

# Background to Organic Conversion

By Alan Mooney

# Background

- Prior to conversion in 2009 I was farming 160ac
- 120ac in continuous winter cereal balance, used for store to beef enterprise



# Reasons for conversion

- Economic situation at the time
- Yields leveling off
- Cost of inputs increasing
- Increasing level of resistance to fungicides and pesticides
- Emergence of new types of grass weeds especially bromes
- Limited long term availability of major nutrients such as P & K
- Deteriorating soil structure

# Reasons I'm glad I converted

- Finally I have got off the input merry-go-round
- I'm now trying to work with nature instead of against it
- Despite reduction in yields I'm better off financially
- Soil structure and life have improved

## Conversion process

- Conversion in my case involved reseeded long term tillage land to a grass clover mix
- Initially I converted 120ac in total including 80ac of cereals & 40ac permanent pasture
- Over the last three years I've converted the remaining 40ac of continuous cereal ground



# My rotations

- 3 yr grass/white clover (grazed only)

Normally followed by

- Winter wheat
- Winter/spring oats
- Triticale or OSR
- Winter/spring oats
- 3 yr grass/white clover or 2 yr grass/red clover

- 2 yr grass/red clover (2 cuts silage + light grazing)

- Normally followed by similar to white clover rotation

# Overview of do's & don'ts

- Least competitive crop should be first in rotation
- Less nitrogen hungry crops later in rotation such as oats and triticale
- Red clover rotation must be followed by a white clover rotation to avoid red clover sickness
- Red clover doesn't like compaction close cutting or grazing
- Bloat has to be managed too



# Issues involved in conversion

- Provision of water troughs, fencing & cattle handling facilities
- Provision of suitable winter housing for animals
- Option of a stockless system
- Attend organic course