

# Organic Farming

Are you missing out on a great opportunity?

*Expert knowledge means success*

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Note: This publication has not been updated since it was last published. Some of the hyperlinks may have changed and may need updating. In addition, some of the information in this publication may be out of date.

## Introduction

Some farmers and growers might be missing out on a great opportunity if they don't give serious thought to organic production - it might apply to you too if you're a farmer or horticulturist. With growing consumer demand for organic food, conversion to organic farming may help you to maintain or improve your income whilst managing your land in an environmentally-friendly way.

But organic farming is not an easy option. You should consider carefully the financial implications for your business of going organic and you may well need training if your enterprise is to succeed. A number of colleges offer courses in organic agriculture and horticulture.

Much of this publication was prepared in 2009 and it will be updated further in due course.

## What exactly is Organic Farming?

In practical terms, organic farming is a system that:

- Avoids artificial fertilisers and pesticides.
- Emphasises the role of crop rotation in helping to maintain soil fertility and quality and to combat pest and disease problems.
- Requires the use of fertility building crops.
- Uses natural fertilisers - such as animal manures.
- In the case of livestock, animals are kept in a welfare-friendly manner as well as avoiding the use of conventional medicines and other treatments.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ("Defra") discuss Organic farming in these terms:

- Organic farming methods are designed to achieve a sustainable system with limited use of external resources. Rotations are an essential component for disease and pest control and to provide fertility for growing crops. On mixed arable and livestock farms, the

use of grass/legume breaks is an integral part of most systems. Pure legume stands may be used either for forage production or cut and mulched to build fertility.

- Changing to an organic system of farming is known as conversion. Conversion and the final organic system must be considered on a whole farm basis to obtain an accurate picture of the changes required and their financial costs and benefits.
- For land, to achieve organic status, it must be registered and farmed to organic standards for a period of two years. During this conversion period, output is likely to decrease without the accompanying compensation for premium prices. Often, this effect is minimised by a gradual introduction of land into the system. Sometimes, it may be better to make the changes required in one go to speed up the time in obtaining premium prices.
- For livestock, the conversion period can be faster than for land. But, since livestock must be fed an organic ration (including forage), the conversion is finalised in practice when sufficient land has been converted to supply the required forage.
- It is during the conversion period, that the greatest changes have to be made to the farm system. It requires detailed technical planning, careful financial budgeting and proper consideration of the marketing techniques to be deployed to obtain the maximum potential from organic markets and the premium pricing they offer.
- It may be possible to convert only part of a farm/horticultural holding if (1) the converted area can be regarded as sustainable in its own right and (2) there are no opportunities for fraudulently switching conventional and organic produce.

## Converting to Organic Farming

Organic food production in Europe is strictly regulated by an inspection, certification and labelling scheme. It is unlawful to call a food product 'organic' if it has not been inspected and certified by one of several organic control bodies.

Organic farming offers UK farmers the chance to diversify into new farming methods and markets, while benefiting biodiversity and sustainability within agriculture and rural communities. Organic farming also allows farmers to



A definition of Organic Farming  
'Organic production systems are designed to produce optimum quantities of food of high nutritional quality by using management practices which aim to avoid the use of agro-chemical inputs and which minimise damage to the environment and wildlife.'

Source: UK Register of Organic Food Standards

## develop professionally by:

- using a range of techniques drawn from the latest research in soil science, biodiversity, crop breeding, animal husbandry, ecology, animal welfare standards, and the preservation of natural resources;
- reaching diverse markets through new channels - by sale to leading national supermarkets, local restaurants or specialist organic shops, or directly to consumers via organic farmers' markets, box schemes and/or online selling.

The U K organic market is the third largest in Europe, after Germany and Italy. After a decade of strong annual growth, sales of organic food grew by a more modest 1.7 per cent in 2008 and fell by 12.9 per cent in 2009. Although the value of organic sales fell in 2009, sales of some products actually increased, such as organic baby food (up by 20.8 per cent) and organic milk (up by 1 per cent).

## According to the Soil Association's Organic Market Report for 2009:

- in 2009 sales of organic products in the UK were worth £1.84 billion - a decrease of 12.9 per cent on 2008.
- despite the downturn, organic food sales were still more than three times higher than ten years previously and more than 50 per cent higher than five years ago.
- in terms of retail sales value, the three biggest categories of organic food were dairy products, fresh produce and fresh meat.
- there was a 9 per cent increase on the previous year in the area of land under organic management - now at 743,516 hectares or 4.3 per cent of agricultural land.
- the amount of land in conversion to organic status dropped by 5.6 per cent, to 149,103 hectares.
- 5,177 producers were producing organic products - up by 4.2 per cent on the previous year.

An organic farming system avoids the application of artificial fertilisers and pesticides, and uses crop rotation and other forms of husbandry to maintain soil fertility and control weeds, pests and diseases.

You may qualify to register your land and produce as organic, if you do the following:

- Maintain the fertility and biological activity of the soil.

- Increase soil quality by multi-annual crop rotation including legumes and other green manure crops.
- Feed your organic livestock only 100 per cent organic feed that meets their needs at that stage of their development - either from your own or a neighbouring farm. Certain exceptions may apply - e.g. if 100 per cent organic feed is unavailable in your area, you can provide feed from an in-conversion holding. If you cannot get certain organic ingredients, you may be able to include non-organic ingredients approved for use in organic feeds.
- Feed suckling animals only with natural milk, preferably maternal.
- Use livestock manure or organic material - preferably composted from organic production - either from your own or a neighbouring farm.
- Stop the use of growth promoters, synthetic amino acids, herbicides and pesticides in your system.



Requirements apply through all phases of food production and processing. For example:

- you are only permitted to use substances from an authorised list
- you must display labels showing where your organic products were farmed
- you must ensure that at least 95 per cent of the produce ingredients are organic to label a produce as 'organic'
- you must not use genetically modified (GM) organisms or products produced from or by these in organic production

You must use the European Union (EU) organic logo on all pre-packaged food which you label as 'organic,' with the use of national and other logos being optional. A product may only be described as organic if at least 95 per cent of its agricultural ingredients have been produced organically. The EU logo cannot be used on products that do not meet the 95 per cent rule.

## Environmental Stewardship

Environmental Stewardship is an agri-environment scheme that provides funding to farmers and other land managers in England to deliver effective environmental management on your land.

## How does Environmental Stewardship work?

There are three elements to Environmental Stewardship:

- Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) provides a straightforward approach to supporting the good stewardship of the countryside. This is done through simple and effective land management that goes beyond the Single Payment Scheme requirement to maintain land in good agricultural and environmental condition. It is open to all farmers and landowners.
- Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) is the organic strand of ELS. It is geared to organic and organic/conventional mixed farming systems and is open to all farmers not receiving Organic Farming Scheme aid.
- Uplands Entry Level Stewardship (Uplands ELS) was launched in February 2010 to support hill farmers with payments for environmental management. This strand of Environmental Stewardship succeeds the Hill Farm Allowance. It is open to all farmers with land in Severely Disadvantaged Areas, regardless of the size of the holding.
- Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) involves more complex types of management and agreements are tailored to local circumstances. HLS applications will be assessed against specific local targets and agreements will be offered where they meet these targets and represent good value for money.

## Organic Entry Level Stewardship

OELS is one element of the Environmental Stewardship scheme delivered by Natural England to promote effective environmental management. It provides funding if you're already farming organically on land registered with an organic control body (CB). Aid may also be available as top-up to OELS payments if you're converting to an organic system.

To qualify for OELS funding you must be registered as an organic farmer with an approved CB, not be in an existing organic aid scheme and adopt appropriate management practices on your land.

The scheme operates only in England. Separate schemes are available if you farm in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Organic Entry Level Stewardship replaced the Organic Farming Scheme which was closed to new applicants in March 2005.

Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS), including Uplands OELS, is delivered by Natural England, on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Its aims are to:

- encourage wildlife conservation;
- maintain and enhance landscape quality and character;
- protect natural resources;
- reduce potential damage arising from climate change;

Farmers who manage a combination of organic and conventionally managed land can apply for OELS on their organic land and Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) on their conventional land, as part of one combined agreement.

OELS is a whole farm scheme, so all eligible land should be entered. Payments are based on the amount of eligible organic land on your farm. OELS agreements last five years, with payments made to you every six months.

### Payments per hectare

To get OELS payments, you must generate 60 points of management options per hectare of eligible organic land. In return, you will receive a payment of £60 per hectare of eligible OELS land per year. There are higher payments for Uplands OELS - up to £92 per hectare.

Applicants automatically receive 30 points per hectare of eligible organic land. The remaining 30 points are made up from your chosen management options, for example:

- low input grassland (115 points per hectare);
- in-field tree protection on rotational land (16 points per tree);
- two-metre buffer strips on rotational land (400 points per hectare).

Aid for converting conventionally farmed improved land and established top-fruit orchards to organic farming is also available through OELS at rates of £175 per hectare per year for the first two years of the OELS agreement on improved land, and £600 per hectare per year for the first three years of the agreement for areas of top-fruit orchards.

## Defining your land

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If your farm has a mixture of organic and conventional land, you will receive £60 per hectare per year for all organic land registered with an organic control body (CB) and entered into OELS. You will also get ELS payments, at £30 per hectare per year, for any conventional land, which you will be required to include in the scheme.

If you change CBs, you must register your land with a different CB before you de-register from your existing one, so that your registration is unbroken throughout the full term of your agreement.

Organic land in parcels of 15 hectares or more within the Moorland Line is not eligible for OELS and must be entered into the ELS scheme instead, at a rate of £8 per hectare. Land receiving payments from the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) may be entered into OELS and/or ELS. The payment will be in addition to any payment you receive for SPS.

## Uplands OELS

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Uplands OELS replaced the Hill Farm Allowance (HFA), which is not paid after 2010. Land which you claim HFA for is eligible to count towards your Uplands OELS points' target.

If you are already in OELS, you can replace it with Uplands OELS.

Uplands OELS provides funding if you:

- are already farming organically on land registered with an organic control body (CB) or are converting to an organic system;
- have at least one parcel of eligible land within the Severely Disadvantaged Areas (SDAs) in England;
- adopt appropriate management practices on your land;
- have no current Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) or Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) agreement;

For more information on Uplands Entry Level Stewardship (Uplands ELS) visit: [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

## Applying for Organic Entry Level Stewardship

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You can apply at any time for an Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) agreement. There are monthly start dates. The application involves preparing a Farm Environment Record in which you should set

out all your farm's environmental features. Before you can enter land into OELS, including Uplands OELS, and start to receive payments, you must:

- register or already be registered on the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) Rural Land Register (RLR);
- register or already be registered with an approved organic control body (CB).

If you are a tenant or contractual licensee, you must check that any OELS agreement you intend to enter will not put you in breach of your agreement with the landlord or landowner. You will need to have their counter signature to the OELS agreement as well as their commitment to take it over if your control of the land should lapse before the five-year period of the OELS.

## Registering land on the Rural Land Register

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To register land on the RLR, you must have a Single Business Identifier number, an RPA vendor number and a County Parish Holding number. If you do not already have these numbers, RPA can allocate them to you. If you have claimed payments under the Single Payment Scheme or other Defra and RPA schemes, you will already have an RPA vendor number.

Common land is not eligible for OELS but may be eligible for Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) if you submit a separate application covering the whole common.

You can find out more about registering land by contacting the RPA Helpline on Tel +44 (0)845 603 7777.

## Application form for Organic Entry Level Stewardship

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To register your OELS or combined OELS/ELS application, and request an application form and a set of application maps, contact Natural England at the address below. Your application form must be sent to Natural England by post to the same address:

Natural England (ISS office)  
PO Box 380  
Crewe, CW1 6YH

You can call the Natural England Enquiry Service on Tel: +44 (0)845 600 3078. Alternatively you can request registration via e-mail: [els.online@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:els.online@naturalengland.org.uk)



Natural England aims to provide an agreement within three months of receiving your application.

## Entry Level Stewardship Online

ELS Online is a secure software package that enables you to prepare and submit your ELS application electronically. You or an agent submitting an application on your behalf can register to use ELS Online. Among its features is a tool to help you calculate your total number of points. ELS online visit: <http://tinyurl.com/6rfrm4t>

## What are permanent crops?

The definition of 'Permanent Crops' covers crops that occupy the soil for a period of five years or more and yield crops over several years. This would normally include nurseries, trees and bushes for the production of fruit and berries, and vines. Not included are strawberries and multi-annual crops.

## Organic certification and standards

Organic food production within the European Union (EU) is strictly regulated. If you are a farmer, grower, food processor, storage provider and/or an importer of organic food from a non-EU country, or if you market organic products, you must be registered with an approved organic control body. You must also be inspected at least once a year to ensure that you meet the EU-wide standards. Only then can your products legally be labelled and marketed as 'organic'.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is the authority responsible for organic farming regulations in the UK.

The word 'organic' is defined in law. European Union (EU) rules apply to the organic production and to the labelling and control of organic products.

Organic control bodies (CBs) license individual organic operators. They are approved by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). You must be registered with one of the CBs, comply with their standards and meet their requirements in order to market your produce as 'organic'.

Each or all of the following activities require registration with an approved CB:

- producing or processing organic food or products;
- importing organic food or products from third countries, i.e. those outside the EU (with named exceptions);
- producing organic animal feeds;
- re-labelling organic products at any stage of the distribution chain.

If you are considering converting to organic, you will need to think about the implications in terms of time, cost and the changes you might have to make.

Once you have decided to go organic and have chosen an approved CB, you'll need a copy of their standards and an application form. A list of approved UK CB's can be found on the Defra website: [www.defra.gov.uk/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/)

## Application forms

You can download the application forms that apply to your business and return these to the organic control body, or you can phone the relevant CB to request them. The CB will then contact you to arrange a mandatory inspection. When you apply to register with a CB, you agree to work to its standards and open your farm and all its processes to the CB's annual and ad hoc inspection regime. You will not be fully certified until you have completed a conversion period, which normally lasts at least two years.

To complete your application form, you will need to provide:

- your full name and address, farm name and the trading name of the main holding and any other holdings;
- the total size of the holding(s) and the number of hectares you wish to convert to organic;
- the name and address of any advisers you employ;
- the names, addresses and licence numbers of any contracted storage and handling facilities you use;
- information on all the crops or livestock your farm produces and any on-farm process you carry out;
- confirmation of whether you have used sewage sludge, insecticides, fungicides or herbicides in recent years.

In your application, you will also have to set out briefly how you propose to manage soil fertility and manure and describe how you plan to source, store and handle waste. You will also have to briefly describe your crop rotation plan and its aims. You will later need

to expand on these and other processes in your full conversion plan. You may wish to contact The Organic Advisory Service, which offers advice to help farmers convert to organic farming.

## Where can I get advice and information?

The Organic Advisory Service based at the Organic Research Centre is able to provide conversion advice via its helpline. It can also provide telephone contracts and consultancy on conversion on a commercial basis.

Conversion Helpline Tel: 01488 658279

E-mail: [info@organicresearchcentre.com](mailto:info@organicresearchcentre.com)

Web: [www.organicresearchcentre.com/](http://www.organicresearchcentre.com/)

Further advice and information concerning organic farming can be obtained by telephoning the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs. Tel: +44 (0)8459 33 55 77

## Processing and stores

If any stage of the processing of products takes place on your farm, you must cover this in your application. Any stores or other buildings in which production processes take place - either on your farm or by contractors on other farms - must also be inspected. This includes processes such as the washing, drying and/or cold storage of produce you have grown.

When you register farm production, you need to include:

- each farm production unit, down to individual fields and including their OS/RLR numbers;
- each production enterprise - e.g. dairy cattle, vegetables, and/or cereals;
- a named manager as head of each production unit.

Only products from the named fields and enterprise units can be certified and thus marketed as organic.

You must complete the form and return it to the CB with a fee. The CB will then send you their standards manual and the forms in which you will have to briefly describe your conversion plan. After assessing your application, the CB will contact you to arrange an inspection. For more information on converting to Organic Farming visit: <http://tinyurl.com/7cqcbt>

## Record Keeping for Organic Producers

Guidance notes designed to assist organic farmers and growers to comply with the Record Keeping standards have been issued by Organic Farmers and Growers<sup>1</sup> - they are reproduced below:



### Record Keeping

The term 'Organic' when applied to food is a statutory label which gives the consumer a guarantee that it has been produced in a specified manner, namely to the UKROF/OF&G Standards ("the Standards") The keeping of comprehensive records by producers is a key requirement of the Standards and is one of the principal means by which the integrity of the product can be verified.

The Standards Chapter II Section 15 specifies the records which must be kept and the failure to do this is an infringement which may result in an additional inspection at the producer's expense.

The continued failure to keep the appropriate records over two inspections may result in the loss of organic status for a crop or product and if not rectified, possibly for the whole farm.

Computerised records are acceptable but regular backups must be made to ensure their availability in the event of a system crash.

The following guidelines indicate the options available:

#### *Standard 15.2 - Input Records:*

Purchase invoices must be kept for all purchases and should be organised in date order.

Where manures are bartered, such as manure for straw, or are available for free from local stables etc., or are brought in from an associated conventional unit managed by the same producer, these must be recorded separately in terms of approximate quantities delivered, dates and sources.

#### *Standard 15.3 - Output Records:*

All outputs must be recorded by either sales invoices or delivery notes as specified. The code 'Organic Certification UK2' should be used on all labels and invoices for which certification has been obtained for the

products, to identify OF&G as the inspection body.

In the case of retail sales to the consumer, the quantity should be recorded on a daily basis. This can be done by an electronic point of sale in the case of a retail outlet, by sales invoices or by recording the bulk transfer of products from the holding to the shop.

### *Standard 15.4 – Stock Records:*

More applicable to processing operations but this also applies to raw materials or products, such as cereals or animal feeds which are stored in bulk. A periodic stock-take should be done (at least once per year at the accounting year end) to record the quantity in store.

### *Standard 15.5 – Crop Records*

#### i) In-Conversion

##### a) & b) Planned Rotations by field or area

The planned crop rotations for each field must be recorded for at least the next two years and preferably for an entire arable rotation. The OF&G Crop & Rotation Record Sheet is designed for recording this information and will be issued with all the fields listed following receipt of an application.

In addition to the arable and horticultural crops, grass fields used for silage, clean grazing and forage crops or reseeded should also be recorded with their planned management for each year.

Future crops can be indicated in pencil so that they can be amended if necessary and current crops completed in ink. A similar form of recording the rotation can be done on a computer spreadsheet.

##### c) The previous chemical treatments

The chemical used on each field should be recorded on the Field History Sheets in the Application Form or Annual Questionnaire.

#### ii) Organic Status

##### a & b) Rotation Plan and cropping plan by field or area.

See 15.5i above for the means of recording these in compliance with the Standards.

##### c) Organic materials for soil conditioning and fertilisation

##### d) Mineral fertilisers

##### e) Pest control materials

All the above must be recorded in terms of their source, type, rate of usage and date on a field-by-field basis.

The OF&G Field/Cropping Record Sheet is designed to comply with this Standard. One copy should be made for each field or cropping area (block of fields managed together, greenhouse or permanent vegetable bed) and used to record the day-to-day activities on that field.

A computerised form of record keeping is also acceptable as is a farm diary provided that personal details are not included.

A pocket diary is easier to keep up to date if carried around but less useful as a management tool unless the information is periodically transferred to the Field Record Sheets or computer spreadsheet.

##### f) Seeds and transplants

The species, variety, organic status, chemical seed dressing (if any), quantity and the source of all seed and plant material must all be recorded. Often, the most convenient way of doing this is to keep the delivery notes, invoices or seed packets or labels.

Organically produced seeds and vegetable reproductive materials (including cereal, vegetable, forage and grass and clover seed, trees, fruit bushes, strawberry runners, seed potatoes and onion sets) should be used where available.

Where organic materials are unavailable, documentation, such as seed catalogues and letters from suppliers, should be kept to confirm this.

Where organic materials are not available, non-organic seeds can be used with permission. The OF&G Derogation Request To Use Non-Organic Seed & Vegetable Reproductive Materials Sheet or alternatively, a copy of the seed order or purchase invoice can be used to list these and obtain a derogation from the Certification Officer.

Every effort should be made to obtain seeds without chemical dressings.

Where this is sometimes unavoidable, such as with maize or sweet corn, a record of the treatment must be kept.

All transplants must be grown in an acceptable organic compost, either on the organic unit or by a registered plant raiser.

The source and numbers of each variety must be recorded, whether raised on the holding or brought in from another registered plant raiser.

## *Standard 15.6 – Livestock Records:*

### The Livestock Movement Record

This is required by law and must be kept up to date. A number of standard books are available for this purpose and are acceptable. The book should also include births and deaths unless these are recorded elsewhere.

#### i) Brought in stock

A detailed record of each purchase must be kept which includes the BSE status of the animals, both for breeding stock and fattening stock (see Standard Chapter II Section 7.27)

The OF&G BSE Audit Sheet is available to record this information and the checks required to confirm their BSE-free status or their removal from the herd.

#### ii) Veterinary Treatments

Again, this is required by law and suitable books are available to record the treatments. A book must be established even if no treatments have been used to date.

In addition to the withdrawal period specified by the manufacturer, the extended withdrawal periods specified in the Standards (see Standard Chapter II Section 7.26) must also be recorded.

Where a Veterinary surgeon carries out a treatment, they will normally keep their own records. It is still a requirement that the producer keeps the farm records up to date as well.

## *Standard 15.7 – Feed Stuffs:*

The OF&G Animal Nutrition Record Sheet can be used to record the required information by making a copy for each group of animals receiving a similar feed regime.

All the ingredients and their proportions and organic/conversion/non-organic status must be recorded plus the quantities fed to each class of animal.

Brought in compounds can be recorded by keeping copies of the ingredients labels. In addition, the quantities fed must also be recorded.

On the following Record Sheets there are examples to help you to comply with your record-keeping obligations.



## (3) Livestock Nutrition Record Sheet

Livestock Enterprise .....

Notes:

- 1) Livestock enterprise = Dairy/beef/sheep/pigs/poultry, etc.
- 2) Type of stock = Calves 0-6 months/6-12 months/12-24 months/dairy cows/suckler cows/twin ewes/single ewes/gilts/sows/weaners/laying/table birds, etc;
- 3) Feeding Period = dates between which the ration is fed;
- 4) Note individual ingredients for farm produced mixes or attach the sack/specification labels of brought in compounds and straights;
- 5) Average Dry Matter = Herd/flock average fed daily; total up for the year.

Type of stock	Feeding period	Ingredients, Quantity and Organic Status			Average Dry matter Kg/Animal	
		Organic	Conversion	Non-Organic	Daily	Annual
	Dates From: To:					

## (4) Crop Rotation Record Sheet

Producer .....

Farm.....

For recording the main crops (including arable crops, grazed pasture, hay and silage, fodder crops and reseeded) planned and grown each year.

No.	Field/Cropping Units	OS Nos.	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008

## How Organic Farming benefits the environment

As the Department for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Defra) says: "Well-practiced organic farming is one of the more environmentally-friendly systems of food production, because it seeks to work with natural process instead of controlling them. The potential for pollution and other environmental degradation is lessened by avoiding the use of 'artificial' chemical inputs."

The UK Register of Organic Food Standards (UKROFS) set out a number of specific environmental requirements. For example, organic farmers must:

- Protect natural features, such as streams, ponds, wetlands, heathland and unimproved grassland;
- Maintain hedges, stone walls and trees;
- Manage grazing in natural or semi-rural habitats;
- Retain archaeological features;
- Take care in their use of manures and animal wastes.

## Organic premiums

Premiums for organic produce are well established in many areas, e.g. milling wheat, vegetables and milk. More recently, farmers are receiving substantial premiums for meat. When preparing budgets, farmers should make allowances for the likely availability of premiums when conversion has been completed.

## Set-aside and arable area payments

Set-aside and Arable Aid generally applies to organic farms in the same way as conventional farms. Organic farms may apply for annual derogations to include legumes in set-aside mixtures and they have more flexibility over summer cultivations. Set-aside arrangements can be integrated into organic systems to benefit fertility building, weed control, pest and disease breaks, ley establishment and business reorganisation. Some of these arrangements may be of

particular benefit during the conversion process.

## Suckler cow, sheep annual premium scheme, beef special premium scheme

These apply to the organic farm in the same way as non-organic farms. Changes to the farm business during conversion may provide opportunities to lease out or sell quota. In practice, organic farmers have not been able to obtain additional ewe quota any more easily than conventional farms. Therefore the need to lease in or purchase quota for the introduction or expansion of a sheep flock must be budgeted for in conversion plans. Additional suckler cow quota may be available to organic farmers from the National Reserve.

## Statistics

Statistics produced by Defra on the organic farming sector were released on 29 July 2010, according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority. This release shows information gathered during 2009 for organic crops and livestock produced in the United Kingdom, and the numbers of organic producers / processors who are registered with Organic Certification Bodies in the UK.

The key results are:

- Land areas - At a UK level the total organic land area has shown very little change over the last year, with just a 1% decrease between 2008 and 2009. The cereals area has seen a modest increase of 5% to 60,000 ha, while the vegetables area (including potatoes) has shown a small decrease of 4% over the year to 18,900 ha. Temporary and permanent pasture land make up the majority of organic land and have shown little change between 2008 and 2009, with temporary pasture showing a slight decrease of 3% to 126,200 ha and permanent pasture remaining static at 495,800 ha.
- Livestock numbers - Generally, organic livestock numbers have showed a downturn between 2008 and 2009 with only cattle showing an increase. The pig sector showed a sharp decrease

of 32% to 48 thousand following unprecedented growth in 2008. Organic poultry numbers showed a decrease of 9% to 4 million as consumer demand fell. Cattle numbers for the UK have increased by 4% to 331 thousand. Sheep numbers for 2009 are 885 thousand. We are unable to provide historical data for sheep at the moment as we are investigating some inconsistencies in the historical data and will publish these results as soon as they are available.

- Producer / processor numbers - The number of organic producer / processors has shown a slight decrease (4%) to almost 7,600 at the end of 2009. All UK regions have shown decreases with the North West showing the largest percentage drop of 9%.

## UKROFS - Strict production standards

For many years, there have been codes for organic farming prepared by voluntary bodies and applied by their members. A European Community Regulation became effective in 1993 - it describes the inputs and practices that may be used in organic farming and growing, and the inspection system that must be put into place to ensure it. The Regulation also applies to processing, processing aids and ingredients in organic foods. So, all food sold as organic must come from growers, processors or importers who are registered and subject to regular inspection.

In the United Kingdom, the Regulation is administered by UKROFS - it consists of an independent Board appointed by Agriculture Ministers, which is assisted by a small secretariat provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Its job is to ensure that the EC Regulation is properly applied in the UK by the various bodies that register organic farmers and processors.

## How can you tell that food is organic?

It is not possible to prove just by looking at it or by testing whether food is organic. That is why inspection during production is so important. It is illegal to offer for sale any food as organic unless it has been produced in full conformity with the EC Regulation by registered producers. So the use of the word 'organic' on the label or by the shopkeeper is your guarantee that it has been organically produced.

It is not necessary for the label to show any other trademark or symbol, or the address of the producer (though these may be added). However, they must not be used to mislead the consumer into thinking that food is organic when it isn't.

## The inspection system

Anyone wanting to grow or process food which is to be sold as organic must by law be registered with UKROFS or a body approved by UKROFS and be inspected by them at least once a year. The same applies to those importing organic food from outside the EC.

The UKROFS-approved bodies operate privately but are all subject to inspection by UKROFS to ensure that their systems and the standards of their inspections conform to the EC Regulation and UKROFS Standards.

UKROFS also carries out direct check inspections on farmers and processors registered with the sector bodies as an additional assurance that organic standards are being complied with. The inspectors check to make sure that, for example:

- No non-approved fertilisers or pesticides have been used;
- Appropriate crop rotation has been practiced;
- Animal health and welfare standards have been observed;
- Approved measures have been taken to preserve and enhance wildlife habitats and the environment;
- Land has been farmed organically for the conversion period (normally two years) before food can be sold as organic.

## Animal health and welfare

The EC Regulation currently provides rules for the production of plant-based organic foods. Community standards for animal production are being developed and until these are in place, national standards, such as those of UKROFS in the UK, must be used.

These standards aim to keep livestock in good health by promoting high standards of animal welfare, appropriate diets and good day-to-day care of stock. If animals are ill, the farmer must give appropriate treatment. Antibiotics and other conventional medicines are used under veterinary advice and only where no alternative treatment is available or where necessary to save an animal's life or to reduce suffering. In such cases no product from the animal concerned may be sold as organic for a period from the last use of the medicine which in most cases is twice as long as the normal 'withdrawal period' for that medicine. Organo-phosphorus pesticides cannot be used to treat animals sold for organic meat in any circumstances. There are requirements to ensure humane conditions for animals in transport and at slaughter.

## Labelling of organic foods

The rules governing the labelling of organic foods emanate from the EC Regulation and are designed to ensure that consumers are not misled.

In the case of a product in a natural state such as potatoes, the rules are simple: potatoes may be described as organic only if a registered producer of organic foods has grown them. You might see on the label 'Organically Grown Potatoes' or perhaps just 'Organic Potatoes'.

Though not legally required there may also be a brief description of organic farming and perhaps the logo of the inspection body concerned and the address of the grower or packer.

These rules are the same for manufactured products with one or more organic ingredients. For example, in the case of flour or bread, the label might say 'flour made from organically grown wheat' or 'wholemeal bread baked from organic flour'.

The EC standards recognise that it is not always possible to make products from organic agricultural ingredients. For instance, some herbs and spices might not be available in organic form.

The manufacturer can use up to 5% of such minor ingredients and still label the product organic. The Regulation specifies those food ingredients which may be used within the 5% limit and which are not considered to be sufficiently available in organic form.

If the product contains less than 95% organic agricultural ingredients, but at least 70%, organic ingredients can be mentioned only in the ingredients list and a clear statement on the front of the label showing the total percentage of the ingredients which are organic.

Again, the regulation specifies which non-organic ingredients may be used because they are not yet sufficiently available organically.

Percentages are based on the agricultural ingredients. Non-agricultural ingredients, e.g. water, yeast, salt, are not included in the calculations.

The Regulation also closely limits which additional ingredients may be used in the processing of products. Genetically modified organisms are not permitted as either ingredients or processing aids – and neither is irradiation of food permitted.

Labels must indicate the organic certification body with which the processor or packer is registered. This must be done at least by the use of the Code number shown opposite. The name or trademark of the certification body may also be shown. (A processor or packer registered directly with UKROFS should use the code UK1). All the labelling regulations applicable to other good products apply equally to organic products.



## Frogs, Newts and Birds

Farmers are rewarded for protecting the environment under an initiative launched by the government in March 2005.

The Environmental Stewardship Scheme allows every farmer in England to earn payments for making their land more hospitable to wildlife.

Farmers will earn money for work such as looking after hedgerows to provide habitat for birds and small mammals, creating wildflower plots for bees and other insects on set-aside arable land, and protecting ponds from pesticides and fertilisers to encourage wildlife such as frogs and newts.

This work will help reduce the decline in wild bird populations, cut pollution and increase all forms of wildlife on farms.

The change is a key part of the government's Sustainable Strategy for Farming and Food. Farmers could earn up to £30 per hectare for delivering straightforward yet effective work that benefits wildlife.

## Approved Sector Bodies

Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association  
(General Enquiries)

The Biodynamic Association (BDA)  
Secretary

Painswick Inn Project  
Gloucester Street, Stroud, Glos GL5 1QG  
Tel/Fax: +44 (0)1453 759501  
E-mail: [office@biodynamic.org.uk](mailto:office@biodynamic.org.uk)  
Web: <http://www.biodynamic.org.uk/>

Organic Farmers and Growers Ltd  
Organic Farmers & Growers  
The Old Estate Yard, Albrighton, Shrewsbury,  
Shropshire SY4 3AG  
Tel: 01939 291800  
E-mail: [info@organicfarmers.org.uk](mailto:info@organicfarmers.org.uk)  
Web: [www.organicfarmers.org.uk](http://www.organicfarmers.org.uk)

Organic Food Federation  
31 Turbine Way  
EcoTech Business Park, Swaffham,  
Norfolk PE37 7XD  
Tel: +44 (0)1760 720444  
E-mail: [info@orgfoodfed.com](mailto:info@orgfoodfed.com)  
Web: [info@orgfoodfed.com](http://info@orgfoodfed.com)

Scottish Organic Producers Association  
Royal Highland Centre, 10th Avenue,  
Ingliston, Edinburgh, EH28 8NF  
Tel: 0131 335 6606  
Web: [www.sopa.org.uk/](http://www.sopa.org.uk/)

Food Certification (Scotland) Limited  
(For Organic Certification of farmed salmon  
in the UK)  
Food Certification International Ltd  
Findhorn House, Dochfour Business Centre  
Dochgarroch, Inverness, Scotland IV3 8GY  
Tel: +44(0)1463 223 039  
Email: [info@foodcertint.com](mailto:info@foodcertint.com)  
Web: [www.foodcertint.com/](http://www.foodcertint.com/)

Soil Association Certification Ltd  
South Plaza  
Marlborough Street, Bristol BS1 3NX  
Tel: +44 (0)117 314 5000  
Web: [www.soilassociation.org/certification](http://www.soilassociation.org/certification)

Soil Association Scotland  
18C Liberton Brae  
Tower Mains, Edinburgh, EH16 6AE  
Tel: +44 (0)131 666 2474  
Web: [www.soilassociation.org/scotland](http://www.soilassociation.org/scotland)

Irish Organic Farmers and Growers  
Association  
Main Street, Newtownforbes  
Co. Longford, Ireland.  
Tel: (+353) 043 334 2495  
Email: [info@iofga.org](mailto:info@iofga.org)  
Web: <http://iofga.org/>

United Kingdom Register of Organic  
Food Standards (UKROFS)

Defra  
Nobel House, 17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR  
Tel: +44 (0)8459 33 55 77  
E-mail: [defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

Henry Doubleday Research Association  
Garden Organic  
Coventry, Warwickshire, CV8 3LG  
Tel: +44 (0) 24 7630 3517  
E-mail: [enquiry@gardenorganic.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@gardenorganic.org.uk)  
Web: [www.gardenorganic.org.uk/](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/)

Elm Farm Research Centre  
Elm Farm  
Hamstead Marshall, Newbury, Berkshire  
RG20 0HR  
Tel: +44 (0)1488 658298  
E-mail: [elmfarm@organicresearchcentre.com](mailto:elmfarm@organicresearchcentre.com)  
Web: [www.organicresearchcentre.com/](http://www.organicresearchcentre.com/)

## Recommended Reading

Some useful books on the subject of organic farming are:

- Organic Farming by Nicolas Lampkin, ISBN 0852361912, published 1 Jan 1994, Hardback £24.95.
- Organic Farming and Growing (A Guide to Management) by Francis Blake, ISBN 1852238380, published 31 May 1994, Paperback £12.99.
- Tools for Organic Farming by George McRobie, ISBN 1853390097, published 31 Dec 1989, Paperback £7.95.
- The Economics of Organic Farming (An International Perspective), by N Lampkin and S Padel, ISBN 085198911X, published 1 Dec 1994, Hardback £60.
- Profitable Organic Farming, by John Newton, ISBN 0632039299, published 11 Jul 1995, Paperback £19.
- Organic Farming for Sustainable Agriculture, by A K Dahana, published 25 September 2000, ISBN 8177540580, Hardback £34.99.
- Successful Small-Scale Farming: An Organic Approach, by Karl Schwenke, published April 1991, ISBN 0882666428 Paperback £10.
- The Organic Farming Manual: A Comprehensive Guide to Starting and Running, or Transitioning to a Certified Organic Farm by Anne Larkin Hansen (Paperback - 17 Feb 2010, £17), ISBN-10: 1603424792, ISBN-13: 978-1603424790.
- Organic Farming: Everything You Need to Know, by Peter Fossel, published April 2007, Paperback £14.44, ISBN-10: 0760324697, ISBN-13: 978-0760324691



## Further Information

This guide is for general interest - it is always essential to take advice on specific issues.

We believe that the facts are correct as at the date of publication, but there may be certain errors and omissions for which we cannot be responsible.

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