



OUR NEWS :

Hello again, here is Newsletter N°8 for December and January

We are taking a look at the producers of oyster mushrooms, apples and kiwi this month. They share with us their passion for their produce and discuss the evolution of the organic market, we are experiencing at the moment.

Last September, the Biogaronne producers visited the company Vitalis in Holland, which specializes in the production of organic seeds.

In October, Biogaronne took ownership of land and a building, which we have moved into. As planned this has enabled us to double our refrigerated area already for this winter, and we will have 800m² operational for spring 2011. I will keep you up to date with the works as they progress.

On 14th and 15th December a group of producers from the South-West are attending open days on organic techniques for fruit and vegetables, being held in Angers.

All the Team at Biogaronne wish you a very happy festive period.

Enjoy your reading..... talk to you soon, warm wishes Jean Luc.

VITALIS - A DIFFERENT CONCEPT IN SEEDS



«Vitalis, founded in Holland in 1994 by Jan Velema, has become one of the leaders in organic seeds. We organically produce seeds of reliable varieties, in response to specific customer demand and that of organic producers. We are developing and selecting more and more varieties in our trial centres throughout Europe.

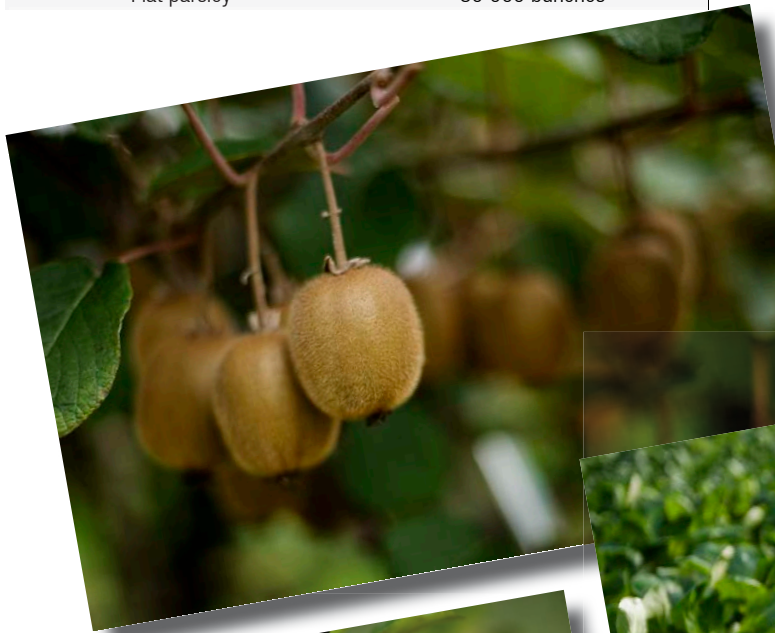
In 1998, Vitalis joined Enza Zaden and now operates as an independent company within the group. We have been able to increase our range by adding the leading varieties from Enza Zaden. By running trials for these varieties, we select those which are adaptable to organic agriculture and add only those which comply strictly with our criteria are added to our range. We can therefore supply high quality seeds to all our organic producers.

Organic seeds must respond to strict quality requirements. In fact, a quality seed is the basis of successful production. Vitalis harvests, cleans and packages its seeds with the greatest care. Often, this work is carried out by hand, but some sophisticated machinery is also sometimes used. Having cleaned the seeds, we test their germinating power, and look for any diseases which may be present. Finally, only batches which pass the tests are marketed. Producing organic seeds is more expensive than producing conventional seeds. Nevertheless, we maintain a quality of seeds as high as that of conventional ones.»



PRODUCTION PLANNING :

Product	December/January	Product	December/January
Beetroot	20 t	Red Kuri squash	20 à 25 t
Carrot in conversion	15 à 20 t	Potatoes	
Oyster Mushroom	2 t	<i>Coquine, Charlotte, Ditta, Désiré, Nicola, ...</i>	80 t
Red Cabbage and white cabbage	15 à 20 t	Green Kuri squash	10 t
Butternut Squash	25 à 30 t	Long Black Radish	15 t
Long Island Cheese pumpkin	55 à 60 t	Daïkon White Radish	15 t
Lamb's lettuce	120 à 150 palets	Pink Jerusalem Artichoke	8 à 10 t
Purple turnip	25 à 30 t	Kiwi Hayward	500t
Boule d'Or Yellow turnip	15 t	Walnuts from Périgord	30 t
Yellow onions	50 t	Apple	
Parsnip	10 t	<i>Pinova Corail, Dalinette, Breaburn Delbard Jubilée, Goldrush, ...</i>	50 à 80 t
Leek	35 à 40 t		
Flat parsley	30 000 bunches		



THE PRODUCERS :



Jean Pierre ROUMAT at Fauillet - Lot et Garonne

« I converted to organic farming because in 2004 I became aware of the risks for fruit producers in using conventional chemical products and the consequences on consumers' health. Actually, I was frightened, and so I chose not to continue on this path and to turn towards more respectful agriculture and farming methods.

My area of production is 16 hectares cultivated as follows: 2 hectares of kiwi orchards are in their third year of conversion. Sorting and grading is done by outside services, because the investment for an electronic grader would be too great, on the other hand the storage and packaging take place on our premises.

1.5 hectares of organic apple orchards with the following varieties: Dalinette, Pichounette, Juliet and a few Goldrush trees which act as pollinators.

In 2005, I cut back the entire orchard which was in conventional farming in order to graft varieties resistant to spots and to produce organically. Financially, this was quite difficult, because I had to wait three years before coming back into production.

All my orchards have micro-spray irrigation so as to limit the water consumption. I had a good crop of sixty or so tons last year, but this year the orchards suffered an attack of "oriental fruit moth". It's a moth that makes a grub which gnaws at the skin and leaves traces on the surface, but it doesn't alter the flavour or aroma of the apple.

There are 2 hectares of market gardening in open fields, with organic tomatoes destined for industrial tomato juice. I installed a drip watering system rather than spray to reduce the risks of mildew and to get a good yield.

8 hectares of sunflowers and camelina as well as 2 hectares of hemp have been organic since 2002. I press the grains myself to get oil which is destined for human consumption, for the sunflower, and cosmetics for the camelina and hemp.

I am passionate about growing hemp. I have been producing hemp for 11 years. This plant has a pivotal root, which goes down into the soil up to a meter deep. This draws up minerals from the soil and improves the soil's structure, which is very important in organic farming, particularly in crop rotation.

The straw part of the hemp is used in insulation; the grain is sold in bird shops, hempseed for fishing, or oil. In fact, I am looking for a distributor interested in selling my range of oils (hemp, sunflower and camelina).

I deliver my apples to Biogaronne. For me, working with this company which retains the personal touch enables me to make the most of my production. I prefer it to be distributed by an organic producers' network than to be sold in supermarkets. I attach a lot of importance to the quality of the personal relationship we enjoy. ».

Krysja et Harm VAN DER HORST at Laparade - Lot et Garonne

«A passion for mushrooms»

« I studied at agricultural college in Wageningen, in Holland, as a biological engineer specialised in researching dairy products. We came to France in 2001 and that is when I decided to start producing mushrooms. After several years experimenting, I actually started to produce organically in 2007. Deliveries and the accounts are done by Krysja, whilst I concentrate on the production.

The raw materials I use are: straw, hay, alfalfa and wheat bran, which I currently get from organic farmers in the department.

The production of oyster mushrooms requires a great deal of manual labour, the compost is moved several times. The raw materials are watered regularly, mixed and then the fermentation begins and rises to a temperature of 60°C; the process takes about 2 weeks. During the process, protective micro flora are created to combat the mushrooms' competitors.

After this, sewing takes place in washable troughs containing 50 litres of compost, which are closed but pierced on top to let the mushrooms grow through.

Three weeks later, the harvest can begin with three to four crops over five to six weeks.



Cultivating mushrooms, is the only vegetable grown above ground where organic methods are authorized. The troughs are set up in seven separate rooms, and this allows us to reseed a room each week. The temperature of the rooms is kept at between 15 and 24°C by a biomass heating system, using sawdust, boosted by solar panels for the hot water in winter and moisture sprays in summer. Humidity must be maintained at around 85% and accompanied by an artificially produced wind, which make the working conditions difficult. The weather greatly affects the method of production and it is difficult to maintain a balance between the temperature, the humidity and the ventilation, as well as producing the compost. I chose oyster mushrooms because they are little known and so can attract a better price. The common cultivated mushrooms require more machinery and shiitake mushrooms are very hard to grow. I deliver all my oyster mushrooms to Biogaronne, as they were very enthusiastic about my project from the start, which enabled me to concentrate my efforts on the production. I get a good price and they adapt to the varying volumes of production, which is appreciated. I make three deliveries a week, which represented about six tons of production in 2010. Our plan is to increase our production by investing shortly in a new building, a new storage area for the raw materials and an area in which to grow alfalfa and wheat».



**Julien Pedelucq
at Saint Etienne d'Orthe - Landes**

«The Kiwi de l'Adour, another dimension in organic kiwi fruit»

«Adour enjoys a climate which favours the production of kiwi fruit, and which is closest to that of the best producing areas of New Zealand.

A mild oceanic climate, slight frosts, high humidity, and good sunshine as well as exceptional soil along the mountain stream of Adour, make this territory unique in Europe for cultivation.

My father, Henri Pedelucq, was the first person to introduce kiwi production to the Adour valley in 1965. A producer himself, in 1978, he created the Sikig society, enabling this new industry to flourish.

From the beginning Sikig kiwi cultivators did not allow any form of pesticide treatment so as to preserve the natural heritage of their region.

Sikig takes the fruit in at the plant, carries out the grading, then stocking and marketing for all 170 members, who now represent 400 hectares of orchards in the Adour Valley.

At the plant, 30% of the staff is employed for quality control, supervised by a quality engineer, a responsible laboratory, controllers and a technical commission of 11 producers.

A technician inspects the orchards regularly, and follows up on the production record books, and there is a support service for the producers, which includes conferences and training days.

After having certified 100% of the orchards under CCP and Label Rouge, who guarantee flavor and traceability to consumers, Sikig, conscious of sustainable development, became quite naturally interested in the environment and therefore converted to organic methods, and as early as 2001, 20% of the production was organic. The whole yield has been certified by Eurep Gap since 2005. In 2007 we joined Arbio, the professional organic association in Aquitaine, in order to be part of a joint effort to build and support this section of the industry.

In 2008, we met Guillaume, manager of Biogaronne, Jean-Luc the director, and Frédéric, a kiwi producer working with Biogaronne. By getting to know one another better, it led us to set up a business partnership for distributing to specialized wholesalers. During the campaign of 2009/2010, more than 200 tons were marketed by Biogaronne. Since putting this partnership in place, we can see a distinct increase in the tonnage as well as maintaining the right price for our producers.

I attach a great deal of importance to our relationship, which is based on a high level of confidence between our two organizations, with prime regional identities, enabling us to distribute direct from our plant to Biogaronne clients.

Organic production and their markets are evolving all the time. I hope that Sikig and Biogaronne can continue to develop together, to gain recognition and appreciation for our products from the organic consumers of tomorrow».

