

**Inside Out - South West: Monday October 18, 2004**

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/southwest/series6/biodynamics.shtml>

## BIODYNAMICS

**Move over organics - now health-conscious consumers can go one step further by buying biodynamic. Among the first in the UK to embark on the practice are the Bells, who live and work at Shedbush Farm - and we've got the story.**



The biodynamic way of life

Nestling at the foot of Golden Cap is Shedbush Farm, and a remarkable story of an agricultural philosophy which goes against the grain.

Ian and Denise Bell gave up high-flying careers to tend this difficult land the biodynamic way - using no chemicals, only good husbandry and a sprinkling of cosmic forces.

### A new concept

Having left behind their careers as hairdresser and interior designer, the Bells moved to Shedbush Farm, on the West Dorset coast.

The health-conscious couple had previously hobby-farmed at weekends, but due to growing concerns about the state of the food chain, decided to prove a point - that a purer, more sustainable system of farming did exist.

Ian says, "There was a time when organic farming was considered to be a bit wacky, but then public demand forced everyone to start thinking about it more and more.

"Biodynamics followed on from that, because it addresses the issue of the continuing vitality of the land, the livestock and ultimately ourselves."

Shedbush Farm was an ideal venture for the Bells because it had previously been farmed conventionally and later abandoned.



Ian Bell believes biodynamic farming is the way forward

This left behind tough agricultural conditions, providing Ian and Denise exactly the challenge needed to silence their critics.

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Ian says, "I'm a Virgo and a natural sceptic, but also a bit of a purist.

"Having worked like this now for the past 10 years I can absolutely tell you that as an article of faith, it really does work."

### **A philosophical approach**

The concept of biodynamics was devised 80 years ago by an Austrian philosopher named Rudolf Steiner.

The method takes a holistic approach, mixing organic farming with elements of astrology and homeopathy and forbidding the use of chemicals and fertilisers.

Farmers embracing the philosophy believe that plants are a living link between the earth, air and cosmos.

By nourishing them with only natural substances, the animals who feed on them become a part of a healthy, life-giving food chain.

The Bells rear heritage breeds of Aberdeen Angus cows, Tamworth pigs, Portland sheep and Black Rock hens.

The animals are all fed a special, secret diet, mixed to Ian's home-made recipe.

Even their medicine is home-made - Ian believes his special blend of homeopathic remedies help to build up a natural immunity to disease, leaving no need for the use of unnecessary chemicals.

"These animals were around millions of years before the drug companies came along with their solutions.

"Everything these animals are fed is more than fit for human consumption and the result is healthy livestock - you couldn't buy their accrued immune system for a million pounds."

### **Stress-free living**

Biodynamics also dictates that animals should be reared slowly, and slaughtered humanely with minimal stress.

In fact, Ian and Denise even accompany their animals to the abattoir - ensuring that they have had 24 hours' rest before they meet their maker.

This stress-free living, they think, adds to the deeper flavour of the meat, which tastes better thanks to all the extra care and hard work which goes into its production.

And local butcher Ray Smith can testify to this.



Denise tends to the chickens

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"The first thing I noticed was how the fat was so pure and clean - I've never seen that on other reared animals.

"It's like a hand cream, it smells lovely - I almost want to take my clothes off, put it all over my body and rejuvenate myself!

"I think there has to be a bit of magic and passion in it."



Local butcher Ray thinks the Bells' meat is top-notch quality

And Ian's wife Denise agrees, adding, "It is passion and purity - treating the animals rather like finely-tuned athletes.

"At the end of the day you only have to eat it to see the difference."

In fact, the Bells' meat has been awarded biodynamic certification, guaranteeing that it has been more carefully produced than the highest organic standard.

But this is reflected in the price.

### **Big business**

The Bells' pork works out at £10.90 per kilo (or £4.95 per lb) and it's only available in bulk, so as well as being expensive, it's a pretty exclusive business.

But Ian believes customers willing to embrace the concept won't mind paying the price - and investing in a bigger freezer!

"We produce this product and sell it directly to the customer, so we're cutting out the middle man.

"The profit they would make at each stage comes back to the farm, which means we can provide better conditions for the animals.

"The cost to the customer is a little bit more than they might be paying at the butcher or the supermarket, but there is a cost to everything.



Would you go biodynamic?

"People need to stop for a moment and think about the priorities in life."

And with more and more farmers jumping on the bandwagon, it looks like maybe one day everyone will eat the biodynamic way.

## Readers' Comments

We are not adding any new comments to this page but you can still read some of the comments previously submitted by readers.

### **Pip Piper**

This article was out the top drawer. More information on the same is needed, Where can I obtain more information on this type of Farming are there books available etc? Perhaps when you complete these stories you could also follow up at the end of each itme with such information as I have mentioned. Although we live in Jersey keep the good work up on the programme it makes a refreshing look to the norm on TV

### **Clare Lumsden**

I thoroughly enjoyed this program. Perhaps, one day it will be a compulsory method of farming, together with organics. I would be very interested in any articles or programmes reflecting the advised equivalent biodynamic lifestyle treatment for humans ?! Thank you.

### **R.J.J.ATKIN**

Brilliant, MANY more biodynamic prog' and organic please. If every supermarket had this food the cost of the NHS would over time FALL.

### **Mrs Helen Knott**

I've read about biodynamic farming before and this article confirms that it is something that has to be considered further as part of the future of farming ,our food and ultimately us and our planet. Great food for thought!

### **Mike Fowler**

This type of non intensive farming is definatly the way forward. Please show many more features like this to make the information as widely available as possible. I think most people are ignorant about the implications for health and animal welfare implicit in intensive farming, and most would be prepared to pay a little more for their food if they knew more about how it is produced.