

# Down on the Farm: Waterland Organics

## Waterland Organics, Lode, Cambridgeshire

My name is Paul Robinson and my family have farmed in the Cambridgeshire fens since the 1600s. I own 120 acres of organic fenland. 20 acres of land is used to grow sugar beet and 20 acres is planted with vegetables. The rest of the land is pasture and my sheep graze on it. A small patch of my land has an apple orchard with beds of asparagus and Jerusalem Artichokes growing amongst the trees.

I tend to sell my vegetables to local shops and at the farmers' market. I am also part of a farmers' cooperative where a group of farmers help one another to sell their produce. I deliver vegetables to customers who are part of an organic box scheme.

Over the year I have different jobs to do;

### January and February

Prune the apple trees so that the branches are not too overcrowded. Remove some fruit buds so that there are not too many small apples.

### March

Sow the peas with a hand drill. Start to plant the lettuces with a tractor.

### April

The apple buds flower and bees are placed in hives nearby to pollinate them. I 'brush hoe' the lettuces with a tractor that has special brushes attached that can sweep away the weeds.

### May

The lettuces are harvested 6-8 weeks after planting. I sow the carrot seeds and weed all of the crops with a hoe.



## **June**

The carrot seeds take a while to grow so a flame gun can be used to kill the weeds on the surface. All the crops planted need weeding and hoeing by hand and by tractor throughout the summer. The first peas are ready to harvest. Fruit on the apple tree needs thinning so the remaining fruit can grow larger.

## **July**

Weeding and hoeing continues.

## **August**

Harvest the first small sweet carrots.

## **September**

Harvest the apples.

## **October**

Harvest the rest of the carrots.

## **November and December**

Cover the last carrot harvest with straw to stop them from freezing.

## **Questions**

1. How large is the farm?
2. How does Paul use his land?
3. How much of Paul's land is used to grow organic food?
4. How does Paul manage to sell his vegetables?
5. Why does Paul prune the apple trees?
6. Why are fruit buds removed from the branches of the apple trees?
7. How long does it take for a lettuce to grow before it can be harvested?
8. Name the different ways that Paul can weed his crops.
9. Why are bees useful?
10. How else could the bees help the farmer to earn a living?
11. Why does Paul need to thin the fruit on the apple trees?
12. Which are the first crops to be harvested?
13. When are most of the crops harvested?