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Soil Association set for new indie sales drive

BY ANDREW DON

The Soil Association has revealed plans to step up promotion of organic food through independent stores, where organic sales are growing ahead of the mainstream grocery market.

The organic certification body told *FFD* it will target indie shops more seriously after announcing a new promotional scheme for the foodservice sector.

The Organic Served Here award scheme, launched in January, will see restaurants, cafés and other eateries "rigorously" audited and then graded from one-star to five-stars, based on the percentage of organic ingredients they serve.

Alison Muirhead, business development manager at Soil Association Certification, which certifies more than 70% of organic products sold in the UK, said: "Having this star system at the restaurant level is ticking a lot of boxes for consumers, but there could well be something in the retail sector that ticks those same boxes."

Under Organic Served Here, a one-star rating will



The Soil Association's plans include an online search facility, pointing consumers towards organic stockists

indicate eateries that are "dipping a toe" in organics, and there is scope for similar signposting with retailers, Muirhead told *FFD*.

The organisation will work "more and more with

retailers" starting this month, building on its existing training, merchandising and point-of-sale help. It has already begun reaching out to independents, asking them to sign up to

its Organic Indie E-News. A store search facility on its website is also "definitely on the cards", giving details of stores and the organic lines they offer.

Muirhead said the organisation wants to map all specialist retailers that cater for organic consumers. "We want to bring them into the Soil Association community and join all the supply chain dots so we can really cater to that growing market."

Speciality food shops are already high up on the list of places where consumers want to buy organic food. "If we can make it as easy as possible for people to seek that information it can only go from strength to strength."

But she also said shops should blow their own trumpet. "There's work to be done on both sides."

The Organic Trade Board will also be targeting indie shoppers with its third Wake Up To Organic breakfast promotion in June.

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www.soilassociation.org

Global event showcases Welsh food

BY MICK WHITWORTH

Producers ranging from charcuterie specialist Cwm Farm to national brands such as Radnor Hills will be showcased at Wales' first ever international food and drink event.

UK and international buyers, journalists, dignitaries and industry leaders have been invited to BlasCymru/TasteWales, taking place at the Celtic Manor resort near Newport, Gwent, on March 23-24.

Buyers from delis, farm shops and food halls are among those being urged to attend the Welsh Government-led event, which combines a producer showcase with meet-the-buyer sessions and an



Pembrokeshire Beach Food Co will be among the featured speciality brands

international conference.

Delegates are already set to arrive from as far afield as the United States, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates, and over a

hundred Welsh producers will exhibit, including Pembrokeshire Beach Food Co, Edwards of Conwy, Penderyn whisky and Snowdonia cheese.

Lesley Griffiths, Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, said: "Bringing together individuals and organisations from across the industry, BlasCymru/TasteWales will provide the platform for us to display the strength, success and pride we have in Welsh food and drink and help us continue with the positive trajectory we are currently on as we strive to reach our 30% growth target by 2020."

www.tastewales.com

Tayto takes control of Portlebay

Northern Ireland crisp and snack maker Tayto Group has bought a majority stake in five-year-old Portlebay Popcorn, which went into administration at the end of January.

Tayto – which also owns the Golden Wonder, Mr Porky and REAL Crisps brands – took a 75% stake in the posh popcorn maker alongside Neil Adams and Jonty White, two of Portlebay's founding shareholders, in a pre-pack deal.

Adams and White, former directors of Burts Chips, will continue to run the business independently from Tayto.