



Merchandising organic: a guide for retailers





Our guide

Merchandising is not just a well-designed display, it also encapsulates the practices that promote and sustain sales. This comprehensive guide will equip you with the knowledge to merchandise your organic products, to ensure they are appealing to organic customers as well as to the rest of your customer base.

Contents

Core principles of merchandising	06
Fresh fruit and vegetable department	20
Deli and chill fridges	24
Discounts and sampling	30
Window and façade display	34
Special occasion merchandising	38



choose organic for...



your well-being



wildlife



the environment



Push flap to fold





Introduction

Soil Association Certification certifies over 90% of UK organic food processors and works with over 4,000 clients in the organic supply chain.

These range from small farms to large organic brands, processing plants and retailers. The Soil Association organic symbol is the most recognised organic symbol and has the fastest-growing symbol recognition of all certification standards year on year.

Why organic?

If all Europe's farmland followed organic principles, agricultural emissions could drop by 40-50%.

The organic market has seen its 11th consecutive year of growth in the UK and is now worth over £3.1 billion, its highest value ever. Now is the time to learn about your organic-loving customers and bolster the sustainable credentials of your business.

Organic customers

- High basket spenders – your organic customers will spend more per basket than those who don't buy organic
- Over half (56%) of organic shoppers are concerned about the impact of food packaging on the environment
- Provenance and local sourcing are important to organic customers
- The highly committed organic customer (as opposed to the occasional organic shopper) accounts for the majority of spend on organic products

Top 6 reasons for buying organic

- No pesticides
- Better for the environment
- Perceived better quality
- Taste is better
- Better for animal welfare
- Perceived health benefits





Core principles of merchandising

Staff training and support

- All staff need to be actively involved in merchandising
- Training should offer guidance on the presentation of different product categories and displays, as well as the rationale behind product selection and merchandising opportunities throughout the year
- Use pictures of strong display examples from your branch as a foundation for new ideas
- Encourage staff to assess competitors' merchandising examples
- Utilise talented, creative staff for design ideas and integrate merchandising into everyday practices





Shaping your displays

- The eye is drawn to the centre of any display
- Customers look from left to right – place items accordingly
- Use classic shapes to format displays:
 - Triangles (cascading)
 - Squares (strong lines)
 - Rectangles also provide good, clean lines



Height

- Differences in heights and levels create interest and enable a wider range of products to be showcased
- Full, small containers/baskets look more aesthetically appealing than half-empty large ones
- Fill the bottom of display baskets with paper/boxes with products on top to give a fuller, generous appearance

Eye level is buy level

- Your valuable items should be at the most valuable location
- The perfect place to highlight your organic ranges
- Example – offer favourite breakfast tea on a lower shelf, but tempt customers with an organic single estate tea at eye level





Basics at the back

- Customers will seek out basic items such as milk and bread – use the front of your shop to display interesting, higher margin items

The five senses

- Sight – colour, texture, pattern etc
- Smell (aromas of fresh food)
- Sound (appropriate music)
- Touch (accessible products)
- Taste (offer tasters/samples)

The tempting aroma, texture and look of the roasted coffee beans offers a sensory experience and increases the appeal of the sealed packets



Signage and Blackboards

- Use a consistent style of colour, font and tone of voice
- Use your backboards for campaign messaging, seasonal highlights or to emphasise a good deal
- You can find a list of Advertising Standards Authority-assessed organic messaging that you can feature on your blackboards/social media in our “Marketing Organic - what you can say” guide (see resources list page 44)
- Draw attention to award-winning organic products through personalised staff/branch recommendations
- Focus on key words e.g. ‘organic’, ‘local’ and ‘source’
- Soil Association Certification offers free kits to use in your shops featuring posters, leaflets and “staff pick” cards (see resources list)





Using colour

- Colour block with light colour going through to dark/bold, left to right
- Food packaging and fresh products offer a wide range of colours to utilise

Bold and intentional colour combinations draw your customer's attention.

First in, first out (FIFO) + all faced up

The fundamentals of food business – keeping quality high and wastage low (manager monitoring required).

- All items at the front of shelves, neatly presented and labels facing forward
- Face products as wide and high as possible to impress a packed appearance
- ‘Moment of truth’ – have systems that keep your products looking desirable at all times

Images A and B below give different impressions of the overall shop – **A** might indicate the olives have low sales turnover, and that staff are not vigilant in checking stock for freshness – **B** gives the opposite impression.



* Image “A”:
Unappealing shrunken olives need to be removed and olives rotated to retain freshness

*Image “B”: Glossy plump olives look fresh and appealing



*Image “C” - Disorganised noodle packets give a ‘bargain bin’ impression, decreasing product value, and reducing awareness of product range

*Image “D”- Neatly organised range of recognisable categories showcase the products available and increase possible sales opportunities



Refill

You don't have the benefit of branding to highlight the attributes of the products in your refill area so get your staff to tell your customers about their favourites! You can access free "staff pick cards" in our POS kits.

Topped up & clean

Keeping refill areas topped-up and clean is especially important, it should be clearly labelled and appropriate scoops/containers should be provided.

Refresh and change

- Move items around and highlight slow moving products to offer a fresh perspective to customers

Accessorise

- Decorate shelves with extra supplier packaging, baskets, nature (flowers, branches, foliage) – be creative!
- Baskets are brilliant for containing products that may have fluid, less manageable packaging

Use crates or tables around your shop to create “moments”, to encourage customers to come off autopilot and engage with new stock/brands



Organic apples showcased in a rustic basket offers a nostalgic view of apples on market stalls, while a colander container offers a contrasting style.

Left: A bee theme connects organic with it's positive impact on bees and biodiversity

Right: This presentation of the functional tongs add height and shape to a deli salad





Group classic combinations

Inspire your customers by making 'add on' purchases easy

- Breakfast – bread + jams + breakfast condiments
- Lunch – sandwiches/salads, savoury pastries, oatcakes, fruit, healthy snacking options
- Dinner – salads/lettuce + dressings + add-ons (e.g. seed mixes, croutons)
- Cheeses + chutneys + biscuits
- Desserts – strawberries + cream – especially around Wimbledon time! Think of items that you eat/cook together!



Breakfast condiments all together and near fresh bread

Temperature and lighting

- Plot displays according to natural and internal lighting and adjust seasonally
- Direct sunlit areas need to be merchandised with care – consider using 'dummy' display items to avoid stock damage

Clutter and dirt free

- Strong cleanliness systems are fundamental to food premises
- The entire shop floor is important – if a customer can see it, keep it clean and organised. This also applies to visible paperwork and storage areas
- Have designated areas for all products, including seasonal/rotating products areas or islands – display areas are a great place to showcase these, creating a point of difference.

An organic September display, creating a sense of occasion and seasonality





Till point

- Maximise your captive customer audience for impulse purchases
- Choose your till products consciously – it's NOT a dumping area for homeless stock
- Offer sweet and savoury snack items







Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Signage

- Clearly mark price, origin, class and description, and organic (where relevant)

Freshness

- Is key here – customers often judge an entire shop on fresh produce

Imperfections

- Some organic products might be less regular than non-organic ones – highlight these natural characteristics positively!

Certification

- Do you have loose organic fruit and vegetables or organic bulk products that you put into refill dispensers? Then you need to be certified. Check out “Why certify with us” in the resources section.



Beautiful, architectural Romanesco are made a feature in the fruit and vegetable display



Maximise shelf life

- Do not over stack
- Reduce damage risk with only a few layers, keeping produce at the correct temperature
- A general rule – the higher the water content, the more likely refrigeration is required

Cross promotion

- Be proactive by linking fruit with organic dairy such as cream or ice cream – physically or with signage
- Offer easy add-on sales with fruit baskets near lunch items and at till points



A full vegetable fridge,
bursting with fresh
produce



ORGANIC GARLIC
£12.90/kg
NET WT 1kg

ORGANIC TURMERIC
£9.18/kg
NET WT 1kg

ORGANIC GINGER
£8.00/kg
NET WT 1kg

ORGANIC RED CHILLI
£14.80/kg
NET WT 1kg

ORGANIC AVOCADOS
£1.80/kg
NET WT 1kg

ORGANIC CONFERENCE PEARS
£4.30/kg
NET WT 1kg

ORGANIC EGGPLANT
£1.50/kg
NET WT 1kg

ORGANIC TOMATOES
£1.50/kg
NET WT 1kg

ORGANIC ONIONS
£1.50/kg
NET WT 1kg

ORGANIC CUCUMBERS
£1.50/kg
NET WT 1kg

ORGANIC LEEKS
£1.50/kg
NET WT 1kg

ORGANIC CARROTS
£1.50/kg
NET WT 1kg

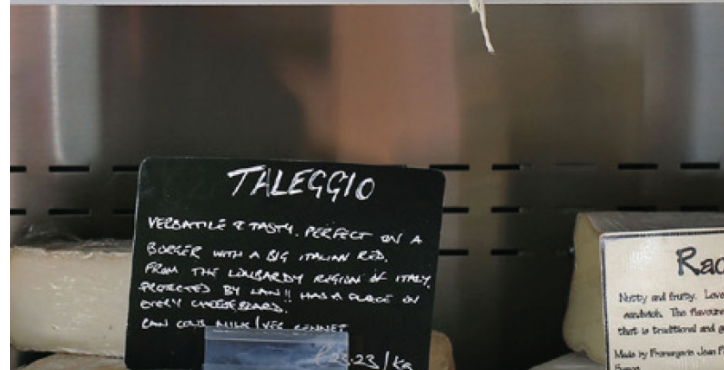


Deli and Chill Fridges

Deli meat

To keep deli meats looking fresh and appealing, slice first thing, daily – using offcuts as samples or sandwich/general ingredients.

Use tickets highlighting organic meat benefits to the environment and animal welfare – support the premium price with knowledge of the exceptional quality/provenance (see “Marketing Organic - what you can say” in the resources section)





Cheeses

Build your organic cheese section with a range of varieties.

Cheese sections should have a 'theatre'

Play with:

- Heights
- Sizes
- Prices ranges
- Complementary products (quince jam, organic biscuits)
- Original rustic cheese packaging (e.g. brie wheels)
- Showcase maximum stock:
 - Place whole cheeses under smaller portions to create a full fridge
 - Do not overfill, maximise airflow in deli
 - Place organic, unusual and short dated stock centrally to maximise sales



Price tickets

- Offer fresh items by 100g/per container as opposed to 'by kg' price to adjust customer price perception
- Highlighting average portion cost decreases customer cost intimidation





Chill fridges

- Focus on produce requiring refrigeration, keep minimal complementary ambient products (e.g. beverage bottles)
- Raw meat on the bottom shelf to avoid cross contamination

Organic dairy

- Is a strong category for organic, with a lot of variety and established artisanal brands
- Forms a significant percentage of spending on organic, so showcase a wide range to increase your sales
- Encourage 'grab and go' sales by offering spoons for individual portion items





Discounts and Sampling

Discounts

Value perception:

- Consumers continue to prioritise saving money on groceries and a significant percentage of customers say that they would buy more organic if more deals were available
- Use signage that's yellow and red to make your promotions clear and stand out – these are perceived as 'value' coloured tickets
- Sell products close to their 'use by date' by offering discounts and appealing to that sense of 'value'
- Promote possible ingredient uses:
 - Veggies for a soup/stews
 - Ripe bananas for home baking
 - Over-ripe tomatoes for fresh tomato sauce
 - Highlight that these are temporary price reductions, offering customers a fantastic discount while stock lasts

Persuasive signage would change these bananas into an appealing sales option





Sampling

- Invite your customers to try a new or existing product – a fantastic way to remind them of the great taste of organic products (a “top 6” reason for buying)!
- Ask suppliers to offer tasting events to remind your customers of the story behind the food, which is especially important for organic
- Highlight the Soil Association symbol when talking to customers –educate them on organic and the SA, as well as the sample product
- Offer purchasable products nearby – catch the impulse!

Keep it clean and tidy – a chaotic sampling area will not tempt customers





Appropriate timing:

- When awards such as the BOOMs (Best of Organic Market) awards are announced, use that as an opportunity to bring together award-winning products to sample
- Weekends are ideal for tasting events, with customers more open to purchasing speciality products
- Focus on desired demographic visiting times for fresh sample consumption



Window and Façade Display

Window and Façade Display

Your entrance is....

- The perfect place to highlight your certification (if certified) – the Soil Association symbol signals trust and quality to the consumer (please see the resources section for more info)
- An opportunity to entice customers into your branch through displays, product placement and signage
- Clean and clutter-free to welcome customers to your store



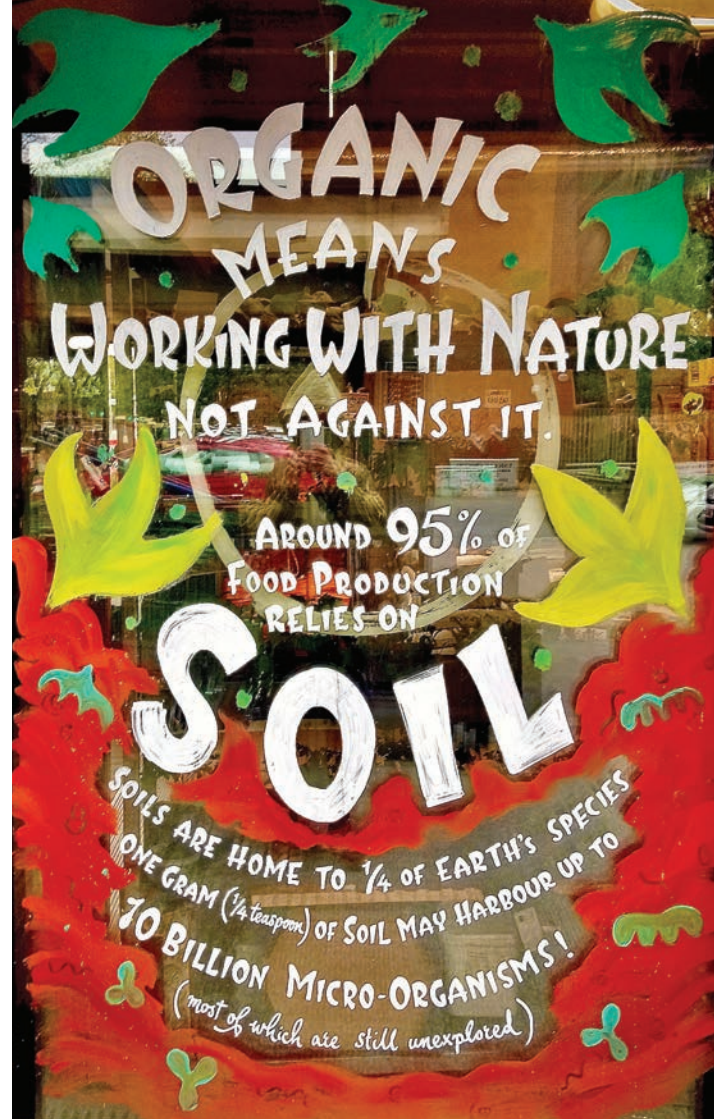


Have staff regularly check your window display from the outside to monitor whether the display remains successful.

The most effective window display has a key message:

- An organic seasonal rotating display, highlighting Organic September or a particular season, such as Spring
- Ensure it is maintainable and contributes to increasing sales. Offer stock for customers to purchase nearby to avoid ruining display symmetry
- Consider using empty packaging – it keeps stock where it can be sold, and minimises losses, especially where displays are affected by strong sunshine
- Be aware of what can be seen behind the display – if your customer can see it, it's part of your display.

Top Tip: Some shops use window stickers to shape the area.





Special Occasion Merchandising

Special Occasions

Special occasions are the optimum time for organic sales opportunities, as customers seek out high quality

- The striking, decorative nature of festive packaging (Easter eggs, Christmas biscuits) creates displays easily
- Put celebratory events in the calendar throughout the year, as well as designated staff time to plan and create appropriate merchandising displays

Celebrations

Consider your local community – make sure all your customers are catered for and feel valued. It's also an excellent opportunity to work with and seek out new suppliers.





Organic September

Organic September is the UK's biggest celebration of all things organic. This month-long celebration has been running for almost 15 years and is a fixture in the calendar for many independent retailers, offering a key moment to highlight wonderful farm-fresh produce during the traditional harvest season as well as delivering an opportunity to educate and upsell shoppers to organic. Soil Association Certification provide retailers with free point-of-sale materials every Organic September to help make the most of the opportunity.

Request your free point of sales kit via the Soil Association website at www.soilassociation.org/indies



THE SHEAF STREET

HEALTH STORE



ORGANIC YOUR SEPTEMBER
FOOD AS IT SHOULD BE

The banner features a red circular logo with a stylized plant and the word 'ORGANIC' written around it. The background is split into teal and yellow sections.



ORGANIC YOUR SEPTEMBER
FOOD AS IT SHOULD BE

The banner features a red circular logo with a stylized plant and the word 'ORGANIC' written around it. The background is split into teal and yellow sections.



UPSTAIRS

organic heart

The organic food of Viridian



BOOM Awards

The Best of Organic Market (BOOM) Awards are the UK's only organic awards, honouring the brands, businesses and people behind the UK organic industry. Having run for 10 years now, these prestigious awards celebrate excellence in organic, with professional judges awarding categories from food through to farming, beauty, fashion and more. Award winners are announced in July, offering an ideal opportunity to showcase BOOM winners in-store during Organic September.

There is also an award for Best of Organic Independent Retailer. Awards entries generally open in the Autumn, you can find out more at www.soilassociation.org/boomawards







Free Point of Sale materials

Soil Association Certification understand that independent retailers are champions of organic in their local communities, and we want to make it as easy as possible for store owners to tell their customers the story of organic. We have created a suite of “What is organic?” marketing materials including posters, postcards and leaflets that are available to order for free via our website.

Resources list:

- [Soil Association Certification's "Understanding Organic" On-Farm Learning Experience](#)
- [Marketing Organic - what you can say](#)
- [Organic Market Report 2023](#)
- [Independent Retailer Support page](#)
- [Why certify with us](#)

External Resources:

- [Suma Wholefoods](#)
- [IDDRI Report](#)
- [WWF Basket - Outcomes and Measures](#)



Food merchandising with SA organic products should interest and educate your customers. Tempt them to try something new, and contribute loyalty to the store and brand equity to the organic market – does your store's range and display of organic products achieve these objectives?

To be added to our independent retailer newsletter (please specify whether you would like to receive the Scottish or the UK edition).





Soil Association Certification

Through our not-for-profit business Soil Association Certification, we inspect and award organic certification to farms and businesses that meet our organic standards.

Any product sold as 'organic' must comply with strict rules set at UK, European and international levels. These rules (known as standards) assure consumers they are buying genuinely organic products that can be fully traceable back to the farm.

Organic standards cover all aspects of organic food certification including production and packaging, animal welfare, wildlife conservation, and ban unnecessary and harmful food additives in organic processed foods.

Our standards not only meet the UK government's minimum requirements but exceed them – especially in areas concerning the environment and animal welfare. We have also developed standards for areas not covered by government or EU regulations. These include conservation, fish farming, textiles and health and beauty and wellbeing products.

We inspect each of our licensed farms and businesses to our standards at least once a year. We also carry out a number of random spot inspections, which can be unannounced. At other times we may carry out an inspection in response to a complaint or concern raised.

Established in 1973, 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of organic certification. Our experience, knowledge and expertise in all aspects of the organic sector, means the Soil Association organic symbol is the most recognised organic mark in the UK shelves today.



Get in touch

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