Minutes, Inishowen Organic Group meeting

**March 27th 2008**

**Present:** J. Reilly, N. Doherty, N. McLaughlin, M. Reilly, L. Doherty, L. O’Connor, T. Morgan, M. Martin, S. McGloin.

**Apologies:** S. McWilliams, P. Doherty, P. Harkin, B. Farren, K. O’Hara Farren.

Minutes of previous meeting read and approved.

Meeting Attendance.

Only a handful of people are turning up regularly for meetings. Discussion on how to change this. Suggestions: change the night of the meetings, canvass members and other interested parties to find out which night would be best.

Website.

People can send photos of their farms or information on how to go about tasks involved in growing, rearing animals or anything else they think would fit the site. Send to tremone@o2.ie

Awareness raising.

Sean suggested that an awareness seminar could be held in Letterkenny. John suggested McGrorys, Culdaff might be a better venue for the people involved. He will make arrangements later.

***Update: venue booked for Wednesday May 21st at 7.30 pm***

***More info available soon.***

A group of people from Carndonagh have been given funding from the Inishowen Partnership to revive the week long festival, which used to run in July, ending with the ‘Cattle Show’ at Tulnaree.

Therese attended the meeting. Can the group do anything during the festival to promote organic food and farming?

***Suggestion: show ‘the future of food’ during the week.***

Noel and Therese offered to phone individuals to see how much interest there is.

Speakers.

Suggestions are welcome for speakers for monthly meetings.

Bev Doherty has agreed to give a slideshow at next meeting.

Free range.

Discussion; Eggs cannot be sold as ‘free range’ unless the producer is registered with HSE. Organic certification is not sufficient unless selling at market, i.e. face to face selling. It is difficult to officially distinguish between deep litter production and production using organic methods without registration. Only houses with over 50 hens can register. Farm gate selling is probably the best way to sell non-certified organically produced eggs or chickens.

NOTS

Sean explained how the National Organic Training Skillnet works.

Too many details to minute.

In short: no membership fees, but courses funded 50/60% by the skillnet. Applicants must register interest with the organisation.

**COURSES WILL NOT RUN IF THERE IS NOT SUFFICIENT DEMAND**

All administration will be handled by NOTS office in Drumshanbo. Text or email is preferred.

Courses suggested for Inishowen immediately, if there is sufficient demand:

veg box design, horticulture, HACCP, medicinal herbs. All courses need 8 people minimum.

Computer course can be run. Noel will teach this. An ECDL course could be run too.

Paddy McCartney.

A lot of people have expressed interest in doing the course Paddy ran last year. This course cannot be funded by the skillnet because it is not for commercial producers but it is hoped that Paddy will run it himself shortly. Names needed right away, contact Paddy or John.

IOG

It was officially decided that, since the WON network is no longer in operation, this group is to be known as the Inishowen Organic Group, with the website iog.weebly.com