

Organic Farming

Newsletter

Summer 2014

Grasp the organic opportunity



Some of the most profitable farmers in the country are farming organically. High output levels, lower production costs and premium market prices contribute to higher margins. In many cases the Organic Farming Scheme payments are an added bonus.

Irish organic food enjoys an excellent reputation both at home and especially across Europe. There are shortages in the domestic market especially in grain, milk, fruit and vegetables. There is considerable scope in particular for import substitution of fruit and vegetables. Demand for Irish organic beef is on the rise, particularly in Europe. Price premiums are available for organic produce and vary between 15% and 100% over conventional prices.

Did you know?

- 1.3% of land in Ireland is farmed organically. The government target is to achieve 5%. The E.U average is 5.4%.
- In excess of 58,000ha is farmed organically in Ireland. Average farm size – 36ha approx.
- 1,400 farmers are currently organic or in-conversion in Ireland.
- The Irish organic market is worth €98m approx., up from €63m in 2004 (Source: Bord Bia).
- The EU market has quadrupled in size over the last 10 years and is now worth over €20 billion euro.

Steps to Successful Conversion to Organic Production

1. Get acquainted with the adjustments required by attending Teagasc/DAFM Organic Demo Farm Walk(s) - see: www.teagasc.ie/organics. Walks are due to commence from July 2014. Talk to other organic farmers and/or contact a local advisor.
2. Choose an Organic Certification Body (OCB) - IOFGA or Organic Trust, and get an information pack.
3. Prepare a conversion plan and submit to OCB.
4. Apply to the Organic Farming Scheme. A new scheme is due to re-open in 2015. Consult DAFM website: www.agriculture.gov.ie for more details.
5. A 25 hour 'Introduction to Organic Production' course and a business plan have to be completed before acceptance into the OFS.



Organic farming - Is it an option on your farm?

Is it Profitable? Organic farming can be a profitable system of farming with some of the most profitable farmers in the country farming organically. Maintaining high output levels, coupled with lower production costs and premium market prices contribute to higher margins. In many cases the organic farming scheme payments are an added bonus.

Stocking rates: Organic farming is being practised successfully in Ireland at stocking rates up to 2 livestock units per hectare. There are over 100,000 Irish farmers farming at lower stocking rates than this. Are you in this category?

Schemes and grant aid: At present in 2014, there is no Organic Farming Scheme. A new Organic Farming Scheme will re-open in early 2015 with improved payment rates in comparison to the old scheme. A grant scheme with 40% payment rates for new equipment, housing, processing facilities etc. is also available. Consult DAFM www.agriculture.gov.ie for further details.

Fertiliser: Good clover swards, crop rotation and targeted use of FYM and slurry mean that coping without artificial fertiliser can effectively be managed.

Higher organic feed prices: Using home grown grain, purchasing grain from other organic producers and having the correct breed and system can reduce feed costs significantly. This is a potential market for cereal farmers with grain currently trading at €350/tonne approx.

Housing: In organic farming, animals must have access to a bedded lying area. Housing may need to be modified on some farms if considering this system, please consult your adviser for further details.

Animal health: Animal health is extremely important part of organic principles. An animal health plan is prepared by your veterinary surgeon and submitted as part of the conversion plan. In essence animals are treated if a treatment is required for under more formal arrangements.

Horticulture and Cereals: Artificial fertilizers, fungicides, pesticides and insecticides are not permitted under organic standards. Organic farmers cope well with this by using grass clover breaks for fertility building, weed and disease control. Cereals crops are selected for their ability to outcompete weeds and disease resistant varieties are favoured by horticultural growers. Mechanical weeding techniques work well in organic agriculture.

Husbandry skills: A good farmer will always be a good farmer irrespective of the enterprise carried out. The skills required will be picked up easily from your adviser, attending a training course, attending farm walks and talking to other organic farmers. It would also be well worth while attending an organic course (contact your local advisor).

Markets: The organic markets are growing from strength to strength worldwide and especially in mainland Europe. There are shortages in the market especially in beef, grain, milk, fruit and vegetables. There is considerable scope in particular for import substitution of fruit and vegetables. The price premium available over non organic produce can be up to 100%.



Teagasc Organic Advisors:

Area	Contact Advisor	Contact No.
Donegal/Sligo/Leitrim	Paul Rigney	071-9183369
Mayo	John Noonan	098-28333
Monaghan/Cavan/Westmeath/Offaly	Paul Gibney	044-9340721
Galway/Clare	Martin Feerick	065-6828676
Roscommon/Longford	Enda O Hart	094-9620160
Cork West	Michael Bourke	026-41604
Meath/Dublin/Louth/Kildare	Sean Finn	01-8460644
Tipperary	Gordon Peppard	052-6121300
Limerick	Kevin Fitzgerald	068-21266
Kerry	David Trant	068-21266
Carlow/Wicklow/Wexford	Stephen Eivers	059-9183555
Waterford/Kilkenny	Dan Clavin	091-845200



What are the key questions?

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

Animal systems

1. Is your current stocking rate below 2 L.U per ha?
2. Can your animal housing be modified to incorporate a bedded lying area?
3. Are you a REPS 4 or AEOS participant?

Crop systems

1. Can you incorporate a grass/clover break into your rotation?
2. Do you have a source of farmyard manure/slurry on your own farm?
3. Are you interested in achieving gross margins of €1000 per ha for cereal production?

Organic Farming Schemes

1. Organic Farming Scheme

Conditions:

Awaiting new Terms and Conditions. Please consult with DAFM www.agriculture.gov.ie.

2. On-Farm Grant Aid Scheme

- Grant aid for on farm investment. Examples: Purchasing of equipment, changes to housing facilities
- 40% Grant (excl. V.A.T.)
- Maximum payment of €20,000

3. Off-Farm Grant Aid Scheme 2014

- Grant for off farm investment. Examples: Develop facilities for grading produce, cold storage facilities, butchering equipment
- Grant rate 40%
- Maximum payment of €100,000

Getting started

Organic farming is a system of farming. If you wish to convert or investigate if this system is for you contact your local Teagasc adviser (see details above). Your adviser will guide you through a few simple steps to conversion and guide you through the adjustments required to your existing farming system to meet organic standards.

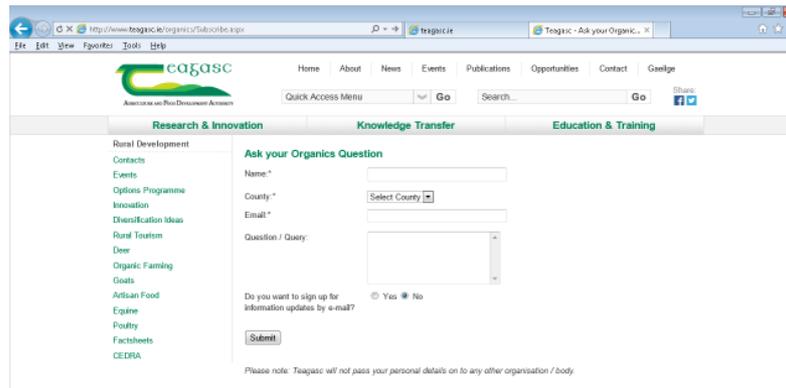
For example:

- The adjustments required to meet organic standards and timelines.
- Choosing a certification body and getting an information pack
- Getting a conversion plan prepared and submitted to Organic Certification Body (OCB).
- How to apply for Organic Farming Scheme payments and grant aid if required.



New

- Ask your organic questions and subscribe to organic updates from Teagasc: www.teagasc.ie/organics



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Teagasc website. The page title is 'Teagasc - Ask your Organic...'. The main content area features a form titled 'Ask your Organic Question'. The form includes fields for 'Name*', 'County*' (with a dropdown menu), and 'Email*'. Below these is a 'Question / Query' text area. At the bottom of the form, there is a checkbox for 'Do you want to sign up for information updates by e-mail?' with radio buttons for 'Yes' and 'No', and a 'Submit' button. A small note at the bottom of the page states: 'Please note: Teagasc will not pass your personal details on to any other organisation / body.'

- The Organic Option - Success Stories DVD. 8 organic farmers tell their own success stories. Watch online or order a copy: www.teagasc.ie/organics/dvd.asp#video

2014-2015 Organic Demonstration Farm Walks

JULY Thursday 17 July, 2 pm Oliver Dixon Athena, Claremorris, Co. Mayo Beef Thursday 31 July, 2 pm Eleanor and Richard Murphy Robinstown House, Glenmore, Co. Kilkenny Cereals, Beef, Sheep AUGUST Thursday 21 August, 2 pm Alan Jackson Lacka House, Riverstown, Birr, Co. Offaly Beef, Cereal Tuesday 26 August, 2 pm Kay O'Sullivan Garrynagearagh, Mourneabbey, Mallow, Co. Cork Beef, Sheep, Cereal	SEPTEMBER Wednesday 10 September, 5.30 pm Darren and Patrick Byrne Strifeland, The Hill, Balbriggan, Dublin Horticulture, Poultry, Direct Sales Thursday 18 September, 2 pm Pat Mulrooney Manganstown, Kilsheelan, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary Dairy Tuesday 30 September, 2 pm Anthony Boyle and Morgan Hurley Thornhill Organic Farm Skibbereen, Co. Cork Horticulture, Direct Sales OCTOBER Tuesday 7 October, 2 pm Greenearth Organic Farm Caherlea, Corrundulla, Co. Galway Horticulture, Direct Sales	Wednesday 15 October, 2 pm John Curran Moygrehan, Fordstown, Navan, Co. Meath Beef, Sheep, Cereal NOVEMBER Wednesday 5 November, 2 pm Mark Duffy Bellview, Cloger, Ballybay, Co. Monaghan Beef Wednesday 19 November, 2 pm Pat Booth Heath, Killone, Stradbally, Co. Laois Beef MARCH 2015 Wednesday 25 March, 2 pm Mark Gillanders Ballinagall, Monaghan, Co. Monaghan Beef, Arable
---	--	---

Useful contacts:

Organic Trust, 2 Vernon House, Vernon Avenue, Dublin 3. Tel. 01 8530271

IOFGA, 16A Inish Carrig, Golden Island, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Tel. 090 643 3680.

Organic Unit, Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, Johnstown Castle, Co. Wexford. Tel. 053 9163400.

For further information on any issues raised in this newsletter, or to access other enterprise newsletters, please contact your local Teagasc adviser or see www.teagasc.ie