Advice
General advice is available both from Teagasc and a number of Agricultural Consultants.

- In 2007 Teagasc appointed four specialist organic advisors who are regionally located.
- Combined with the Teagasc local advisory input and external consultancy input as required this will help to ensure that adequate support is available, both at the time of conversion and also on an ongoing basis.
- A demonstration farm programme is operated by Teagasc and the Department which enables visits to first-class facilities and see organic production and management techniques at first hand. Details of the open days are widely available.
- A number of Agricultural Consultants have been briefed by the Department and the Organic Certification Bodies in all aspects of the organic production system.

Useful Contact Details
Organic Unit, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Johnstown Castle, Lo-call 1890 200 509.

Teagasc
- Pat Barry, Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork
  Tel: 025-42222, 087-2138331
- Elaine Leavy, Grange, Co. Meath
  Tel: 046-9061100, 087-9853285
- James McDonnell, Oak Park, Co. Carlow
  Tel: 059-9170200, 087-3293820
- Dan Clavin, Athenry, Co. Galway
  Tel: 091-845845, 087-9368506

Agricultural Consultants
Their contact details are available on the DAFF website or directly from the Organic Unit of the Department.

Education
Support is available to organic operators at many levels to facilitate compliance with the organic regulatory requirements and also enable them to reach their full potential within the system.

- Education courses are available through The Organic Centre, Rossinver, Co. Leitrim, An t-Ionad Glas, Dromcollogher, Co. Limerick and the Wexford Organic Centre.
- Short courses available through Teagasc and the National Organic Training Skillnet (NOTS) Programme.

Education Centres
- The Organic Centre, Rossinver, Co. Leitrim
  Tel: 071-9854338.
- An t-Ionad Glas Organic College, Dromcollogher, Co. Limerick
  Tel: 063-83604.
- Wexford Organic Centre, Cushenstown, Co. Wexford
  Tel: 053-9237033.
One of the main aims of organic farming is the production of high quality food that the consumer is increasingly demanding.

Organic farming:
- Involves production systems with a high level of respect for the environment.
- Contributes to greater biological diversity.
- Makes responsible use of energy and natural resources e.g. water, soil, organic matter & air.
- Concentrates on the nourishment of the soil through the use of natural inputs including farmyard manure and clover swards.
- Avoids the requirement for herbicides, fungicides and insecticides by using crop rotations.
- Excludes the use of GMO’s.

Organic Farming - a Real Opportunity for Horticultural Production.
- Expanding market for organic food.
- Major deficit in Ireland of home produced organic fruit and vegetables.
- Lower costs of production and good price premium cover any yield reductions under organic production system.
- Increasing opportunities for direct sales e.g. Farmers Markets, Farm Shops etc.

In keeping with the strong Government commitment to the development of the organic sector in Ireland, substantial financial supports are available to both producers and processors and these are outlined overleaf.

### Organic Farming Scheme

It is now possible for organic producers to obtain organic support payments without having to be in the REPS Scheme. Organic producers will still, of course, be able to join REPS as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>In conversion</th>
<th>Full organic status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horticulture Area 1 to 6 hectares (ha)</td>
<td>€283/ha</td>
<td>€142/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horticulture Area &gt; 6ha and up to 55ha</td>
<td>€212/ha</td>
<td>€106/ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### All Other Holdings - payment rates per hectare per year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farmed Area of</th>
<th>In conversion</th>
<th>Full organic status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmed Area of 3ha up to 55ha</td>
<td>€212/ha</td>
<td>€106/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmed Area &gt; 55ha</td>
<td>€15/ha</td>
<td>€15/ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These payment rates are additional to any REPS basic payments

### Example of total payments for organic operators participating in both the Organic Farming Scheme and REPS 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Max annual payment while in 2 year conversion period</th>
<th>Max annual payment when fully organic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 ha</td>
<td>€8,920</td>
<td>€6,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Schemes of Grant Aid for the Development of the Organic Sector

Development grants are available to both Producers and Processors under the Schemes of Grant Aid:
- On-Farm and Off-Farm grant aid for new equipment and facilities for production, preparation, grading, packing, storage, distribution and sale of organic products.
- Grant aid of 30% for investments over €1,500
- Maximum grant aid of €60,000 (On-Farm) and €500,000 (Off-Farm) payable over the duration of the scheme, which runs from 2007-2013.
- Grant aid scheme is especially useful for fruit and vegetable production and processing equipment.

### Regulation

Organic production and labelling of organic products is controlled by European and national regulation, i.e. Council Regulation 2092/91, which is backed up by Statutory Instruments 112 of 2004 and 698 of 2007. The EU legislation allows Member States to use private inspection bodies to carry out the inspection and licensing system of organic operators. Two certification bodies carry out this work in Ireland, i.e. Irish Organic Farmers & Growers Association (IOFGA) and Organic Trust Ltd.

To become an organic operator an applicant must first make contact with one of these two bodies who will initiate the licensing process.

### Marketing

The development of the organic sector in Ireland has to be market driven. Bord Bia, in consultation with the Organic Market Development Group, has produced a three-year Organic Marketing Plan 2006-2009. The objective of the €1.5m Plan is to develop the organic sector in Ireland for existing suppliers and new entrants, and assist them to develop their market potential. Initiatives to date include a Farmers Market Guide published in 2007 and the upcoming Organic Guide.