

Rural Economy &
Development
Programme

Organic Farming

A Step-by-Step Guide to Conversion



November 2018 update

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/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. Are you in GLAS? Some GLAS measures eg. Traditional Hay Meadow, Low Input Permanent Pasture and Wild Bird Cover are not eligible for Organic Scheme payment.

Step 2 - Investigate

1. Get acquainted with the adjustments required by attending farm walk(s), talking to other organic farmers and or 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

1. Soluble mineral fertilisers are prohibited, but some inputs such as lime and rock phosphate are permitted.
2. 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.
3. Most manufactured agro-chemicals (e.g. herbicides) are prohibited.

Animal welfare

1. The highest standards of animal welfare are obligatory. Permission to carry out mutilations, bedding and generous floor space are required for housed animals.
2. 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.
3. 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 get an application pack

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 generally 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.

The OCBs carry out annual inspections of every organic enterprise. Further information can be sourced from these certification bodies:

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

Tel: 090 6433680 [Email: info@irishoa.ie](mailto:info@irishoa.ie)

Web: www.irishorganicassociation.ie

Organic Trust, 2 Vernon Avenue, Clontarf, Dublin 3

Tel: 01 8530271 [Email: organic@iol.ie](mailto:organic@iol.ie)

Web: www.organictrust.ie



Step 4 Complete a QQI Course in Organic Production

A 25 hour 'Organic Farming Principles' course must be completed before acceptance into the OFS. For information and booking details on courses held nationwide go to:

www.teagasc.ie/organics. **Applicants must complete course by 1 Sept. 2019.**

Step 5 Application - Organic Farming Scheme (Tranche 3-targeted scheme)

Note: A ranking and selection process will be put in place that will give priority to organic sectors that are deemed to be in deficit ie. dairy, cereals and horticulture.

First, complete a conversion plan and submit along with an application form and other requested documentation to an OCB.

Second, obtain an Organic License no. from OCB to become a "registered organic operator."

Third, apply to Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine to join the Organic Farming Scheme.

This requires 2 separate online applications:

- Submit Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) application ONLINE. **Deadline 19 Dec 2018.**
- Choose organic or in-conversion land parcels on BPS in 2019 (Basic Payment Scheme) application ONLINE.

See <https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmingsectors/organicfarming> for all details.

Payment Rates for Organic Farming Scheme 2018

	In Conversion (Year 1 & 2)	Maintenance Rate (Years 3, 4 & 5+)
Livestock: 3-60Ha	€220/Ha	€170/Ha
Livestock: Over 60Ha	€60/Ha	€30/Ha
Tillage: Up to 20Ha	€260/Ha	€170/Ha
Tillage: Over 20Ha	€220/Ha	€170/Ha
Horticulture: 1 -6Ha	€300/Ha	€200/Ha
Horticulture: Over 6Ha	€220/Ha	€170/Ha

An additional €30/Ha is available for red clover

Step 6 . The Conversion Process

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

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 and Contacts: www.teagasc.ie/organics

Organic Knowledge Transfer

Welcome to the website of the Teagasc Organic Production Department. Teagasc provides training, advice and research for those involved in organic production, those considering converting to organic farming and the wider organic sector.



Is Organics an option for you?



Steps to Organic Conversion



Scheme & Grant Aid

[Ask an Organics Question](#)



Training



FAQ



Resources

Teagasc Organic Specialists

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

Email: dan.clavin@teagasc.ie

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

Email: elaine.leavy@teagasc.ie

Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, Organic Unit, Johnstown Castle Est, Co. Wexford

Web: www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmingsectors/organicfarming

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