

# Down on the Farm: Abbey Farm Organics

**Abbey Farm Organics, Abbey farm, Flitcham, Norfolk**

Hello, my name is Edward Cross and I own Abbey Farm. The farm covers 900 acres. Most of the farm is used for growing cereals and sugar beet but over the last few years I have started to plant more organic crops.



60 acres of land on the farm are now being used for growing organic wheat, barley, vegetables and herbs. Last year I planted large amounts of potatoes, onions, courgettes, peas, beans, chard, spinach and lettuces.



I have spent a lot of time encouraging wildlife to my farm. On the farm I have a water meadow that is home to many different plants and animals. I hope that some of the birds that are attracted to the meadow may eat the pests that attack my crops. I have built a bird hide so that visitors to my farm can watch the water birds without being seen.

The vegetables that I grow are sold in the farmers box scheme. I grow different vegetables at certain times of the year and a selection of vegetables are chosen and placed in a box that is delivered to the customer by myself. The types of vegetables in the box depend upon the seasons and the crops that I can grow at that time of year. I also sell my vegetables at the local market.

It is important that I carefully plan the year ahead;

## **January**

Plan the crops to plant and order the seeds.

## **February**

Prepare the land and check the machines. Put up a fence to stop the rabbits. Make a propagator to grow the seeds. Plant the first vegetable seedlings in 'plugs'.

## **March**

Plant the wheat. Weed any crops like the carrots that have been left over the winter.

## **April**

A special machine is used to weed between the cereal crops. Plant the seeds and put some of the crops into a poly tunnel.

## **May**

A great deal of weeding is needed by hand hoeing and using a tractor hoe. More seedlings are planted out in the fields. The spinach is harvested.

## **June and July**

More weeding and hoping for rain every other week. The potatoes are harvested.

## **August**

Harvest the cereal crops and place them into the stores where they are cool and dry.

## **September**

Plant crops like peas and beans that will add nutrients back to the soil after the cereal crops have been grown. Harvest the vegetable crop.

## **October to December**

Most crops have now been harvested although the sugar beet is still being harvested. Some crops are planted for next spring. A small amount of weeding is needed.

## **Questions**

1. How large is the farm?
2. How much land is used for growing organic food?
3. Why does Edward Cross spend time encouraging wildlife to his farm?
4. Can the customers choose the vegetables that they want when they are using the farmer's box scheme?
5. Name some ways in which the farmer sells his crops?
6. What does Edward Cross do to prepare the land before planting his crops?
7. What are the most common jobs during May and July?
8. When are a lot of cereal crops harvested?
9. Which is the first crop to be harvested in the year?
10. Why does Edward plant crops like peas and beans after harvesting cereal crops?