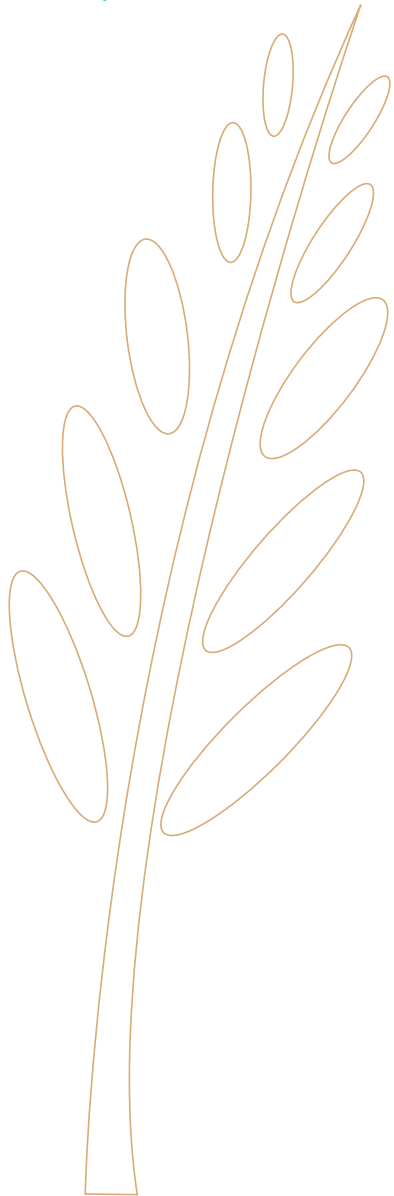




Action Plan 2006

Foreword

by Lord Rooker, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development



"I am delighted to present this organic action plan on behalf of the Organic Action Plan Group for Northern Ireland.

The Group has had an excellent first year, and has successfully drawn together the diverse views of its members. This action plan will provide a good framework for their actions over the coming year, and sets out clearly what the group hopes to achieve.

I believe organic farming offers a significant opportunity for producers in Northern Ireland, particularly when viewed in light of the need to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, and the demands of the Nitrates Directive and the Water Framework Directive. A strong organic sector also has the potential to contribute to rural development and to healthy local economies.

The prospects for organic food and farming in Northern Ireland depend on more than production opportunities, however. The market-specific actions contained in this document remind us that growth in organics must be market-led, and the Action Plan Group is committed to the development of a market for local organic produce as well as the expansion of the local production base.

I am pleased to be able to give my support to this action plan, and look forward to seeing positive outcomes for the agri-food sector and the environment in Northern Ireland."

Rt. Hon. LORD ROOKER

Minister of State

The Organic Action Plan Group for Northern Ireland was established in 2005 to lead the strategic development of the organic sector in NI. Our membership is representative of a wide range of interests, firmly rooted in organic Northern Ireland. Details of the group's membership can be found at Annex A.

We have prepared this Organic Action Plan to contribute to the development of the organic production base in line with the developing market for organic food in NI, GB and the Republic of Ireland. We intend to regularly review the plan.

A dynamic organic sector, engaging with the local community and supported by the right policy, has a great deal to offer Northern Ireland. I believe that the objectives and actions proposed in this Plan will help achieve this.

I am extremely grateful to all members of the Group for their hard work and to DARD for supporting the Group.

[Christopher Stopes](#)

Chair, Organic Action Plan Group for Northern Ireland

Introduction

by [Christopher Stopes](#), Chair of the Organic Action Plan Group for Northern Ireland.



Strategic Objective 1:

To develop the market for organic produce



Actions:

- a The development and implementation of a market-specific communication strategy, to include:
 - the production of publicity material to inform consumers of the key benefits of organic food and farming specific to Northern Ireland; and
 - the production of promotional material for retailers and public purchasers.

- b Education about the merits of organic through schools and to the public, to include:
 - the development of materials for school pack, e.g. leaflets, CDs, stickers, bookmarks, etc.;
 - the development of a programme of school visits to relevant venues; and
 - the development of demonstration farms for publicity and education purposes.

- c The development of public procurement opportunities for organic products, to include:
 - continuing engagement with the EU RAFAEL¹ project;
 - establishing and developing links with local health trusts, education boards and other potential public purchasers; and
 - the organisation of public procurement workshops.

- d Increasing sales of organic products through independent and multiple retailers, to include:
 - the development of links with the Rural Retailer Network, which was established by the Rural Development Council;
 - the establishment and maintenance of contact with multiple retailers in Northern Ireland;
 - the development of contact with the independent retail sector, identifying and working with specific independent retailers who have an active interest in developing their organic offer; and
 - following up on actions identified by the organic market study.

¹ "Renaissance of Atlantic Food, Authenticity and Economic Links"

Actions:

- a Securing the introduction of ongoing organic reward payments beyond those presently available through the Organic Farming Scheme, and consideration of infrastructure support for the organic horticulture sector, to include:
 - maintaining pressure upon DARD to introduce reward payments swiftly; and
 - recommending successor scheme to the Organic Farming (Conversion of Animal Housing) Scheme to DARD as appropriate, following the Post Benefit Analysis of the present scheme in 2007.

- b The development and implementation of a producer-specific communication strategy, to include:
 - the promotion of the organic sector in Northern Ireland through the issue of press releases by the OAPGNI; and
 - the promotion of conversion to organic status among conventional producers, including horticulturalists.

- c Co-ordinating the supply of organic products with market demand, to include:
 - following up on actions identified by the organic market study.

Strategic Objective 2:

To develop the organic production base in Northern Ireland in line with market requirements



Strategic Objective 3:

To increase the efficiency of the organic industry in Northern Ireland

Actions:

- a Promotion of the availability and quality of education, advice, information and technology transfer relevant to the organic sector, to include:
 - linking to the support available through the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise.

- b Promotion of best practice, benchmarking and 'lessons learnt' within the organic sector, to include:
 - arrangement of study trips to Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland and Europe as appropriate;
 - linking to DARD's 'Walk the Supply Chain' initiative; and
 - linking to the Focus Farm network and the Greenmount organic farm for producer extension services.

- c Promotion of organic research and development specific to Northern Ireland, to include:
 - following up on relevant action identified by the Advisory Committee on Organic Standards' UK R&D review; and
 - the establishment and maintenance of links with the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute.

Strategic Objective 4:

Consider the establishment of a resource centre for the Organic Action Plan

Actions:

- a Consider the provision of a focal point for the organic sector in a local context in Northern Ireland to help enable the market to develop, to develop supply chains with farmers and market outlets of all types, including direct supply, independent and multiple retailers, to include:
 - recommending that DARD complete a feasibility study for a resource centre to aid implementation of the organic action plan.

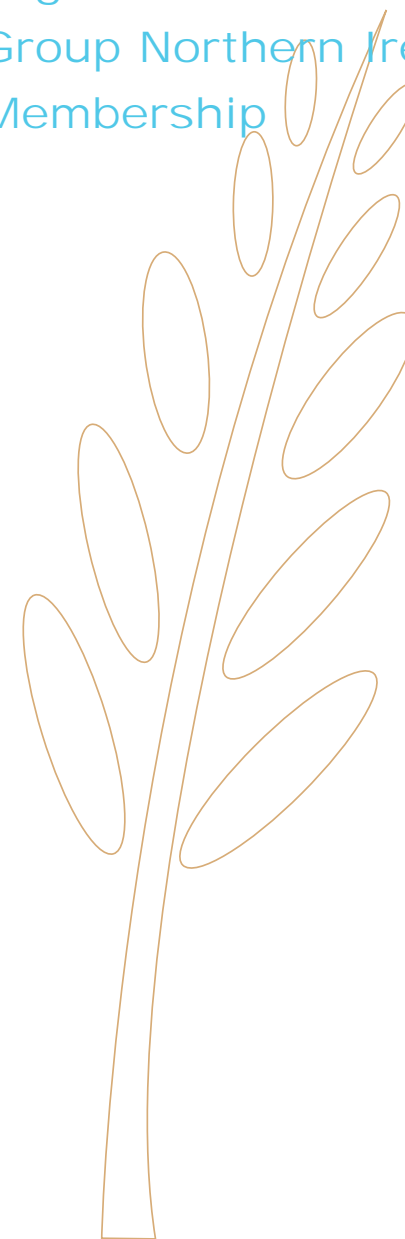
| Nominee | Organisation | Sector |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Christopher Stopes (Chair) | EcoS Consultancy | Organic Consultant |
| Rex Humphrey (Vice Chair) | Northern Ireland representative on Advisory Committee on Organic Standards | Organic Standards |
| Paul Stewart | Northern Ireland Independent Retail Association | Retailer Body |
| Raymond Pollock | North West Organics | Organic Producer Group |
| Richard Jacobs | Organic Farmers and Growers | Organic Certification |
| David Laughlin | Ulster Farmers Union | Farming Union |
| Brian Lockhart | Wilson's Country | Organic and conventional potatoes |
| Liam McCarthy | ABP Ltd. | Organic and conventional meat processor |
| John McCormick | Ulster Organic Vegetable Producers | Organic Producer Group |
| Roy McCracken | Emerald Organic | Organic Dairy |
| Tom McKeown | Moy Park Ltd | Organic and conventional poultry |
| Eileen Thompson | Farmlay Eggs | Organic Eggs |
| Jim Twine | Soil Association Certification Ltd | Organic Certification |
| Dr Arthur Mitchell | Rural Development Council for Northern Ireland | Rural Development |

Annex A

Organic Action Plan

Group Northern Ireland

Membership





For more information please contact

The Secretary

Tel: 028 9052 4567