

FACT FILE: AN ORGANIC FARM

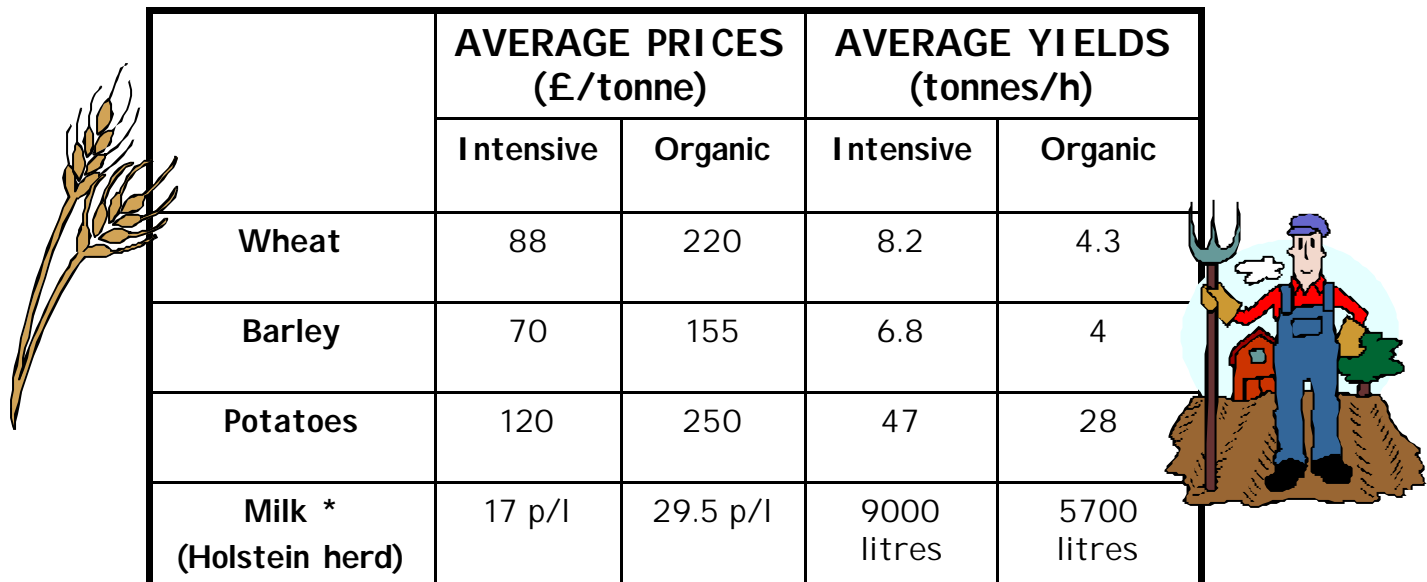
Organic farms are not allowed to use artificial chemicals such as weedkillers or pesticides. Organic farmers try not to give animals medicines unless they are really necessary.

Fields are weeded by a tractor pulling a special piece of equipment called a 'harrow-comb'. Pesticides are not used; insects and birds that eat up the pests are encouraged to live in the hedges and areas of unmown grass and wild flowers. Manure from cows is used to feed the soil instead of artificial fertilisers.

The crops are rotated carefully in each field to avoid problems with weeds and disease. The usual crop rotation is three years of clover and grass, followed by two years of cereals followed by a year with spring beans sown together with clover, ready to start the cycle again. Animals are moved to different fields to keep them healthy.

Organic cereal crops (barley, oats and wheat) are taller than on a farm that uses chemicals, making long straw which is sold for thatching. The harvested crop fields are not ploughed until they need to be sown again, leaving stubble and seeds for wildlife to eat. However, grass and clover fields are sown as soon as possible after harvesting, so that they grow strong enough by winter for the sheep to graze.

Mixed organic farms employ three or four times more people than they would if they used artificial chemicals and specialised in producing one kind of animal or crop. This, combined with the fact that they get lower subsidies from the government than intensive farms do, makes organic food more expensive. However, if there were more organic farms, unemployment in the countryside could be reduced.



	AVERAGE PRICES (£/tonne)		AVERAGE YIELDS (tonnes/h)	
	Intensive	Organic	Intensive	Organic
Wheat	88	220	8.2	4.3
Barley	70	155	6.8	4
Potatoes	120	250	47	28
Milk * (Holstein herd)	17 p/l	29.5 p/l	9000 litres	5700 litres

* Note: p/l = pence per litre of milk sold litres = litres per cow per year (average)