

Organic Pig Production: An introductory guide

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This booklet is part of a range of short introductory guides that are designed to help anyone who is thinking about starting an organic enterprise. It is not intended to be a comprehensive guide but aims to answer the most common questions.

This booklet must be read together with the standards of your organic certification body. For example, if you are a Soil Association Certification (SACL) Ltd licensee then you should read the full *Soil Association organic standards*.

SOIL ASSOCIATION

The Soil Association has an independent membership-based team within the Soil Association charity, dedicated to helping farmers, growers, primary processors – and the wider organic sector. We are independent of the organic certification process and are here to provide you with information, advice and support.

To find out more about the benefits of producer membership see the rear pages. Alternatively, call us on **0117 914 2400** and we will be happy to help discuss any membership queries you have, or any other questions arising from this booklet.

Organic conversion

How long does it take to convert land to organic status?

Most arable, horticultural and grass-based farms will go through a 24-month conversion period when the land must be managed to full organic standards. However, sometimes the conversion period may be increased or reduced.

Land used specifically for poultry and pigs may be eligible for a reduced conversion period. In order to qualify, farm records and a field assessment at inspection must demonstrate that no prohibited inputs have been applied to the land for 12 months before the start of conversion (see '**What are prohibited inputs?**' below).

According to organic regulations all land must be monitored during the conversion period. This normally involves at least one farm inspection a year by an approved UK organic certification organisation, such as Soil Association Certification Limited (SACL).

A reduction of up to four months may be given if farm records show that no *prohibited inputs* have been used for at least four months before the proposed start of conversion (see '**What are prohibited inputs?**' below). Unless land has been part of a monitored environmental management scheme, four months is the maximum reduction that any certification body can give.

Land that has been part of a monitored environmental management scheme, such as a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) or land that is part of an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme or Higher Level Stewardship scheme; may be eligible for a reduced conversion period of up to 12 months. In such cases an application must be made on behalf of the farmer to the UK's organic government body - your certification body does not take the decision -and it is rare for a reduction in conversion to be granted on these grounds.

Your land may not be eligible for any reduction in the conversion period if you have used herbicide or synthetic fertiliser application – including spot herbicide treatments or weed wiping.

The absolute minimum organic conversion period for land will be 12 months in any case.

What are 'prohibited inputs' under organic rules?

Any materials other than those listed in the *Soil Association organic standards* (which has a positive list of permitted inputs and inputs that can only be used with prior permission) should be regarded as prohibited unless the materials have been checked with your certification body.

Prohibited inputs for land would include, for example, synthetic fertilisers, herbicides and synthetic pesticides. Prohibited inputs for livestock would include all organophosphate treatments, the unauthorised use of routine veterinary treatments (such as routine worming) and the unauthorised feeding of non-organic feedstuffs which may be contaminated with genetically modified (GM) material.

Full lists of approved fertilisers, pest and disease control products, approved feed suppliers, and abattoirs are available free to SACL licensees and producer members. Call the Soil Association on **0117 914 2400** or **producer.support@soilassociation.org**

If you are in any doubt about the status of *any* product you can always contact the Soil Association for advice on **0117 914 2400**.

Do I have to convert all my land?

You do not have to convert all land on a holding; however, the area you convert must be large enough to form a viable production unit.

If you are thinking of converting only part of the holding you will need to make sure that the organic area is physically separated from any non-organic land on the same holding by means of stock-proof fences or hedges, and you will need to maintain separate records, invoices and accounts.

Please note that simultaneous land and livestock conversion requires all livestock and the land used for their grazing and feed to be kept to full organic standards from the start of the conversion period (see '**What is simultaneous conversion?**' below).

Can I convert my existing herd of pigs?

Animals that are non-organic can *never* achieve organic status themselves – in other words, they can never be sold-on as organic. However, provided that non-organic sows undergo the appropriate conversion period they can produce organic youngstock. These 'non-organic' breeding sows are often referred to – and commonly traded – as converted breeding stock.

To produce an organic piglet a sow must be managed to full organic standards – including feed and veterinary treatments – from service onwards, after which the piglets are born as organic on organic land. You must raise and keep the pigs to full organic standards throughout their life in order to sell them as organic (please also refer to '**What is simultaneous conversion?**' below).

Can I buy in piglets from a non-organic source and convert them?

No. The sow must be managed to full organic standards from service, and her piglets managed to full organic standards through their lives if the pigs are to be marketed as organic animals.

I am thinking of setting up a pig enterprise and I have no existing herd – is this a problem?

You should not have any problems in establishing a new enterprise before you start your conversion and non-organic animals are commonly used to set up a new herd in this way. The sows must undergo the appropriate conversion periods before they can produce organic youngstock on organic land, and do not ever achieve organic status themselves (see '**Can I convert my existing herd of pigs?**' above).

However, replacement rules are very different for those producers who already have organic land, and want to set up new organic livestock enterprises. In such cases there are restrictions on the numbers and age of non-organic animals that are brought-in (please also refer to '**Replacement stock**' below).

Please contact the Soil Association for further advice on **0117 914 2400** or email **producer.support@soilassociation.org**

What is 'simultaneous conversion'?

If you are eligible for one year conversion (see '**How long does it take to convert land to organic status?**') then that would be the quickest route to producing organic pigs. If you are eligible for the one year conversion you cannot then also undertake simultaneous conversion.

If you are undertaking a two year conversion then simultaneous conversion may be an option. Simultaneous land and livestock conversion (often know as 'Sim Con') is a development which allows more extensive (and less intensive) producers to convert their land and livestock enterprises to full organic status more quickly than the traditional organic conversion procedures.

Under the traditional conversion route land enters conversion for 24 months before sows undergo conversion to allow them to farrow on organic land (see '**Can I convert my existing herd of pigs?**' above). So, realistically it may be three years or so from the start of the conversion process before the first organic pig is ready for slaughter.

The advantages of Sim Con are that pigs which are born during the conversion, and have been kept to full organic standards throughout the conversion period, will qualify as fully organic once the land achieves full organic status after the 24 month conversion period.

However, there are significant rules that may make Sim Con difficult for all producers considering organic conversion. Under Sim Con rules all land and livestock on the production unit must be maintained to full organic standards from day one of the 24 month conversion period: this includes all land on the holding needed to provide grazing and forage for the livestock, all brought-in feeds, veterinary treatments, housing and so on.

There is very little margin for error under Sim Con rules, so it is absolutely essential that you are fully aware of the implications of Sim Con and the organic standards for your land and livestock before the start of the conversion process.

If a producer enters Sim Con then all grazing and all home-produced forage can be considered as 'organic' during the conversion period, although it obviously cannot be traded as 'organic'. However, as the animals must be fed to full organic standards any brought in feeds and forage must comply with the organic standards (see '**Do I have to use 100% organic feed?**' below).

Producers who undertake Sim Con will *not* be able to request any reduction in the 24 month conversion period.

Please note that, as with existing organic conversion procedures, all existing non-organic livestock on the holding can never gain organic status themselves.

NOTE: If pigs are the only livestock kept then it is unlikely that Sim Con will provide a great benefit over standard conversion. Looking at the information above, you would need to keep all pigs to full organic standards for the two year conversion period, which means that during that period there would be several litters of pigs that were reared to full organic standards on organic feed but which you would have to sell as non-organic as the land was still going through conversion. These additional feed costs are unlikely to be compensated for by the

potential to sell organic pigs from the day the land becomes organic, rather than six to nine months later.

If, however, pigs form part of a mix of livestock enterprises on your farm and you also have beef animals, Sim Con may still be a viable option. For more information contact the Soil Association on **0117 914 2400**.

What sort of land is best for organic pig production?

Ideally, land will be free draining in a low rainfall area (less than 800mm). It need not necessarily be flat, although this is an advantage for farrowing sows. Sites which slope steeply or have heavy land or high rainfall can lead to problems with soil erosion and animal welfare.

What about water provision?

Water demand can be considerable, especially during hot periods when wallows must be provided to protect pigs from heat stress and sunburn (note that dark skinned pigs may be less susceptible). All pigs should have unlimited access to water and you should provide a back up supply in case the main supply should ever fail. An example of this could be bowser supply of water when pipes freeze in the winter.

How can pigs fit into an organic system?

Pigs fit well into a rotation. They often graze at the end of a grass/clover ley. The ley can then be followed by cereals, roots or vegetables.

The standards recommend that pigs should not return to the same land more than once in four years, and do not stay on the same piece of land for more than six months – this is a recommendation, not a requirement. As herbicides are not permitted in organic systems weed control must be by management practices or mechanical methods, and pigs can provide an effective means for controlling persistent weeds.

How much land will I need?

Following the introduction of the EU organic livestock regulation there are limits on manure application rates (and therefore stocking rates). A maximum application of manures or slurry of the equivalent to 170kg nitrogen (N)/ha can be made each year over the entire holding. For most pig producers it is unlikely that this will be exceeded.

As a rough guideline the proposed '170kg N rule' equates to 2.29 sows plus progeny reared to bacon weight (18 pigs/sow/year) per hectare of land over the whole farm. This is just an indication and it is important that thorough calculations are done (see table below). More generous allowances for total area may be required to meet annual rotation requirements and to ensure ground cover survival.

Organic producers can establish links with other holdings and enterprises so that, where excess manures are produced on one holding, the manure may be transferred and spread to another holding(s) where the 170kg N/ha limit had not yet been met.

Excess manure cannot be transferred to non-organic holdings.

In addition, the UK certification bodies have set a maximum application rate of 250kg N/ha/yr for any single field or area (excluding that deposited direct by grazing stock).

The following table provides guidance for the 'N rating' for individual livestock:

Stocking rates equivalent to 170 Kg N/ha

Type of Livestock equivalent to 170 Kg N/ha	Maximum number of animals
Pig (baconer)	16
Cutter (35– 85kg)	18
Grower (18–35kg)	28
Weaners (7–18kg)	60
Sow and litter (to 7kg)	9

A worked example of actual stocking rate is shown below for a 10ha farm where all land is suitable for pigs.

Using two sows and progeny per hectare over the whole area suitable for pigs gives a maximum of 20 sows plus progeny that can be maintained on the farm.

If the pigs are stocked on the same land no more than one year in four 2.5ha of land will have pigs on it each year, therefore each hectare will be stocked with eight sows and their progeny.

If pigs are moved every six months then 1.25ha of land will be stocked at any given time. This equals 16 sows plus followers per hectare.

In practice if pigs are moved more frequently – and some farms move the herd every three to four months – then more land is usually provided per sow per year. This system may have benefits in terms of keeping ground cover on more marginal sites. It also allows for flexibility of use: land ahead of the pig herd may be grazed by other farm livestock and the land behind can have crops planted on it. More frequent moving does require a higher workload.

Can I make use of woodlands?

Deciduous woodland can provide a good environment for pigs, which will enjoy eating acorns and other additional beneficial foods. Grazing with pigs can aid the management of woodland, but care must be taken as the pigs will damage the trees if they remain in the same place for too long.

Animal health

What veterinary drugs can I use? Will there be longer withdrawal periods?

Where effective, the organic standards recommend the use of homoeopathic and herbal preparations in preference to synthetic chemical medicines, such as antibiotics, anti-parasitic drugs, hormones, anti-inflammatory and analgesic drugs, and sedatives.

However, the standards do permit the use of synthetic chemical medicines in order to avoid suffering and distress, and where homoeopathic and herbal preparations would not be effective.

Under organic livestock management preventative husbandry and management practices must be introduced to avoid and minimise pest and disease problems – and reliance on chemical treatments.

Please note that there will be an extended meat withdrawal period for any chemically-synthesised and non-synthesised veterinary product used in organic pig systems. Homoeopathic preparations have no organic withdrawal period.

As a rough guideline the organic withdrawal periods for **chemically-synthesised** veterinary products, such as wormers or antibiotics, will be:

- 48 hours where no withdrawal is specified
- Seven days for products with a non-organic withdrawal period of 0–48 hours
- Three-times the non-organic withdrawal period for products with a withdrawal period of between 2–18 days
- 56 days for products with a non-organic withdrawal period of between 19–28 days
- Twice the non-organic withdrawal period for products with a withdrawal period of 29 days or more.

For more detailed information on the organic withdrawal periods please refer to the *Soil Association organic standards*.

Antibiotics, copper diet supplements and probiotics for growth promotion are all prohibited.

Soil Association Certification Ltd licencees and producer members can contact the Soil Association for information on the organic withdrawal period at any time on **0117 914 2400** or **producer.support@soilassociation.org**

Full records of all treatments must be kept and made available at inspection – a veterinary record sheet is available from Soil Association Certification Limited.

For further details on homoeopathy in organic livestock production refer to the reference section below or for more information call us on **0117 914 2400** or **producer.support@soilassociation.org**

A group called Homeopathy at Wellie Level (HAWL) regularly host specific events on the use of homoeopathy in livestock production. Information can be found at **www.hawl.co.uk** or contact Chris Lees on **01666 841213**.

Details of suppliers of homoeopathic products are also available from the Soil Association on **0117 914 2400** or **producer.support@soilassociation.org**

I have been told that I will have to submit an animal health plan – what is it?

In organic livestock systems the prevention of pest and disease problems and high levels of management and husbandry is the key. The organic standards require all producers to submit an animal health plan during the early stages of their conversion. Basically, an animal health plan should provide a written strategy for the management of animal health to organic standards during the conversion period – and beyond.

By producing a plan, the farmer is able to demonstrate that they are aware of what will be required of them under the organic standards in terms of livestock health management. The plan should:

- Identify all significant potential livestock pest and disease problems you might face
- Outline how you intend to prevent their occurrence where possible
- Outline what treatments will be used should they occur and
- Identify how you intend to improve overall herd-health and reduce reliance on veterinary treatments.

Producers are strongly advised to get advice from their veterinary surgeon in developing the plan, although this is not a formal requirement.

As a rough guideline the animal health plan might:

- Identify all persistent mineral deficiencies, disease and parasite health problems that occur on the farm
- Identify husbandry changes that will be needed in order to remedy problems, such as the adoption of a clean grazing system, appropriate stocking levels, improved hygiene practices and improved housing ventilation
- Identify all treatments that are used - or may have to be used - at all stages of the conversion period - and beyond. The plan should identify how the use of these treatments will change throughout the conversion process and how you intend to reduce reliance on veterinary treatments, ensure organic withdrawal periods are observed, etc.
- Identify different management practices for all ages of stock including the feeding regime, housing details, medication procedures, grazing policy and the management practices that will develop immunity (for example, selection for breeding, choice of land for use by farrowing sows and so on)
- Identify record keeping procedures and systems. Producers are expected to keep detailed records and invoices of all brought-in-feeds, livestock movements and veterinary treatments, along with your field and crop records.

The animal health plan should not be seen as a 'one-off' document, only to be filed away – never to darken the office desk again! It is extra work but provided the plan is revisited and revised on a regular basis (perhaps once a year) it can become a useful management tool for monitoring pest and disease problems in the herd, identifying what has/hasn't worked in the past – and any key problem areas. It

should also be updated (preferably with your vet) according to the progress or problems that you have experienced.

The animal health plan should be drawn up so that if you suddenly had to leave the farm for a short-period, a temporary manager/colleague could step in and maintain the livestock to the standards for a short time.

Copies of the animal health plan should be made available to the stockpeople, the veterinary surgeon, farm consultants, the certification inspector and so on.

Will stock lose organic status if treated more than three times in a year?

Organic animals may lose their status if they are treated a number of times with veterinary medicines. Any organic animal which receives more than three courses of treatment by chemically-synthesised medicines in one calendar year, or any animal which receives more than one course of treatment if it is killed for meat at less than one year old *may* lose its full organic status in the case of meat production, or have to go through a 're-conversion' period for organic products, such as milk or eggs.

However, under normal organic management this new rule should not cause too much concern. Producers should note that one 'treatment' would be considered as the full course of treatments required to cure the animal of that specific ailment. For example, an animal may require a course of two injections and one pessary in order to cure a specific ailment or disease: this would be considered as **one treatment**, not three. Also certain treatments, including vaccinations, parasite treatments (such as wormers and external parasite dips or pour-ons) and compulsory eradication orders are excluded from this rule.

Organic withdrawal periods must be observed and full records of all treatments must be kept and made available at inspection – a veterinary record sheet is available from Soil Association Certification Limited.

If the routine worming is not allowed, how can I control worms?

The control of internal worms can be achieved through good livestock management practices.

Recommended methods of internal parasite control include:

- Control of intestinal worms by grazing management and pasture rotation (understanding and observing the life-cycle of the parasite)
- Ensuring grazing priority for 'clean' or 'safe' pastures is given to youngstock, for example wean piglets onto a clean paddock and use a farrowing paddock only once.
- Rotating pigs with other livestock and forage areas
- Control of internal worms by breeding for, and the use of, breeds of stock with resistance to infection
- Maintain good hygiene practices including regular movement of huts and removal of old bedding
- Monitor the situation by use of faecal egg counts, and abattoir checks regarding condemned livers with 'milk spot' a sign of ascaris worms.

Under the standards if individual animals become infected and show clinical symptoms then producers are permitted to use certain wormers (anthelmintics) to treat these individual animals.

Always consult with your vet to select the right wormer for the job.

If you are in any doubt about the effectiveness of a wormer you must contact your vet directly. The Soil Association should be able to confirm whether or not a particular product is suitable under the organic standards but you should *always* consult your vet to ensure that the wormer will actually treat the parasite concerned.

Products which leave harmful residues in the faeces, such as avermectin-based products, are restricted under organic standards.

Organic withdrawal periods must be observed and full records of all treatments must be kept and made available at inspection – a veterinary record sheet is available from Soil Association Certification Limited.

Can I use vaccines?

Vaccines can be used where there is a known disease risk on a farm - or neighbouring farm - which cannot be controlled by **any other means**

A vaccination programme should be developed as part of the animal health plan, following advice from your vet (see '**I've been told that I will have to submit an Animal Health Plan - what is it?**' above).

Single vaccines are preferred, unless a multiple problem exists. The development of natural immunity should never be discouraged.

Many non-organic pig herds routinely vaccinate for erysipelas and parvo, but this may not always be necessary. If a farm chooses not to vaccinate for erysipelas the herd should be monitored by routine blood sampling and checked for erysipelas arthritis.

With parvo it may be possible to stimulate immunity in gilts by exposing them to contamination on-site. You should consult your vet as to whether vaccination will be needed.

Permission from Soil Association Certification Limited must be obtained before introducing a vaccination programme.

Replacement Stock

Can I buy in non-organic replacements?

The *Soil Association Organic Standards* require producers to source organic livestock for breeding purposes in the first instance.

To assist in sourcing organic breeding stock, stores and replacements the Soil Association has set up the Organic Marketplace, see www.soilassociation.org/organicmarketplace or contact the Soil Association on **0117 914 2400** for more information.

However, if producers are unable to source suitable organic replacements they are permitted to introduce up to a maximum of 10% of the herd as non-organic female replacements on an annual basis, with the prior permission of Soil Association Certification Limited. However, they must be brought in as 'nulliparous', this means they must be gilts – and full records must be maintained.

Any non-organic replacement animals must be kept to full organic standards from service onwards for the piglets to be born as organic. The non-organic animals themselves never gain organic status, but are classified as 'converted breeding stock'.

The organic standards also state that for farm production units with less than five pigs a maximum replacement of one non-organic animal per year will be allowed.

Permission may also be obtained from Soil Association Certification Limited to go above the 10% maximum replacement limit and increase the replacement percentage by **up to 40%** in the following specific cases:

- When a major extension to the herd is undertaken
- When the breed is changed
- When a new livestock specialisation is developed; for example, dairy sheep or breeding specialisation
- When a rare breed is sourced.

The organic standards also state that permission may be given to allow producers to bring in non-organic livestock when a farm has suffered a **catastrophe**; for example, high mortality rates caused by health problems.

Permission to bring in non-organic livestock when a farm has suffered a catastrophe would **only** be considered in extreme cases and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Producers are still obliged to source organic livestock, where available. The loss of livestock on an organic holding due to foot and mouth disease would be included in this category, for example.

Increasing numbers of organic breeding and replacement stock are becoming available each year throughout the country. Contact the Soil Association for further information about the Organic Marketplace service on **0117 914 2400** or visit www.soilassociation.org/organicmarketplace

What about replacement boars?

It is permitted for males for breeding to be brought in from non-organic farms provided that the animals are subsequently reared and fed to the full organic standards.

Artificial insemination (AI) is also permitted in organic production. However, heat synchronisation hormones, such as *Regumate*, would not be permitted.

Which breeds are best for organic production?

This is a matter of personal choice but it is important to be aware of market requirements. A wide variety of breeds are in use within the UK.

A large proportion of all organic sows are hybrids developed by breeding companies such as the Pig Improvement Company (PIC) for the free range market. If you do use this type of white sow it is recommended that a Duroc boar is used. This will help to improve the eating quality. Eating quality should be an important consideration generally to ensure customer loyalty to the product. The use of a Duroc will also mean the offspring tend to be coloured which affords them protection against sunburn and heat stress.

The Saddleback or a cross is also well represented on organic units, as well as Tamworths, Gloucester Old Spots, Large Black and several others. A recent study found little difference in performance for the PIC hybrid, Saddleback or Saddleback cross Duroc, though this report only took sows to fourth parity and it may be that the traditional breeds will have a longer productive life than the PIC hybrid.

The traditional breeds tend to produce fatter pigs and these can be rejected by some processors. Producers supplying processors where the pork ultimately ends up on the shelves of multiple retailers may need to use hybrid sows in order to comply with the maximum permitted backfat levels. Producers selling direct to consumers may find that using rare or native breeds can provide a marketing advantage.

Management

What practices are prohibited in organic pig production?

- Ringing of sows, gilts and boars
- Use of farrowing crates
- Castration
- Tail docking
- Teeth cutting or grinding
- Prophylactic use of iron injections.

Can I house the pigs over the winter?

All pigs should be free-range on growing vegetation whenever possible. However, in severe weather conditions it is permitted to house pigs. Ample bedding must be provided, as well as access to an outside area for dunging and rooting. Organic straw is recommended but non-organic straw is permitted. Forage or other green food should be supplied when there is no access to grass. Please refer to the *Soil Association organic standards* for the space that must be provided for each size and type of pig.

Can the pigs be finished inside?

It is possible to finish pigs outside provided that feed management is considered carefully. Some producers do have a problem with pigs becoming overfat. One way of combating this is to feed fattening pigs silage. This allows the level of concentrates to be reduced whilst still giving the pigs 'gut fill'.

If necessary, for the last few weeks pigs may be finished in spacious open-sided barns on straw bedding. They must also have access to an outside dunging, rooting and exercise area. The length of time that they are inside must not exceed one fifth of their total lifetime. Please refer to the *Soil Association organic standards* for the space that must be provided for each size and type of pig.

Do I have to use 100% organic feed?

If you are converting the land by any method other than Sim Con (please refer to '**What is Simultaneous Conversion?**' above) the requirement during the conversion period is for the pigs to be fed a GM-free ration rather than a fully organic one. Once the land is converted to organic the ideal is to use 100% organic feed. However, the standards currently allow the use of a limited proportion of approved non-organic feedstuffs where the farmer is unable to source fully organic feed.

Defra have compiled a so-called 'green' list of permitted non-organic feeds which are deemed to be in short supply, and which can be fed where prior justification is provided. Producers need to fill in a derogation form (available from your certification body) and keep it ready for inspection. A derogation to use non-organic feed ingredients will only be given where producers can show that they have tried to source organic ingredients.

Feed mills will also need prior permission before milling compounds with non-organic ingredients. If the feed mill has been given permission to make a feed using non-organic ingredients the farmer does not have to ask prior permission to use that feed. On an annual basis up to 10% of the ration for pigs (calculated as a percentage of dry matter intake – DMI) can comprise approved non-organic feed.

This non-organic allowance is set to decrease over the next few years. The 10% non-organic allowance will be in place until 31 December 2009, when it will drop to 5%. If sufficient organic feed ingredients are available it is expected that pigs will have to be fed 100% organic feed from 31 December 2011.

On a daily basis the maximum allowance for approved non-organic feedstuffs (calculated as a percentage of DMI) is 25%, provided that the total **annual** non-organic ration does not go above the current maximum of 10%, as indicated above.

Managing the ration can become complicated and careful rationing is advised in order that the annual 10% limit is not exceeded.

There has been a recent change to the European Regulation regarding the amount of in-conversion feed that can be fed to organic livestock. The amount you can use depends on whether the feed comes from land in its first or second year of conversion and the source of the feed. If you produce feed from your own holding on land that is in its second year of conversion you can feed your animals 100% of their diet from this second year and still sell your products as organic – as long as you have some land that is already registered as fully organic. If the second year conversion feed is produced on another holding – even if it is one with which your own farm is linked – the maximum amount that can be fed is 30% on an annual dry matter basis.

Second year in-conversion crops or forage *must* come from land that is in its second year of conversion – in other words, crops or forage cut at least 12 months after start of your conversion date.

Crops such as wheat or barley that come from first year conversion land – land that has not yet completed 12 months of conversion – are considered to be non-organic. However, up to 20% of the annual or lifetime intake of the animal on a dry matter basis may originate from the grazing or harvesting of permanent pastures or perennial forage parcels in their first year of conversion, provided that this land is part of your own or a linked holding. Note that this 20% allowance does not apply to annual forage crops such as stubble turnips that are grown on first year conversion land.

As you can see, feed rationing and the use of in-conversion crops and forage can be complicated. In order to ensure you are meeting the organic standards on feed please contact the Soil Association on **0117 914 2400** with details of your proposed ration

As a rough guide the daily DMI for a sow with nine piglets is in the region of 5.7kg. The daily DMI for weaners should be calculated based on a figure of 1kg for animals of nine weeks of age, and approximately 2.65kg for animals of twenty five weeks of age.

For full details of the typical dry matter values of fresh cut grass, silage, straights, and a full range of other feed stuffs contact the Soil Association on **0117 914 2400**.

Please note that no livestock or livestock products may be sold as 'organic' from a holding that is in-conversion until at least *some* of the holding has achieved full organic status.

Where can I get organic concentrates?

Organic feed is widely available. A list of approved organic feed suppliers is available from the Soil Association on **0117 914 2400** or **producer.support@soilassociation.org**

All concentrate feeds and blends fed to organic stock *must* be from approved – or **certified** – suppliers. Such certification includes an assurance that they do not contain GM materials or other prohibited materials, which the feed manufacturer will have verified as part of their own certification process.

For licensees who mill and mix their own non-organic feeds and use straights, then non-GM declarations or organic certificates must be obtained from the supplier(s) of all relevant ingredients.

All non-organic single-ingredient feed materials bought-in to feed stock *during the conversion period* or fed to organic stock, such as grains, pulses, oil seed cakes, and food by-products, *must* be accompanied by a GM-declaration form.

Non-GM declarations are not required for organic feedstuffs, approved straight minerals, seaweed, and other products that are clearly not produced from GM sources or derivatives.

All concentrates, cakes and blends fed during the *land conversion period* (before stock are required to be managed to organic standards) *must* be accompanied by a GM-declaration form.

All concentrates, cakes and blends fed during simultaneous conversion, or to fully organic stock, *must* be approved or certified as organic feed.

What will be the labour requirement?

It is vital to the welfare and productivity of the herd that there are good stockpeople running the unit.

Try to ensure there are good stockpeople available before embarking on a new pig enterprise. The number of stockpeople required will vary according to individual herds. How often the pigs are to be moved (see '**How much land will be needed**' above) affects labour requirement, as will the degree of mechanisation, the size of the herd (in terms of economy of scale), and management policy (for example, AI versus natural service), the breeding of own replacements, and so on. However, for small herds some jobs, like weaning, may require two staff. On smaller herds one person will be needed per 50 sows; on larger herds this may be one person for 70–100 sows, depending on mechanisation.

Marketing

Is there a market for organic weaners?

The market for organic weaners is limited to individual farmers who specialise in finishing weaners. Make sure of the market before production. Producers can advertise weaners for sale or weaners wanted on the Soil Association's Organic Marketplace – see www.soilassociation.org/organicmarketplace or call **0117 914 2400** for more information.

What is the market for organic pigmeat like?

There is a clear differentiation within the organic pigmeat market. The two main areas are direct selling and selling through wholesale outlets to multiple retailers. Direct selling may involve farm shops, farmers' markets or local butchers, and it is generally smaller herds (less than 20 sows) who choose to use these outlets. Access to organically certified cutting and packaging facilities will most likely be required. Sales through wholesale outlets makes up approximately 80% of current production, mostly from herds of 50 sows or over.

The requirements for the two markets differ. Producers involved in direct selling tend to use a wider variety of breeds and may not be under the same restrictions for specifications, such as back fat, slaughter weight and breed. (See '**What breed is best for organic production?**'). The multiple retailers require some degree of product conformity and therefore the specifications may be tighter to supply this market.

Identifying which market you intend to produce for is vital: only after an outlet has been secured and its requirements understood should you enter into production.

One group that is important within the pigmeat sector is Eastbrook Farm Organic Meats. A large proportion of pigmeat destined for the multiple retailers is marketed through them. While other marketing co-operatives exist, such as the Organic Livestock Marketing Co-operative (OLMC) and regional producer groups, such as Graig Farm Organics, pigs form a much smaller part of their business.

The Soil Association strongly supports producer-based marketing initiatives: co-operation is the key to future long-term security and sustainable development of the organic livestock sector.

Basic marketing advice and other information is available free to Soil Association licencees and producer members in our factsheet *Marketing Information for Organic Farmers (milk, meat, eggs and grain)* (£5 non-members). Contact the Soil Association on **0117 914 2400**.

Are there any rules regarding the transport and slaughter of organic animals?

For full details you should consult the *Soil Association's organic standards*. The use of local abattoirs is recommended to minimise travelling times; however, if pigs are to be marketed to multiple retailers the choice of abattoir is usually outside the producer's control. If animals need to be fed during transport, or have a waiting period of longer than 12 hours at the abattoir, they must be fed to full organic standards.

If meat is to be marketed as organic the animals must be slaughtered and butchered by operators who are registered with an organic inspection body and subjected to an annual inspection process.

A full list of registered organic abattoirs and butchers is available from the Soil Association on **0117 914 2400** or **producer.support@soilassociation.org**

Grants and advice

What government grants are available?

The following schemes are available to farmers undertaking conversion to organic production:

- Organic Entry Level Stewardship for England
- Organic Farming Scheme for Wales
- Organic Aid Scheme for Scotland
- Organic Farming Scheme for Northern Ireland

The above schemes aim to encourage the expansion of organic production. Under the scheme, farmers moving from non-organic to organic farming methods receive financial help during the conversion period in the form of a 'per hectare' payment over a five year period, depending on the type of land you have.

There are specific requirements so if you are considering making an application to join one of the schemes you must read the eligibility requirements in full in the explanatory booklet that are available for the respective schemes. Application forms for the above schemes and full explanatory booklets are available from the various government offices.

The OELS for England and the OFS for Northern Ireland both require that the land must be registered as 'in-conversion' with a registered certification organisation, such as Soil Association Certification Limited before the grant is applied for

The OAS for Scotland and OFS for Wales require that farmer apply for the grants before land is registered as 'in-conversion'

Please note that full contact details are provided at the end of this document. Each scheme varies slightly according to its requirements and eligibility for payment, as well as the levels of payment. Please contact the Soil Association for further information and relevant factsheet on **0117 914 2400**.

Where can I get further advice and support to help me decide?

Choose producer membership with the Soil Association:

To get advice before you even go into conversion you can become a producer member with the Soil Association.

Producer membership is designed to assist you in the essential task of gathering the information and advice that you need before you even start the conversion period.

As a member you can gain access to the same advice and support available to fully organic producers:

- Receive the excellent quarterly journal, *Organic Farming*, which provides invaluable technical and market information, as well as a full range of news and feature articles
- Use our on-line telephone services for **free** technical advice, support, information and contacts
- Attend a varied national programme of on-farm events and farm walks. This is where farmers and growers can meet to share information, see organic farming demonstrations and socialise. Members receive priority booking status and substantial discounts to all events and seminars
- Have your views heard. Over 70% of the UK's organic producers are represented by us in all major agriculture, environmental and food industry forums. This is particularly important when battling for European levels of support - including aid payments - to be made available to UK producers
- Benefit from our market development. We support a range of initiatives to ensure UK producers succeed in the market place.
- Receive support with waste minimisation.

Once you enter conversion with the Soil Association all of the above benefits and services are FREE, provided as part of your licence fee.

Useful contact numbers

Organic Conversion Information Service (OCIS):

A Government-funded free advisory service is available in Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales for producers interested in conversion.

In Wales call **01970 622100**

In Scotland call **01224 711072**

In Northern Ireland call **028 9442 6752** (for livestock) and **028 9442 6765** (for crops).

In England call **0800 980 0048**

Main contacts for the government's Organic Farming/Aid schemes in the UK:

Natural England (formerly Rural Development Service) contact details for information on Organic Entry Level Stewardship:

T: 0845 602 4093

National Assembly for Wales (Agriculture) Divisional offices:

Llandrindod Wells T: 01597 823777

Caernarfon T: 01286 674144

Carmarthen T: 01267 225300

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD):

T: 028 9052 4567

Scottish Executive for Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD) Local offices:

SEERAD Office:

Ayr T: 01292 610 188

Benbecula T: 01870 602 346

Central Area Office T: 01738 602000

Dumfries T: 01387 255 292

Elgin T: 01343 547 514

Galashiels T: 01896 758 333

Hamilton T: 01698 281 166

Inverness T: 01463 234 141

SEERAD Office:

Inverurie T: 01467 626 222

Kirkwall T: 01856 875 444

Lairg T: 01549 402 167

Lerwick T: 01595 695 054

Oban T: 01631 563 071

Portree T: 01478 612 516

Stornoway T: 01851 702 392

Thurso T: 01847 893 104

Useful marketing contacts:

For up to date arable marketing contacts and market information contact the Soil Association and ask for the *Marketing information for organic farmers (meat, milk, eggs and grain)* factsheet and visit www.soilassociation.org/pricedata

Organic Livestock Marketing Co-operative	T: 01763 250313
Eastbrook Farm Organic Meats	T: 01793 792044
Graig Producers	T: 01597 851704
Graig Producers South West	T: 01872 530362
Caledonian Organics	T: 01224 711063
Organic Livestock Farmers of Cornwall and Devon	T: 01579 349374

Recommended reading for organic pig production

Lampkin, N (2002) *Organic Farming*, Old Pond Publishing (available from the Soil Association)

Lampkin N, Measures M & Padel S (eds) (2007) *Organic Farm Management Handbook*, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, Organic Advisory Service (available from the Soil Association)

Macleod, G (1994) *Pigs: The Homoeopathic Approach to the Treatment and Prevention of Disease*

Soil Association (2004) *Pig Ignorant? A guide to small scale pig keeping*, Soil Association technical guide

For a full list of Soil Association literature, including technical guides, fact sheets and briefing papers, contact the Soil Association on **0117 914 2400**.

Comprehensive and practical Soil Association technical guides covering specific areas of organic production:

- *Growing Organic Vegetables for a Box Scheme*
- *Guidelines for the Production of Organic Apples and Pears in the UK*
- *Improving Biodiversity on Organic Farms*
- *Organic Carrot Production*
- *Organic Herbs: markets, production and processing*
- *Organic Leek Production*
- *Organic Lettuce Production*
- *Organic Onion Production*
- *Organic Potato Production and Storage*
- *Organic Weed and Scrub Control on Organic Grassland*
- *Rotations for Organic Horticultural Field Crops*
- *Setting Up an Organic Box Scheme*
- *Soil Management on Organic Farms.*

For a full list of the available Soil Association literature, including books, technical guides, fact sheets and briefing papers, please contact the Soil Association on **0117 914 2400** or visit www.soilassociation.org/shop

Soil Association

Producer membership

**You don't have to be an organic farmer to join the Soil Association – everyone can benefit from organic techniques!
Our membership options:**

Producer membership – £80 a year

For farmers and growers – or anyone interested in or connected to producing food! Benefits include the *Organic Farming* magazine, access to over 50 factsheets and briefing papers, technical guides, our e-mail bulletins, farm walks, training events and seminars – and the knowledge that you are directly supporting our development and producer-related work.

Producer membership *plus* – £168 a year

Provides you with all the benefits of producer membership... *plus* unlimited access to our exclusive helpline where our experienced team is on-hand to help your business succeed.

Public membership – £24 a year

Keeps you in touch with the organic world, helps you find where you can buy organic food, and allows you to support our campaigning work and projects that aim to transform food culture.

For more information call 0117 914 2400 or visit www.soilassociation.org

The Soil Association is based in Bristol but we work across the UK.

Soil Association Scotland

Call **0131 666 0847** or visit **www.soilassociationscotland.org**

To discuss developments in other areas call the Bristol office on **0117 914 2400**.