



THE NEWS :

Hello everyone, here is Newsletter N°6 for August and September 2010

The variable spring weather has continued to disrupt production as well as the marketing, with periods of overproduction alternating with lack of stock. Nevertheless the consumption of organic fruit and vegetables seems to have increased, notably in the French market.

This month we're taking a look at the producers of plums, watermelon and melon, who will share with you their passion for good fruit.

In September, Biogaronne is organizing a tasting day in the vines with our dessert grape producers. You will be able to discover the differences in aromas present in the various types of vine.

Enjoy your reading and we'll be back to you soon

Best regards,
Jean-Luc



PRESS VISIT TO THE SOUTH WEST :

On July 1st and 2nd, the organic commission of Interfel in association with Sopexa organized a press visit to the South West of France, in the context of the third year of the European Communication program. The organic commission of Interfel takes into account the specificity of the organic sector as well as the expectations of the professionals in all of its activities, especially in promotion and communication.

This voyage of discovery, accompanied by a dozen journalists in the profession (Biolinéaires, Biofil, LSA, Les Marchés, Agra Presse, Réussir Fruits et Légumes, FLD, Vegetable...) increased awareness of the reality of this domain, in respect of the organization of the organic industry in the South West.

During the course of the organic meal, which took place in the restaurant of the Administrative Offices in Agen, Jérôme Cinel made a presentation on ARBIO, the joint-trade organization, and the project for industrial catering in Aquitaine.

When they came to visit Biogaronne, we showed them our range of fruit and vegetables as well as the organization of our distribution service for the producers. We also touched on different subjects close to our hearts: supporting producers during conversion, industrial catering and the emergence of new operators who now contribute to the diversity of the organic market which is rapidly developing.

Technical problems linked to production were also approached when visiting Guillaume Vlemmings, namely the diversification due to the rotation of crops in organic farming, which prevents mechanisation and therefore necessitates a large amount of manual labour. Organic Market Gardening requires a lot of preventative work and a good understanding of techniques. We bet that the messages have been widely diffused by these professionals, who we have had the pleasure of welcoming during their visit to our region.



PRODUCTION PLANNING :

Products	August/September	Products	August/September
Dry garlic	10 t	Beef tomatoes	15 to 20 t
Aubergine	15 to 20 t	Roma tomatoes	30 t
Courgette	150 t	Raspberries	10 t
Smooth Cucumber	3 000 pakete	Golden greengages	50 t
Chinese cabbage	10 t	President plums	20 t
Butternut squash	20 t	Mirabelle plums	5 to 10 t
Haricot beans (fine or flat)	15 t	Charentais melon	20 t
Yellow onions	20 t	Peaches/Nectarines	10 t
Red onions	10 t	Fresh Walnuts	10 t
Watermelon	40 t	Chestnuts	10 t
Flat parsley	15 000 bunches	Royal Gala Apples	20 t
Capsicum	8 to 10 t	Grapes	
Small pumpkins	20 t	Alphonse Lavallée	
Lettuces (Batavia, oakleaf, round)	100 palets	Chasselas	60 to 80 t
Vine tomatoes	30 t	Exalta	
Round tomatoes	40 t	Hamburg Muscat	



THE PRODUCERS :

Roland Tarn et Garonne

« I am of Dutch origin and my wife and I came to France in 1980. I have been in organic farming since 2008. When I was in conventional farming, I produced a lot of melons but the price paid to producers went down and down and we had no control at all over marketing. I went into organic farming in order to protect farmers and consumers from all these chemical products, and I prefer working with Biogaronne as they don't sell to the supermarkets and they respect and value highly the work of the producers.

On a cultivatable area of 60 hectares I grow essentially cereals. Two hectares are dedicated to watermelon and butternut squash.

Why watermelon ? To me it's an unusual fruit and you can eat kilos and kilos of it. In the summer it is very refreshing, it keeps well and doesn't have to be sold quickly. The only disadvantage is that the consumer wants small fruits and that reduces the revenue for the producer.

This spring we had a lot of rain, and I couldn't get into the fields with the tractor, so we had to plant a hectare of watermelon by hand! I think I'll start harvesting around 15th August and I hope it will be nice and hot this summer, because with a yield of about 40 tons, I have plenty to refresh the consumers with.

To keep busy in the winter and in order to complement my income, I restore houses using natural products, install wooden cladding or redo insulation with hemp. This goes with my organic farming.”



Jocelyne and Loïc Lot et Garonne.

“I was working with my father in a Groupement Agricole d'Exploitation en Commun (GAEC) and when he retired two years ago, I set up an Entreprise Agricole à Responsabilité Limitée (EARL) with my mother.

We have 30 hectares of clay-chalk slopes, full south-facing, which suit our fruit production well and enable us to harvest fruit high in flavour. My father converted the orchard in 1995, when he had to replace the peaches with plums as the peaches did not stand up to conversion and had a lot of problems with parasites.

Greengages account for 4 hectares – Vars, Moissac and Dorée Véritable varieties.

We are in a plum producing region, notably the Golden

Greengages which are greatly appreciated by the consumers and are of good caliber.

We also have 15 hectares of Prune d'Ente, and we have an oven, which enables us to dry them on site, yielding 2 tons on average per hectare. This variety is rehydrated as the demand arises, packaged and marketed under the registered company “Lou Prunel” located in Bias. During the plum harvest we have about 15 seasonal workers. Every year we replant about 300 scions in order to gradually renew this orchard.

The apple trees represent four hectares with “Chanteclerc”, a yellow variety, “Rubinette” two colours and tasty red “Pitchounette”. For two years now we have been bringing the production into biodynamic farming, which means two inspections a year, one for organics and the other for biodynamics.

For us, this method of production is an approach which gives us a better understanding of the forces that influence nature. It's a path towards greater knowledge. We work differently, we use different treatments, we are apprehensive about things and life in general, thus we can act accordingly, it's a philosophy.

Our aim as fruit tree farmers is to reach a good balance in our orchards so that the trees can stand up better to disease and parasites.

To achieve this we use essentially two preparations : One is cow dung based which is worked into the soil to improve growth. The other silica based which is sprayed on to the trees to encourage maturity. This one increases the transformation from starch to sugar and helps the fruit's keeping capacity.

It would be ideal to have a herd of cattle which would restore the fertilizer to the earth where they graze and would give good compost. We work with Biogaronne, because it's a sound organization with a personal touch, which meets our expectations of equity between producer and consumer.»



André-Emile and Joël Brothers Lot et Garonne

“Our father has been growing melons for more than 35 years, rotating the cultivation with cereals, we have clay/chalk soil with practically 50% clay on the slopes, which suits melon giving it a good flavour, although the choice of variety is also a determining factor. To have good melon it is important not to plant on the plain or in lighter soil (boulbène) which stays compact after the rain.

On an area of 98 hectares of cultivatable land we grow wheat, soya, lentils and sunflower. Melon represents 3.5 hectares (half a hectare under cover for a spring crop, 1 hectare under tunnels in open fields and 2 hectares in open fields without tunnels for a summer and autumn crop). Our organic melons are planted from 15th March then stag-

gered until 14th July so that we can produce up until the end of September, beginning of October. The forecast yield is 15 to 20 tons. We sell our produce from 10 June to the retail market and then from around 20th June we dispatch further afield through Biogaronne mainly. In order to maximize quality we start to harvest when the stalk has just started to crack where it joins the fruit and there is a droplet of sugar. We have had melon which reached 18° brix.

This year we are facing big problems with aphids which we have tried to stop by releasing ladybirds for the production undercover, but the month of June was too cold and ladybirds are only effective in the warmth. From a technical point of view the hardest job is to prevent mildew from developing, especially in the late season when the cold damp nights are here. This year we're going to try out covering the cultivation with protective nets type P17.

All our cereals and melon have been organic since 2001. When we were in conventional farming we produced more and more fruit for less and less income, on top of which André-Emile was seriously intoxicated by the products for spraying.

We visited other organic productions and financial incentives to convert in 2000 convinced us and we think that there is a real ecological challenge to take up. Organic producers should pay 50% less contributions to MSA, because producing organically helps to preserve public health.

The European specifications for organic production seem to be a good thing, because it enables us to standardize methods of production in each country and thus to reduce distortion. However, we must be careful not to repeat the mistakes made in conventional farming, by becoming too dependent on the supermarkets, for example.

In our department, organic production is developing all the time. Here's a little story: we are part of an agricultural company which, amongst others, works in organic farming on Francis Cabrel's land; some 100 hectares of cereals and a dozen hectares of wine grapes. We can look at the future with more peace of mind now, our nephew has joined us and he will take over the business gradually, so there will be organic melons in Astaffort for decades to come....”.