

JODY SCHECKTER

(Information supplied by the Natural and Organics Exhibition, Cape Town)

Currently living in Britain, Scheckter was born in South Africa and, at the age of 22, earned a place in the cockpit of a Works McLaren F1 car. He later joined Ferrari and became World Champion. Quick, shrewd and blessed with a dry sense of humour, he was one of the most popular drivers of his time.

What is little known about Scheckter is his passion for chemical-free beef and dairy. As one of the top five organic beef and dairy farmers in Britain, he is passionate about "slow growing" animals. As quoted by Sue Grant-Marshall in a Cape Argus article (23 August 2005), ' "Slower growing animals are healthier and taste better. I'm doing what comes naturally, nature's way," he explains as he criticises modern breeding programmes. These, he says, turn out bigger animals faster and on food often laden with antibiotics.'

In the same article, he also states ' "you have to understand that everything comes from the soil". Healthy soil, he says, means healthy grass, animals, meat and milk - which all add up to healthy humans.'

According to a recent article in Farmer's Weekly, 'Scheckter's farm, Laverstoke Park contains a variety of dairy herds (Jersey cows, water buffalo, Lacaune sheep) as well as several other breeds of beef cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry.

In addition to livestock, Scheckter grows organic vegetables that are sold directly to consumers through a variety of marketing ventures such as an on-farm butchery, a box scheme through which customers can buy a box of fruit or vegetables, farmers markets, an online shop and an organic hospitality business.

Scheckter says that while glory on the race track came easily, success in business was a bit harder to achieve. Mastering organic farming is the hardest thing he has ever done because doing things exactly right and making money out of it takes time.'

Scheckter is constantly approached to do charitable work in the UK but prefers to help South Africans. He's been involved in a home for street children and with various NGOs in greening and growing food the permaculture way.

Said Exhibition Director, David Wolstenholme: "I hope that our organic community appreciates the effort and expense that Jody Scheckter has incurred on their behalf to promote an organic culture here in South Africa. Jody has no business interests here so there is no other financial agenda for him.

To have the former world champion here at our show is a great honour for us. Besides the heightened media interest, it gives the exhibition recognition as an important platform for change and for all South Africans to embrace the mind-shift to an organic lifestyle."