

New Organic Farming grants now available

The Countryside Stewardship scheme opened for applications last week with 16 options available for organic farming, providing new opportunities for conversion and ongoing management, with the payment rates reflecting the efforts of ORC and other organic organisations to ensure fair play for organic producers.

Countryside Stewardship Organic options

Countryside Stewardship organic conversion and maintenance options are available to all farms, with no restriction by the “targeting” which controls other options to the regional priorities.

Land type	Conversion (first 2 years) £/ha and year	Ongoing organic management £/ha and year
Top fruit	£450	£300
Horticulture	£400	£200
Rotational land	£175	£65
Improved permanent grassland	£75	£40
Unimproved	£50	£8

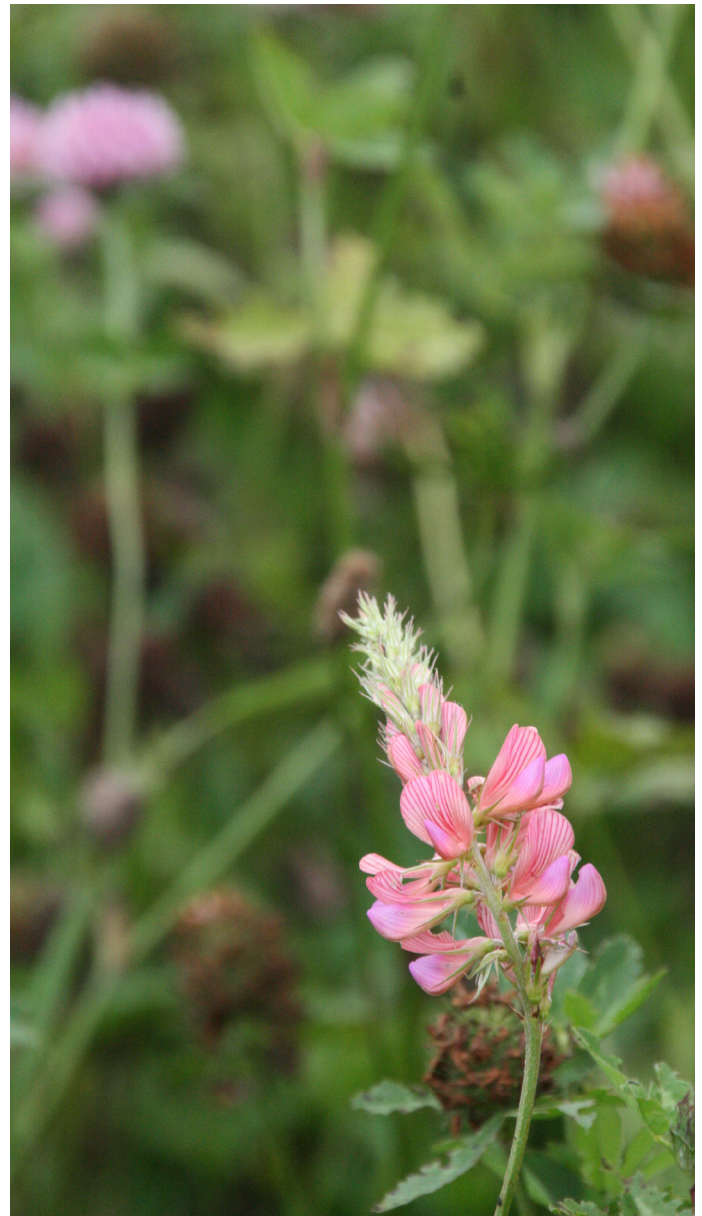
Five exclusively organic options were developed by Natural England with input from ORC. Of particular interest are Overwintered stubble, Multi-species ley and Undersown cereal. Most of the other menu options available to conventional land are also available to organic farms.

Specialist organic options	Payment rate	Comments
Overwintered stubble (OP1)	£116/ha	
Wild bird seed mixture (OP2)	£115/ha	
Supplementary feeding for farmland birds (OP3)	£494/t for every 2 hectares (ha) of wild bird seed mixture.	Restricted option; only if OP2 is in the agreement
Multi species ley (OP4)	£115/ha	
Undersown cereal (OP5)	£86/ha	

Business opportunities

In the last two years organic markets are back in growth, after several difficult years during the recession. Growth is particularly strong in certain multiple retailers, for box schemes and for independent retail. This contrasts with declining conventional sales. Farm Business Survey data, including farm grants, for the last five or six years show that for most enterprise and farm types organic farming profitability is similar to conventional. Organic pigs and poultry have suffered in comparison, while organic dairy, which at one time struggled with low farm gate premiums, are now showing significantly better returns than conventional. For more information see Lampkin, Gerrard and Moakes (2014) Long term trends in the financial performance of organic farms in England and Wales, 2006/07-2011/12 <http://orgprints.org/26339/>

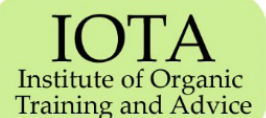
The new Countryside Stewardship organic grants are an important element of farm profitability, they demonstrate Government's ongoing support for organic farming and the new rates will be sufficient to ensure that existing organic farms could be as least as profitable as their conventional counterparts. They will not be sufficient for some farms to convert but for others, particularly more extensive mixed arable/livestock farms and horticulture farms there will be good opportunities to improve their profitability by conversion.



The window for applications in England is open from now until 30th September 2015. Details available on <https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants>

The Institute of Organic Training and Advice (IOTA)

IOTA is a professional body for UK and Irish trainers, advisers and other extension workers involved in organic food and farming. IOTA recently hosted a training course for advisers and others to coincide with the opening of the scheme, covering the latest scheme details, application procedures and business opportunities for organic farming in both England and Wales. Accredited advisers with knowledge of the schemes are available from IOTA. mark.m@organicresearchcentre.com T:+ 44 (0)1588 640118 M 078877 46524



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