

Project number: 5934
Funding source: Teagasc

Date: March, 2012
Project dates: Jan 2009 - Dec 2011

Meeting national targets for organic farming in Ireland



Key external stakeholders:

Policy Makers, Organic Farming Bodies, Conventional Farmers, Organic Farmers

Practical implications for stakeholders:

- This study examines the factors that determine whether producers adopt organic farming and estimates the likely future level of adoption that will take place.

Main results:

This study examined the factor influencing the take up of organic farming in Ireland. It found that under current circumstances, large-scale conversion to organic farming by drystock farmers within the next five years is unlikely.

Opportunity / Benefit:

The study points to an information deficit amongst farmers and a general lack of knowledge and awareness of organic farming. Policy makers may wish to consider modifying the means by which they communicate with farmers on issues associated with organic farming.

Collaborating Institutions:

NUI Galway

Teagasc project team: Trevor Donnellan
Doris Laepple
External collaborators: Tom Van Rensburg (NUIG)

1. Project background:

Despite the considerable interest in organic farming the Irish organic sector remains small. Therefore, to target support for the sector, it is important to understand why farmers make decisions in favour or against organic farming as well as to identify drivers and barriers of that decision. The adoption of organic farming is assumed to be driven by a variety of different drivers such as economic, socio-economic, structural and institutional factors.

2. Questions addressed by the project:

The project had a number of objectives. It asked:

Which factors influence the diffusion and adoption of organic farming in Ireland? Which factors influence entry to and exit from organic farming?

3. The experimental studies:

The project looked at the economics of organic production, and use a quantitative approach to examine the decision making that takes place on farms with a particular focus on economic and policy factors as well as the role of producer networks and social and family influences in the advancement of organic production. A survey of conventional drystock farmers was conducted to elicit farmers attitudes to a range of issues including the environment, conventional organic production, information sources and attitudes to risk. This data was then applied to social psychology models in an econometric framework to better understand the motivation of producers.

4. Main results:

The results suggest that under current circumstances large-scale conversion to organic farming by drystock farmers within the next five years is uncertain, but nevertheless 6% of farmers state considerable interest in conversion to organic production.

5. Opportunity/Benefit:

It appears that farmers do not have strong opinions about organic farming but equally the results here suggest that they do not have a good level of knowledge about organic farming. Therefore an increase in the provision of information mainly focused on promoting organic farming as a profitable alternative to conventional farming could have a positive impact on the tendency for conversion. Future conversion to organics is most likely to be financially driven, but this may be hampered by the farmers' perception that only rich people can afford to buy organic food.

6. Dissemination:

Main publications:

Laepple D. and Donnellan T. (2009) Adoption and Abandonment of Organic Farming
An Empirical Investigation of the Irish Drystock Sector. Paper presented at the 83rd Annual Conference of the Agricultural Economics Society.

Popular publications:

7. Compiled by: Trevor Donnellan
