

Abbey Home Farm case study

Farm tenants	Will and Hilary Chester – Master.
Farm manager	John Newman.
Education contact	Will Chester-Master.
Shop, café and Green Room contact	Hilary Chester-Master.
Address	Abbey Home Farm, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 5HA / The Organic Farm Shop, Burford Road, Cirencester GL7 5HF.
Phone /email	01285 643419Farm640441 shop/Green Room / cargofco@aol.com
Grid Ref	SP043 037.
Size	570 hectares.
Tenancy	The land is rented under a tenancy agreement.
Date when farm competed organic conversion	First Organic product milk – 1/11/94. The rest of farm has been converted to organic in stages.
History	Will and Hilary took over the tenancy in 1991 of a typical conventional (non organic) Cotswold arable farm. They immediately began the organic conversion. The Organic Farm Shop and Café opened in 1999, and has been extended considerably using green oak from the farm, including a new space for education/ community events for all ages.

Physical features

General description	Lying alongside the Fosse Way on the edge of the Roman town of Cirencester, Abbey Home Farm is a mixed farm producing milk, cereals, vegetables, meat and eggs.
Soil types	Cotswold Brash.
Altitude	130 –155m.
Rainfall	81.5 cm per year.

Land use

Crops	Wheat, Triticale (a wheat / rye cross), Oats, Barley, Beans and over 80 different varieties of vegetable and salad.
Crops used in rotation	The rotation is: Year 1 legumes/grass, Year 2 cereals, Year 3 cereals, Year 4 beans, Year 5 cereals.
Set a side	Yes.
Stewardship	Yes.
Woodland	32 hectares.
Vegetables	6.1 hectares.

Animals

Cows	120 dairy cows. The breed is Freisan. 80 beef cows. The breeds are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aberdeen Angus Cross • South Devon Cross.
Sheep	500 ewes. The breeds are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lleyns • Scotch Mules.
Pigs	10 sows - the breed is called 'Hampen'. 1 Boar – the breed is 'Duroc'.
Laying hens	465 Black Rock hens.

Labour on farm	5 - Farm Manager, Herd Manager, Shepherd, Stockman, Relief Stockman.
Labour in veg. garden, shop and cafe	<u>Vegetable garden</u> 7 - Head Gardener plus one other all year and 5 assistant gardeners for season. <u>Café</u> 9 - 2 cooks, 7 shop staff plus extras.

Machinery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 tractors (60 –135 Horse Power) • Seed drill • Combine Harvester • Trailers, materials handler, various cultivation implements.
Machinery in veg. garden	Minimal cultivation implements and 35 year old tractor. Hand tools.

Markets for farm produce

Cows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk is sold to OMSCO (milk co-operative). • Meat is sold to OLMC (meat co-operative).
Sheep	Lambs are sold in the farm shop and to OLMC.
Chickens	Eggs are sold in the farm hop.
Pigs	Pork and bacon are sold in the farm shop.
Vegetables	Farm shop.
Soft fruit	Farm shop.
Cut flowers	Farm shop.
Herbs	Farm shop.

Diversification

Alternative	The Green Room is a newly opened
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sources of income	education/community/conference centre that can hold from 5 to 200 people. Organic catering can be provided. Connection with the woodland or vegetable garden on the day encouraged.
Other features / attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic Café and large shop to browse in. Predominantly food but also organic skincare, books, seeds, textiles, baby things etc. • Yurt for hire in very private location • Education visits • Greenfield camp site • Permissive footpath • Trailer rides for shop customers and groups by arrangement • Open days • We are hoping to start a cookery club for local schools.

Environmental benefits

Habitats	Limestone grassland, woodland.
Wildlife	Rare plants include pasque flower, yellow rattle and orchids. Birds of prey including buzzards, kestrels and sparrow hawks nest on the farm.

Significant changes arising from organic conversion

Animals	More animals and arable land.
Labour	More labour directed towards managing the animals. Contractors are used.
Types of crops grown	Good balance between fertility building crops like beans and clover and utilisation
Change in balance of land use (arable v. animal)	Now equal balance between arable land and grassland.
Income from produce / profitability of farm	
Noticeable changes in wildlife	Increased range of species and numbers.
Personal outlook on farming	We aim to farm sustainably and profitably within the local community, raising and growing as much local food as our climate allows us to produce. We try to offer people the chance to reconnect with the food we produce and they eat.

