

Organic expansion boosts island food and farming

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The Isle of Man is preparing for an organic boom which could change the face of food and farming on the island.

Leading certification body, Organic Farmers & Growers (OF&G), has been working with the Manx Organic Network to aid the island's food growers and makers in taking the step into organics.

With five farms already licensed as organic producers, the next move was to bring in other parts of the island's food chain.

As the main organic certification body operating on the Isle of Man, OF&G has allied with the Manx Organic Network to put all of the pieces in place, with two butchers and an abattoir in the process of becoming certified to process and sell organic food.

Now preparing to add to that are Fenton Campbell Butchers, of Douglas, Radcliffe Butchers, of Castletown, and the Isle of Man Fatstock Marketing Association, in Tromode.

To convert to organic farming and food processing each farm or other business must meet the legal requirements, laid down by the EU, which ensure that food produced and sold as organic is genuinely so and has been handled separately from non-organic food throughout its journey to the customer. As the certification body, OF&G oversees this process and carries out inspections before issuing a licence confirming organic status.

Support for the farms and businesses going organic has also come from the Manx Organic Network and its co-ordinator, Janet Bridle.

Mrs Bridle said: "We are very excited about this development. It is such a big step. The time had to be right for it to happen but, as we have shown to the government, there is a huge consumer interest in locally grown organic produce. We hope the organic base on the island will just continue to expand."

Organic Farmers & Growers' Business Manager, Richard Jacobs, said: "This is a really positive step for the Isle of Man. It will allow more businesses on the island to deliver what the community wants and benefit from the growing market for organic food.

"If the whole process of food production, from farm to plate, can done organically by Manx farmers and businesses it's good news for the whole island. We're delighted to be able to help with that process."

Mr Jacobs added: "The organic regulations are vital to ensuring that shoppers get what they are expecting - that is, food grown in an environmentally sustainable way with regard for human health and animal welfare. We work hard to protect and enforce those standards, while understanding that there are practical considerations to running a business."

More information on making the move to organic farming and food processing is available from Organic Farmers & Growers on 0845 3305122 (local rate) or by visiting the website at www.organicfarmers.org.uk.

