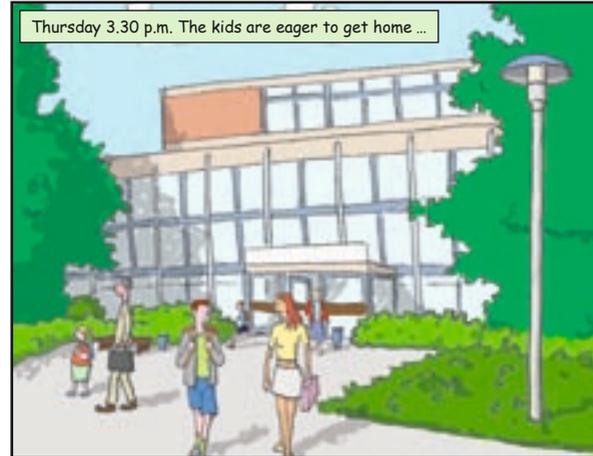




JULIA AND STEVEN'S ADVENTURES

DISCOVERING THE WORLD OF ORGANIC FARMING

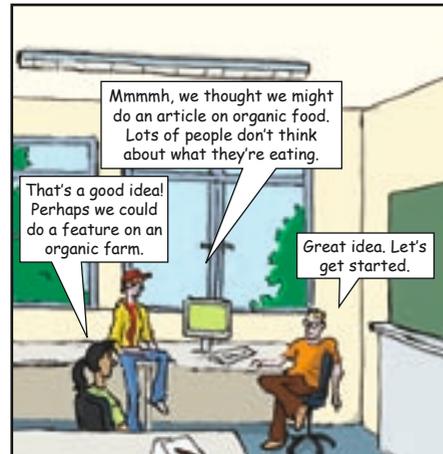
Thursday 3.30 p.m. The kids are eager to get home ...



... Voices can be heard behind the door. The "Express" school newspaper editors, Julia and Steven, are planning the next issue.



OK, we need to pick a lead story before we decide on the page layout.



Mmmh, we thought we might do an article on organic food. Lots of people don't think about what they're eating.

That's a good idea! Perhaps we could do a feature on an organic farm.

Great idea. Let's get started.



Found one, Fir Tree Farm. It's quite close to us.

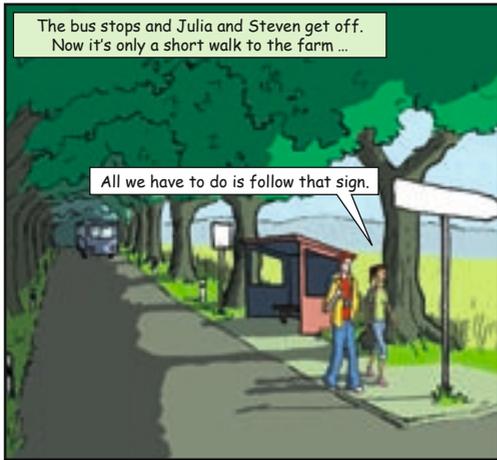
... Would it be OK if we came to see you next weekend? ... Great! See you on Saturday!

And that's exactly what they did. The following Saturday, the two reporters set off to Fir Tree Farm.



We're really lucky having weather like this because we can take some excellent photos.

Great! I think we have to get off at the next stop!

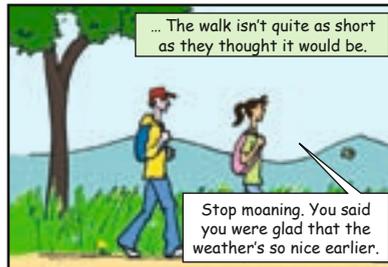


The bus stops and Julia and Steven get off. Now it's only a short walk to the farm ...

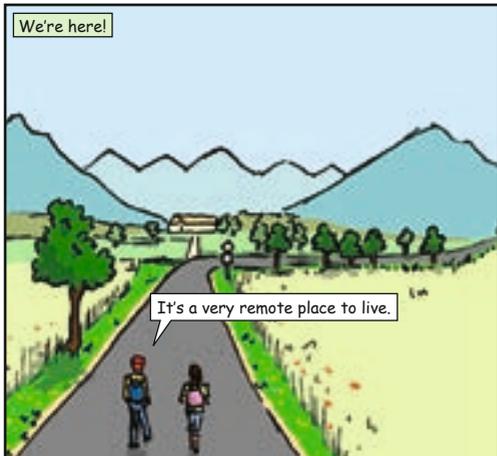
All we have to do is follow that sign.



... The walk isn't quite as short as they thought it would be.



Stop moaning. You said you were glad that the weather's so nice earlier.



We're here!

It's a very remote place to live.



Julia and Steven are expected.



Hello, pleased to meet you.



Did you find the farm OK? It's quite a walk when you come by bus. I'll bet you're pretty hungry after all that exercise ...

Come on in, then.



Welcome to Fir Tree Farm! I hope you're going to send me a copy of your newspaper so I can read the article when it's published.

Promise! But we can't write the article until you've shown us around so that we've got something to write about.

That's easily done.

Feeling much better after the food, the young journalists get down to work.



The most important thing about organic farming is the closed loop principle. It's probably best if I show you what I mean. Let's start off in the barn. The soil needs fertiliser so that the crops always have enough nutrients. We're lucky, because our livestock provides us with perfect fertiliser — and it's free!



The apprentices are busy mucking out.



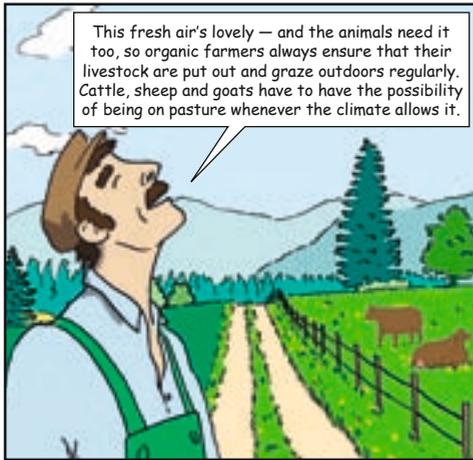
Our cows aren't tied, they are free to move around. Although that means I need a bigger cow house. It is more natural for the animals to be able to move around. The stalls have straw on the floor. You can see fresh straw being put on the cows' sleeping area over there.

Some of the excrements are collected down here when we hose down the floor. We use it as liquid manure and spray it onto the fields. Smells good, doesn't it?

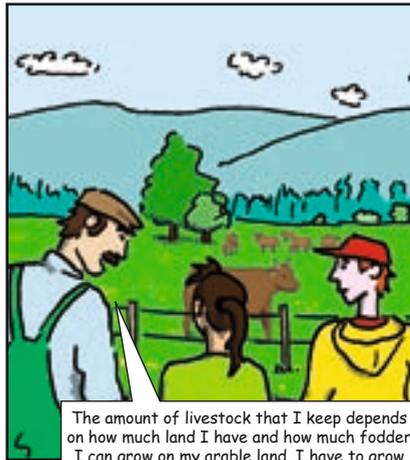
That's where the rest of the dung ends up. It's a mixture of excrements and straw. The dung heap is just a compost heap, like the ones you have in your gardens.



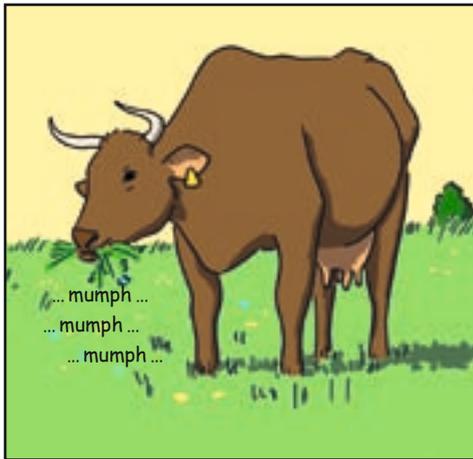
Yes, we've got a compost heap. But it doesn't smell as bad as yours ...



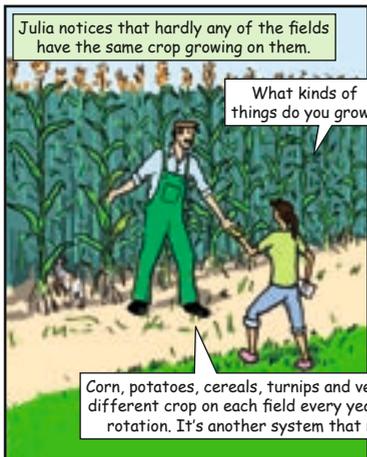
This fresh air's lovely — and the animals need it too, so organic farmers always ensure that their livestock are put out and graze outdoors regularly. Cattle, sheep and goats have to have the possibility of being on pasture whenever the climate allows it.



The amount of livestock that I keep depends on how much land I have and how much fodder I can grow on my arable land. I have to grow most of what I feed to the animals myself. Otherwise I wouldn't have an organic farm. If you consider that a dairy cow feeds on up to 75 kilograms of fresh grass per day in summer, you can imagine how much winter fodder you need for a 60-strong herd. I use some of the crops that I grow as animal fodder. The straw from the crops is used in the cow house. And this straw, mixed with cow dung, is used as fertiliser on the fields. That's what I mean by closed loop. I hardly have any waste products.



... mumph ...
... mumph ...
... mumph ...



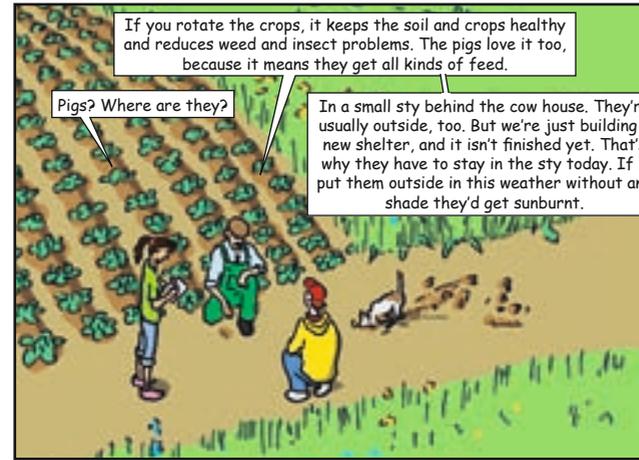
Julia notices that hardly any of the fields have the same crop growing on them.

What kinds of things do you grow?

Corn, potatoes, cereals, turnips and vegetables. We grow a different crop on each field every year. That's called crop rotation. It's another system that makes good sense.



Mmm delicious ...



Pigs? Where are they?

If you rotate the crops, it keeps the soil and crops healthy and reduces weed and insect problems. The pigs love it too, because it means they get all kinds of feed.

In a small sty behind the cow house. They're usually outside, too. But we're just building a new shelter, and it isn't finished yet. That's why they have to stay in the sty today. If I put them outside in this weather without any shade they'd get sunburnt.



Peter, what kind of cows are they? I've never seen any like that before.

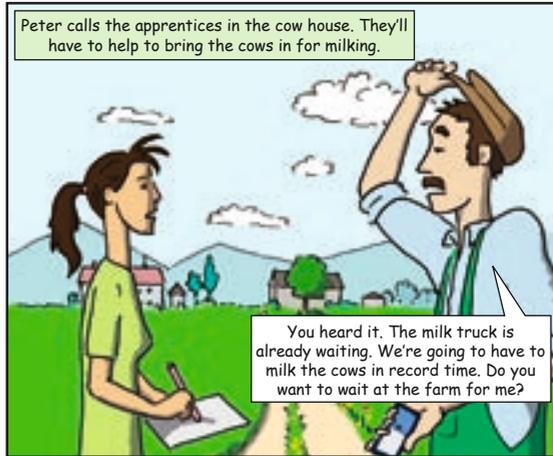
It's a very old breed of cows. A few hundred years ago, they would have been the only type of cows to be seen in this region. They're smaller than the black and white cows that you probably know. Their milk and meat yields are also lower. But they're better suited to our local climate. My cows are hardly ever sick, and all the calves are born here outside.



They're free to roam around as they like, and they can eat as much as they want. They stay healthy because they get plenty of exercise and roughage.



Oh, you are already there? OK, we'll have to get moving on then!



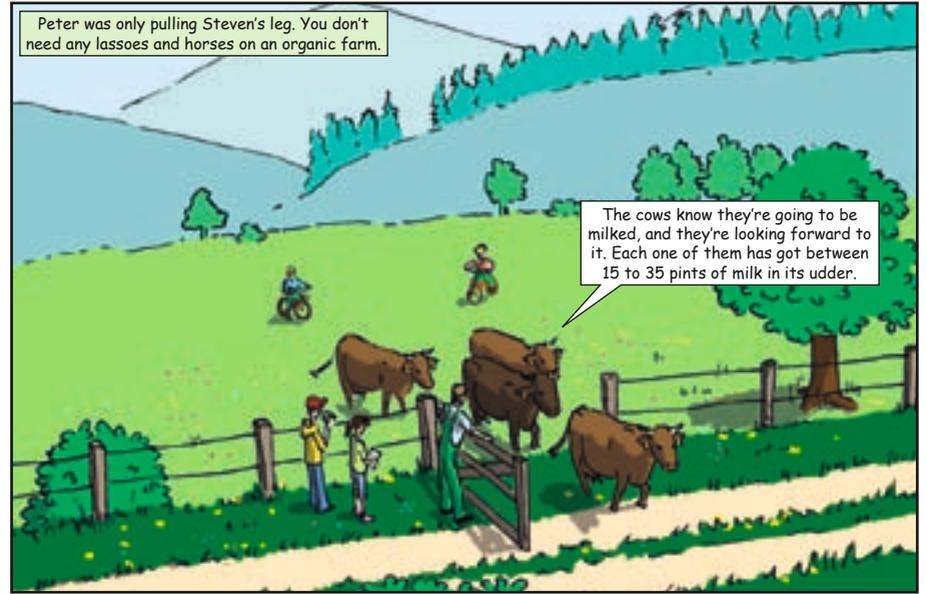
Peter calls the apprentices in the cow house. They'll have to help to bring the cows in for milking.

You heard it. The milk truck is already waiting. We're going to have to milk the cows in record time. Do you want to wait at the farm for me?



You're very welcome to help if you want. Would you like that ...?

Thanks Peter! Let's see how good Steven is at being a cowboy!



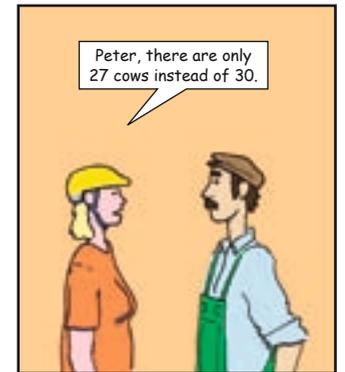
Peter was only pulling Steven's leg. You don't need any lassoes and horses on an organic farm.

The cows know they're going to be milked, and they're looking forward to it. Each one of them has got between 15 to 35 pints of milk in its udder.

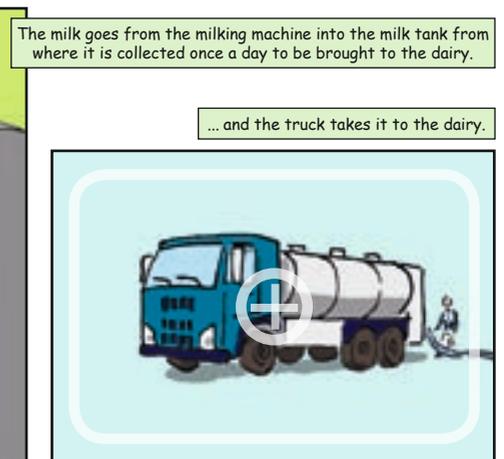
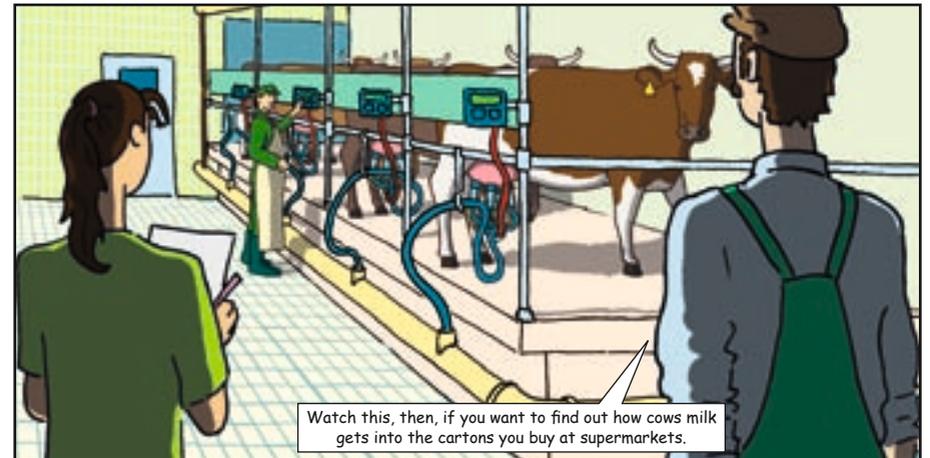
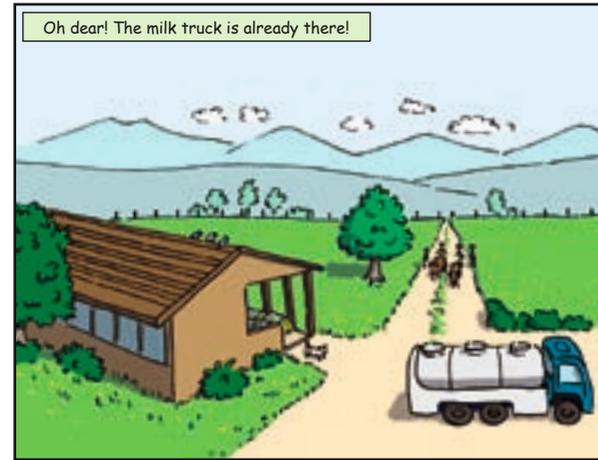
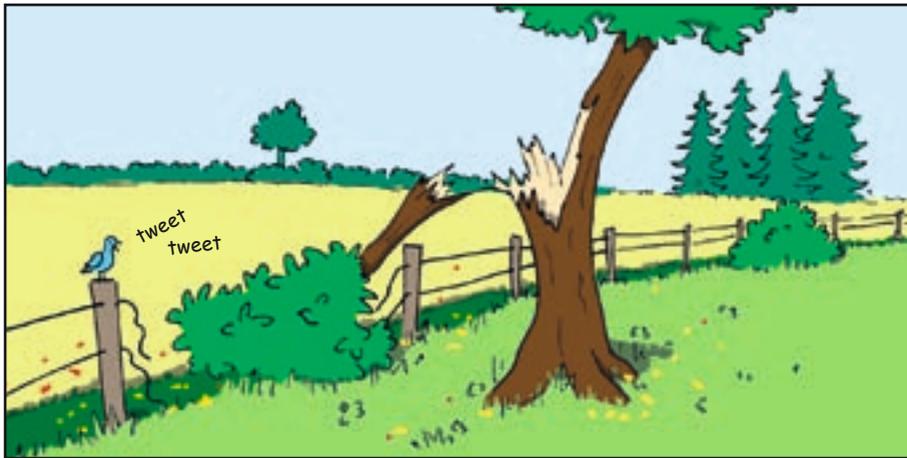
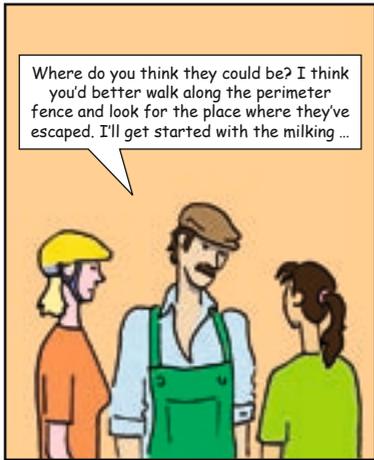


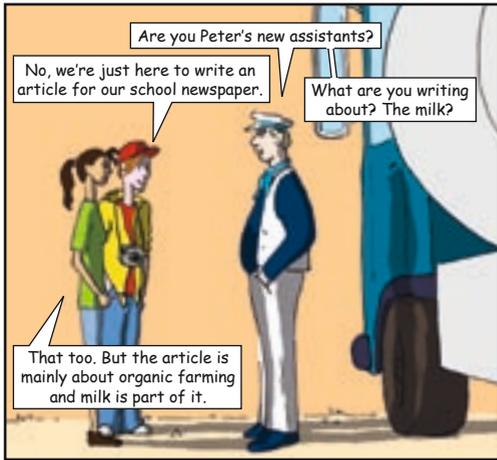
Sam, the apprentice, manages to keep the cows heading for the cow house all on his own. Steven is visibly relieved. There is a problem, though.

... 25 and 26 ...



Peter, there are only 27 cows instead of 30.





Are you Peter's new assistants?

No, we're just here to write an article for our school newspaper.

What are you writing about? The milk?

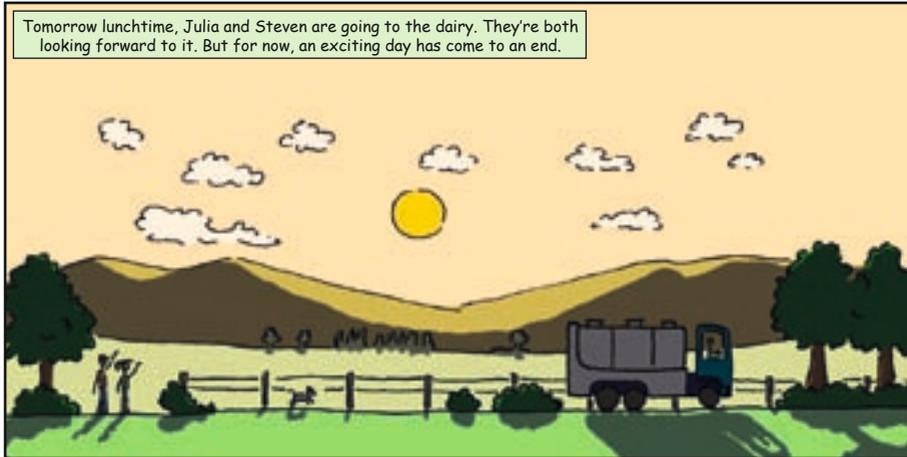
If you want to find out what happens to the milk next, you're very welcome to visit the dairy tomorrow.



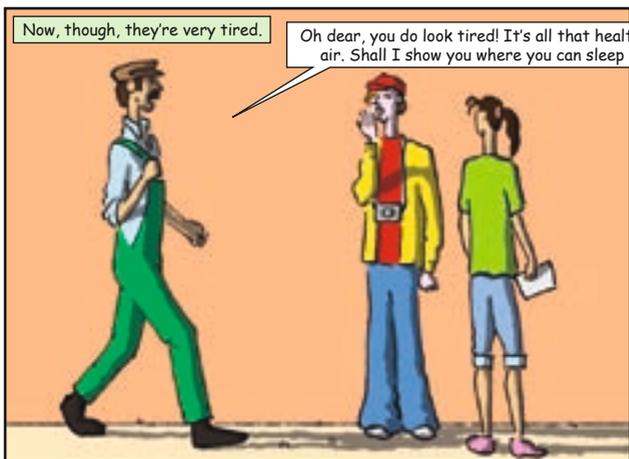
Really? That's fantastic! On the way to the supermarket. What happens to the milk? From cow to carton. Milk to cheese... Steven, it's going to be the best article we've ever written!

That too. But the article is mainly about organic farming and milk is part of it.

She isn't always like that ... but she's right. You don't get that kind of an opportunity very often. What time can we come tomorrow?



Tomorrow lunchtime, Julia and Steven are going to the dairy. They're both looking forward to it. But for now, an exciting day has come to an end.

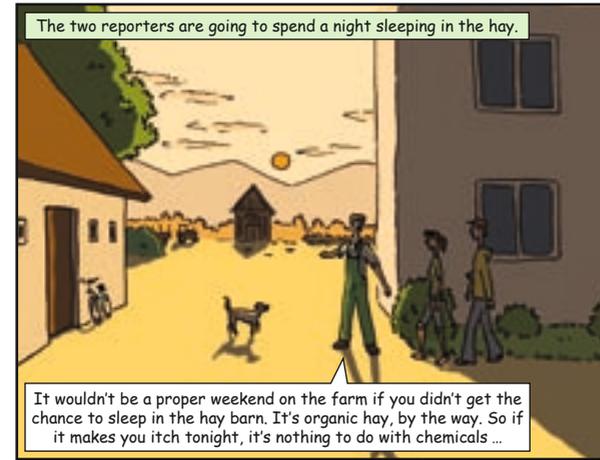


Now, though, they're very tired.

Oh dear, you do look tired! It's all that healthy country air. Shall I show you where you can sleep tonight?



Who's tired? ...



The two reporters are going to spend a night sleeping in the hay.

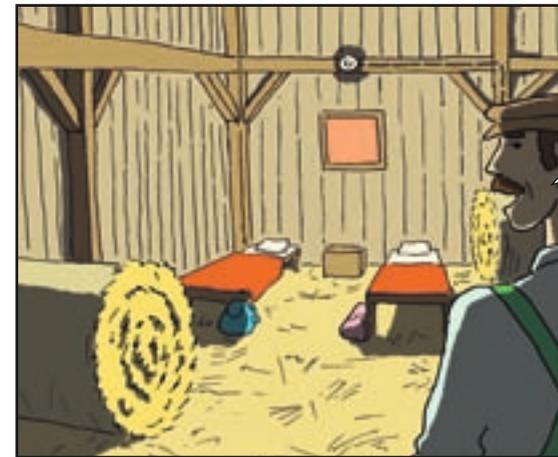
It wouldn't be a proper weekend on the farm if you didn't get the chance to sleep in the hay barn. It's organic hay, by the way. So if it makes you itch tonight, it's nothing to do with chemicals ...



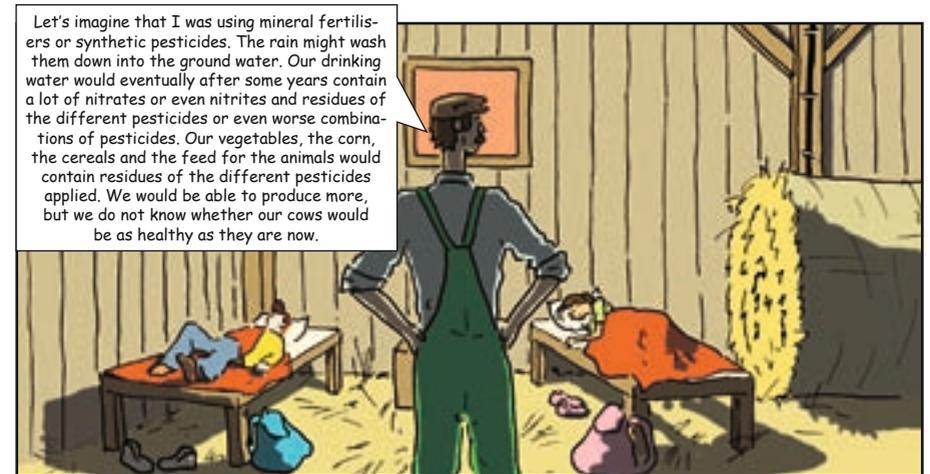
It looks just like any other hay. What makes it organic?

I've already told you that I produce everything I need for the livestock here on the farm.

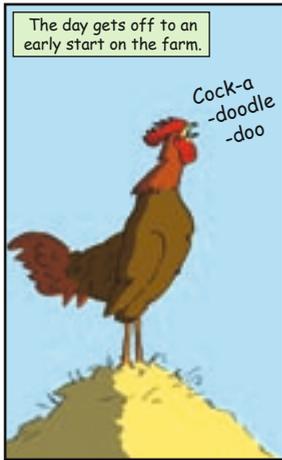
That closed loop thing?



That's right. You've already seen one half of the loop. The animals produce the fertiliser for the fields. The straw that you see here is what is left of the wheat harvest. It's stored here so we can use it for bedding in the cow house and pigsty. Then it goes from the cowshed to the dung heap so that we can use it as fertiliser on the fields.



Let's imagine that I was using mineral fertilisers or synthetic pesticides. The rain might wash them down into the ground water. Our drinking water would eventually after some years contain a lot of nitrates or even nitrites and residues of the different pesticides or even worse combinations of pesticides. Our vegetables, the corn, the cereals and the feed for the animals would contain residues of the different pesticides applied. We would be able to produce more, but we do not know whether our cows would be as healthy as they are now.



The day gets off to an early start on the farm.

Cock-a-doodle-doo



Did you sleep well?

Like a log. Did you put something in our food yesterday? I think I fell asleep before my head hit the pillow.

No, that's one of the secrets of organic farming. There's nothing in the food that shouldn't be there. You'd simply had a long and strenuous day. And I've got more of the same for you today ...

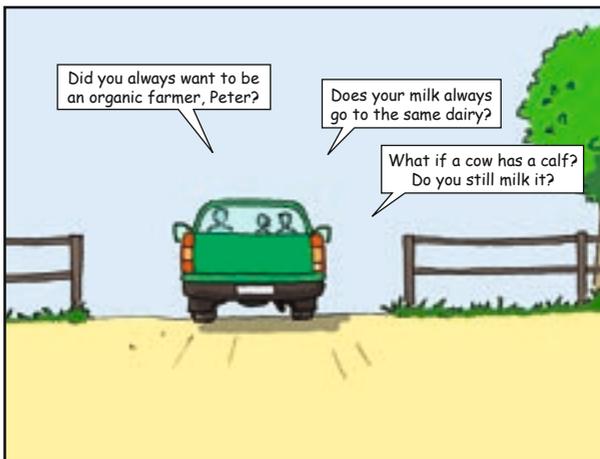


Right! We're going to the dairy! Wait a minute! How are we going to get there, Steven?

I'll take you in the car. If you hadn't been here yesterday we probably wouldn't have found the missing cows so quickly. You helped me find the cows, so I'll help you to get to the dairy. My apprentices will be finished repairing the fence by lunchtime. Then we can set off to the dairy.

Oh, thanks Peter! You're brilliant!

Thanks for that compliment, young lady. Eat up, then, so you've got plenty of energy for our excursion!



Did you always want to be an organic farmer, Peter?

Does your milk always go to the same dairy?

What if a cow has a calf? Do you still milk it?



This is the only organic dairy for miles around. That's why there's a queue. The milk cartons only get an organic seal if the milk comes from farms like mine. There are very strict controls.



The man who drove the milk truck yesterday has seen the car and comes forward to greet the three of them.

Our important visitors have arrived! So it took the press to persuade you to leave your farm, Peter? Welcome both of you. I'm glad you could make it.



One of the dairy's staff has agreed to show the junior reporters around the dairy.



Hello there. Would you like to come along with me?

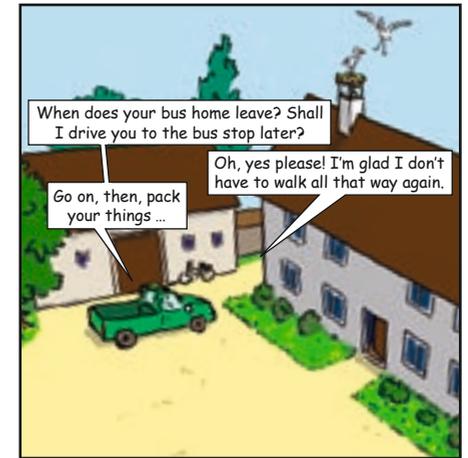
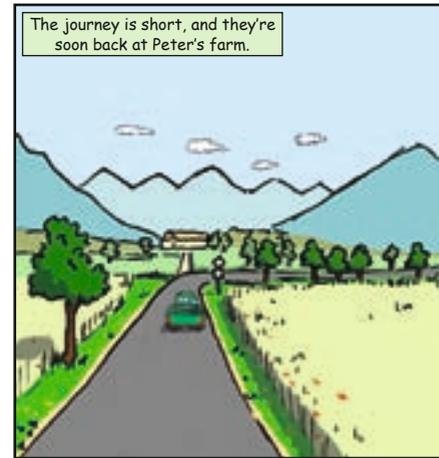
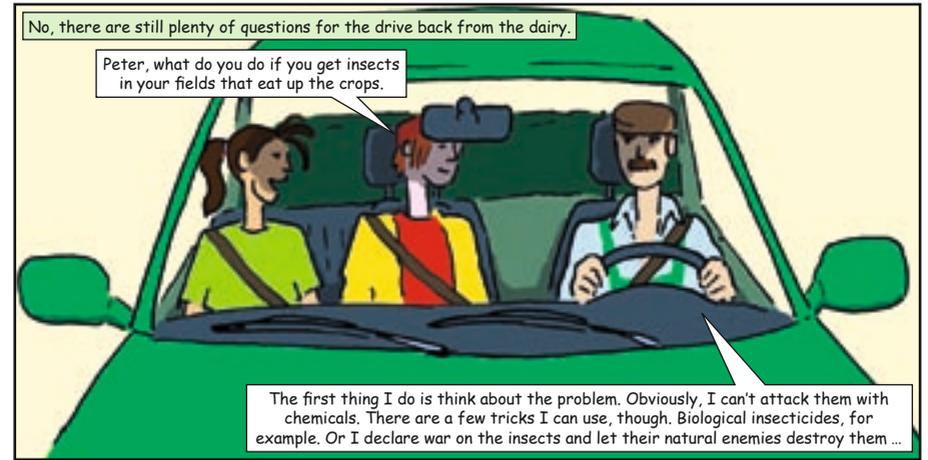
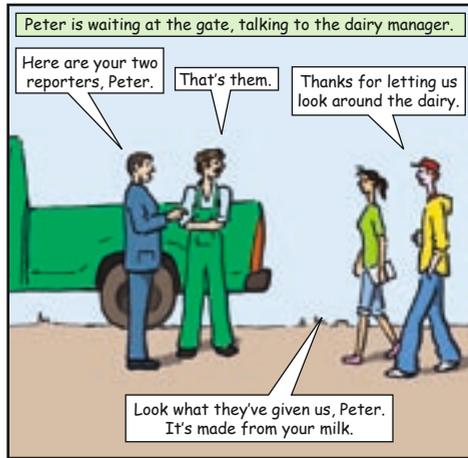
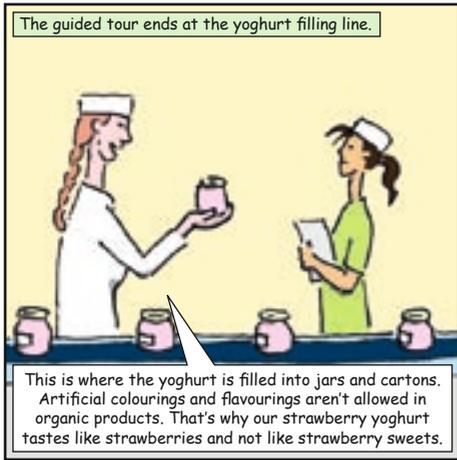
We don't just pump the milk out of the trucks into the cartons. This is our laboratory. We use the instruments to analyse the milk and see how much fat and proteins it contains and whether it is healthy. We can see how hygienic our milk is and we can see at first glance how well the cows are being looked after.



This is the cheese dairy. We're really proud of it. Our cheese has won lots of awards. And I think it deserved them, because it comes from happy cows who spend the whole day outside in the sunshine feeding on juicy grass and herbs. The cheese that their milk produces has to be special ...



The next stop in the tour is the cheese dairy.





I'd write that the logo simplifies everything. Just imagine you're in the supermarket and there's hundreds of yoghurts on the shelf. Now you can tell which of them are organic at first glance ...

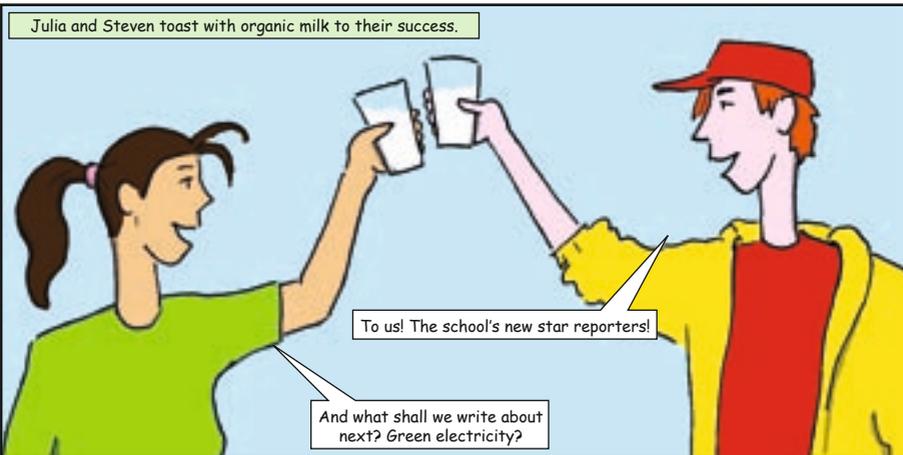
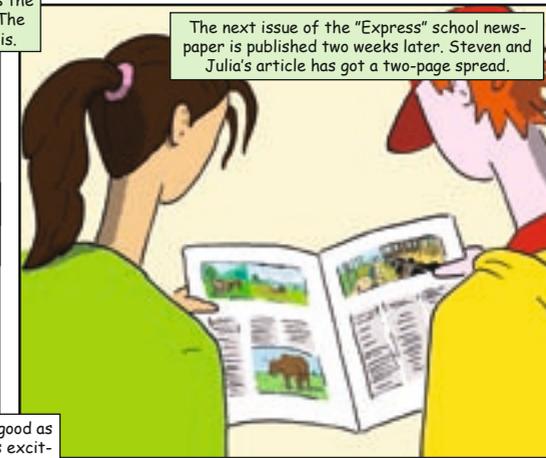
Getting the OK from the editors' conference is the last hurdle that the article has to overcome. The conference is a test of how good the article is.

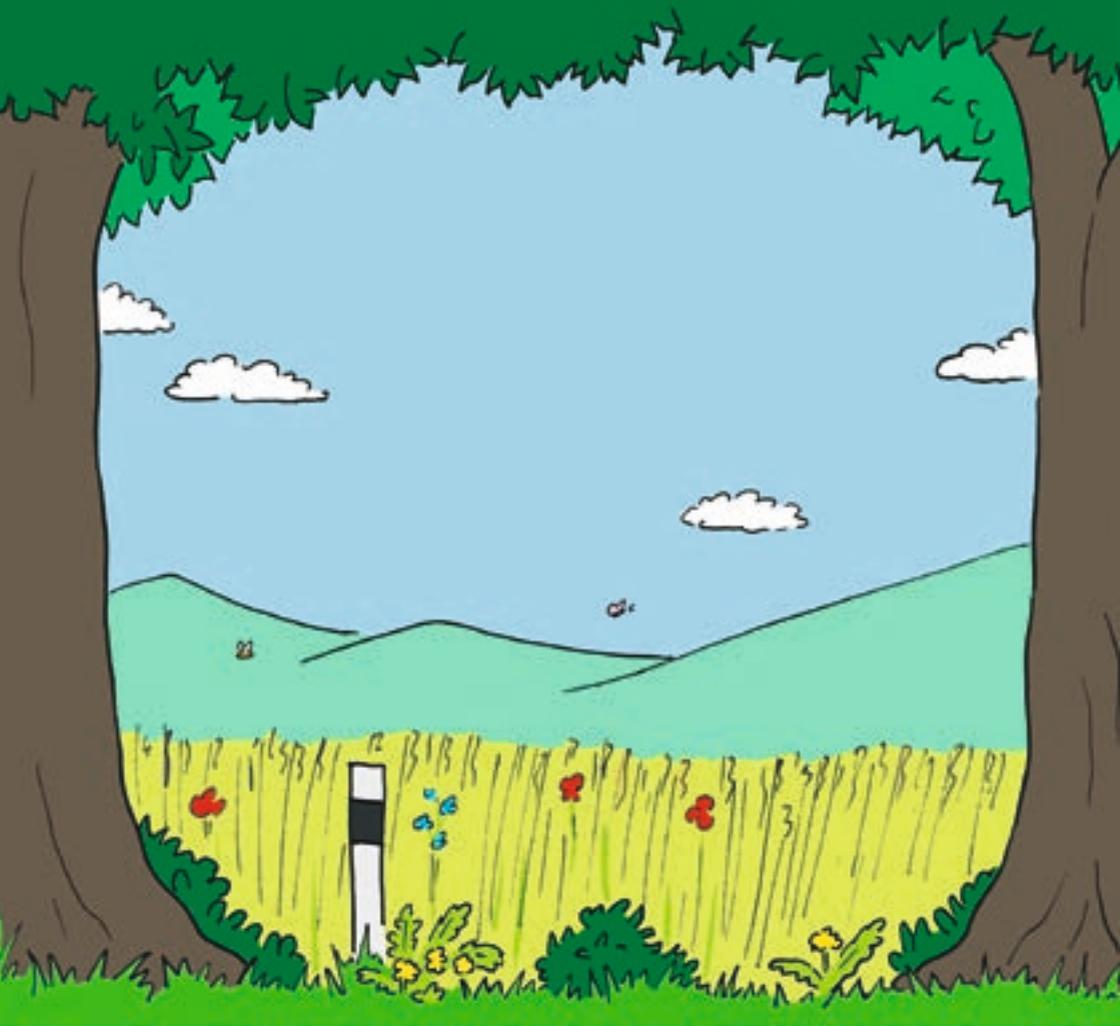


Well done!



The next issue of the "Express" school newspaper is published two weeks later. Steven and Julia's article has got a two-page spread.





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