

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - ORGANIC FARMING SCHEME

What is the Organic Farming Scheme?

The Organic Farming Scheme is a 5-year scheme operated by the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine and is part of Ireland's new CAP Strategic Plan. The scheme will re-open to new entrants in October 2022.

When will the Organic Farming Scheme open?

The first tranche is expected to run between October and November. The Department intends to open the scheme annually between 2022 and 2027.

What are the payments available under the scheme?

	Year 1-2 (in-conversion) Area ≤70ha	Year 1-2 (in- conversion) Area >70ha	Year 3-5 (fully converted) Area ≤70ha	Year 3-5 (fully converted) Area >70ha
Drystock	€300/ha	€60/ha	€250/ha	€30/ha
Tillage	€320/ha	€60/ha	€270/ha	€30/ha
Dairy	€350/ha	€60/ha	€300/ha	€30/ha
Horticulture	€800/ha	€60/ha	€600/ha	€30/ha
Participation payment	Annual payment of €1,400 to cover administrative costs (€2,000 in the first year of the conversion)			

All farmers (in-conversion or fully converted) who are part of the Organic Farming Scheme will be able to avail of the payment rates from 01 January 2023. You can learn about the potential payments for your farm using the [Department's Organic Payments Calculator](#)

What criteria do I need to meet to be eligible for the scheme?

Eligibility conditions will be set out in the Organic Farming Scheme terms and conditions to be published by the Department shortly. A minimum area of 3 ha is required for most enterprises (1 ha for horticulture). The farmer or grower should be registered with an organic certification body such as the Irish Organic Association and have access to the [Agfood.ie](#) at the time of applying for the scheme.

What are the different steps in the application process?

There are three straightforward steps in the application process

1. Complete our [Application Form](#) and [Conversion Plan](#) including soil analysis results and maps
2. Fill out the first page of the [ORG1 form](#) and include it in your IOA application
3. Register your Organic Farming Scheme application with the Department via [Agfood.ie](#)*

*Once we have received your Application Form and ORG 1 Form we will notify the Department to enable you to register via [Agfood.ie](#) which you need to do before the closing date.

When do I have to start converting my farm?

New applicants who submit their application in October/November 2022 begin their conversion from 01 January 2023 to align with the new Organic Farming Scheme.

Do I need an advisor to apply?

Advisors are available to assist farmers who wish to convert to organic farming or farmers can choose to complete the application process and conversion plan themselves. We can help to identify advisors in your area if required.

Are there any specific training requirements?

As part of the Organic Farming Scheme, you must also complete a 25-hour Organic Production Principles Course within a defined period (dates to be confirmed). The course is offered by various providers around the country, including [Teagasc](#) and the [National Organic Training Skillnet \(NOTS\)](#)

Can leased land be part of my converted area under the scheme?

Lease agreements must be in place for the duration of your Organic Farming Scheme contract. An agreement of at least 5 years is therefore required to apply. A copy of the lease should be enclosed with your application. If the land is rented please enclose a letter confirming annual first refusal from the landlord.

Are there other supports available to organic farmers?

The new [TAMS Organic Capital Investment Scheme](#) will provide grant aid of 50% to organic farmers from 2023 (currently 40% grant aid), 60% for young trained farmers. This includes funding for building and approved machinery. Organic farmers also have priority access to [ACRES – the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme](#). The new [Protein/Cereal Mix Crop Scheme](#) may also be particularly relevant for many organic farmers.

Can organic farmers avail of all other CAP support and schemes?

Organic farmers generally have the same access to all other CAP support and schemes e.g., BPS, eco-schemes, TAMS, ACRES, Straw Incorporation Measure, and the Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme where they meet the eligibility criteria.

Can livestock be grazed in commonage areas?

A commonage agreement outlining the location, grazing animals and duration and committing to relevant requirements etc must be signed before use. Commonage area is not eligible for organic payment, but farmers can avail of a commonage payment with organic priority access to [ACRES – the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme](#).

Is forestry eligible under the organic payment scheme?

There is no organic payment for forestry, but where eligible farmers can still avail of [forestry grants and premiums](#) offered by the Department and tree planting measures with organic priority access to [ACRES – the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme](#).

Do I have to stay in the Organic Farming Scheme for the full term?

If you join the OFS you sign up for a five-year contract. If you leave before your contract ends then any monies received must be paid back to the Department.