

**Eostre Organics • [www.eostreorganics.co.uk](http://www.eostreorganics.co.uk)**

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## **Notes for Press. 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2007**

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### **Pioneering Co-operative of organic producers**

Eostre Organics is co-operative of fruit and vegetable producers based in East Anglia with trading partners and members in Italy and France <sup>1</sup>. At Eostres' core is a commitment to ethical trade, sustainable agriculture and communities - for these reasons we actively seeks to work with community groups, small businesses, the public sector and other cooperatives.

### **Markets with a difference...**

Since its foundation in 2003 the Eostre Organics Co-operative has been working with community groups and organisations in order to develop closer links between farmers and shoppers and find ways of delivering fresh organic produce to those who might not otherwise have access to it.

The Crop Cycle stall in Walthamstow is just one way in which Eostre hopes to achieve these aims. Working with the Forest Recycling Project, the Hornbeam Ecology Centre and Organic Lea, Eostre brings an impressive range of organic fruit and vegetables to Hoe Street every week. In addition Organic Lea's members run a stall selling locally grown vegetables and fruit. The Hornbeam Café is also open and offers a great range of organic and fairly traded drinks as well as hot snacks, soups and fantastic cakes.

All four organisations hope that this will be the start of a close relationship that will see East Anglian farmers visiting Walthamstow to give talks and advice on growing as well as inviting locals back to join them on their farms for walks and social events. Josiah Meldrum, Eostres' Community Projects Manager, said "Everyone at Eostre really enjoys the markets, and we love the fact that we're able to get involved with organisations like Organic Lea, FRP and the Hornbeam centre".

The benefits of collaborating with groups like those at Walthamstow are clear to Grahame Hughes, a producer member of Eostre, "As a grower you can feel quite isolated at times, especially if you're just dealing with a wholesaler. As a member of Eostre I have a chance to meet many more of my customers, invite them to see where and how I grow and feel that I am supporting the local economy and strengthening communities".

### **Eostre Organics Markets in London**

Eostre trades at ten markets every week some, like the Crop Cycle at Walthamstow, are community markets others are more conventional fine food and farmers' markets. But wherever you choose to shop you can be sure of a warm welcome from our well informed and enthusiastic team of stall workers.

[Archway](#) Junction Road (next to Archway tube, N19), every Saturday 10am - 4pm

[Balham](#) (Balham Market, Hildreth Street, SW12), every Sunday 10am - 2pm

[Brixton](#) (89 Acre Lane next to Opus café, SW2), every Saturday 10am - 3pm

[Holloway](#) (Sunnyside Community Gardens, Hazellville Road, N19), every Saturday 10am - 3pm

[Kings Cross](#) (Calthorpe Project, 258-274 Grays Inn Road, WC1H) every Friday, 11am - 3pm

[Peckham](#) (157 Bellenden Road, SE16), every Saturday 10am - 4pm

[Sloane Square](#) (Partridges Market, Duke of York Sq, Kings Road, SW3) every Saturday 10am - 4pm  
[Spitalfields](#) (Old Spitalfields Market, 105a Commercial Street, EC1), every Sunday 9am - 5pm  
[Walthamstow](#) (Hornbeam Environment Centre, 458 Hoe Street, E17), every Saturday 10am - 3pm  
Camberwell (The Sun and Doves Pub, 61-63 Cold Harbour Lane, SE5 9NS) every Sunday 10am – 3pm

## **More than just markets...**

Eostre also supplies box schemes, shops and restaurants in London and East Anglia and you can find an outlet near you by visiting our website [www.eostreorganics.co.uk](http://www.eostreorganics.co.uk).

## **Eostre Organics: At the heart of a new European co-operative <sup>2</sup>**

Eostre has very close social and trading links with a co-ops in Europe and with seven other European co-ops from five countries are laying the foundations for a Europe-wide co-operative of organic producer co-operatives. The new co-op (provisional called ECCE Bio) will be formally constituted this June and officially launched in early July<sup>3</sup>.

Many farmers find it difficult to compete in a global market where food has become just another commodity and buyers look for the cheapest prices and longest shelf lives – regardless of origin. Increasingly there is a realisation that this emphasis on the economic cost and uniformity of what we eat and drink has sidelined the environmental and social costs. This has led many to question how we produce our food and to look for qualities that were once taken for granted such as traceability, flavour, local varieties and less intensive farming methods.

The proposed European co-operative will emphasize these qualities as well as taking the concept of fair-trade and applying it to Europe where the position of small producers, often stewards of some of our most precious landscapes, is perilous. Buying from the new co-op will allow shoppers to feel confident that the organic goods in their shopping basket have not only been produced and traded equitably but have helped to secure diverse habitats for wildlife and conserved less commercial crop varieties.

Producer co-operatives who join the new European co-operative will benefit from an exchange of skills, experience and ideas as well directly through trade. In addition the co-operative will give a voice to smaller producers at a European level, allowing them to lobby effectively on issues such as genetic engineering and changes in organic standards as well as to promote the benefits of sustainable agriculture.

ENDS

## **Notes for Editors:**

- 1) Eostre Organics is an organic producers' co-operative for East Anglia, established in 2003 with facilitation provided by East Anglia Food Link (EAFL) and support from DEFRA under the Rural Enterprise Scheme. Eostre's members are organic fruit and vegetable growers from Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, ranging in size from 2 to 900 acres.

Eostre seeks to make organic produce of the highest quality available to all parts of society, supplying independent retail outlets, farm shops, markets, community groups, co-operatives, box schemes, processors and the public sector. Eostre's most public face is its daily stall at Norwich Provision Market and ten weekend markets in London.

Eostre seeks to bring producers and consumers closer together, through educational materials, farm walks and regular newsletters. We aim to operate honestly and openly, giving our customers full information about how and where their food is produced. Our charter sets out our principles and is widely displayed and available.

All in all, Eostre aims to provide food, and to participate in a food system, that is healthy for the environment, society and the individual.

- 2) The process of establishing a Europe wide co-operative of organic producers is being facilitated by Clive Peckham, formally of East Anglia Food Link where he was instrumental in the establishment of Eostre Organics. Clive now works for AlimenTerra a network of European organisations committed to developing practical and

co-operative actions leading to the creation of a truly sustainable European food system. The organisations participating in AlimenTerra cover all aspects of the food chain from farmers' unions and development organisations to NGO's, local food initiatives and organic support bodies. See [www.alimenterra.org](http://www.alimenterra.org) for more information.

- 3) After an earlier meeting in Valence, France, the co-operatives involved established that the principle objective of collaboration should be the creation of a fair, ethical and co-operative trading system in Europe. This will:
- a) Prioritise proximity and co-operation between producers and consumers
  - b) Increase local, direct and co-operative sales
  - c) Increase the viability of organic production, processing, distribution and retail businesses operating according to agreed fair, ethical and co-operative criteria
  - d) Work closely with South-North Fair Trade organisations and products to create a complete system and genuine co-operative links between the Southern and Northern producers
  - e) Be based on a charter and principles which enable the products and organisations operating within the system to offer genuinely sustainable and ethical products and obtain fair price
  - f) Offer consumers a guarantee that the products they purchase come from a sustainable and ethical origin wherever they are produced
  - g) Provide a platform to mobilise producers and public opinion on the threat posed by GMO's