



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.

Deputy Chairperson - 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.

Members

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 former 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 almost 50 years' experience in agriculture, working in various roles across the spectrum of livestock and other farming systems. She initially worked as an ADAS ruminant nutritionist and later joined Newcastle University as a lecturer, where her research identified key elements of animal management leading to healthy, sustainable food.

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 Garzon has over a decade of experience in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, spanning research, fish health, and the salmonid production and supply chain in both freshwater and marine environments. She holds a PhD in Biology and has built a career focused on fish health, environmental performance, and sustainable development.

Teresa has held senior scientific and leadership roles across industry and research organisations, including Senior Scientist at VeroMaris, and positions at MOWI and PatoGen, where she specialised in fish health and disease management. She has also worked with Loch Alba and currently serves as Head of Environment and Development at Scottish Sea Farms.

In addition to her technical expertise, Teresa has played an active role in sector leadership and inclusion. She was instrumental in the development of Women in Scottish Aquaculture (WISA) and has served as Chair of its Board. WISA aims to support women in reaching their full potential within the aquaculture sector while promoting the wider social and economic benefits this brings to Scotland's remote and rural communities.

Sascha Grierson

Sascha has over 25 years' experience in agriculture. She is an owner and director of a mixed organic food and farming business in Perthshire in Scotland, including organic poultry and egg production, and development of a nationally recognised organic food brand.

She has also spent the previous six years in agricultural consultancy, in a variety of project and leadership roles principally delivering national datasets in farm economics and greenhouse gas emissions for Scottish Government, and working alongside scientists in a variety of specialisms.

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 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.

John Newman

John has extensive agricultural experience and has been farm manager at Abbey Home Farm, Cirencester since 1992. He has over 33 years practical knowledge of a wide range of organic production as well as organic processing and has set up small scale dairy and poultry processing units and an on-farm butchery.

John was a founder director of The Organic Milk Suppliers Co-Op Ltd, Organic Seed Producers Ltd and Organic Arable and has been involved with many participatory research projects. He is a long-standing member of Soil Association standards board.

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 nearly 30 years, the last decade farming to in equivalence to the USDA organic standards without antibiotics. 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 has been South-West member of the NFU organic forum and the Organic representative on the National Dairy Board.

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