

Thinking of going organic?

How to get the full facts about organic farming and the conversion process



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Cwmwl Amcwyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Budyddys Gwledig
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The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
Europe Investing in Rural Areas



**Canolfan Organig Cymru
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**Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government**

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Organic farms aim to produce high quality food in an environmentally friendly way to promote the health and well-being of soil, plants, animals, people and the countryside. Producers convert for many reasons, and the implications are different for each individual farming system. If you are interested and follow these steps carefully you will have a sound understanding of what is involved in conversion and will have taken full advantage of all the support available to help you decide.

1 Understand what's involved

The **Organic Conversion Information Service (OCIS)** is a free service, with absolutely no obligation to convert. It is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and:

- helps you look at the implications of conversion for your farming system
- provides a financial illustration to give you some idea of the economic impact of conversion
- supports farmers who decide to convert to prepare their applications to their chosen organic control body (formerly known as a certification body)

OCIS includes access to a telephone helpline, an information pack and on-farm advisory visits. Call the Organic Centre Wales (OCW) helpline for more details or visit the website www.organiccentrewales.org.uk.

Organic

CONVERSION

INFORMATION

S E R V I C E

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Calls may be monitored for training purposes



2 Plan carefully

Farming Connect can pay 80% of the cost of preparing a Whole Farm Plan, which can be used to provide a **detailed organic conversion plan** covering the farming system and financial implications of conversion. The Farming Connect Whole Farm Plan Co-ordinators who are based at your local Divisional Office and OCW staff can help you decide on the scope and content of your plan and identify suitable mentors to carry out the work. Farming Connect also offers support to eligible businesses in meeting **cross compliance requirements** and **environmental regulations**.

3 Get out there!

There is no substitute for meeting experienced organic farmers and other producers who are also converting their systems. OCW delivers the Farming Connect Organic Development Programme, which includes **demonstration farm** and **farmer discussion group events, conferences, seminars, workshops** and other types of learning opportunities. Many of these events are run in conjunction with the Grassland Development Centre (GDC) based at IBERS, Aberystwyth University.

Farming Connect has established a Skills Development Programme which enables eligible farming and forestry businesses to claim **80% funding towards vocational and regulatory training. Agri-environment training** (e.g. creating and maintaining on-farm habitats, landscape and water quality), is fully funded for Tir Gofal agreement holders.

The Welsh Assembly Government will organise events on the new Land Management Scheme, Glastir. These will be delivered across Wales to help farmers identify habitats and suitable options on their farms in order to complete their applications. Contact your local divisional office for details.

OCW co-ordinates organic areas at the **Royal Welsh Show** and the **Winter Fair** and has a presence at other major farming events and regional shows.

The Organic Research Centre Elm Farm also runs a demonstration farm network in England, and the Soil Association has a network of organic farms open to the public in Wales and England.



4 Read all about it

A range of publications is available from OCW, including technical guides, fact sheets and **information on all aspects of food and farming**. Visit our **website** www.organiccentrewales.org.uk for more details, free downloads and to subscribe to two **free e-mail bulletins**. The Soil Association also publishes a series of technical guides and a magazine, *Organic Farming*, which contains technical items and news. Organic Farmers & Growers also provide an information pack for farmers and regular newsletters. Other technical information is available from the Organic Research Centre, Elm Farm.

5 Apply for support from the Welsh Assembly Government

The Minister for Rural Affairs has made funding available to **support organic conversion**. The Welsh Assembly Government is likely to open windows of application in 2010 and 2011, during which period you must submit your application, which must be supported by an outline conversion plan. Contact your local WAG divisional office or visit OCW website www.organiccentrewales.org.uk.

6 Look at your marketing options

If you wish to achieve an organic premium for your produce, you will need to understand the different routes to market. These include working through **producer groups, cooperatives, direct sales or supermarkets**. OCW offers marketing information and support through the Better Organic Business Links (BOBL) project. Food Fisheries and Market Development Division (FFMDD) of WAG also offers **support for the development of organic marketing and processing**.



7 Get your farm certified

Certification is an entirely separate process from applying to WAG for support payments. However, support payments are conditional on the land being certified and remaining so throughout the period of your agreement. This will mean becoming registered with an organic control body, for which a fee is payable, and will involve annual inspections, and an increase in the level of records you need to keep. Minimum organic standards are set by the European Union and implemented by registered organic control bodies. Contact OCW for a list of control bodies to choose from, or see our website www.organiccentrewales.org.uk.

Organic Centre Wales (OCW), established in 2000, is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government to be the focal point for information on organic food and farming in Wales. The Centre is operated by a partnership of three organisations: ADAS Wales; The Organic Research Centre, Elm Farm; and the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) at Aberystwyth University.



Sefydliad y Gwyddorau Biolegol, Amgylcheddol a Gwledig
IBERS ABERYSTWYTH
Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences



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