

# **ORGANIC, COOPERATIVE AND VIABLE AGRICULTURE**

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[Greenham Reach](#), is an innovative project of three affordable small mixed farms, located in Devon. It is the first dedicated organic land management cooperative in the UK. Each of the three houses that make up this place are trying to show that it is possible to live thanks to agriculture, with land below 12 acres and using sustainable methods of agriculture. Its objective is to demonstrate that it is possible to create a viable business based on cultivating the land, while respecting the environment.

Greenham Reach's 22 acres make for an idyllic spot. Situated amongst rolling fields, between the banks of the River Tone and the nearby Somerset border, the fields are full of vegetables, wild flowers and herbs, fruit trees, a colorful garden, chickens, goats and even a beehive. This is a pilot project promoted by the Ecological Land Co-Operative (ELC). His goal is to overcome the obstacles that prevent an agricultural culture based on the creation of small rural businesses on parcels of land of less than 12 acres. Users pay £300-400/month rent for these lands to the ELC. The work of the ELC is essential, as it provides the land and the necessary basic infrastructure (such as the common barn, solar panels, compost toilet systems and access roads) for the activity of all the users of Greenham Reach. And as if this were not enough, it also organizes activities and tutorials designed to broaden the knowledge of small farmers. If this initiative works, the ELC will use this organizational model in 20 other projects nationwide.

There are 3 families that form the cooperative and work the land. They live in mobile homes, feed on energy obtained from solar panels and drink rainwater. "We all share ecological and sustainable values," says James Dexter, one of Greenham's users who farms his 6 acres of land and his animals in hopes of stabilizing his own salad and meat business. He also expresses that "the most important thing is that both I and my colleagues are creating viable companies and we are able to support ourselves financially."

Even so, they recognize that it is not an easy task. The price of farmland has skyrocketed by 250 percent in the last decade, to reach an average of £9,900 per hectare, according to new figures from estate agents Savills. There are also numerous legislative and planning obstacles to overcome in a system that imposes tests and financial feasibility studies (with very severe and even excessive conditions) on new projects.

According to Alex Laurie, Director of ELC: "The average price of a small residential farm plot in this country is a staggering £250,000, and even with economically viable and profitable businesses, it is very difficult for them to obtain large-scale financing. banks. There are a lot of people who have a lot to offer to agriculture who are excluded from rural livelihoods, and we're trying to fix that." The group (ELC) has launched a crowdfunding appeal to raise £10,000 for the project.

**There are no comments yet.**