

Organic Farming: Conversion

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For recent changes to this guidance, please see the [bottom of the page](#).

Aim

The aim of this option is to encourage the participation in organic production in Scotland by supporting farmers and groups of farmers to convert their land to organic status.

Organic farming seeks to work with natural processes using methods that are designed to achieve a sustainable production system with limited use of external inputs.

These options provide support to farmers or groups of farmers to use organic farming methods and to encourage the expansion of organic production in Scotland to deliver environmental benefits.

Eligibility

Any land in Scotland is eligible.

You should not include areas of land covering rocks, scree, water, dense bracken etc. We will check this using the same approach we use to check land for the Basic Payment Scheme.

[Assessing your land eligibility](#)

To apply, you must provide evidence with your application that conversion of the land is viable through the submission of an Organic Viability proposal (OVP), endorsed from a UK-approved Organic Certification Body.

[List of UK approved organic control bodies](#)



[Organic Viability Proposal \(MS Excel, Size: 26.2 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/Organic-Viability-Proposal----28-February-2023.xlsx>



[Organic Viability Proposal guidance \(PDF, Size: 43.2 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/aecs_update_2018_-_organic_viability_proposal_guidance_-_23_november_2017.pdf

[Livestock calculator \(PDF, Size: 25.0 kB\)](#)

[Other sources of information \(PDF, Size: 83.0 kB\)](#)

Spatial targeting

This option is available throughout Scotland.

Requirements

You cannot formally apply for conversion of the land included in your application before the full application is submitted. However, you must submit an organic viability proposal OVP endorsed by a UK-approved Organic Certification Body.

After your AECS application is submitted you can apply to your chosen Certification Body to convert the land and they must formally approve your preferred date of conversion (which must be no earlier than 1 January of the first year of management covered in your application) and your detailed conversion plan.

Additionally, you must note that if your application is approved you must begin conversion by either within six months from the date of your authority to start work letter or your contract start date (usually 1 January) whichever is the later.

Early notification of organic conversion application outcome

The authority to start work letter is the letter we send to you normally acknowledging receipt of a signed copy of the contract.

Note: Exceptionally, where an application for organic conversion is successful in the 2023 round we will issue an approval / authority to start work letter which will be in advance of the contract offer which will follow later. This will enable you to start the conversion process with your chosen certification body within in a six month period from the date of the approval / authority to start work letter.

Successful applicants who do not wish to begin conversion early in the first year of contract can wait until they have returned an accepted contract offer and been issued with a further authority to start work letter. As described above applicants following this route must begin conversion by six months from the date of the second (standard) authority to start work letter.

For applicants who are applying for organic conversion and are successful in the 2024 application round this same early approval / authority to start work notification will be available. This is to allow converters the maximum range of dates to begin the conversion process from the 1st of January in the first contract year.

Further Requirements

- you must submit, along with your first annual recurrent claim, confirmation from your organic certification body of the conversion start date of the area subject to conversion payment, showing that you have begun organic certification within the permitted timescales as set out above. [Further claims and payment information](#).
- you must comply with the organic standards (as laid out by European Commission Regulations and the UK Organic Products Regulations) and additionally the [Organic Production and Care of the Environment Standards](#) as advised in the UK Compendium of Organic Standards for the duration of your contract for the area subject to conversion for each payment category
- you must enter a viable production unit (as agreed by an Organic Certification Body), manage it according to organic standards, be an active farmer and remain registered with a Certification Body throughout the period of the agreement
- each year of your contract, you must submit a copy of your annual production (Land Parcel) schedule and your most recent certificate(s) in support of your annual recurrent claim. The certificate(s) provided must cover the whole period of the year of claim. You should send these to us as soon as they are supplied to you by your organic certification body
- if you enter land into the Fruit and Vegetables Conversion option you must grow a fruit or vegetable crop on **that** land at least **once** in years three to five of your contract. There is an expectation that land entered under the fruit and vegetables option will grow organic fruit or vegetable crops that are destined for human consumption. You should consider whether you can meet this expectation carefully before selecting the fruit and veg option.
- In general, land which was registered as fully organic at any time since 1 January 2000 is not eligible for conversion, unless the land lost its original organic registration and is being presented again for organic conversion by a different and unrelated business to the business that originally converted the land to organic. See [supporting guidance](#).
- you should also refer to the [checklist of requirements](#)

Payment

Organic conversion payment rates per hectare		
Conversion rates per hectare	Years one and two	Years three to five
Arable	£280	£65
Improved Grassland	£140	£55
Unimproved Grassland / Rough Grazing	£12.50	£8.50
Fruit and Vegetables	£400	£200

We will pay you for the duration of your contract on each eligible hectare of land entered into the relevant Organic Conversion option.

Organic Conversion is no longer capped in AECS. Existing organic conversion contract holders with land on their schedule of works in excess of the previous caps will start to be paid on these areas from the 2024 scheme year. While there is no upper limit for land in organic conversion you must be able to demonstrate that the land is used for agricultural purposes.

A minimum payment of £500 per annum per IACS registered business for conversion applies.

The description of land categories can be found below:

[Description of land categories](#)

Capital Costs

As this option is to help farmers with the cost of converting their land to organic systems, capital items, such as stock fences, are not normally eligible. An exception **may** be made where the land was previously under a continually cropped arable system which is being converted to an organic system where grass and grazing are being re-introduced. Consequently you must supply a justification for any capital items applied for under this option detailing why these should be considered as exceptional by the case officer.

Inspections

The inspectors will check:

- you have valid copies of organic certification reports and production schedules
- the land meets the eligibility criteria

Additional guidance

[Supporting guidance is available for this option.](#)

Recent changes

Section	Change
Requirements	Added text covering the early notification of organic conversion application outcome
Payment	Added text to explain that while there is no upper limit for land in organic maintenance you must be able to demonstrate that the land is used for agricultural purposes.

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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