

## Organic Project Team (OPT) National Council Report

July 2024

### Market Report

Enhanced Organic Farm Scheme (OFS) payment rates of recent years have seen an increase in the number of farmers participating in the OFS scheme. An additional 1,050 farmers joined the scheme this year, bringing the total to over 5,000 participants in the OFS, and a tripling of the area being farmed organically since 2020.

Even with these new entrants, the area under organic production remains significantly below the European average. Ireland's Climate Action Plan has a target of 10% of land area farmed organically by 2030. This is a very ambitious target and can only be reached through funding and additional resources for the sector. There is a growing market consumer demand for organic products, and Ireland's green image in the international marketplace gives us a real opportunity to further develop the sector.

IFA is clear that additional funding and resources need to be allocated to the establishment of markets, as more organic will come onto the market in the next two years as new entrants finish the conversion process. Progress has been made in this respect with the appointment of a full-time sector manager in Bord Bia and IFA continues to liaise with the Bord Bia team on an on-going basis.

### IFA organic sector proposals for Budget 2025:

- Funding of the Organic Farm Scheme should be increased to incentivise and further develop the area of land under organic production.
- The participation payment should be maintained.
- An additional payment should be made on the first 3 ha of organic horticulture area.
- Increased investment needs to be made towards developing suitable markets and outlets for the projected increase in organic produce coming onto the market in the coming years.

### Activity since last Council

- An initial meeting of the new members of the IFA Organic Project Team took place in May chaired by John Fitzpatrick. At this meeting members cited the aims and expectations of the group for the upcoming year. It was decided that the group must continue to liaise with all relevant stakeholders in the industry and introductory meetings should be set up. Members also raised issues relevant to their commodities and decided actions to further these issues.
- Chairman John Fitzpatrick and organic executive Niamh Brennan took part in two COPA Organic meetings last month. At these meetings IFA gave an update from an Irish perspective in terms of markets. Overall, the organic market in Europe is lackluster at present, with the cost-of-living crisis evident across the continent.
- IFA continues to engage with the Organic Forum and attends regular meetings. IFA provides suggestions and feedback on the next Organic Strategy as part of this group. The Strategy is expected to launch in the next few weeks.

### Upcoming Events/Issues

- IFA will continue to meet with all retailers regarding organic produce.
- The IFA Organic Project Team will meet with Bord Bia on July 24<sup>th</sup> to discuss markets and plans for 2024/2025.

- IFA continues to attend meetings of the Organic Forum Group.
- IFA representatives will continue to support organic farm walks nationally.
- The next meeting of the Organic Project Team will be on September 11<sup>th</sup>.



John Fitzpatrick  
Organic Project Team Chair



Niamh Brennan  
Organic Policy Executive