



PRESS RELEASE

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Cash incentive for landowners to restore UK peatland

OF&G (Organic Farmers & Growers) have teamed up with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) UK Peatland Programme to offer a new certification scheme to landowners that will support the protection and improvement of UK peatlands.

The Peatland Code sets out best practice for projects seeking to market the climate and environmental benefits of peatland restoration. It helps landowners secure private funding for projects, offering an additional revenue stream, by providing investors with assurance through third-party verification that expected climate benefits are credible and deliverable.

“A recent report from Green Alliance suggests we have an opportunity to achieve the 2030 reduced emissions targets, in part, by restoring the UK’s 2.7m hectares of peatland by at least 26%,” says Roger Kerr, chief executive at OF&G, who certify over half the UK’s organic land.

“Together with the IUCN UK Peatland Programme, we aim to help landowners restore much of the UK’s peatlands, which cover 12% of the total UK land area, reverting damaged peatlands from large sources of carbon to fulfilling their carbon sequestration potential, and support the wider environment.”

Jillian Hoy, Peatland Code coordinator at IUCN UK Peatland Programme, says there are many environmental benefits to maintaining peatlands. “In a healthy condition, peatlands don’t just act as a carbon sink. They provide unique habitats for biodiversity and are great for water quality, acting as a natural filter. The vegetation matrix on peatlands in upland areas also helps to slow the flow of water into catchments, aiding efforts to combat flooding.

“However, only 20% of peatlands in the UK are in good condition, and instead of storing carbon, 80% of our damaged peatlands are currently a source of greenhouse gases, releasing the equivalent of 20 megatonnes of CO₂ each year. This equates to 4% of UK’s total yearly

greenhouse gas emissions, as shown in a recent study led by the Centre of Ecology and Hydrology, and James Hutton Institute.”

Ms Hoy says although peatlands are currently a climate risk, they have the ability to be an asset in addressing the problem. “Degraded peatlands can be difficult to restore. It’s not an easy task but the UK peatland community have the knowledge and skills needed and the benefits are significant. It’s important we act now as they will be harder to restore in the future.”

Developed by the IUCN UK Peatland Programme and certified exclusively by OF&G, the Peatland Code is a new, voluntary certification standard.

“Validating emissions reductions arising from peatland restoration is a natural extension of our certification services,” says Mr Kerr. “Peatland Code certification compliments organic production well and addresses a core area of focus for us as a business, in tackling climate change. However, it’s important to recognise that the scheme is available to all farmers and landowners, regardless of their farming system.”

To find out more about Peatland Code certification, visit <https://ofgorganic.org/>

To find out more about the Peatland Code, visit <https://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/funding-finance/peatland-code>

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Notes to editors:

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OF&G is one of the largest control bodies in the UK, certifying over 50% of UK organic land and operating across Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including the Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

OF&G has more than 40 years’ experience in the organic sector and is the longest established Defra-approved organic control body. The company’s headquarters are in Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

<http://ofgorganic.org>

The IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) UK Peatland Programme exists to promote peatland restoration in the UK and advocates the multiple benefits of peatlands through partnerships, strong science, sound policy and effective practice.

The work of the IUCN UK Peatland Programme is overseen by a coalition of partner bodies including Defra, John Muir Trust, Moors for the Future Partnership, National Trust for Scotland, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, North Pennines AONB Partnership, RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Wildlife Trust, University of East London, University of Newcastle and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.