

» By Jaime Newborn.

Shaping the world with Craig Sams

I know a French butter maker who makes the best butter in the world – the taste is just perfect – and all his milk and ingredients are organic, from organic dairy herds and so on. But he doesn't market organic. And I say to him – 'why not?'

"And he says 'Why should I call myself organic? It's everyone else that should label the fact that they're not. I'm producing the way I was always intended to'.

"That's my vision for the organic industry in the future – I'd like to see even the term 'organic' wither away because it's become so much the norm."

It's no surprise that what many would see as wishful thinking is an entirely plausible ideal for the likes of Craig Sams, Chair of the UK's Soil Association and founder of iconic fair-trade and organic chocolate brand Green & Blacks.

Turning his hand to everything from woollen weaves to cocoa, the ultimate organic entrepreneur has seen firsthand what a few alternate ideas and a large amount of passion can do.

His appearance in a diverse array of

health, wholefoods and ethical orientated roles in life – everything from pioneering the leading organic UK food company 'Whole Earth Foods' with brother Gregory in the sixties; to sourcing the Afghan coats worn inside out by the Beatles on the cover of 'The Magical Mystery Tour'; to championing the macrobiotic movement with the beginning of the renowned restaurant 'Seed'; to establishing Britain's first organic bakery; to turning chocolate into a feel-good product with a conscience – means Craig is something of an expert at inspiring even the most inactive individuals to look harder.

Green and Black's 'Maya Gold' 70% dark solids chocolate – the first product in the world to be certified Fairtrade - registered 'ethical trade development' as part of the average shoppers' palate. Craig says the company never set out to be fair trade, as such – it was the natural progression of an organic business.

"The link between organic and ethical trade is hugely important – it is entirely possible to have mutually beneficial relationships between developing world producers and developed world processors.

In the case of Green & Blacks, we didn't have to try and force the puzzle pieces into place – they were already there", he says. (The Maya Gold bar obtained Fairtrade accreditation in 1994, after Craig began teaching Mayan farmers in Belize how to produce organic Cocoa, returning a price to growers above the offer on hand from large corporations).

He says, now the same thing is happening with climate change.

"Organic production naturally fits in with sustainability – it doesn't need forcing. Once we get our heads unlocked from chemicals, I truly believe it is within our grasp to 'make the deserts bloom again'."

And he says by no means does that suggest farmers will need to go back to tedious manual labour and a horse and cart.

"Organic is about innovation. Technology is about innovation. Currently, agriculture is one of the only industries left where technology hasn't kept pace – we're stuck in a chemical era. Imagine, for example, a little four wheel drive solar power vehicle that can run down carrot rows and distinguish carrot tops from weeds, zapping intrusive



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plants with propane – there is no doubt smart technology can help propel organic forward.”

As will a stronger sense of community. Craig says currently, what he'd most like to change is the way we eat and produce food to reconnect people.

“Farming health, personal health and social and environmental health are intricately linked and a stronger sense of interwoven, communal production that allows us to step back and see the whole picture will, I believe, benefit all those facets.”

Having sold Green & Black's to Cadbury in 2005, Craig has lost no time in beginning to build yet another story from the ground up – returning to bread. He and wife Josephine Fairley have taken over the UK's Judges Bakery and are now delivering organic, slow leavened, non-synthetic loaves to an ever-growing stream of interested consumers.

Organic might still need to be labelled accordingly but, as Craig points out “You rarely need to explain what organic is anymore – people already know. There's a generation growing up out there for whom the decision to go organic will be a no-brainer”.

For more on Craig Sams read our book review for 'Sweet Dreams – the story of Green & Black's' by Craig Sams and Josephine Fairley. The book will be on sale in Australia from August 16th 2008.




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