

Organics – a novice's view

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Journal

“Some farmers see no opportunities and they are right. Some farmers see plenty of opportunities and they are also right”

Attitude

"The real act of discovery consists, not in finding new lands, but in seeking with new eyes" (*Marcel Proust*)

Looking at the organic option

- Dairy farmer with off farm job
- Castlefarm, Co Kildare - 177 acres
 - 2000 – 50,000 gal, low cost system, 80 acres tillage
 - 2003 - 65 cows, 60 acres tillage, OAD Sept on,
 - 2004/05/06 OAD full lactation, 70 cows 30 acres tillage
 - 1 Oct 2006 – Entered conversion to organics

Why organics?

- Looked at options
 - Stand still - not an option
 - Get out of dairying – young and enjoy it
 - Expand – Well trodden path
 - Organics – Glenisk cutting path at time

Why organics?

- Expand – 120 cows producing 130,000 gallons
 - Profitability
 - Time
 - Investment
 - Cows
 - Buildings
 - Parlour
 - Quota – 60,000 gallons?

Why organics?

- Organics - Castlefarm
 - Low nitrogen/ high clover system
 - Good grassland management
 - Straw bedding
 - Tillage
 - Had an interest - important
 - Higher milk price - carrot
 - Challenge

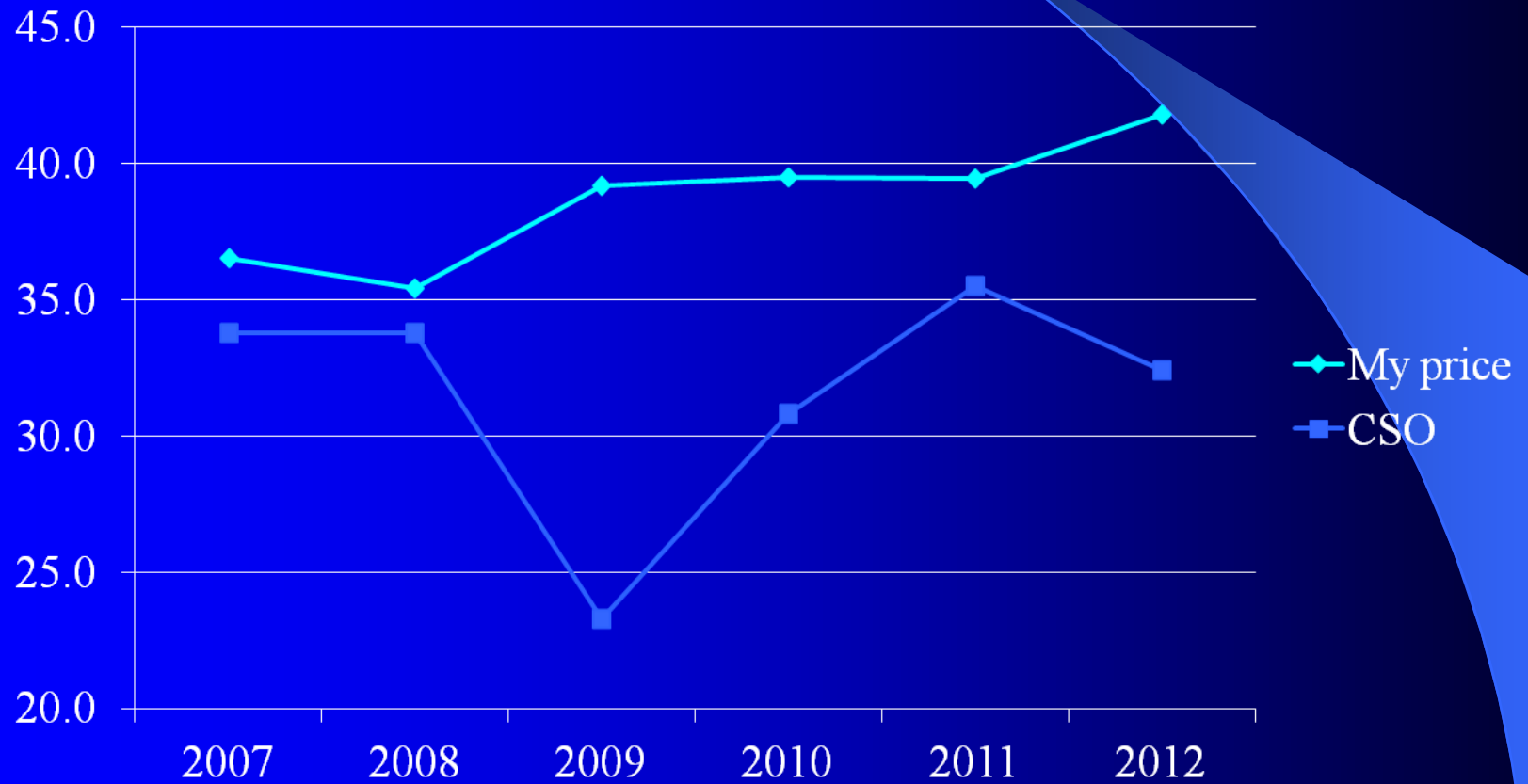
Organics

- Decision - Sept 2005 – not overnight switch
 - Visit organic farms – found was possible
 - Soil fertility - addressed
 - Drain and reseed – 8 acres
 - Increase clover –
 - reseed 20 acres, over sow 20 acres, 13 acre red clover
 - REPS plan
 - Nitrates – FYM store (composting)

Since then

- Challenges
 - Animal health – Not major
 - Life without the bag - SR
 - Nutrient balance
 - Autumn calving
 - Higher cost system
 - Higher milk price

Milk price



What has changed?

- Milk quota going -Different comparison
 - Output
 - Grass grown and utilised -8 t v 12 t
 - SR 1.9lu/ha v 2.5lu/ha
 - Higher costs
 - What milk price is needed?
 - Volatility
 - Sustainability

Looking forward

- Farm potential
- Volatility
- Markets – milk buyers
- Organic scheme
- What do you want to do?

"Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason why so few engage in it".

Henry Ford