

Rural Economy
& Development
Programme



Teagasc Organic Farm Walk
on the farm of
Whiteoaks Acorn Project,
Derryvane, Muff,
Co. Donegal
Wednesday 26th June 2019



Front cover photo:

Noel Doherty, Whiteoaks Acorn Project Farm Manager.



Introduction

Welcome to today's farm walk

The topics that we will discuss at today's farm walk are:

- Glasshouse production
- Plant propagation
- Polytunnel growing
- Organic pest and disease control
- Fieldscale vegetable growing
- Managing weeds
- Soil nutrition
- Organic certification
- DAFM organic sector supports

Background - Whiteoaks Acorn Project

White Oaks Acorn Project is built on a 36 acre farm located on the Derry/Donegal border. It was originally founded 13 years ago. Initially it was set up to assist the adjacent sister project which is White Oaks Rehabilitation Centre in helping support the catering in their Centre and to also provide therapeutic duties for the residents.

Following on from that a very small scale farm shop was developed, and the sale of vegetables to local restaurants and cafes commenced. This has grown over the years especially with the development of a box scheme which delivers to customers in the Inishowen Peninsula and Derry City. At this

point the Project delivers to approximately 100 houses in the local area over two days in the week. Alongside this, the Project also host annual events such as a plant sale, pumpkin days and it is hoped that horticultural workshops will be facilitated on site in the future.

Work now also involves supplying other produce such as eggs, raw organic milk, sourdough bread and cooking stocks. The aim is to cater for the needs and desires of target markets while also supplying them with a high level of customer service.

The Project also offers other facilities such as a retreat centre, residential accommodation, a gift shop, cafe and a Celtic Peace Garden.





Site and soil type

The farm (approx 16 acres available for cropping) is located on quite an exposed site which presents challenges in terms of cropping. Only 0.5 acres of 12 acres available for fieldscale vegetables is considered “sheltered” (one plot located between polytunnels). However, the ten polytunnels and 45m x 45m glasshouse help the situation and enable the growing a wide variety of crops on site. Soil type is mainly heavy clay texture.

Table 1 - Crop Agerage.

Crop type	Area (acorage) available approx.
Fieldscale Vegetables	12 acres
Polytunnels (10 - various sizes)	1
Glasshouse (45m x 45m)	0.2
Other areas	3.0 (including 0.5 acres buildings, 1 acres forest/hens 1.5 acres woodland.
TOTAL	16.2 acres.



Crops grown on the farm

Over 20 different types of crops and herbs are grown on the farm throughout the whole year. The tables below outlines crops presently grown on the farm.

Other crops grown during other times of the year include cabbage, celeriac and squash-polytunnel/glasshouse/fieldscale.

Table 2 - Crop Types, Varieties on farm at present

Glasshouse Crops: 1 multi-span glasshouse: 45 m x 45m (150ft x150ft)

Crop on display	Varieties
French Beans	Conra
Tomatoes	Sakura (cheery) Gardener delight (cherry) Yellow Perfection; Gimli F1
Courgettes	Dunja F1 Goldy F1; Zelia F1
Mustard Salad Mix	Oriental mustard blend
Spring Onions	Parade
Basil	Chen F1
Chillis	Ring of Fire Barak
Lettuce	Little Gem Regina Di Giacci
Edible Cornflowers	Colour mixed



Cabbages in the glasshouse-April 2019.



Tomatoes in the glasshouse June 2019.

Polytunnels: 10 in total of various sizes

Crop on display	Varieties
Courgettes	Dunja F1 Zelia F1
Cucumbers	Passandra F1
Tomatoes	Gimli F1
Chillis	Barak
Potatoes (early)	Colleen
Pumpkins	Racer Jack O Lantern
Garlic	Vallelado



Early potatoes in a polytunnel April 2019.



Fieldscale crops

Crop on display	Variety	Acerage (approx)
Potatoes	Setanta Colleen	2
Carrots	Miami Rodelina Napoli	1.5
Spring onions	Parade	0.2
Broccoli	Santee F1 Summer purple	0.2
Kale	Cavolo nero Red Russian Ragged jack Rote krauset	1.0
Celery	Victoria	0.05
Onions	Sturon red baron	2
Coriander/Dill	Filtro/Tetra	0.05
Broad Beans	Ratio	0.05
Lettuce	Lollo Rossa (purple colour)	0.05

Note: Total = 7 acres cropped at present; 5 acres under grass.



Farm Manager Noel Doherty at potato field (top photo taken April 2019; bottom photo June 21st 2019. Potatoes planted 19th April.




The distance between seeds at sowing can easily be adjusted using the push seeder.

Rotations

Reasons to rotate:

- Crop breaks prevent disease and weed build up.
- Different crops take different nutrients from the soil (and some add nitrogen).

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- Green manure crops build up soil structure and fertility – helps stop leaching of nutrients.
 - Increases the variety of produce for direct sales eg. farmer's market, box scheme.
 - Spread financial risk.
 - Be more self-sufficient.

There is no exact blueprint for a rotation on the farm and it can vary depending on various factors, especially market demand.

The most important considerations that are taken on board on the farm are:

- Never follow a brassica with another brassica.
- Tomatoes and cucumbers are never grown beside each other for two years in a row.

Seed propagation

Seed is normally sourced from Tamar Organics (based in Launceston, England). They also purchase seed from Europrise based in Dublin.

All plants are grown from seed as it enables full control of all aspects of growing from seed to fork. It also helps to eliminate any potential problems with pest and disease.



All plants are grown from seed using propagation trays on heated benches.

Weed control techniques

- Biodegradable corn starch weed barrier in fields.
- Mypex weed cover.
- Flame weeding.
- False seed beds. This involves preparing drills, collapsing them (using rotovator) preparing the drills once again (day before sowing), sowing the crop. eg. carrots.



Myplex (above) and biodegradable corn starch barriers are very important tools to help control weeds on organic farms.

Pest and Disease Control Techniques on the Farm

- Fleece for cabbage root fly, carrot fly, caterpillars and pigeons.
- Organic slug pellets (Derrex™).
- Pyrethrum – plant based spray for cabbage, white butterfly, aphids, whitefly.



Fleece is used to protect crops against various pests.

Sources of soil fertility/compost

- Compost - seeding and potting compost - organically sourced.
- 12 month old farmyard manure. Sourced from a local farmer.
- VinasseTM (liquid fertilizer foliar feed for glasshouse and polytunnel crops eg. tomatoes, courgettes).
- Seaweed dust; Liquid seaweed.



Farmyard manure is brought onto the farm from a local cattle farmer and composted prior to land-spreading.

Labour

Whiteoaks Organic Project employ throughout the year as there is a continuous level of work throughout all seasons.

The Project currently has 4 full time employees including farm manager, Noel Doherty and three other full time employees based on the farm twelve months of the year. Another member of staff works one day a week all year round also. We also work alongside a local unemployment scheme TUS (Community work placement initiative) where we provide work placements for local people and we currently have 2 men on this scheme. Students from abroad also work on the farm during the Sumner months.

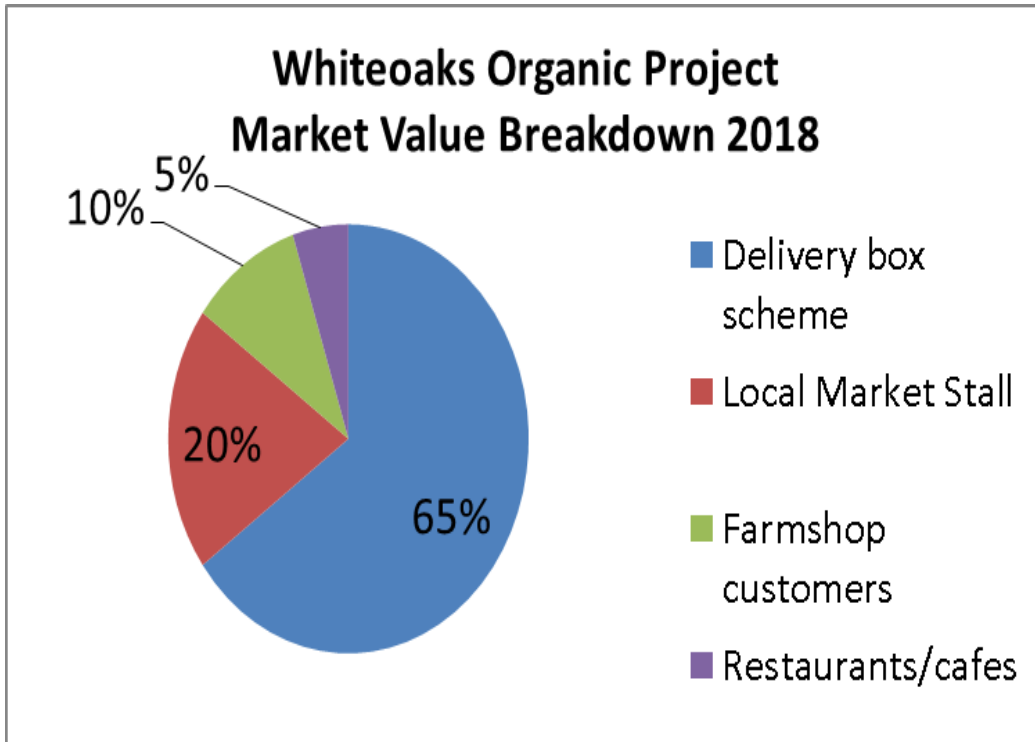
Set-up Costs

- Mainly rely on second-hand equipment with little use of grant aid. Buy and Sell websites used to purchase equipment, other stockists etc?
- Grant-aid and donations used for part-payment of some buildings and glasshouses.
- Very recently erected another larger polytunnel; cost ~€2,000 (labour included, main cost was the plastic) 80ft x 24ft wide. Took 1 week to construct.
- Regarding the sourcing of our glasshouses and polytunnels, the Project always try to shop locally. The materials for the polytunnels have all been sourced in Co. Donegal.



Edible cornflowers in the glasshouse.

Routes to Market



Main challenges

- Growing crops without “quick fix” conventional chemical options requires more planning and use of mechanical and biological control options.
- Slugs control - particular challenge on this site.
- Diseases such as botrytis in the Summer on the tomatoes.
- Weed control.

Future plans

- To build on adding new services such as workshops throughout the local community.

- Plans to expand services and widen the delivery area.

Other events

Whiteoaks Organic Project Pumpkin Day

Thursday 31st October 2019. All welcome.



Produce is mainly sold through a box delivery scheme.

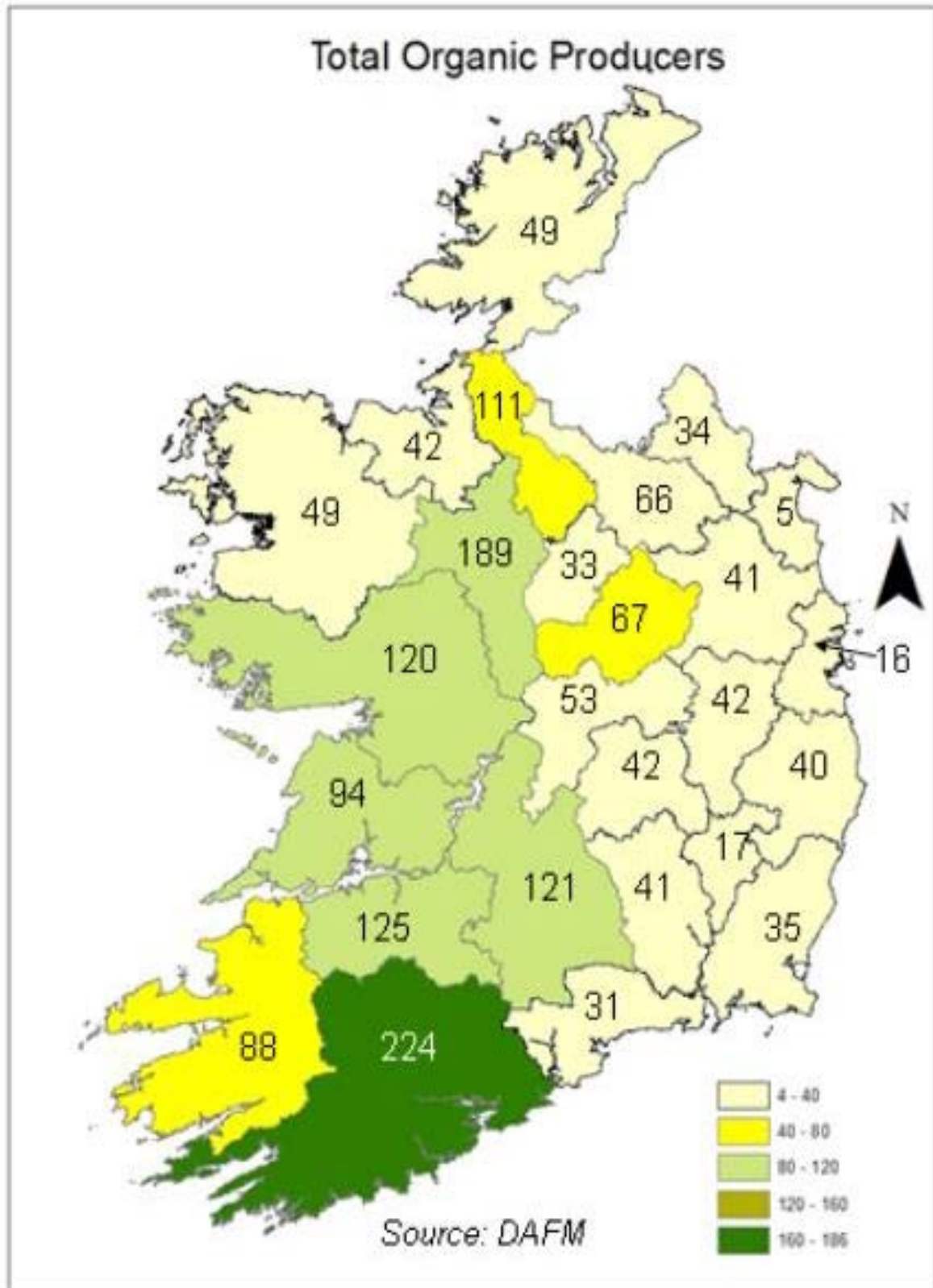
Regulation for Seed Usage

- Organic seed database with details of suppliers and available organic seed www.organicxseeds.com
- Must seek permission to use un-treated non-organic seed from your Organic Certification Body (OCB).
- A derogation must be obtained from the OCB for use of any untreated non organic seed prior to sowing.
- Conventional treated seed is not permitted to be used.



The project now has over 100 box scheme customers and plans to expand.

Location of all organic producers in Ireland - December 2015





An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

Organic Certification in Ireland

A major factor that distinguishes organic farming from other approaches to sustainable farming is the existence of internationally acknowledged standards and certification procedures. The standards for organic production within the European Union are defined and enshrined in law by Council Regulation EC 834/2007 as amended.

In Ireland the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine is the competent authority (i.e. - the Department's Organic Unit is based at Johnstown Castle Estate Wexford) for regulating the organic sector and ensuring that the obligations and requirements of Council Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 as amended and adhered to. The Organic Unit of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine have designated Official Certification Bodies whose role is to certify organic producers, farmers and processors through an inspection process of each individual's unit or farm. Further information can be sourced from these organic certification bodies:

IOA (Irish Organic Association)

13 Inish Carraig, Golden Island, Athlone.

Tel: (090) 64 33680 www.irishorganicassociation.ie

Organic Trust

2 Vernon Avenue, Clontarf, Dublin 3.

Tel: (01) 853 0271 www.organictrust.ie

Global Trust Certificate Ltd.

3rd floor, Block 3, Quayside Business Park, Mill Street, Dundalk, Co Louth.

Tel: (042) 93 20912 www.GTcert.com

BDA Certification- (Demeter)

Painswick Inn Project, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GLS 1QG, United Kingdom.

Tel: (0044) 145 376 6296 www.biodynamic.org.uk



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme Organic Capital Investment Scheme (OCIS)

A standard rate of aid of 40% on investments up to a ceiling of €80,000 (i.e. can generate a grant of €32,000 from an investment of €80,000). For qualifying young organic farmers who meet the specific eligibility criteria, the standard rate of aid is 60% on investments up to a ceiling of €80,000.

How to Apply and Closing Date:

Online applications only through www.agfood.ie facility.

Full details and T&C:

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmingsectors/organicfarming/organicsscheme/organiccapitalinvestmentschemeocis/>

Queries:

DAFM Organic Unit, Johnstown Castle: (053) 91 63400

Organic Processing Scheme

Grant aid of up to 40% on €1.25 million (i.e. can generate a grant of €500,000 for an investment of €1.25 million) in facilities for the processing, preparation, grading, packing and storage of organic products with minimum level of investment in excess of €3,000.

More Details:

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmingsectors/organicfarming/organicsscheme/schemeofgrantaidforthedevelopmentoftheorganicprocessingindustry-offfarm/>

Queries:

DAFM Organic Unit, Johnstown Castle: (053) 91 63400



Steps to Successful Organic Conversion

1. Get acquainted with the adjustments required by attending farm walks, talking to other organic farmers and or contacting a local advisor.
2. Research market opportunities. Contact relevant processors to explore market requirements, specifications and when the product is in demand. Many organic farmers choose to sell directly (especially market gardeners) which requires extra work to develop your own market.
3. Choose an Organic Certification Body (OCB) and get an information pack
4. Prepare a conversion plan and submit to OCB.
5. All entrants to the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) must enter for an initial five year plus term. Please consult DAFM website: www.agriculture.gov.ie for updates on a new Organic Farming Scheme.
6. A QQI approved 25 hour 'Introduction to Organic Production' course has to be completed by all new applicants before acceptance into the Organic Farming Scheme.



Whiteoaks Acorn Project

Contacts: Faunchea McCloskey, General Manager; Noel Doherty, Farm Manager. (00353) (0)74 93 84866.

Veg Box Orders: Facebook: Whiteoaks Acorn Organic Farm

Postal Address: IOSAS Centre and Celtic Prayer Garden, White Oaks Acorn Project, The Sanctuary Project, Lenamore Road, Derryvane, Muff, Co Donegal F93 F104, Tel: (00353) (0)74 93 84866.

Information on Organic Farming

Teagasc Website:

www.teagasc.ie/organics and
www.teagasc.ie/horticulture for further information.

Teagasc Organic Specialists:

Dan Clavin, Teagasc, Mellows Dev Centre, Athenry, Co. Galway.

dan.clavin@teagasc.ie

Elaine Leavy, Teagasc, Grange, Dunsany, Co. Meath.

elaine.leavy@teagasc.ie

Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine:

Dept. of Agriculture Food & Marine, Organic Unit, Johnstown Castle Est., Wexford.

Tel: (053) 9163400

Email: organicunit@agriculture.gov.ie

Web: www.agriculture.gov.ie



A series of 20 horizontal black lines, evenly spaced, providing a template for handwritten notes.

New Teagasc/DAFM Farm Walk Schedule 2019-2020 to be announced in Autumn 2019.

See www.teagasc.ie/organics for updates.



The poster features a green border and a background of various agricultural products including wheat, clover, tomatoes, and carrots. At the top left is the Teagasc logo with the text 'Teagasc' and 'AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY'. To its right is the harp logo and the text 'An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara' and 'Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine'. Further right is the European Union flag logo.

Organic Farm Walks 2019

Teagasc, Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine and organic organisations invite all farmers and members of the public to see organic farming in practice and to meet and speak with the producers and sector's experts.

Wed, 16th January 12pm Timothy O'Donoghue, Farranacliffe, Tipperary Suckler to Weanling	Wed, 29th May 2pm Tom & Gemma Dunne, Seefeld, Ballinaslee, Durrrow, Co. Laois Cereals, Beef Finishing
Wed, 20th February 12pm Peter & Jenny Young, Castlefarm, Narraghmore, Athy, Co. Kildare Dairy	Wed, 5th June 2pm Sean Condon, Fanningstown, Crecora, Co. Limerick Dairy
Wed, 17th April 12pm Donal Keane, Camelton Stud, Summerhill, Co. Meath Suckler to Beef, Cereals	Wed, 12th June 2pm Jason Stanley, Castlefleming, Errill, Co. Laois Sheep, Cereals
Wed, 24th April 12pm Stuart & Jean Kingston, Upper Forrest Farm, Farnanes, Co. Cork Beef Finishing, Cereals	Wed, 19th June 2pm Nurney Farm Organics, Carbury, Co. Kildare Fieldscale Veg, Protected Crops, Poultry eggs, Direct Selling
Wed, 8th May 12pm Ross & Amy Jackson, Woodview House, Lacka, Carrig, Birr, Co. Offaly Cereals, Sheep, Beef Finishing	Wed, 26th June 2pm White Oaks Acorn Project, Leanamore Rd, Derryvane, Muff, Co. Donegal Fieldscale Veg, Protected Crops, Direct Selling
Wed, 22nd May 2pm Andrew & Leonie Workman, Dunany Flour Organic, Togher, Drogheda, Co. Louth Cereals, Milling Flour	Wed, 3rd July 2pm Paul Kelly, Castledargan, Ballygawley, Co. Sligo Suckler to Weanling & Store

For more information please visit www.teagasc.ie/organics

