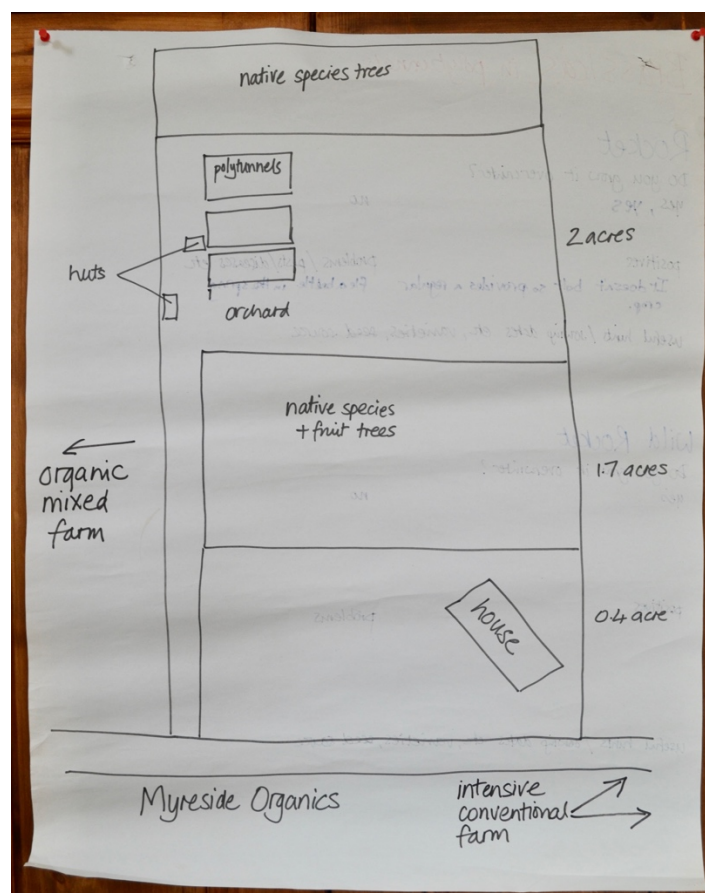


"What Will Be On My Plate In 2042?"

Edited transcript of Antonia Ineson's presentation, 30th May 2022

Antonia: Well, this is this is my bit of land, Myreside Organics. It's on an existing Organic farm, which is incredibly lucky because it meant I didn't have to go through conversion. It was already in good heart, had good hedges around it. I've got a very, very good landlord who's been very dedicated to Organic for years and years and years was a real pioneer.



Antonia's plot

So what happened was that there's a book called *The Organic Grower* by Elliot Coleman, who is a Canadian, and has been very significant in supporting the development of small-scale market gardening as part of a larger food system for years. What he said was one person can work two acres by hand in an Organic market garden. That is not true. But that's why originally I took over the two acre plot. And one of the significant things is that I was able to get a limited duration tenancy, which is a Scottish Government backed form of agreement. And that, I think illustrates the importance of having Government support for these sorts of things because that sort of tendency is secure. I'll come back to that.

So originally, my plan was to work the whole of that. That really has not been possible. But what I have got now is three poly tunnels which I do work intensively and that probably is about as much as I can cope with. They're not huge, they are about 40 feet by 30 feet. They're not small, but they're not huge. But I try and get three crops a year out of the whole of it. And so the actual production is pretty high.

Then after a bit, as I realized there was no way I was going to be able to work all two acres, I became more and more convinced that we really have to support biodiversity. We have to become more diverse in what we're doing. There were, as I say, very good hedges down both sides already, which the farmer had planted. So I've been planting more hedges and more trees, I've planted most of this area in native species trees. Then quite recently, partly because of the reports on insect collapse, but also because on this side of the plot is a very intensively run farm where, when they cultivate and it's dry, the wind blows and they have to then clear the road because there's so much soil being lost, it's absolutely horrific. The field this side was in blackcurrants. Most of the time they don't spray when the wind is coming in direction of the farm because they know that I could lose my certification if I got significant spray drift. There one time it was being sprayed though. And so my landlord and I went and talked to the sprayer. They were saying that they spray 12 times on blackcurrants. And the last time is immediately before harvest with the fungicide, because Ribena who buy those blackcurrants demand completely fungus free fruit. So, if you buy Ribena that's what you're going to be drinking. So the good thing is that there's an old railway line, embankment runs down here, which has trees on it and so creates a fairly good barrier. I mean, it's not perfect, but it's better than nothing.

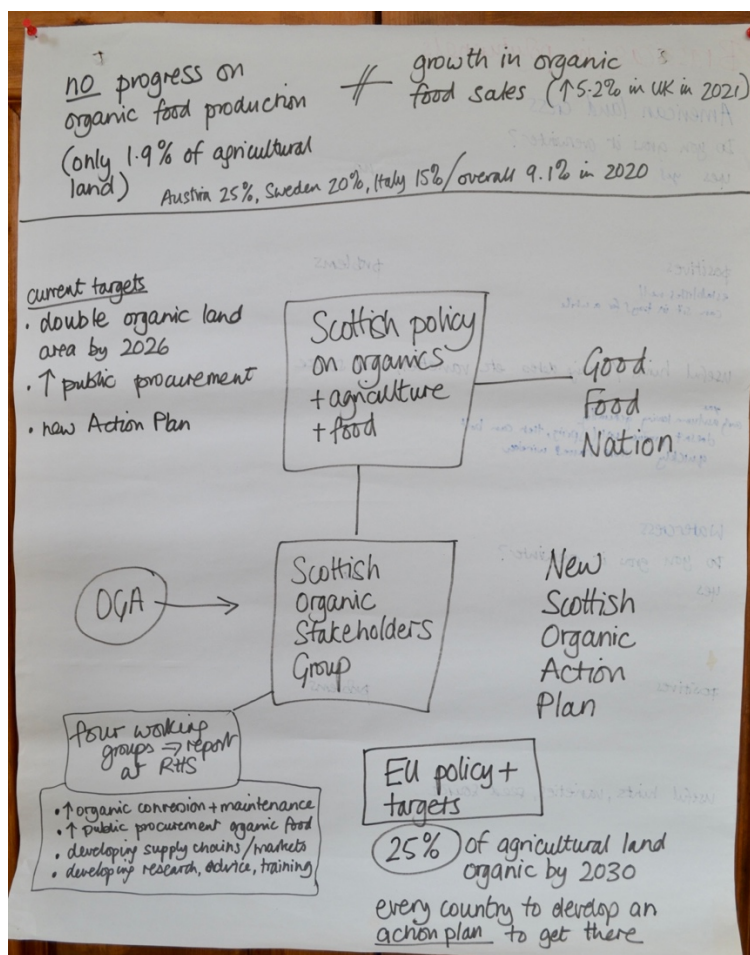
And as I say on the whole, they don't spray when the wind is coming in the direction of my plot. But it does really get into your mind the huge difference between farm that I'm on and land just the other side. Another example of that huge difference is that at one point when the wind was blowing clouds of dust off that farm and the question was asked 'aren't you worried about losing your topsoil?', the farmer said, 'Oh, it'll see me out'. I think that kind of view is shifting. I think in the last couple of years, there has been far more recognition that topsoil is important and actually losing it is not a sensible way to run your farm. And to do that, you have to look after the soil and only cultivate it at suitable times and so on. So it's the contrast between the farm that I'm actually on and the farm next door.

So this bit of land on my plot, the farmer was still farming himself, but it was too small, and I think that's another thing that's quite interesting because getting the tractor in to make silage from that bit of grass just wasn't worth it. It was done some years, but some years it was just left to get on with it. I'm in the process of planting that up with native species trees and also fruit trees as well.

The other thing is that for a lot of people in my situation, accommodation is a real issue. I was lucky enough that the farmer, I owned a flat in Edinburgh. The farmer said, did I want to buy a house plot? I got planning commission purely because I was able to get an SRUC consultant to say, yes, this person does need to be here. She needs to be here 24 hours a day, basically, to run these poly tunnels and to work the land effectively. So I was able to build a house on it. That's unusual, but I think again, shows the real importance of Government and planning policy, if you're going to be able to do the sorts of things that I'm doing.

The other thing is that because I'm taking over this, I don't know if people know there's now something called the modern limited duration tenancy, which replaces the limited duration tenancy, which is a Government-backed form of agricultural tenancy. And I'm in the process of getting that for the whole plot.

So I just thought I'd mentioned some of the things which surround the market garden, as I've made some reference to the importance of Scottish and EU level policy impact. In the process of doing this, I did get some funding for poly tunnels with great difficulty, that was quite early on. Anyway, I did get some. I don't get any subsidy, although it turns out even though I'm under three hectares. The important thing to me is the EU Farm to Fork policy, which I don't know if people know that they're sort of underlying thing at the moment is to get twenty-five percent of all agricultural land in the EU to be Organic by 2030. Obviously, the Scottish Government is trying to maintain equivalence with the EU for obvious reasons. And so I think that is a hugely important thing for the future of agriculture in Scotland. I'll come back to that when I talk more about the policy stuff.



Antonia's 'aide memoire' on the policy framework for advancing Organics in Scotland

Just very briefly. My routes to market. I mainly sell now direct from the gate because during COVID, the farmers market stopped, obviously. I have an email list of about 250 people, most of whom don't buy, but there's enough who do buy. They put in orders. I'll leave it at the gate they collect it. It's really simple. I do still do farmers markets a bit. I think farmers markets in are in a fairly poor state quite honestly. Because when you look at them, what are they selling? They are selling lots of alcohol, they're selling cupcakes, they're selling fudge, they're selling lampshades. And you know, I'm not against any of these people, but is that a farmer's market really? The problem is that there aren't the people there to take the vegetables to the stall. There aren't the producers. That's the problem. Not the market itself.

I do a bit of selling to restaurants and have done over the years. And that's the good steady demand. But there are very few restaurants who actually want the stuff I've got, but I'm lucky I've got a good

network. I don't sell through shops because they have a 50% mark-up. I'm not knocking the shops. They need that to keep going, but I can't afford to pay myself, to sell my stuff for 50% less. I'm very aware that that then limits who's going to be buying from me.

I think there's a huge need for more Organic processors in Scotland, I do sell to one processor who buys my apples. It's an interesting example because this whole area is stuffed full of apples. But what it's not stuffed full of is apples which are certified by the Soil Association as Organic. I sell to an Organic processor who is up in Huntley, purely because mine are certified.

The price of food is a constant issue, the pricing of what I sell. I'm torn between the issues about food quality, poverty, and inequalities. Before I did this, I worked in public health in Lothian health for years. I worked mainly on health inequalities during that time. It's something that I am very much aware of. I'm also aware that that is not going to be solved from farming or food growing. And so what I try and do is price at what I consider a fair price. But I think it's a huge issue.

In terms of financial viability. I've done quite a bit of interviewing Organic growers and farmers. I would say if you took the subsidy away, none, well, no farming in Scotland is viable if you take the subsidy away at the moment. It's not possible. And the Government is saying, more of the Westminster government, but also the Scottish government, you have to diversify to be a farmer or grower. And I think that's true. So you need another income coming in from something else. Now, why is that true of farming and nothing else? It's a crazy situation. So a lot of small growers depend on free labour, volunteers, woofers, and you know socially it's really interesting and really valuable, it brings people into the countryside, it gets some understanding about food production. I'm not knocking it, but what other business would you expect to depend on free labour? It's madness.

Subsidy - where is that going to be going? We know that the future of agriculture subsidy in Scotland is very much under question. I trained in New Zealand where they suddenly cut agricultural subsidies many years ago. And there were an awful lot of suicides as a result. And if you look at New Zealand agriculture now, it's in a very, very bad state. It's doing appalling environmental damage. People have this idea of New Zealand being clean and green. It is not, it's being wrecked.

You need education, training, advice, and research to back up what you're doing and what I'm doing. As I say, I trained in New Zealand, I also did a lot of volunteering. I learned a lot. A lot of that was as much about running small businesses. It wasn't about the growing because I've grown my whole life. Although obviously growing commercially is different from gardening, but it's a bigger part of overlap. There's a huge lack of all these things in Scotland. And I'll come back to this later, but I think the SRUC is beginning to realize this. The Farm Advisory Service does not provide good advice to my sort of business at all at the moment. The contract for that is coming up and I hope that that's going to change.

What's really important is linked to the other growers. And I'm part of the Organic Growers Alliance, which is a UK wide organisation. We have an incredibly good Facebook group. I use that as my farms advisory service, basically. It's a closed group, very controlled, but people involved in that are very, very experienced Organic growers. And so you put a question on there, you get absolutely superb advice. If people don't know, there's a really good debate about what the pros and cons of things are. That shouldn't be, we shouldn't be depending on Facebook. It's crazy. We should have really good institutions in Scotland which can advise people in all sorts of agriculture about the latest research. I would really love to have access to more research. I know there's really interesting stuff going on in the Continent. How do I get it? So internationally, as I say, I think there's a lot more going on in Europe. I've been to two fantastic events. One was a slow food event in Turin, and the other was something called TechE Bio, which happens every other year, which every other country in Europe pretty much sends a delegation. They have a stand. It's all about Organics. It's fantastic. It's

about all aspects. It's about everything from viticulture to animal production to arable to small scale production. Includes fantastic trade stands showing the appropriate tools and mechanical stuff. Scotland wasn't there. Why don't we send some group to actually learn? It was over three days I think, they had something like six parallel sessions at all times of meetings, I mean, it was just amazing. There were huge numbers of young people there. It wasn't all people of my age, over the hill and trying to keep going. It was really inspiring. And I think we need to get a Scottish delegation to the next one.

Inputs is a crucial area and that's been made more difficult by Brexit. My inputs are seeds, we all know the problems there were around Brexit, about seed imports, but also the availability of seeds for Organic growing in Scotland. There aren't any. There's something called the Seed Co-op, which has been set up in the south of England, which is really good. They're really working to produce seed, which is for Organic systems. But it's in the southeast of England. You have to work really hard to work out what are the appropriate varieties to use.

Compost for propagation. Obviously, you can't sell your soil, off an Organic land, I wouldn't want to anyway. So therefore you have to buy in a small amount of compost for propagation purposes. The best one comes from Germany, and it's called Klassmen. I think it's wonderful. But that's crazy. But you have to make that decision. The Organic Growers Association does an annual survey as to what the best ones are and because they're all, ones being produced in England, there's one called Melcourt, and there's one called Fertile Fibre, but they're just not a patch on the German quality, so. I buy some cow manure inn which comes from the Skea's farm, which most people know about. The Skea's actually rent most of the land on the farm that I'm on anyway. As a mixed farming production system, they produce seed potatoes, it's there core thing, Organic seed potatoes. They also have cattle. So basically I'm using cattle manure from the farm. It has to be Organically certified obviously.

Another input is petrol because I have to drive because I do a very small delivery run. So I do use petrol, I do use plastic. My tunnels are covered in plastic. I use plastic pots, I use plastic module trays. I also put my stuff in plastic bags. The reason for that is I've looked very carefully at all the other options and there aren't any which actually are viable in terms of maintaining the quality of what I'm producing and don't break down into microplastics. So that's a constant problem.

So behind what I'm doing, why I first went into it, was because I came from public health background and for several years I was still working public health and I was doing this in the summer. Back then my impetuses were really human health, the quality of the food I was producing and sustainability. My focus has shifted over the years I've been doing this, this is now my 16th year. Now climate change is the centre of it, it really is, because as I say I think we're facing an apocalypse - all the stuff about soil health, insect collapse, biodiversity loss etc.

The other half of what I do is that I'm involved in trying to do something about Organics and food and farming in Scotland at a policy level. This is as a representative of the Organic Growers Alliance through something called the Scottish Organic Stakeholders Group.

What we've managed to do is get a far wider group of producers, farmers, processors, and also organisations together, who are all wanting to do something significant about Organics and farming in Scotland. We've got the NFUS signed up to this, which is wonderful. We've got the World Wildlife Fund, we've got the RSPB, and lots more, and we are working with the Scottish Government to try and say, 'you have set a target to double the amount of Organic land in Scotland by 2026'. Now that is actually pathetic because we only have 1.9% of Organic land that is Organic at the moment. In Europe, Austria has twenty-five percent, Sweden 20%, Italy 15%, and overall it's 9.1%. So we are

nowhere near this. But it's a start. At least the Scottish Government has set a target. They are recognizing that Organics is a really important part of the systems change that we need to happen.

So, the weird thing is that you've got no progress in Scotland on Organic production, but you've got, last year alone, a five point plus increase in Organic sales, that was UK, so it's probably less than that in Scotland. But you've got a market opportunity here which is not being fulfilled from Scotland. We've got to look very carefully about why that is what the opportunities are, what's needed from producers, farmers, everybody. Crucially, the Scottish Government to shift up.

Participant comment: I see you've referenced the Good Food Nation up there. I'm quite passionate about Good Food Nation Bill, and the potential within the Food for Life Served Here scheme. So I tend to ask all the growers that I know what they think about both of those just to get a bit of diversity of views on that. Do you think that offers us a starting block? What do we need to do to make sure our elected representatives make it meaningful?

Antonia: Absolutely. I think this is what I mean when I talk about systems change. I think this talks about the systems change that we need to happen. I suppose I'm concentrating at the moment of Organics within that.

Whilst the Scottish Government has said is that they're going to increase the amount of Organics in public procurement, the trouble with the Food For Life scheme is that it isn't necessarily Scottish Organic food that was going into it. But there is definitely an opportunity there. One of the members of our Organic Stakeholder Group is also the chair of the public procurement group in the public sector so she is going to be key in this. And she understands Organic, she understands the importance of short supply chains, the way that you can actually manage with the same amount of money going into things like school food by cutting the amount of meat but having better quality meat, by training up school cooks and having school kitchens. Places like Denmark have shown that with some initial funding going into things like training, you can do it within existing budgets.

I think the other really interesting thing about places like Denmark is that it's just automatic that children are fed Organic food in public sector places. If your child is in a school or nursery, they will get Organic food. That then has a spillover effect on what people then buy in the shops. And you get a virtuous circle where Organics becomes normal. It's not an elite thing. It's not something which is seen as only for people who've got more money than sense. It just becomes what high-quality food is, then that has a big effect on the environment and biodiversity and all the other things.

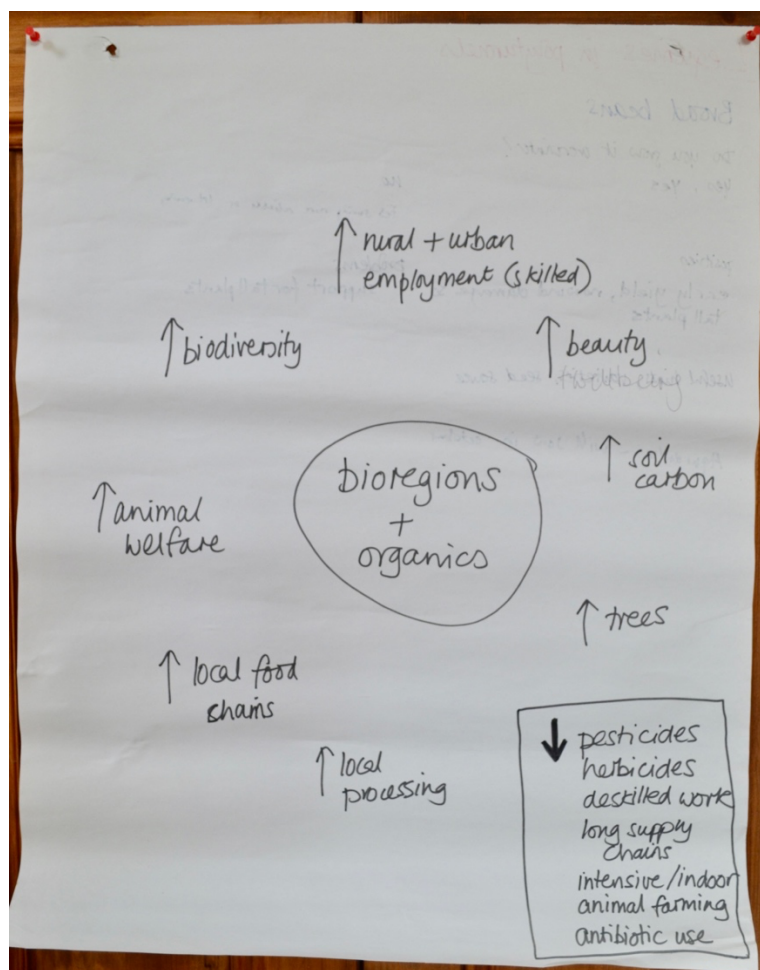
So where we are at the moment with the Organic Stakeholder Group is that we have four working groups, which have had really good involvement from organisations, producers, and processors. They're on **Organic conversion and maintenance** - so that's how do we get more farmers going Organic? **How do we support them so they stay Organic?** Because there is a problem where people come into Organics and then drift out again because they don't get the support they need. **How do we get more public procurement?** Hospitals, schools, prisons, everywhere that a public body feeds people, they should be buying Organically produced Scottish food and getting it in there.

How do we develop supply chains which are appropriate so that you have local supply chains for stuff which is very fresh, which people need to get immediately. But also maybe a Scottish level supply chains and then UK and then oranges from wherever. And places like Riverford, which is a very big Organic box scheme in England have done really interesting stuff on saying, 'we need oranges, how do we get them? How can we actually transport them sustainably?' And again, it's a systems thinking approach that they are taking - you don't just think, well, we're picking up one bit at a time. They're actually looking at the whole way they operate, paying decent wages, not

exploiting migrant labour. And the fourth one is **developing research advice and training**, because working in Organics is a skilled enterprise. You need people, you need research. I'd be really interested in what's happening in Organics and James Hutton Institute for example, because I know there's a lot of work going into very high-tech systems there. And I am very dubious about those myself because of the setup costs, the sort of skills and work environment and the people involved in that.

So the key thing is that Mari Gudgeon has been, I would say, extremely receptive to what we're doing. There is going to be work on a new Organic action plan. There was one previously, which I was involved in, but the problem with that was that we didn't have the breadth of involvement that we've now got, and we didn't have the political will behind it. There was a lot of fine words in that one but nothing happened. And I really hope that we don't go on in that state because I think it'll be a failure of all of us if that does happen.

Just a quick thing of how I would see Organic growing fitting in with the Bioregional approach. I think Organics offers higher employment opportunities, there is more skilled work in Organics, a proven increase in biodiversity on Organic farms and proven improved animal welfare. I think it's about beauty of the place too! And of course there is also proven increase in soil carbon, there is likely to involve more tree-planting.



Organics and Bioregioning

I think that you would have to develop local food chains and local box schemes etc and that is beginning to happen, but it needs to be far further developed. We need much more local processing, which again then provides rural employment.

What you won't get with a shift to Organics is pesticide use, herbicide use, de-skilled work, people losing their connection with a particular farm, working for contractors and long supply chains. Everything has gotten to the point of going down to some Tesco processing centre which then comes back up. Madness. No intensive indoor animal production systems. And much, much lower if not non-existent antibiotic use. And really we all know what the situation with antibiotics. We're going to lose our antibiotics at the present rate of progress. So that's why I think Organics is absolutely crucial to anything to do with a Bioregional approach and the future.