

Converting Redundant Farm Buildings



Introduction

The conversion of a redundant building can create a new source of income and there are many opportunities for building conversions including:

- Industrial workshops
- Recreation/tourism
- Residential

An under utilised resource can thus be converted into a valuable asset. Although there can be a substantial financial reward for landowners able to convert for these purposes, there are a number of important considerations. A landowner should carry out a feasibility study themselves to establish the implication of proceeding with the conversion, and the potential benefits.

The Market

Conversion into residential use remains the most popular option. Before proceeding with a building conversion all options should be considered including garden centres, horse liveries, restaurants etc.

Retail uses of converted agricultural buildings can include craft and clothes shops, farm supplies shops, warehouse style retail outlets and retail units linked to tourism attractions. Franchises are another option where the farmer can buy into an already successful retail business and replicate it at the farm.

A number of market factors should be considered when assessing the viability of a conversion. These include location, accessibility for customers, proximity to centres of population and local competition.

Market research is essential to assess demand for the type of retail unit that is likely to succeed, and that is more likely to obtain planning permission. A guide to the planning procedure can be obtained and you should have informal discussions with your local county council.



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This is one of a series of fact sheets on potential income generating activities.

All fact sheets are available in the Advisory Section of the Teagasc Website
www.teagasc.ie

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Teagasc Fact Sheets present a brief overview of a topic. Further detailed advice should always be sought from relevant sources

Requirements

Generally, you need planning permission if you are building, demolishing or alternating a building, or making a “material change of use” to structures.

For more information on planning see “Agriculture and Farm Development – The Planning Issues” available from your local council.

Experience indicates that planning permission is more likely to be gained if the road access is reasonable, the building is close to existing buildings, will not affect the neighbours, and will retain the same appearance after conversion.

The use of the site for purposes not associated with agriculture may be contrary to the deemed agricultural zoning of an area and could represent a material contravention of the Development Plan and may be problematic. Where it is proposed to extend a farm building, proposals must comply with the standards for waste water disposal and access, if a new access onto a public road is required. (Councils invoke the provisions of the Derelict Sites Act 1990 as appropriate).**Establishment Costs and Profit Margins**

Expenditure

Expenditure on conversion will vary considerably, depending on the construction of the building, its location, and whether the work will be outsourced to contract or undertaken directly by the owner.

Income

Income will be determined mainly by the use to which the conversion is devoted. Guidance is given in other Factsheets as to some of those uses. If you are considering leasing the building, contact local auctioneers to assess price and potential demand.

Funding

The County Enterprise Boards (CEBs) support “micro-enterprise” of ten employees and less, with grant-aid.

Leader is specifically intended to help enterprises in rural areas and have in the past supported many conversion projects.

If you have an idea you can contact your local county LEADER board and apply for grant assistance. Some previous LEADER assisted conversions include modern craft studios, Montessori schools, Hostels and Self Catering Holiday homes.

Business plans need to be completed in advance of starting your venture. Teagasc’s Rural Enterprise Service provides specialised training courses, seminars, support and individual advice to rural enterprises. See www.teagasc.ie/startingyourownbusiness for more information.

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