



## **DAFM Survey of Organic Farmers Highlights Feed Requirements for winter 2023**

*A major survey of organic farmers carried out by the Department of Agriculture received just under 1,200 responses.*

### **Background**

With the significant increase in the area under organic farming and over 2,000 additional farmers joining the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) in January 2023, a major survey of organic feed requirements has been undertaken by the DAFM's Organic Unit based in Johnstown Castle, Wexford to establish regional feed requirements for organic concentrate feeds: straight feeds and forage for the 2023/'24 winter. The objective of the survey is to highlight the opportunities for organic tillage farmers to grow grain and grain/ protein crops to meet the growing demands, facilitate partnerships between tillage and livestock farmers for interfarm trading of feed and provide information to feed merchants to ensure they can meet demands for the coming winter.

Around 1,200 organic farmers participated in the survey which is a 30% participation rate. 34% of the survey participants have obtained full organic status, 59% are in their first year of conversion and the rest are in their second year of conversion. The majority of those who responded have beef (72%) and/or sheep (41%) enterprises. Some 12% have a tillage enterprise, 4% have poultry and 3% have dairy. Response numbers were reflective of the geographic spread of organic farmers. Responses were received from every county except Louth; the largest number came from Cork, Roscommon, Mayo, Donegal, Galway and Kerry.

### **Demand for Straight Feeds**

The survey indicates that the participants are planning to purchase over 1,500 tonnes (t) of grain pea mix; a high quality, good value balanced feed providing energy and protein. The demand for this feed varies from over 370 t in the West, 350 t in the Midlands and 210 t in the South



East regions. Likewise, the survey indicates a demand for over 660t of organic oats and 600t of organic barley with demand across all regions. A detailed analysis of the regional demand for the various feeds is provided in Annex 1.

There are now over 4,000 organic farmers and with a survey participation rate of 30%, it is clear that there are good opportunities for organic tillage farmers to grow these crops this springtime to meet growing needs. The survey information can be useful for advisors to motivate tillage farmers in the growing of these crops.

The survey indicates that 24% of organic farmers are self-sufficient and do not need to purchase additional feedstuffs, while 12% have an arrangement in place with another organic farmer to supply them with forage or concentrates. Many organic livestock farmers expressed a desire to partner with tillage farmers for inter-farm trading of feed and DAFM will be following up on this.

### **Concentrate Feeds**

Participants indicated a demand for over 8,000t of organic concentrates for the 2023/'24 winter, 30% of which is beef concentrate feed with the remainder comprising sheep, dairy, and poultry feed. Again, there is a demand across all regions but particularly in the Border, West and South West regions. It is to be noted the very significant indicated demand for beef and sheep concentrate feed in the South West region of Cork and Kerry. This highlights opportunities for feed merchants across the regions to meet the requirements. A detailed analysis is provided in Annex 2.



## **Forage**

Survey participants are also seeking to purchase organic silage, hay and red clover silage ahead of the 2023/2024 winter. Survey respondents indicated demand for over 5,500 t silage, 2,300 t hay, 1,000 t red clover silage.p. Other forage required by survey participants includes wholecrop, straw and lucerne. Full details are provided in Annex 3.

## **Conclusions**

The area under organic farming in Ireland almost doubled in January 2023. This major survey undertaken by DAFM's Organic Unit indicates growing demand for organic feed of all types to meet requirements for the winter 2023/'24. There is clear opportunity for organic tillage farmers to grow grain/ pea crops and grain to meet the requirements. The regional demand for these feeds is highlighted in the Annex1 and there is great opportunity for inter farm trading of these feeds. It is apparent that there will be significant demand for organic concentrate feeds particularly in the Border, West and South West regions and there is ample time for feed merchants to be set up by next winter to supply the required compound feed. Likewise, the demand for forage across all regions is apparent. An important action in the Organic Stakeholders Forum is the development of the Organic Hub as a platform to connect buyers and sellers of organic produce including feed; the development of which is underway with the planned delivery date of September 2023.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,  
Bia agus Mara  
Department of Agriculture,  
Food and the Marine

**Further Information:**

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine carried out this 'Organic Feed Requirements' survey in order to assist growers making planting decisions for 2023. The information has been anonymised, collated and provided to Teagasc and the ACA for dissemination to farmers. The survey was carried out from 10<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and closed for responses on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023. 1,198 responses represents approximately a third of organic farmers in the Republic of Ireland. For further information please contact DAFM – [organic@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:organic@agriculture.gov.ie), phone – 053 9163425



Annex 1 – Regional Demand for Organic Straight Feeds

	Number of responses	Quantity of Barley intending to purchase (T)	Quantity of Oats intending to purchase (T)	Quantity of Grain/Pea mix intending to purchase (T)	Quantity of Wheat intending to purchase (T)
<b>Nationwide</b>	1198	617	664	1564	253
<b>Border Region -</b> Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo	248	75	69	135	9
<b>West -</b> Mayo, Roscommon, Galway	281	180	136	376	105
<b>Mid-West -</b> Clare, Tipperary, Limerick	178	148	214	163	25
<b>South East -</b> Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford	94	59	35	212	57
<b>South West -</b> Kerry, Cork	179	46	32	153	2
<b>Mid-East -</b> Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Louth	82	62	65	171	23
<b>Midlands -</b> Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath	136	42	116	355	32



### Annex 2 – Regional Demand for Organic Compound Feeds

	Beef concentrates required next winter (T)	Sheep concentrates required next winter (T)	Dairy concentrates required next winter (T)	Poultry concentrates required next winter (T)	Other concentrates required next winter (T)
<b>Nationwide</b>	2901	1682	1424	1477	586
<b>Border Region</b> - Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo	699	317	22	715	15
<b>West</b> - Mayo, Roscommon, Galway	372	271	3	15	10
<b>Mid-West</b> - Clare, Tipperary, Limerick	282	42	70	86	77
<b>South East</b> - Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford	99	54	102	10	457
<b>South West</b> - Kerry, Cork	1055	566	6	605	6
<b>Mid-East</b> - Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Louth	117	355	40	37	15
<b>Midlands</b> - Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath	272	77	1181	8	7



Annex 3 – Regional Demand for Organic Forage

	Silage quantity to be purchased for next winter (T)	Hay quantity to be purchased for next winter (T)	Maize quantity to be purchased for next winter (T)	Wholecrop quantity to be purchased for next winter (T)	Red Clover silage to be purchased for next winter (T)	Other forage to be purchased for next winter (T)
<b>Nationwide</b>	5554	2336	58	132	1003	93
<b>Border Region -</b> Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo	630	488	7	2	2	2
<b>West -</b> Mayo, Roscommon, Galway	2195	655	1	18	135	22
<b>Mid-West -</b> Clare, Tipperary, Limerick	253	145	0	0	100	31
<b>South East -</b> Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford	515	289	50	72	51	20
<b>South West -</b> Kerry, Cork	1189	625	0	0	0	3
<b>Mid-East -</b> Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Louth	467	105	0	40	72	15
<b>Midlands -</b> Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath	305	29	0	0	643	0