



The Organic Farming Scheme (OFS)

What is the OFS?

The Organic Farming Scheme is an agri-environment scheme that offers payments to farmers in Wales to help them convert to organic farming with the aim of benefiting the environment. It is a key part of the Organic Action Plan for Wales, one of the aims of which is to increase the area of agricultural land in Wales under organic management by 10 – 15% by 2010. The OFS is funded by the EU and the Welsh Assembly Government as part of the 1999-2006 Rural Development Plan (RDP) for Wales, and will be subject to revision for the new 2007-2013 RDP.

How are the payments structured?

The OFS is a five year scheme. Payments vary according to the type of land you are entering into the scheme:

Category	Description
AAPS eligible land	Land that was formerly eligible for arable aid
Permanent crops	Crops which occupy the soil for 5 years or more and yield crops over several years
Other enclosed land	Land that does not meet the above criteria, but is fully enclosed by a traditional boundary or fence. If in a moorland area, the enclosure cannot be bigger than 5Ha
Unenclosed land	Land designated as moorland or coastal belt. For details contact your EPC Divisional Office
Grazed woodland	Woodland grazed by agricultural stock

The payments are front loaded as described below. This is because during the conversion period (generally 2 years) you are farming to the organic standards but you cannot sell your produce as organic and receive organic premiums, Conversion related costs are highest during this time.

	Year 1 (£/ha)	Year 2 (£/ha)	Year 3 (£/ha)	Year 4 (£/ha)	Year 5 (£/ha)	Total (£/ha)
AAPS land and permanent crops	225	135	50	35	35	480
Enclosed land	175	105	40	35	35	390
Unenclosed land & grazed woodland	25	10	10	10	10	65

In addition, you will receive a lump sum of £600 for each farm entered into the scheme, of which £300 will be paid in the first year, £200 in the second and £100 in the third. This is intended as a contribution towards the initial costs of advice, training and registration.

Who is eligible?

You must register your land as 'in conversion' with an organic certification body (see OCW Factsheet No. 9 for details). You must be the lawful occupier of the land (either as the owner or a tenant) with responsibility for, and control over, the farming on that land. You must enter a minimum of 1 ha into the scheme. You can enter a maximum of 300 ha per application of AAPS, permanent crops and enclosed land, but there is no limit to the amount of unenclosed land or grazed woodland you can enter.

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Are there issues for tenants?

Tenants are advised to ensure that their leases cover the entire period for which the farm will be in the OFS (five years in the first instance). Should your lease expire and the new occupants choose not to remain in the scheme, the Welsh Assembly Government can require you to repay the money received in full, plus interest.

Can you combine OFS with other agri-environment schemes?

Yes. The OFS can complement other agri-environment schemes, such as Tir Gofal and Tir Cynnal. There is an element of double funding between with Tir Gofal, and some deductions will be made if you enter both schemes (typically about 10% of the OFS total). For details see OCW Factsheet No. 2. There are no double funding issues with Tir Cynnal.

Is there ongoing support after the OFS?

Yes. The Organic Maintenance Scheme was introduced in 2004, and provides support for organic farmers for a further 5 years after the OFS agreement finishes. It recognises the environmental benefits that organic farming brings, and is not intended to cover the cost of conversion. Payment rates are as follows:

	£/ha/year
AAPS land and permanent crops	35
Enclosed land	35
Unenclosed land and grazed woodland	10

See OCW Factsheet No. 10 for further details.

How do I apply?

Contact your EPC Divisional Office or Organic Centre Wales for an application form and explanatory booklet (see contacts below)

Where can I get advice on organic conversion?

The Organic Conversion Information Service (OCIS) is designed to help you understand the implications of conversion for your farming system, enabling you to make an informed decision on the future direction of your farm. The service is free and consists of access to the OCW technical helpline, an information pack and up to two on-farm advisory visits. To register, call the OCW helpline.

Contact details

Organic Centre Wales, Institute of Rural Sciences, University of Wales, Aberystwyth Ceredigion SY23 3AL
organic-helpline@aber.ac.uk ☎ 01970 622100 (Technical Helpline) 🌐 www.organic.aber.ac.uk

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