Step by Step Guide Towards Conversion

1. Information gathering

2. Decide which certification body to register with

3. Obtain copy of relevant standards

4. Decide which farm unit/area/fields to be converted

5. Decide on what is ideal enterprise mix for the farm

6. Decide on ideal crop rotation (may be permanent grass)

7. Assess existing farm infrastructure
   - Livestock housing, fencing
   - Manure storage and handling
   - Machinery

8. Assess each field individually
   - Cropping history
     - If arable crops previously, sow grass/clover mixture
   - Clover content
     - Improve clover content if necessary
   - Soil fertility
     - Ameliorate deficiencies before starting conversion
   - Weed problems
     - Spray to control weeds before starting conversion

9. Assess existing livestock system
   - Mix of enterprises?
     - Classes of stock
   - Breeds?
     - Easy care, well adapted to environment
     - Well adapted to forage-based system
   - Self-contained herds, flocks?
   - Calving, lambing date?
     - April, May, June?
9. Assess existing livestock system (continued)
- Grassland management?
  - Clean grazing
  - Current level of intensity: fertiliser N and stocking rate
  - Management for early bite
  - Silage quality
- Feeding system?
  - Proportion of forage, concentrate
  - Proportion of bought-in feeds
  - Prohibited ingredients
- Housing system?
  - Type: bedding/slats?
  - Space allocation - overall, trough
  - Ventilation
- Manure storage and handling system
  - Storage capacity and efficiency
  - Application dates
- Stockmanship skills
  - e.g. Stress minimisation factors?
    - Weaning management
    - Stable groupings
- Existing health problems?
  - Any history of BSE in herd?
- Existing veterinary strategy?
- Management skills
- Staff flexibility

10. Prepare conversion plan and livestock management plan
- Cropping sequence for each field
- Timing of start of conversion
- Organic husbandry techniques
  - Soil management
  - Crop rotations and nutrient supply, including manure management
  - Weed and pest control strategy
  - Livestock conversion plan including:
    - Grazing management
    - Housing and welfare
    - Feeding regimes
    - Health strategy

11. Complete and return application form to Certification Body
- Commence organic management
- Expect Inspector’s visit

12. Complete and return OAS application form to SERAD

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