

Management & Marketing Notes. October 2005

Producing Organic Milk: A Checklist

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1. Land and crop management
 - Acres available and current certification status
 - Soil fertility and management practices
 - Weeds and control practices
 - Crop types and rotation
 - Crop inputs for each crop -- amounts, cost and source
 - Estimated yield and chemical analysis for each forage crop
 - Forage availability for livestock diets (feed budget)
2. Herd management
 - Milk production
 - Rations for each type of livestock, including forages, concentrates and supplements
 - Cost of rations for each type of livestock
 - Sources of feed, including forages, concentrates and supplements
 - Herd health and reproduction management practices, including veterinary medicines and treatments, cost and sources
3. Marketing
 - Milk buyer(s)
 - Price offered
 - Outlook for organic dairy products and prices
 - Market risk
4. Profitability and feasibility
 - Transition costs and cash flow projections for crop land and livestock
 - Profitability and cash flow projections for organic production
 - Financial and other resources needed and available for the transition and the initial period of organic production
 - Financial risk – sensitivity of projections to lower milk production, lower milk prices and higher production costs

5. Personal
 - Compatibility with family income and lifestyle goals
 - Comfort level with the philosophy of organic food production
 - Management skill and experience with organic production practices and level of understanding of ecological systems
 - Flexibility and eagerness to learn and experiment with new techniques and practices
 - Patience and good observation skills
 - A willingness to share stories of successes and failures and to learn from others

6. Certification and record keeping
 - Knowledge of organic rules and regulations
 - Certifying agency or agent
 - Farm plan and documentation
 - Production and financial records
 - Organic certification compliance records

SOURCES

Richards, Steve, et al., "The Organic Decision: Transitioning to Organic Dairy Production," Department of Applied Economics and management, Cornell University, EB 2002-02, January 2002.

Kathie Arnold, "Transitioning to Organic," available from the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance Web site at: <http://www.nodpa.com/transitioning.html>

The items listed under section 5. Personal were adapted from Brad Brummond, "Organic Farming: Is It For Me?" North Dakota State University Extension publication A-1181, August 1999, available from the ND Extension Web site at: www.ext.nodak.edu/extpubs/plantsci/crops/a1181w.htm)

RESOURCES

USDA has a National Organic Program web site with all the rules and requirements and a great deal of information: <http://www.ams.usda.gov.nop/indexNet.htm>

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance: <http://www.nodpa.com/>

The Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service:
<http://www.mosesorganic.org/>

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