

# Riverford Organic Farm

**Overview:** Riverford Organic Farm is based in Devon and, among other projects, runs a successful vegetable box scheme

Knowledge  
Transfer  
Partnerships

UNIVERSITY OF  
EXETER



## The business background

Established as a working farm in 1951 Riverford gained organic status in 1987. Three businesses operate from the farm selling fresh organic meat, vegetables and other products. The farm is well known for its successful vegetable box scheme Riverford Organic Vegetables. Seeking to maintain an environmentally low-impact business Riverford contacted the University of Exeter for expert advice and assistance.

A two year Sustainable Development Project was launched through the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) programme. Working with the University's Centres for Energy and the Environment and Rural Policy Research, graduate Mark Howard has taken the lead in conducting a carbon audit and researching ways to reduce Riverford's carbon footprint.

## Achievements & outcomes

In order to develop a sustainable business model for expansion across the UK, the project has focused on reducing the farm's direct and indirect CO2 emissions, by looking at packaging, transport, energy use and sourcing.

Following Mark's assessment and suggestions, Riverford has implemented several new procedures in order to keep its emissions down. These range from monitoring energy use to installing a £20,000 voltage regulator, improving insulation and reclaiming waste-heat from the refrigeration system. Riverford has also developed eco-cool products to keep its produce cool on customers' doorsteps.

## Tangible business benefits

Through implementing the recommendations of the research to date, Riverford anticipates a significant decrease in its carbon emissions. In the longer term Riverford plans to reduce its use of fossil fuels and minimise packaging and waste where appropriate. Research will continue into alternative fuels and energy sources including wind turbines, solar hot water and use of existing woodland to provide heating fuel.

### Fast Facts

- In its aim to maintain an environmentally low-impact business, Riverford set up a project with the University of Exeter to look at assessing and reducing its carbon footprint.
- A range of initiatives have been implemented to keep emissions down, including the installation of new energy saving equipment and the recovery of waste-heat from refrigeration systems.
- Longer term plans are to use woodland for heating purposes and to implement strategic environmental policies to further improve the company's environmental credentials.

## Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP)

KTP is a three-way project between a recent graduate, a business and a university or college for work on a specific project

### Benefits to the Business

- Innovative solutions to help your business grow
- Increased competitive advantage and profitability
- Access to highly qualified people to spearhead new projects
- Access to experts who can help take your business forward
- Improved performance and business operations

### Benefits to the Graduate

- Allows you to launch your career from the right platform
- Gives a chance to apply your degree to your job
- Training opportunities provided
- Mentoring support offered
- Ownership of your project

## The viable solution for business & higher education

### The business perspective

"Amongst the minefield of complex issues and conflicting claims around environmental impact, the KTP project has provided solid and impartial information which has enabled us to make considered and authoritative decisions which have helped to build trust with customers as well as delivering tangible economic and environmental benefits."

**Guy Watson, Riverford Organic Vegetables**

### The graduate perspective

"The KTP has allowed me to gain invaluable experience at a higher level of business management. At the same time I have benefited from academic support and the KTP training allowance to progress my knowledge and understanding of a wide range of sustainability issues and achieve further qualifications. It is rewarding to have brought benefits to both Riverford and the University of Exeter whilst developing myself academically and professionally."

**Mark Howard, KTP Associate**



### The university perspective

"Alongside tackling traditional issues for the business such as on-site energy consumption, the KTP has produced nationally important results on the question of food miles and shopping practices. Many of the results challenge what the public currently believe."

**David Coley, University of Exeter**

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## Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and Expert South West

KTP is a UK-wide programme enabling businesses to improve their competitiveness and productivity through accessing knowledge, technology or skills from the UK's universities, colleges and research and technology organisations.

The knowledge sought is embedded into the business through a project or projects undertaken by a recently qualified person recruited for the purpose to work in the business.

KTP is run and managed on behalf of 17 government-funding organisations by the Technology Strategy Board.

As well as KTP, the online Expert South West Service showcases a variety of other ways to work with the Universities of South West England including training and development, research, consultancy, networking, recruitment, support for start-up businesses and use of a range of resources and facilities.

### The next step

For more information on KTP visit [www.ktponline.org.uk](http://www.ktponline.org.uk). To find out about other services and facilities offered by the South West Universities visit [www.expertsouthwest.com](http://www.expertsouthwest.com).