

Rural Economy  
& Development  
Programme



**Teagasc Organic Farm Walk**  
*on the farm of*  
**Clive Bright,**  
**Ardsallagh,**  
**Ballymote, Co. Sligo**  
**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022**







## Introduction

Welcome to the Bright family farm.

Clive Bright, along with his wife Shelley, and children Ted and Emily, farm 58Ha of land in Ardsallagh, Ballymote, Co. Sligo. Cattle are taken from suckling to finishing with all the pasture finished cattle being sold directly as beef to the consumer under Clive's own brand "Rare Ruminare" [www.rareruminare.com](http://www.rareruminare.com)

Clive started farming in 2003 when his mother Joyce retired. Having farmed conventionally for 10 years, Clive felt that that synthetic fertiliser wasn't doing his soil any good but also that the farm was struggling to return a profit.

Clive is also an accomplished artist and during the period 2003 – 2010, he had solo shows of his paintings in galleries nationwide and in exhibitions internationally. This was Clive's primary source of income until the crash in the late noughties, although he is still a practising artist, during this time Clive shifted his focus to the farm to provide a full time income and in 2013, Clive made the decision to convert the farm to organics and to embark on the journey of direct selling beef to the consumer.

Clive's attitude to farming is refreshing and he even has gone as far as to put his beliefs into a mission statement "To leisurely, profitably and perpetually farm an aesthetic landscape, to feed the minds and bellies of ourselves and others".

One of Clive's ultimate goals is "to farm for free" whereby there will be little or no cheques for inputs or contractors to be written. He believes "Holistic Planned Grazing" on a year round basis is the key to him achieving this goal.

## Farm Profile

- Farmed area 58 hectares
- High clay content soil
- Approx. 40 Livestock Units including 15 suckler cows
- All cattle finished on-farm
- All beef sold directly to the consumer

## Land Details

The holding is all one land parcel including 15Ha of rented ground. The total area farmed is 58Ha hectares. There is 5Ha of a traditional hay meadow as part of a GLAS scheme and all the remaining land is used for grazing purposes.



## Engagement with other agencies

Clive works as a PR and development officer for the Organic Trust. He edits their newsletter and contributes to their annual magazine - *Clover*. He is also a board member of the Irish Agroforestry Forum (IAF) and on the steering group of the National Organic Training Skillnet (NOTS).



## Suckler Enterprise

The suckler herd comes from a background of Shorthorn and is a mixture of mostly Aberdeen Angus and Irish Moiled. Clive used to have a lot of Herefords but found the genetics he had to be large framed and hard to finish on pasture. Clive now focuses on selecting a cow that works for his own farm and system. He is seeking a smaller cow (550kgs) but that still produce off-spring that will come into a 300kgs carcass. He now runs a Belted Galloway bull with the herd as he finds them to be an easy-care animal that finishes well off a pasture only diet. Most of the calving takes place in May with the aim of finishing cattle from 24 -33 months, depending on the breed.



## Selecting breeds for eating quality

Clive admits that he is in a rare situation for an Irish suckler farmer in that he gets to taste the end product. Eating quality and ensuring he has a steady supply of beef on a twelve month basis strongly influence Clive's breeding decisions.

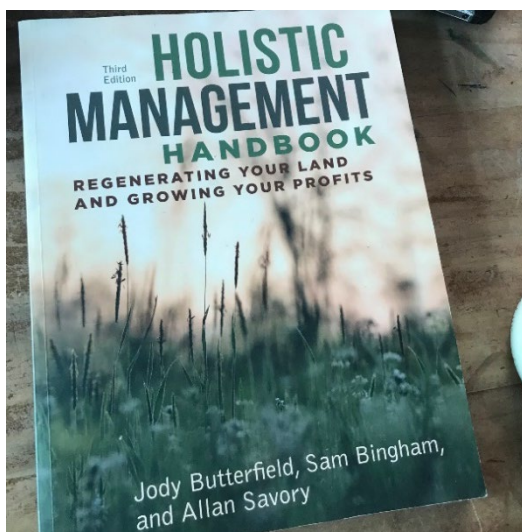
To try and spread out his slaughter dates, Clive finds that he can finish Angus at 24 months + whereas Irish Moiled cattle can be 30- 34 months before being ready for slaughter. This suits Clive's system, because it still allows him to have a tight calving period, yet spread the finishing dates across the season.



In terms of eating quality, he says he finds the Angus to be very tender but finds the flavour from the Moiled to be exceptional. He feels the Belted Galloway should have similar eating quality to that of the Irish Moiled. He hopes the Belted Galloway will also deliver in terms of the herd benefitting from hybrid vigour and they will also have a good layer of fat with a lot of inter-muscle tissue which should finish easily off pasture.


## Holistic Planned Grazing

Clive practices “Holistic Planned Grazing”. It is an adaptive rotation that focuses on the pasture recovery period. One of the key goals is to graze fast when growth is fast and graze slow when growth is slow. The rotation length can vary from 30 – 70 days within the main growing season. Clive’s aspiration is to “farm for free” and he feels this can only be achieved by “harnessing the ecological processes” and allowing nature to do the heavy lifting.



Last winter, the yearlings and finishing animals were out-wintered and rotated slowly through the blanket of stockpiled grass grown over the previous summer months. The breeding cows and calves were housed in October/November, fed on a species rich hay. In March the calves were weaned off cows by allowing them to creep out of the shed to a paddock of fresh grass. After ten days they joined the rotation with the out-wintering herd with no sign of stress.






The cows calve in May as he feels this is the most natural time of year to calve as they are calving in sync with nature. He points out that this is the time of year that deer calve when in the wild. During the growing season, the animals are run as a single herd and their rotation is planned and plotted on a grazing chart (produced by the Savory Institute). They are moved daily to new pastures and sometimes twice daily.



*Early season, pre and post grazing swards on Clive Bright's farm*

His next goal is to fully out-winter all the cattle. This will require a 180 day rotation in the non-growing season from October to April. To enable Clive to out-winter cattle, he acknowledges that he may have to reduce his stocking rate slightly further. He believes Agroforestry is a key component in enabling him to out-winter his cattle also.

One of the aims of holistic planned grazing is to make grazing decisions that constantly improve pastures – “put the herd in the right place at the right time for the right reasons” primary indicators here are the diversity of the species, plant density within the pasture and the quantity it grows. Clive monitors and scores all his paddocks regularly.



*The following is an extract written by Clive Bright for a recent Organic Trust newsletter; “In diverse natural pastures, by definition, no plant dominates. Nitrogen is cycled through pasture plants in a multitude of ways. Clovers may take advantage of the niche and access to light during the period after grazing. As the pasture height increases, different soil microbes in the soil process fresh organic matter – the leaves and roots of plants or the dung and urine of livestock and wildlife. There is a multitude of diverse and resident nutrient cycling processes at play. In a mixed pasture and the rising popularity of mixed-species swards, the power of diversity is coming to the fore as a low input, high production method, which is also excellent for soil health and animal nutrition. Ecologically this complexity is a lot more stable, but it is essential to manage it in such a way as to preserve that variety of species. Sown multi-species-swards (MSS) are often criticised for their lack of persistence, and this is partly down to management. The grazing and mowing regime used to halt succession and preserve the simple ryegrass, and clover sward will also simplify a more complex sward. The later successional species in a multispecies sward often need a longer time to recover after a grazing event; observing and planning for this can maintain the diversity of a sward indefinitely. This recovery period after grazing will change throughout the year depending on the speed of growth. All the species in a purchased mix may not recover at the same rate; therefore, the timing of your grazing events will favour certain species on a particular rotation, so it is important not to be too systematic. A good rule, which is somewhat counterintuitive, is to rotate quickly when growth is fast and rotate slowly when growth is slow. This guideline helps to ensure the recovery period is adequate and, in turn, allows dynamic diversity within the pasture.”*



## Livestock Health in Organic Farming

- A healthy herd in organic farming is achieved by a combination of good management, sound nutrition and good animal husbandry skills.
- When a farm undergoes conversion to organic status an Animal Health Plan is required to be drawn up by the veterinary practitioner, who specifies the current animal health issues on the farm and how the farmer will tackle these problems into the future, while conforming to the requirements of organic certification standards.
- Detection of problems needs to be early, and timely veterinary advice is invaluable – when an animal is ill the organic farmer reacts in the same manner as their conventional neighbour and veterinary assistance is required immediately

### Animal Health on the Farm

Clive's attitude to animal health is one of selection - "The best cow is an ordinary cow without fault". He culls aggressively to select what he calls "adapted animals". This means that any animals that do not thrive on the farm's natural pastures will be culled. Animals that need to be "propped up with repeated medication or meal feeding will be culled" This he believes, will lead to a genetically healthy herd that is not prone to illness.

He says "a self-propelled cow, is one that is resistant to culling, she must calve, wean that calf, and go back in calf, and her weanling must be acceptable to the goals of the farm".

## Agroforestry

Clive is a strong believer that agroforestry has an important part to play on his farm to allow him fulfil his farming goals. He is continuously trialling various establishment strategies that will work on his farm.

Much of what he has learnt about agroforestry has come about as a result of “accidental surprises of planting” he admits. Shelter-belts of densely planted alder have shown the ability to eradicate rushes through improving the water cycle and restoring soil function

He also has observed that existing trees on the farm provided shelter and shade that animals were seeking. He has experimented with varying planting densities, various species and has even made his own cactus type tree guards.





Clive summarises agroforestry as having 3 primary functions on his farm that are beyond a secondary harvest of timber;

1. Animal Welfare – Shelter/Shade; Trees provide animals with somewhere to seek thermal regulation depending on weather conditions at the time.
2. Soil & Water function; His farm has historically had an impervious iron pan in the subsoil. He is now finding that the tree roots are penetrating this pan and thus improving the drainage characteristics of his soils. Cycling of nutrients through the trees has allowed the full potential of the soils to be utilised. Providing a second layer of green canopy increases the levels of photosynthesis.
3. Layout – Wind direction/Aspect/Topography; The right tree in the right place can provide very basic functions and can improve the utilisable nature of the certain paddocks.

## Direct Selling

Clive sells all his beef direct to the customer under the “Rare Ruminare” label. He currently has a waiting list for his meat.

[www.rareruminare.com](http://www.rareruminare.com)

Clive credits a huge part of the success of his business to his local abattoir, Burns Meats “The key thing for my business is the really strong relationship with my abattoir”. Clive delivers a live animal to the abattoir and they, slaughter, dress, store, package and label the meat. This really reduces the level of infrastructure required by Clive and also reduces the level of inspections and paperwork.

Clive collects the meat from the abattoir and puts into Woolcool, biodegradable cool boxes, which are lamb’s wool lined cardboard boxes, along with some ice packs. It is then delivered to the customer either by courier or directly by Clive (for local deliveries).



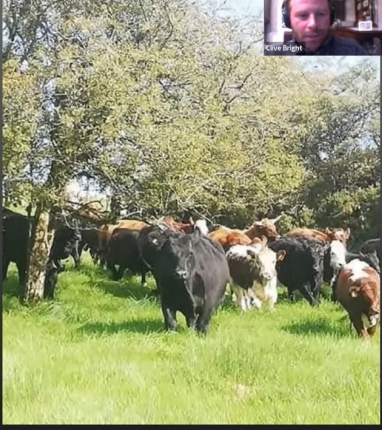
**Direct Selling**

**100% Pasture Fed  
Organic Beef**

Clive Bright

Rare Ruminare

ORGANIC TRUST



Listen to Clive describe his direct selling process at this link;  
[https://youtu.be/11Q\\_RBSDINQ](https://youtu.be/11Q_RBSDINQ)

With Clive's background in art and design, branding is one of his stronger points and he believes that creating a simple and consistent brand is important.

Clive sells all of his beef in a 20kg "Beef box" of mixed cuts. He doesn't sell individual cuts and this really helps simplify the logistics.

Clive currently sells the 20Kg Beef Box for €280 plus delivery. With his animals averaging just over 200kgs of saleable meat, this translates into a sale price of €2,800 per finished animal.

## Financial Performance

Due to the high price received for the finished animal coupled with very low levels of inputs, Clive has carved a very profitable farming system for himself. The preliminary National Farm Survey results for 2021 were announced last week and they showed that Direct Payments on the average Cattle Rearing farm were 138% percentage of Family Farm Income. This means that the average farmer is spending some of their direct payments to subsidise their farming system.

In Clive's situation, not only does he retain all his direct payments as profit, but he is adding significantly to it. His direct payments are 67% of his family farm income.





**Table 1 – Clive Bright’s financial performance 2021**

€	
<b>Income</b>	
Beef Sales	33,486
Direct Payments	24,160
Organic Farming Scheme (OFS)	9,860
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>67,506</b>
Vet	550
Accountant	900
Contractor	3500
Insurance	1200
Abattoir	4585
ESB	1100
Phone	405
Fencing	1500
Machinery	1130
Motor	2300
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>17170</b>
<b>Profit</b>	<b>50,336</b>

## Organic Animal Housing Standards

- Adjustments to meet organic standards may be necessary – depends on farm situation.
- Housing is not compulsory.
- At least 50% of floor area must be bedded.
- Straw, rushes or untreated wood shavings are acceptable bedding materials and these need not be organic.
- All animal housing is subject to inspection and approval by the Organic Certification Body.
- See Figure 4 for organic space requirements.

*Figure 4: Indoor area (net area available to animals)*

Minimum Indoor Areas (net area available to each animal)		
Animal	Live-weight Minimum (kg)	m <sup>2</sup> /head
<b>Bovine animals</b>	Up to 100kg	1.5
	Up to 200kg	2.5
	Up to 350kg	4.0
	Over 350kg	5.0 with a minimum of 1m <sup>2</sup> / 100kg
<b>Dairy cows</b>		6.0
<b>Bulls for breeding</b>		10m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Sheep</b>		1.5m <sup>2</sup> per ewe 0.35m <sup>2</sup> per lamb



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## 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 and inspection process of each individual's unit or farm. Further information can be sourced from these organic certification bodies:

### Irish Organic Association



- Based in Unit 13 Inish Carraig, Golden Island, Athlone, Co. Westmeath,
- Phone: 090 643 3680
- Email: [info@irishoa.ie](mailto:info@irishoa.ie)
- Website: [www.irishorganicassociation.ie](http://www.irishorganicassociation.ie)

### Organic Trust



- Based in Unit M4, Naas Town Centre, Dublin Road, Co. Kildare, W91 F7X3.
- Tel: 045 882377
- Email: [info@organictrust.ie](mailto:info@organictrust.ie)
- Website: [www.organictrust.ie](http://www.organictrust.ie)



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## Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme Organic Capital Investment Scheme

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:

Online applications only through [www.agfood.ie](http://www.agfood.ie) facility.

### Full details and T&C:

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

### Queries:

DAFM Organic Unit, Johnstown Castle: [organic@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:organic@agriculture.gov.ie)

## Organic Processing Scheme

Grant aid of up to 40% on €1.75 million (i.e. can generate a grant of €700,000 for an investment of €1.75 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:

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/press/pressreleases/2015/august/title.84203.en.html>

### Queries:

DAFM Organic Unit, Johnstown Castle: [organic@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:organic@agriculture.gov.ie)



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## Organic Farming Scheme 2022 **PRESENTLY CLOSED**

The DAFM Organic Farming scheme opened on February 9<sup>th</sup> 2022 for new applications and closed on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2022.

### Payment Rates for Livestock Holdings

Organic Status	Farmed Area of >3Ha up to 70Ha	Farmed Area >70Ha
<b>In conversion</b>	€220/Ha	€60/Ha
<b>Full Organic Status</b>	€170/Ha	€30/Ha

### Further Information

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/d46aec-organic-farming-scheme/>

<https://www.teagasc.ie/rural-economy/organics/>



AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

### Organic Farming

#### Steps to Organic Conversion

##### Step 1 - Consider

- Could you farm without chemical fertilisers or pesticides?
- Can you modify your animal housing to incorporate a bedded lying area?
- Have you a source of farmyard manure/slurry/compost?

##### Step 2 - Investigate

- Talk to existing organic farmers
- Consult your farm advisor
- Attend farm walks/open days
- Familiarise yourself with the organic farming standards

##### Step 3 – Choose an OCB

- Choose an Organic Certification Body
- Irish Organic Association
- Organic Trust
- Complete a Conversion Plan
- Register as an organic operator

##### Step 4 - OFS

- Organic Farming Scheme
- Scheme opens regularly
- Attractive premiums available
- Apply online via [Agfood](https://www.agfood.gov.ie/)
- Consult your farm advisor
- Change status of land parcels on BPS

##### Step 5 – Training Course

- QQI Principles of Organic Farming
- 25 hour course
- Blended course - online & farm visit
- Register at [www.teagasc.ie/rural-economy/organics/training](https://www.teagasc.ie/rural-economy/organics/training)

##### Step 6 – Conversion Period

- Normally 2 years – allows time for land to adjust
- Must adhere to organic standards
- Can sell produce as organic once conversion period completed





