

GROWING ORGANICS

Supporting & Increasing Organic Production



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

Organic Farm Walk



on the farm of
Eanna Canavan,
Doolin, Co. Clare

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CANAVAN FARMING SYSTEM

Acerage

- 41 hectares grassland 4.73 ha forestry

Stock Numbers

- 15 Suckler Cows
- Breeds: Shorthorn, Droimeann, Limousin
- Bull - Shorthorn
- 15 - 0-1 year olds - sold as weanlings
- 2 replacements bought under derogation annually

Grassland- paddock system

- Better grass utilisation
- Better weed control
- Better parasite control - rest between grazing



Introduction and Welcome

Eanna has been farming organically since entering conversion in 2018. On the farm there is a suckler enterprise of 15 spring calving suckler cows. The majority of the weanlings are sold in the autumn, with a few of the best heifers kept as replacements.

Occasionally, a derogation is sought and a conventional replacement heifer is purchased. In organics there is leeway for the purchase annually of 10% of the cow herd, in the form of maiden or in calf heifers, with prior permission from the OCB (organic control body).



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SOIL FERTILITY

Sources of Nutrients Used on the Farm 2023

- Farm yard manure
- Cattle slurry
- Lime

Farm Details and Land Use

The land area consists of 41.15 ha of grassland and 4.73 ha of forestry

Table 1 – Stock Details 2023

Stock Type	2023
Suckler cows	15
Calves	15
1 – 2 year olds	3
Bull	1

Cow breeds

The cow breeds are a mixture of Charolais, Limousin, Shorthorn and Droimeann and are all crossed with a Shorthorn stock bull.

Cows are joined with the Bull in June and July, with weaning occurring in late October or early November when the cows are being brought in for winter housing. Over winter, cows and weanlings get fed grass silage, and are housed in a mix of slatted and dry bedded housing. Where a farmer has all slatted houses, access to dry solid floor bedded housing will have to be made available through creep areas or by giving access to new solid floor shed.

In organics animals must have at least 50% of their lying area in the form of solid straw bedded area. A 60% grant is available through TAMS for organic farmers to develop more housing, to repurpose current buildings, or to invest in new machinery such as a topper or a dung spreader.

Management of cows

Calving starts in early February and the majority have calved by the end of April. Cows are calved indoors and are let out as soon as possible post calving depending on weather conditions. This minimises the risks of scour and pneumonia in young calves

Cows and calves are grazed on a rotational basis around the farm using a paddock system. Topping is carried out as necessary after grazing to improve grassland performance and to control weeds.

The paddock system plays a critical role in the control of parasites on the farm, with a rotation length of greater than 25 days in practice, reducing the worm burdens and the frequency of administering wormers.

Liverfluke has not been seen to be an issue due to the drier nature of the ground. However regular dung samples are taken as a precaution.



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FARMER MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE RISK

Prof. Louise McHugh, University College Dublin

23.4% of Irish Farmers considered at-risk of suicide.

Farm stress is associated with higher suicidal ideation and lower wellbeing.

Top 3 stressors for Irish farmers

1. Government policies designed to reduce climate change
2. Outsiders not understanding farming
3. Concern over the future of the farm

Farmer Mental and Emotional Health and wellbeing,

The importance of maintaining positive mental and emotional health and wellbeing, is intertwined with a sustainable farming model.

The farm is organised and managed to ensure workload is sustainable and that help is sought during busy periods. Eanna is aware of the impact of long working hours on mental, emotional and physical health. Eanna ensures he gets adequate rest, eats a healthy diet and is proactive in maintaining a good work life balance.

Results from a nationwide survey by Stapleton, Russell, Markey & McHugh (2022) found 23.4% of Irish farmers considered at-risk for suicide. Farm stress was also found to be associated with higher suicidal ideation & lower wellbeing. The top 3 stressors for Irish farmers were government policies designed to reduce climate change, outsiders not understanding farming and concern over the future of the farm.

Eanna supports the power of talking to help maintain positive mental and emotional wellbeing. Sharing concerns with family members, friends,



TAMS 3 – ORGANIC CAPITAL INVESTMENT SCHEME – HEALTH AND SAFETY

Talk to your advisor.

60% grant aid available to assist with investment in a wide range of facilities, buildings and equipment.

Livestock associated with 19% of deaths

- High risk due to hormonal influence
- Cows at Calving
- Bulls
- Rams

Prevention.

- Understand animal behaviour
- Upgrade and maintain facilities
- **60%** grant aid for animal handling facilities under **TAMS 3**

Take time to think, plan and prepare before each task on the farm

Maintain positive mental and emotional wellbeing

Key Messages

- Prioritise time for planning and organising to help Improve efficiency and safety.
- 60 % grant aid available to help fund facilities, buildings and equipment
- Talk to your advisor

farm advisors or fellow farmers through talking brings a strong feeling of support. When concerns exist, it is important to be open and have the courage to talk about them.

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation 3 Organic Capital Investment Scheme (OCIS)

Grant aid on eligible expenditure and shall be paid at the rate of 60% who are also current participants of the Organic Farming Scheme up to the applicable TAMS 3 maximum investment ceiling of €90,000 per holding.

How to Apply and Closing Date:

Online applications only through www.agfood.ie facility.

Details and T&C:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/d7556-organic-capital-investment-scheme/>

Queries:

DAFM Organic Unit, Johnstown Castle: organic@agriculture.gov.ie
Tel: 053-9163425

Organic Processing Investment Scheme

Grant aid of up to 40% on €1.7 million in facilities for the processing, preparation, grading, packing and storage of organic products with minimum level of investment in excess of €3,000.

Details and T&C:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/51e8d-organic-processing-investment-grant-scheme/>

Queries:

DAFM Organic Unit, Johnstown Castle: organic@agriculture.gov.ie
Tel: 053-9163425



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Animal Welfare in Organic Farming

Livestock Health

- A healthy herd in organic farming is achieved by a combination of good management, sound nutrition and good animal husbandry skills.
- 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 4 STEP PLAN

1 Prevention

- Draw up a health plan with your vet
- Implement a clean grazing system for mixed farming systems
- Maximise use of leader-follower grazing
- Rotate silage and grazing ground
Allow animals to develop a natural resistance
- Consider anthelmintic benefits of Multi Species Swards

2 Analyse

- Consult your vet
- Look for visual signs of animals not thriving
- Use Faecal egg count to ascertain need for treatment
- A coughing animal is not a sick animal. Investigate cause before intervening
- Make use of factory liver reports to assess liver fluke burden

3 Intervention

- Most conventional veterinary products may be used following; Veterinary Diagnosis, positive faecal sample or post mortem result
- Vet must approve all treatments Annual derogation required for dehorning, disbudding, castration, tail docking (Lambs)
- Check with meat processor on prohibited products

4 Withdrawal

- Withdrawal periods for most products will be doubled or trebled
- Animals for meat consumption can only receive 1 course of antibiotic in 12 month period
- If in doubt contact your Organic Certification Body

Conventional Veterinary Treatments Permitted

- Animals for meat consumption: 1 course antibiotics within 12 months.
- Animals for breeding: 2 courses antibiotics within 12 months.
- Dairy Mastitis: 2 courses antibiotics within 12 months, otherwise the cow is removed from the milking herd.
- If limits exceeded, organic status is taken away from animal.

Withdrawal Periods for use of Veterinary Products

- Double the withdrawal period for all products.
- Ensure all products used are approved by the organic body
- Abattoirs may have their own withdrawal periods

Animal Health on the Farm

The switch to organics has not lead to any adverse effects with regard to animal health on the farm.

Faecal analyses are taken to assess the level and identify the type of internal parasites if present.

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.

Table 2: Minimum Housing Area per head and by weight

Minimum Indoor Areas (net area available to each animal)		
Animal	Live-weight Minimum (kg)	m ² /head
Calves; Beef Cattle; Bull Beef;	Up to 100kg	1.5
	Up to 200kg	2.5
	Up to 350kg	4.0
	Up to 500kg	5.0
Suckler Cows		6.0
Dairy cows	Up to 600kg	6.0 min
	Over 600kg	1m ² /100kg
Breeding Bulls		10m ²
Sheep		1.5m ² per ewe
		0.35m ² per lamb

- 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 Table 2 (previous page) for space requirements.

Calculating the stock carrying capacity of your shed

Conversion of animal housing to become compliant with the organic standards can be one of the major tasks drystock farmers have to undertake. To calculate the stock carrying capacity of your shed, you will need three figures;

1. The total indoor area of the shed
2. The lying area in the shed
3. The area required for each animal to be housed

ANIMAL HOUSING – COSTINGS GUIDE

DAFM TAMS COSTINGS

$$13.4\text{m} \times 6\text{m} = 86.4\text{m}^2$$

$$86.4\text{m}^2 \times \text{€}182.34 = \text{€}15,754$$



ESTIMATED ACTUAL COSTINGS

Shed	€9,400
Sliding Door	€1,200
Floor/Wall	€7,000
Plumbing/Electrical	€1,500
Miscellaneous	€1,000

TOTAL €20,100

-60% TAMS grant €9,452

COST AFTER GRANT €10,648



AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Fodder

FODDER REQUIRED				
Animal Type	No.	Months	*Bales/Head/Month	Total Bales Needed
Suckler Cows	20	6	1.7	204
0-1 year olds	10	6	0.8	48
1-2 year olds	10	6	1.4	84
>2 year olds	1	6	1.5	9
Ewes			0.15	
Total Bales Required for Winter				345

* Assumes bale weight of 220kgs DM/Bale

FODDER SUPPLY			
Sward Type	*Expected Bales/Acre	No. of aces to be cut	Total Bales Cut
Red Clover (3 Cuts)	20	10	200
PRG & White Clover (1st Cut)	8	10	80
PRG & White Clover (2nd Cut)	5	5	25
Permanent Pasture (1st Cut)	5	5	25
Total Bales Harvested for Next Winter			355

* 'Expected bales/acre is based on a field index 3 for P & K, pH of >6.3, receiving 2,500 gallons in late March/early April, grazed tight previous Autumn, not grazed In spring

Rush Control

NON-CHEMICAL RUSH CONTROL	
<p>Why Control Rushes?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve Productivity 2. Improve Wading Bird Habitat 	<p>How to Control Rushes?</p> 

Farm Forestry and the New Forestry Programme 2023-2027



New

1. Native Forests



2. Forests for Water



3. Forests on Public Lands



4. NeighbourWoods



5. Emergent Forest / Rewilding



6. Broadleaf, mainly oak



Forest Types

Afforestation
Scheme 2023 -2027

7. Other Broadleaf



8. Agroforestry



9. Seed Orchards



10. Continuous Cover Forestry



11. Mixed High Forest: Conifers, 20% B/Ls



12. Mixed High Forest: Spruce, 20% B/Ls



Take home message

- Improved establishment grant
- 20 year premium
- Benefits: water quality, animal welfare, biodiversity, carbon sequestration

Trees provide an enormous range of benefits to farms.

- Forestry grants and premiums provide an immediate additional income to the farm
- There is a long term and important harvest of timber products that provide further substantial income
- Forestry creates jobs in rural communities
- Trees on the farm offer shelter to livestock as well as other health benefits
- Water quality can be much improved by planting trees along farm waterways
- Biodiversity on the farm is greatly improved by the planting of hedges and trees
- Forests are highly efficient in terms of carbon storage
- Trees provide a constant source of firewood to the farm
- Woodlands can be an important recreational resource for farm families as well as contributing positively to mental health
- And woodlands can offer other revenue sources such as tourism, foraging and so on as well as the potential to claim additional once off supports of up to €1000/ha from the woodland environment fund.

With the launch of the new National Forestry Programme 2023-2027, there are many new and exciting opportunities for forest creation on farms.

These can range from small native broadleaf woodlands to larger forest areas, ideal for creating on-farm income and pension pots from timber sales in the future. The significant increase in the annual premium now means that farmers can benefit from rates of between €745 and €1,142 per hectare for 20 years. Many can also retain existing BISS payments.

The new programme focusses on ensuring that these forests are created in harmony with the environment and contributing to the enhancement of ecosystem services including water quality, biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

There is also a new element to the scheme whereby a one hectare plot of native trees can be planted without the need for an afforestation licence.

Agroforestry is another attractive option giving generous supports to farmers who wish to plant trees and keep farming (grazing or cutting silage for example) on the same parcel of land.

The payments available are summarised in the table below.

More information is available on www.teagasc.ie/forestry

Table 3 – Summary of forestry payments

Forest Type	Grant Rates (Excluding Fencing) €/ha	Annual Premium Payments	Number of Premiums for Non-Farmers	Number of Premiums for Non-Farmers
FT1 Native Forests	€6,744	€1,103	15	20
FT2 Forests for Water	€6,744	€1,142	15	20
FT3 Forests on public Land	€10,544	€1,103	15	20
FT4 Neighbourhood Woods	€10,200	€1,142	15	20
FT5 Emergent Forests	€2,500	€350	15	20
FT6 Pure Broadleaves, mainly oak or beech	€6,744	€1,037	15	20
FT7 Other Broadleaves	€4,314	€937	15	20
FT8 Agroforestry - silvopastoral	€8,555	€975	10	10
FT8 Agroforestry - silvoarable	€6,000	€829	10	10
FT8 Agroforestry - Forest Gardening	€6,000	€829	10	10
FT9 Seed Orchards	€10,000	€1,142	15	20
FT10 Continuous Cover Forestry	€5,421	€912	15	20
FT11 Mixed High Forests: Conifer, 20% broadleaves	€4,452	€863	15	20
FT12 Mixed High Forests: Spruce, 20% broadleaves	€3,858	€746	15	20
NTA1 Small native forests	€6,744	€2,206	n/a	10
NTA2 Small native forests for water protection	€6,744	€2,284	n/a	10

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

IOA (Irish Organic Association)

Inish Carraig Business Centre,
Suite 13, Golden Island, Athlone, Co Westmeath.
Tel: 090 6433680
Email: info@irishoa.ie
Web: www.irishorganicassociation.ie



Organic Trust

Naas Town Centre,
Office A1, Town Centre House, Naas, Co. Kildare.
Tel: 045 882377
Email: info@organictrust.ie
Web: www.organictrust.ie



Supporting the Growth of Irish Organics

Emmet Doyle, Bord Bia Organic Sector Manager

Summary

- Positive developments for the Irish organic sector through increase farmer participation
- Strong consumer purchase intent for Irish organic produce in the domestic market
- Bord Bia will be launching the first national marketing campaign for Irish organic food on November 6th 2023

Introduction

Aligned to the European Green Deal, Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2023 has set a target of 450,000 ha to be farmed organically by 2030. This will bring Ireland's agricultural land under organic production to 10% from less than 2% in 2022.

Ireland's organic sector vision will be delivered by increasing the scale and capability of Irish organic production through increasing the participation in the Organic Farming Scheme (Green Deal Action Plan axis 1). While developing and activating a clear marketing proposition for Irish organics to help the consumption and consumer trust of Irish organics in the domestic and export markets (Green Deal Action Plan axis 2).

Organic Sector Growth

In January 2023, the new Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) began with over 4,000 Irish farmer participants, which is double the number of farmers from the previous scheme. Such an increase in OFS participants has led to the Irish agricultural land under organic production growing from approximately 2% in 2022 to 4.5% in 2023. The application process will open again Autumn 2023 with forecasts of another strong uptake into organics by farmers.

This growth in organics is not only impressive but actually very important as this will increase the volumes of Irish organic food, drink and horticulture produced, helping to deliver the necessary scale to supply key retail and foodservice customer both in the domestic and export markets.

Beef Sector Overview

Cattle Data from DAFM shows that the organic cattle herd stood at 62,000 head in 2021, which is just under 1% of the total cattle population recorded in December 2021. Cattle numbers on organic farms increased by 9% between 2017 and 2021 with an acceleration in 2022 as over half of the applications accepted for the Organic Farming Scheme came from the cattle sector. As a result, numbers are projected to reach around 70,000 head reflecting cattle numbers on farms going through the conversion process. Within the total organic cattle herd, it is estimated that there were around 19,500 suckler cows in 2021. It is estimated that around 22,000 calves were born on organic farms that are destined for beef production or breeding in 2022.

The number of finished cattle processed increased by 20% between 2019 and 2022 resulting in organic beef output reaching an estimated 4,100 tonnes carcass weight equivalent (cwe).

Sheep Sector Overview

Similar to cattle, increasing numbers of sheep farmers have applied for the Organic Farming Scheme in 2022. Total sheep numbers on organic farms are estimated to have stood at 95,000 head at the end of 2021, which represents a rise of just over 20% on 2017 levels. Data from DAFM showed that breeding ewe numbers stood at over 62,000 head in 2020. By the end of 2022, it is estimated that this figure will be closer to 85,000 head.

It is estimated that 73,000 lambs were born on organic farms in 2022. Leakage of store and indeed finished lambs into conventional remains a real challenge for the organic lamb category and all organic industry stakeholders are working together to address this supply chain challenges. The number of finished lambs processed as organic stood at an estimated 22,000 head in 2022, this number doubling from annual numbers in 2017, reflecting increased sales of organic lamb in Ireland and the emergence of additional export markets.

In 2022, total organic production stood at around 450 tonnes carcase weight equivalent for 2022. Like beef there has been a considerable jump in the level of carcase utilisation over the last few years, which is estimated at over 95% for 2022 with increasing volumes of product frozen rather than being sold as conventional.

Dairy Sector Overview

Figures from DAFM suggest that there were just over 4,700 dairy cows on just over 70 organic dairy farms in 2021. This represents an increase of 85% relative to 2017. With a further increase predicted to over 5,400 cattle on organic farms in late 2022.

The slower growth in the organic dairy herd is due to the fragmented nature of the sector and due to high conventional costs in 2022. However due to changing market and sector dynamics in 2023, this could lead to increase number of dairy farmers joining the Organic Farming Scheme when it reopens in the autumn of 2023.

Cereal Sector Overview

Organic cereals have increased in importance over recent years, tied in to the importance and need for organic feed. The land area dedicated to organic cereals stood at 3,342 hectares in 2021 according to DAFM data. The cereals area is dominated by oats, which accounted for over 70% of the total in 2022. The organic oats areas have recorded consistent growth since 2017, more than doubling over the period.

The remainder of the area is utilised for beans, wheat and barley, all of which are consumed in Ireland. It is estimated that total organic oats production amounts to around 13,000 tonnes annually with the vast majority destined for breakfast cereals with the remainder utilised for drinks and animal feed. Organic oats has consistently delivered a price premium of around 70% over recent years, which has been a key driver of growth over the period. Production of other cereals/pulses estimated at 5,000 tonnes annually, the majority of which are utilised as animal feed or sold as cereals product on the domestic market.

On the Ground Snapshot*

- 12,500 organic cattle were slaughtered in 2022
- 22,000 organic sheep were slaughtered in 2022
- 50% of organic lamb production is exported while 65% of organic beef production is exported

23 million litres of organic milk was produced in 2022

- 3,522 hectares of organic cereals in 2022 up from 1,764 in 2017

*(*Industry Calculations)*

Latest Irish Organic Consumer Research

Bord Bia conducted a six month Irish consumer market research project on Irish organics from January to June 2023 with 2,500 shoppers. This results of this research was very promising for the future growth opportunities for organics in Ireland. Some of the key feedback included:

- 88% of all Irish shoppers buy into the organic food and drink in some format
- Eggs and vegetables are the largest categories for organic shoppers. However one in two of all shoppers buy organic dairy (milk, yogurts, cheese) and/or organic meat on a weekly basis
- Over the next 12 months, 95% of all Irish shoppers will look to maintain or increase their level of organic consumption. Of those 45% of all shoppers will look to increase their level of organic purchases

National Marketing Campaign for Irish Organic

In Ireland, to help build the awareness of Irish organics for Irish shoppers, Bord Bia will be launching its first national organic marketing campaign in November. The focus of this campaign will be to demonstrate the quality and value of Irish organic food and drink to Irish consumers. The campaign will include radio, billboards, print, digital, social media and organic brand ambassador activities. The second wave of this marketing campaign will be rolled out in March of 2024 with a three year plan to support the organic sector and increase the number of Irish shoppers buying Irish organic food on a regular basis.

GROWING ORGANICS



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