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Bees mean business in Wales

The ancient craft of beekeeping is undergoing a revival in Wales. Demand for local honey greatly outstrips supply, and this has led to high prices at farmers' markets and specialist retailers. Most beekeepers in Wales are small scale, with just a few hives. About 20 bee farmers run over 40 hives of bees each; and there are about ten very hard-working fully commercial beekeepers, with over 200 hives each.

Support for beekeepers comes from local associations, and from the Wales Bee Inspection Service, which is part of the National Bee Unit at the Central Science Laboratory in York. The Welsh Assembly Government funds the bee inspectors

in Wales, and they provide an invaluable service.

Local Beekeeping Associations provide the beekeeper with essential training and support. All of the 19 local associations in Wales are affiliated to the Welsh Beekeepers' Association – Cymdeithas Gwenynwyr Cymru, which has about 1000 members.

The honeybee is the main pollinator of many crops. Large-scale beekeepers move their hives to the oil seed rape and the apple orchards in spring, then to fields of borage and finally to the heather in August. Commercial fruit growers will pay to hire hives of bees in the spring, when other insect polli-

nators are scarce. For most beekeepers, working with the bees is just an enjoyable pastime, providing a small extra income. However, there is always a good demand for Welsh honey, which small-scale beekeepers cannot meet, and the bees can easily be built up into a useful sideline business. Bees don't need a lot of looking after. They are active only from April to October and they do not require much space. They produce a valuable and very saleable crop. They benefit the environment; and they will usually pay for their investment within a couple of years. Now that's good business!

CALU's subject areas:

- Horticulture
- Bio-energy
- Alternative crops
- Alternative livestock
- Farm woodlands

Bringing Warmth to the Winter Fair

For the fourth time CALU hosted a stall on this year's Royal Welsh Winter Fair. Together with Richard Collins from John Amos, demonstrating a wood pellet boiler we attracted many visitors. The main interest was shown in our horticulture and energy crop sections and we could successfully spread our message.

Due to the good feedback, our strategic position on the balcony of the livestock hall as well as the mild weather it was a motivating event for our team.



Food and Farming Awards—herb success

CALU was delighted to hear that the three finalists selected for the Farmer of the Year award as part of the BBC Radio 4 Food and Farming Awards were all involved in horticulture.

It is one of CALU subject areas and we have done a lot of work this year to promote and inform farmers and other interested people about the possibilities of horticulture.

The top prize was scooped by Robert Wilson from Scotland. Robert took the brave decision to move out of dairying 1981. And the even braver step of moving into herbs and salad leaf production. Robert didn't pretend that everything has been easy, and he said he still misses working with the cows. But the business, Scotherbs, has been a resounding success, and now employs more than 100 people.

The other two finalists were Martin Hamilton and Ian Tollhurt.

Martin started out farming on a 55ha holding near Newtownards. Initially he grew and sold unprocessed potatoes and vegetables. In the 1990s he made the move into washed vegetables. However, market changes forced a re-think and in 2004 his new venture, Mash Direct, was launched. Martin sources his vegetables from six farms in the neighbourhood and processes them into products such as mashed potatoes, champ (mash with spring onions), colcannon (mash with cabbage) and carrot and swede mash. The finished product can be available for sale less than 24hrs after the vegetables were harvested.

Hopefully these examples will encourage more farmers to consider diversifying into horticulture!

Preparing for a changed climate

Farming Futures, a collaboration between NFU, CLA and agricultural and horticultural levy boards has produced a range of factsheets related to climate change.

Titles in the series include: Adaptation Suggestions; What is Climate Change; Focus on Pigs; Focus on Horticulture; and Focus on Potatoes.

The factsheets are available for free download from the Farming Futures website: www.farmingfutures.org.uk

Welfare of Livestock in Transit

Don't forget that Lantra may be able to help with funding the cost of the training required for the new examination. Contact Lantra for further information: 01982 552646

The January 2008 deadline for taking the new examination for transporting livestock in transit has been moved back to allow farmers more time to take the test. Contact your Divisional Office for more information.

Caernarfon: 01286 674144
Carmarthen: 01267 225300
Llandrindod: 01597 823777

New Rural Development Plan funding opportunities

As part of the Rural Development Plan 2007—2013, three new agri-food programmes to support Axis 1 (Improving the competitiveness of the farming and forestry sectors) have been opened.

The final details of the schemes were still being worked on when this newsletter went to press. However, the broad objectives of the schemes are notes below.

The **Processing and Marketing Grant Scheme** aims to support farm businesses, and food and drink producers and processors to add value to their products and to support agri-food businesses in identifying and developing new markets.

The **Supply Chain Efficiencies Scheme** aims to improve supply chain linkages and collaboration, to support innovation and increase the market focus of agri-food businesses in Wales

In England a five year programme—the Food Chain Centre—which was funded by Defra is coming to an end, but there is a wealth of information available on the project's website about how to improve supply chain efficiencies. www.foodchaincentre.com

The final scheme, the **Quality Food Scheme**, aims to support businesses in improving their quality assurance processes and in obtaining Protected Food Name status for produce.

Any producer or producer group interested in finding out more about the schemes should contact their regional delivery team. Visit the Welsh Assembly Government website Environment and Countryside section for more information—<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside> for further details.

DID YOU KNOW...

...that commercially and non-commercially grown orchards cover 400ha of Wales?

Source: walesstats

Field vegetable workshop

In November 2007, 22 farmers attended CALU's workshop on field scale vegetable production at Bellis Brothers Country Market in Hold, nr Wrexham. In conjunction with Chris Creed from CALU partner ADAS and the Bellis Brothers farm manager Jim Cross, the participants got a close insight glance on planting, harvesting, storage, packing and management of a variety of field crops such as carrots, asparagus, strawberries and divers Brassica crops.

Due to the expertise of Chris Creed, the generous offer from the farm to show us around and the excellent catering the day was a full

success for CALU. The participants left motivated and with plenty of new ideas for their own businesses.

The workshop was arranged as a reaction to increasing interest of farmers in producing vegetables and the potential it has to increase farmer's income (CALU Newsletter, Volume 2, Issue 2).

Due to increasing requests CALU also published new crop production guides for courgettes, leek, swedes, garlic and parsnips which provide detailed information about the site requirements, planting, pest control and management issues. The leaflets are available for download on

our homepage.

If you are interested in further events regarding this topic please contact CALU – calu@bangor.ac.uk or 01248 680450.



Inspection of Brassica crops at Bellis Brothers Farm in Hold, nr Wrexham

Energy Audits, Carbon Budgets

—everybody's talking about them, but how do you do them?

Farmers and growers are increasingly required to be aware of their business's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. This is a very complex area of science, but recent developments are leading towards a standardized methodology for making the calculations.

A plethora of carbon footprint calculators are available on the internet, but mostly these are not geared towards land management.

To redress this, the Countryside

Land & Business Association has developed a new calculator CALM (Carbon Accounting for Land Managers) which will be launched at the Oxford Farming Conference in January 2008.

The British Standards Institute is also developing a generic protocol for carbon footprint calculations.

Another calculator with a focus on land use is available from: www.cplan.org.uk—this calculator has been developed by farmers for

farmers.

CALU's experience is that different calculators will produce different results. Hopefully when a common standard has been developed, these differences will disappear.

To find out more about carbon accounting and energy auditing, visit our open day at Coleg Llysfasi on 16th January 2008. For further information please have a look on our homepage or call 01248 680450.

DID YOU KNOW...

...that the average length of the growing season in the UK between 1961 and 1990 was 252 days? In 2006, the growing season was 269 days long.

Source: Defra

Hemp production to increase in England

Hemcore, the UK's only commercial hemp processor, is building a new processing facility in Suffolk to meet increased demand for hemp products.

The new facility will cost £3.6m, employ 35 people and be able to process 50,000 tonnes of hemp straw each year. This is more than ten times the amount currently being processed at Hemcore's

facility in Essex. The new processing plant is expected to start operation in summer 2008.

As CALU demonstrated at trials during 2006, hemp is quite a low input crop. Once established, it does not require routine herbicides or fungicides. It is also fairly tolerant of both drought and heavy rain.

CALU's trials demonstrated a dual purpose hemp, which is grown for

its edible seeds, as well as its fibres.

The main uses for hemp fibre are in the automotive and construction industries. Mike Duckett, MD of Hemcore, pointed out that 50% of the UK's carbon emissions are associated with the construction and use of buildings. Using locally grown hemp as a building and insulation material can help to reduce these emissions.

CENTRE FOR ALTERNATIVE LAND USE

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Supporting sustainable land use in Wales



Forthcoming Events

Everybody at CALU wishes you a
Merry Christmas and a successful
New Year.



Nadolig Llawn a Blwyddyn
Newydd Dda

Wednesday 16th January 2008—On-farm Energy Audits—practical demonstration, training and advice, Coleg Llysfasi, Ruthin

16, 17 & 23 January 2008—3 day training course to prepare farmers for hosting school visits—Henfaes Research centre, Abergwyngregyn. This event is organized by FACE, to register please call 01970 622248

Tuesday 22nd January 2008—Adding Value to Timber—open day. Cilrhedyn Woodland Centre, Abergwaun

Tuesday 22nd January 2008—Woodland and Wood Products—open evening about management and best use of woodland and wood products. Coed Cymru, the Old Saw Mill, Tregynon

Wednesday 30th January 2008—Bedding Plants and Herbs—workshop at Talgoed Nurseries, Conwy Valley. Details to be confirmed

Saturday 2nd February 2008—Orchards—open day to learn everything about orchards you need to know. Conwy town

Wednesday 27th February 2008—Miscanthus—demonstration of established Miscanthus plots and (conditions permitting) harvesting. Pembrokeshire

For more information about any of CALU's events, please contact us.

About CALU



CALU is the Farming Connect Development Centre for alternative land uses. CALU exists to transfer information and technology within the areas of:

- Horticulture
- Biomass
- Alternative Livestock
- Alternative Crops
- Farm Woodlands

CALU has three dedicated members of staff and a network of associate specialists covering all the topics within CALU's remit.

CALU ACTIVITIES:

- Open days
- Demonstration events
- Technical leaflets
- Training days
- Press articles
- Crop information sheets
- Project reports
- Talks
- Producer groups
- Agricultural shows
- Information booklets

CALU PARTNERS:

- University of Wales, Bangor
- Welsh College of Horticulture
- ADAS
- Coed Cymru
- Coleg Llysfasi

