



Grass Seed and Variety Availability Issues

Defra's Perspective

Organic Production Regulations



- Organic production controlled by **European Council Regulation 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products** and various European implementing Regulations.
- Principles on organic grass seed production are set out in **European Council Regulation 834/2007** and implemented by **European Commission Regulation 889/2008**.

Organic Production Regulations



- The Regulations acknowledge that:
 - major efforts are being made to develop the organic seed sector so that organic seed will be available for a broad range of plants.
 - there is still a lack of available organic seed for many species and variety of plant.

Organic Production Regulations



- Article 22 (2)(b) of European Council Regulation 834/2007 provides the basis for a derogation from the organic Regulations to allow the use of non-organic seed under particular conditions.
- Article 45 of European Commission Regulation 889/2008 provides further details on the procedure for issuing derogations for the use of non-organic seed and the conditions for doing so.



Monitoring of organic/ non-organic seed availability

- Computer database for the listing of varieties for which organic seed is available.
- Supplier of organic seed asks for the seed to be registered on the database.
- Seeds must be certified as organic and comply with general requirements applicable to seed.



Monitoring of organic/ non-organic seed availability (2)

Database includes:

- name of the species and the variety of seed
- name and contact details of the supplier
- the date from which the seed will be available
- the name and/ or code number of the organic Control Body that certifies the seed.



Conditions for granting derogations:

- no seed is registered on the database for any varieties of the species the operator wishes to use;
- the organic seed will not be available before the time for sowing or planting;
- organic seed for alternative varieties of requested species is registered but none are suitable;
- for use in research, small-scale field trials or for variety conservation purposes;
- the seed is not treated with plant protection products.

Non Organic Seed Derogation



Organic Control Bodies are responsible for considering and issuing derogations for non-organic seed.

Organic Grass Seed Availability



- Derogations for organic grass seed varieties in 2010:
 - Highest for perennial ryegrass (229 tonnes)
 - Significant number of derogations for hybrid ryegrass (53.5 tonnes) and Timothy (51.8 tonnes)

Organic Grass Seed Availability



- In accordance with the principles of the organic Regulations, Defra is working with the grass seed sector to increase the range and supply of suitable organic grass seed in the UK.
- This is a long-term strategy that requires the full co-operation of those within the sector.

Organic Grass Seed Availability



- Defra works with the sector to increase the range and supply of organic grass seed while enabling operators to work as effectively as possible in the current seed supply situation.
- Regular meetings held with key players in the sector to monitor the organic seed supply situation and plan ahead.
- Operate a system whereby organic operators can use a mixture of organic and non-organic grass seed.

Organic Grass Seed Availability



Grass Seed Working Group

- Meetings held at least once a year either by teleconference or face-to face.
- Attendees include seed producers, seed merchants, representatives from the organic Control Bodies and technical experts.
- Group monitors the current seed supply situation, forecasts the situation for the following year and discusses operational and technical issues.
- Group members are working together to gradually increase the supply of organic grass seed.

Organic Grass Seed Availability



Organic and Non-Organic Grass Seed Mix

- Operators may use a mixture of organic and non-organic grass seed.
- Current ratio is 65% organic seed and 35% non-organic seed.
- Such mixes are automatically approved. Lower proportions of organic seed require approval.
- Intention is to increase proportion of organic seed to 70% by January 2014.

Organic Grass Seed Availability



The Future

- Defra will continue to aim for an increase in the supply and range of organic grass seed varieties in line with principles set out in EU Regulations.
- There are currently no plans to change the organic/non-organic seed mixture system.
- Will adopt a pragmatic approach while encouraging the development of organic grass seed.