

Good Practices – EAFRD projects' template

Project name/title

Organic Farming Scheme

Context

Why was the project needed? What was the situation to begin with? Do not start talking about the objectives. Just the context. (max.300 words)

The Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) is funded through the Rural Development Programme. Due to the popularity and high demand for the scheme the funding allocation of €10 million per year has now been exhausted and the scheme is currently closed to new applicants. The Organic unit within the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) operate the scheme through which prospective organic farmers enter a 5 year contract with the first two years being conversion and the subsequent 3 years a commitment to farm organically.

The objectives of the scheme are two fold to deliver enhanced environmental benefits and preserve biodiversity and animal welfare benefits and to encourage producers to respond to the market demand for organically produced food.

There is an increase in demand for organically grown food across Europe and despite this Ireland currently only devotes 1.2% of utilizable agricultural area to organic production. The Organic Farming Scheme incentivises farmers to switch from normal farm practice to produce organic milk, beef, and vegetables for a growing market. Organic Farming operates at the highest level of sustainability aiming to improve water quality, soil quality and preserve biodiversity. An increase in organic farming is seen as positive from a climate change and biodiversity point of view.

Objectives

In response to the context set out above, what did the project hope to achieve and what was its overall approach for doing this? Do not simply list planned activities, which will be covered below. (max 300 words)

1. To produce quality food in a manner that is beneficial to the environment and deliver enhanced environmental benefits and preserves biodiversity
2. To increase the area under organic production from 1.2% to 5% of utilizable agricultural area
3. To mitigate Climate Change through farming practices that build soil fertility, and avoid the use of chemical fertiliser.

Activities

What did the project do and in what order did it implement its activities? If possible, include: a timeframe; who/which stakeholders were involved; the reasons and logic of the approach taken. The aim is to enable readers to really understand what the project did and how. Do not provide a simple list of bullet points but briefly explain each activity. (max 600 words)

Tom Dunne winner of the 2016 Zurich farmer of the year award which is an award to highlight innovation and dedication within the farming sector is an organic farmer. Tom outlines

his experience of organic farming. "I am beef farmer and farm 118 acres in Co. Laois. 7 years ago I was at a crossroads I wasn't getting enough of a return from my beef enterprise. I began researching my options. I attended some organic farm walks and spoke to other organic farmers. The Organic Farming Scheme seemed like a suitable option for me. The payment of €220/ha during the two year conversion period was attractive. Following the conversion period the payment reduces to €170/ha. Organic beef commands a premium price. I decided to enter into the Organic Farming scheme. I haven't regretted my decision once in my 7 years of participation in the scheme.

In order to prepare my farm for the conversion, I carried out some reseeding and increased the clover mix within my swards. I changed my farming enterprise from a suckler beef enterprise to a beef finishing enterprise. I currently finish 83 cattle per year. "

Tom outlined some of the challenges encountered in the early days of organic farming. Initially he found it difficult to secure a market for all of his cattle. He was supplying Slaney Meats and they would take 4-5 cattle at a time. He is now part of an organic producer group which is a nationwide organic producer group with approximately 30 members. They sell their produce to ABP/Good Herdsman organic meat processing facilities in Cahir and Clones. The producer group streamline the sale of their stock between the members so each farmer knows when they are due to sell their cattle. He achieves on average €1/kg premium for his organic beef. He faced some problems with grass growth but after taking soil samples and applying dung, slurry, and dairy sludge grass growth increased. He is getting 9/10 tonnes per acre of silage.

Tom found it difficult to source feed for his stock so he began growing a combi crop a wheat and pea mix and uses it for feed. The feed is 15.2% protein and is an excellent feed source. Tom admits that you have to be progressive and willing to change and evolve to make your farm work for you. He thinks that the use of science and technology is hugely important. Soil testing, silage analysis, and drawing up a nutrition plan have been key factors to his success. His expansion plans haven't been curtailed by his participation in the organic farming scheme. He plans to expand to finishing 100 cattle per year.

Results

What did the project achieve? What has changed and how was the initial identified need met? Include quantified improvements where possible. Unquantifiable progress can also be described (e.g. increase in revenue, jobs created, number of participating businesses, increase in sales, increase in visitors, etc.). Keep it short – a list is fine (max 300 words)

Tom is achieving a premium value for his organic beef produce now. The organic farming system is working well for Tom he now intends to expand his beef enterprise to finishing up to 100 cattle per year. The Organic farming scheme is helping to improve and enhance biodiversity on his farm. Biodiversity is enhanced because Tom is using fewer pesticides and farming in a manner that is beneficial to the environment.

He no longer spreads chemical fertiliser on his farm which is helping to reduce his carbon footprint.

Lessons

What factors should be taken into account when transferring the example? What was interesting, unexpected, surprising about implementing the project? What could be done better? Keep them short and to the point. (Max 300 words)

Profitability of the farm has been maintained at or as good as the non- organic farming enterprise but it is dependent on the organic farming scheme payments of €220/ha during the two year

conversion period and €170/ha per year following the conversion period. Given the high interest in organic farming the RDP in future may need to provide additional funding for Organic Farming.

Project general info

Name (project title or short name)	
Dates ¹ (Indicate both start and end dates ²)	
Member State (or region if regionalised RDP)	
Type of beneficiary (public/SME/farmer/NGO etc.)	
Measure ³ (or measures)	
Priority & Focus Area ⁴ (for 2014-2020 projects)	

Funding^{4, 6}

Total budget in EUR	
EAFRD contribution in EUR	
National/regional co-financing in EUR	
Private funds in EUR	
Other sources (in EUR)	

Contact details

Project beneficiary name/organisation	
Contact person	
Contact Email	
Telephone	
Other contact details	

Further information

Website	
Additional info sources, links	

Quotes from beneficiaries/participants

(if available) Obviously choose ones that really highlight the key message of the project

Project photos with information on copyrights

A number of 2-3 photos, as available, would be sufficient. Copyrights maybe the name of the photographer, or in general the owner of the photos' copyrights as indicated by the provider of the project's content.

Additional note

¹ Both a starting and end date are needed.

² On-going projects are not eligible.

³ Always indicate which measure(s) were used.

⁴ Both the Priority & Focus Area are needed for the 2014-2020 programming period projects.

⁵ In case more than one measures were used then please provide the above financial data for all measures involved.

⁶ The total and EAFRD budget are required as a minimum.