

Organic Farming

A Step-by-Step Guide to Conversion



Step 1 - Consider

Is Organics an Option?

If you can answer yes to some or all of these questions then you should consider switching to organic production.

Crop systems

1. Can you incorporate a grass/clover break into your rotation?
2. Do you have a source of farmyard manure/compost/slurry on or near your own farm?
3. Can you see yourself farming without relying on pesticides and chemical fertilisers?

Animal systems

1. Is your current stocking rate below 2 livestock units per Ha?
2. Can your animal housing be modified to incorporate a bedded lying area?
3. Do you already use no or relatively low levels of artificial fertiliser?

Is organic farming profitable?

Organic farming can be a profitable system of farming with some of the most profitable farmers in the country farming organically. Maintaining good output levels through the adaption of organic farming production methods, coupled with lower production costs and premium market prices contribute to higher margins.

Step 2 - Investigate

1. Get acquainted with the adjustments required by talking to other organic farmers and contacting a local advisor.
2. Familiarise yourself with the Organic Standards:

A major factor distinguishing organic farming from other approaches to sustainable farming is the existence of internationally acknowledged standards and certification procedures. These standards have been developed to provide organic producers with consistent, clear rules as to how organic food should be produced. A two-year conversion period is required before a farm is given organic status. Some of the main requirements are listed below:

Fertilisers and chemicals

- i. Soluble mineral fertilisers are prohibited, but some inputs such as lime and rock phosphate are permitted.
- ii. Clover and other legumes supply nitrogen. The balance between fertility building crops, such as grass/clover ley and exploitative crops such as cereals and potatoes is critical in a tillage rotation.
- iii. Most manufactured agro-chemicals (e.g. herbicides) are prohibited.

Animal welfare

- i. The highest standards of animal welfare are obligatory. Permission to carry out mutilations and the provision of bedding and generous floor space are required for housed animals.
- ii. Ruminant stock must be fed a diet which is at least 60% roughage. Tillage crops should be considered as a cost effective alternative to buying in concentrates and bedding.
- iii. Routine preventative treatment of healthy animals is not allowed, with a focus on prevention rather than cure.

Step 3 – Choose an Organic Certification Body and Register as an Organic Operator

The Organic Certification Bodies (OCBs) provide an inspection and certification service for all Organic Production Units in Ireland. They have been designated and are regulated by the Organic Unit of the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, and are responsible for upholding the organic standards as defined by the EU.

The OCB sends an information pack on request. The pack is tailored to the producers needs and will contain information on the application and conversion process, an application form and a guide to the Organic Standards. Once the application and conversion plan are received and assessed, an initial inspection will be arranged and you are registered as an organic operator.

The OCBs carry out annual inspections of every organic enterprise. Further information including a guide for completing the application and the conversion plan can be sourced from these certification bodies:

IOA (Irish Organic Association), Unit 13, Inish Carraig, Golden Island, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. N37 N1W4.

Tel: 090 6433680 | **Email:** info@irishoa.ie

Web: www.irishorganicassociation.ie

Organic Trust, Unit M4, Naas Town Centre, Dublin Road, Naas, Naas Co. Kildare, W91 F7X3.

Tel: 045 882377 | **Email:** info@organictrust.ie

Web: www.organictrust.ie



Step 4 - Apply to join the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS)

Having registered as an organic operator with an OCB, you may then apply to the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine to join the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS). This requires 2 separate online applications:

a. Submit separate Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) application ONLINE.

Deadline: 8th April 2022.

b. Choose “in-conversion” or “organic” land parcels on 2022 BPS (Basic Payment Scheme) application ONLINE. **Deadline:** 16th May 2022.

See www.gov.ie/en/service/d46aec-organic-farming-scheme/ for scheme details and payment rates.

Additional Grant-Aid support available:

TAMS (Organic Capital Investment Scheme)

www.gov.ie/en/publication/24875-terms-and-conditions-of-the-organic-capital-investment-scheme-ocis/

Organic Processing Investment Grant Scheme

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/51e8d-organic-processing-investment-grant-scheme/>

Step 5 - Complete an Approved Training Course

An approved ‘**Organic Farming Principles**’ course must be completed as part of the Organic Farming Scheme requirements. A copy of the Certificate showing successful course completion must be uploaded as part of the OFS online application on or before 1st November 2022. For information and booking details on courses go to: www.teagasc.ie/organics

Step 6 - Complete the Conversion Period

When the initial inspection has been carried out, the application approved and the “in-conversion licence” granted, a period of conversion begins. Normally two years in duration, this period of conversion allows time for the land and producer to adjust to the organic methods.

During the conversion period, the enterprise must adhere to all the Organic Standards concerning animal welfare, artificial fertilisers, pesticides and chemicals. The changes proposed in the conversion plan must be implemented during this period.

After the required conversion period expires, the inspection body may issue organic status to the farmer (unless conversion period is being extended), which allows the farmer to sell his/her produce as organic.

Further Information: www.teagasc.ie/organics



Is Organics an option?



Steps to Organic Conversion



Schemes & Grant Aid



Events



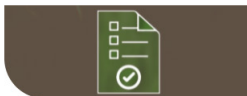
Training



Frequently Asked Questions



Videos



Factsheets

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine:

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), Organic Unit, Johnstown Castle Estate, Co. Wexford

Web: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/fc7c8-organic-farming/>

Email: organic@agriculture.gov.ie | **Tel:** 053-9163400