continues to work on an organic dairy and cereal farm in North Yorkshire.

Mark is also currently working with Soil Association Exchange, completing farm sustainability assessments and advising on the Future Farmer Resilience fund.

Adam Westaway

Adam is a third generation farmer who, with his sons, farms in North Devon. He has been an organic dairy farmer for 25 years. Adam attended Bicton College completing a diploma in agriculture, certificate in dairy and farm business management. He subsequently worked in the UK, Australia, Canada, as well as experiencing farms across Europe.

Adam sat on the OMSCo Board for 6 years and is currently the South-West member of the NFU organic forum and the Organic representative on the National Dairy Board.

Simon Wright

Simon has worked with processed organic food for many years, initially with Whole Earth Foods and Green & Black's and subsequently as a consultant. He helped Defra develop the UK's first organic regulation and has edited books on organic food processing and marketing.

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