

# Organic is catching on

ONE word you hear a lot in connection with organic foods is "nutrients". It's a word much favoured by Simon Ranger, the founder and managing director of Seagreens, a West Sussex-based company that produces wild seaweed capsules and granules.

Seagreens will be exhibiting at next month's organic food festival at the Old Fruitmarket, Glasgow.

"It's my mission to get one gram of seaweed nutrients into everyone in the UK's diet each day," says Simon. "That's enough to provide all the micro-nutrients that are vital to every process of the body."

"So many nutrients are missing from our land foods, especially given the amount of processed foods we eat. We might eat a lot, but we're not getting enough in the way of nutrients. It is this kind of goodness which filters through rock and soil, and seeps into the ocean to be absorbed by thousands of marine vegetables."

Seagreens was the first firm to provide ocean-to-table wild seaweeds, which are harvested in a sustainable way off the Lapland coast in the Arctic, and Simon is already investigating the possibility of beginning a harvest off Scotland's coast.

In addition to producing the capsules and grains – which can be added to meals as an extra ingredient – Seagreens also supplies the granules to other manufacturers of biodynamic and organic foods, such as Artisan Bread, Bart Spices, and Neal's Yard Remedies.

When it comes to retailing, of course, organic produce generally has gone mainstream. With organic sales now accounting for an annual £1.6 billion, £1.2bn of that total was reached by UK supermarkets last year.

Nevertheless, while supermarkets have been instrumental in introducing many more people to organic products, there's no doubt that producers and campaigners would



Gwyneth Paltrow is a champion of eco-chic clothing

rather we, the consumers, were thinking a little more locally.

The benefits are that we help the environment by using less road and air transport and packaging, meaning less pollution and less waste.

Buying in this way also helps to boost the local economy, and can create links between urban communities and the countryside. With many small producers and suppliers now delivering organic boxes of seasonal fruit and veg, there's no excuse for city-dwellers not to try them. Of course, it is not just in the sales of food and

drink where organic produce is gaining ground.

The Soil Association is predicting that sales of organic cotton will triple over the next two years. With celebrities such as Sienna Miller and Gwyneth Paltrow championing eco-chic clothes, many high street stores such as Top Shop, Marks & Spencer, Next, Oasis and Asda are taking notice.

Tesco has also announced the introduction of an all-organic cotton collection by leading designer Katharine Hamnett.

## GREEN INNOVATION

A NEW state-of-the-art composting and recycling centre has been opened in Cumbernauld – effectively "recycling" a former waste water treatment works into one of Scotland's most innovative green projects.

The Deerdykes Composting and Recycling Facility, which includes a computer-controlled in-vessel system to process more complex waste, is now one of the most advanced in the country.

Deerdykes is already helping local authorities, businesses and public bodies meet strict government targets on recycling waste by accepting their green waste, wood chips and branches.

The plant is capable of processing more than 30,000 tonnes of garden waste each year that would previously have gone to landfill. More importantly, every year it is able to produce and sell around 15,000 tonnes of Pod – the brand name of the high-quality organic compost produced at the plant – a major step for sustainability in Scotland.

Scottish Water's move into recycling and composting came after it invested £2.2m in the

former waste water treatment plant, which closed in 2002.

The development was supported by £590,000 from the Scottish Executive through Wrap's (the Waste & Resources Action Programme) Organics Capital Support Programme. "Wrap was delighted to support this commercially sound project which is now contributing towards the positive development of Scotland's recycling and landfill diversion objectives," says Louise Hollingworth, Wrap's supply programme manager for Organics.

"The project will also give Scottish Water the capability of composting kitchen waste materials, providing local authorities with additional flexibility in meeting their recycling obligations."

All waste at Deerdykes is carefully analysed and any unsuitable materials discarded before being composted using the latest techniques. Every batch of 100% peat-free Pod is fully traceable at each stage from input to output.

Pod has already been used in several large-scale landscaping and restoration projects.