

Sustainable Farming

Is farming sustainable?

At Beechenhill, we don't believe that conventional farming systems are sustainable, that is why we farm organically. Conventional farming is using natural resources more quickly than they can be renewed. The most vital resource is soil. Soil is one of mankind's most important resources, but we all take it for granted. We walk on it, play on it, build on it and see it every day; it is the ground under our feet, always there.

With the last 50 years of modern, intensive agriculture, soil resources have been used and not replenished. If we put a houseplant in a flowerpot full of compost or soil, it will live happily for sometime. But after the plant has used all the nutrients and minerals in the soil, it will start to fade and eventually it will die if not fed. To support the grass to feed farm animals and the plants we all want in the countryside the soil has to be healthy and in good condition, it needs to be fed too.

Doesn't conventional farming feed the soil?

Conventional farming uses chemical fertiliser, containing only the basic chemicals, nitrogen, potassium and phosphate to feed the grass and crops. These chemicals do not feed the bacteria or tiny creatures in the soil. Some manure is spread but it is treated as a waste product rather than a valuable resource so is often not used at the most appropriate time of year. In conventional farming the animals are treated with systemic wormers, these powerful chemicals are excreted by the animals. The animal manure becomes poisonous and kills flora and fauna in the soil.

How is organic farming different?

Organic livestock farming is based on a system of using composted manure to feed the soil. Because manure is so valuable to the soil, it is only spread when the soil bacteria is active, between April and October. No poisonous chemicals are used for wormers

Sustainability is woven into the philosophy of organic farming:

IFOAM Standards International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements

www.ifoam.org

- ?? To produce food of high quality in sufficient quantity.
- ?? To interact in a constructive and life-enhancing way with natural systems and cycles.
- ?? To consider the wider social and ecological impact of the organic production and processing system.
- ?? To encourage and enhance biological cycles within the farming system, involving micro-organisms, soil flora and fauna, plants and animals.
- ?? To develop a valuable and sustainable aquatic ecosystem.
- ?? To maintain and increase long term fertility of soils.
- ?? To maintain the genetic diversity of the production system and its surroundings, including the protection of plant and wildlife habitats.
- ?? To promote the healthy use and proper care of water, water resources and all life therein.
- ?? To use, as far as possible, renewable resources in locally organised production systems.
- ?? To create a harmonious balance between crop production and animal husbandry.
- ?? To give all livestock conditions of life with due consideration for the basic aspects of their innate behaviour.

- ?? To minimise all forms of pollution.
- ?? To process organic products using renewable resources.
- ?? To produce fully biodegradable organic products.
- ?? To produce textiles which are long-lasting and of good quality.
- ?? To allow everyone involved in organic production and processing a quality of life which meets their basic needs and allows an adequate return and satisfaction from their work, including a safe working environment.
- ?? To progress toward an entire production, processing and distribution chain which is both socially just and ecologically responsible.