

Rainton Organic Farm case study

Farm manager	David Finlay.
Farm owner	David Finlay.
Address	Rainton Farm, Gatehouse of Fleet, Castle Douglas, DG7 2DR.
Phone /email	01557 814656 david@creamogalloway.co.uk
Grid Ref	600520.
Size	343 hectares (847 acres).
Tenancy	242 hectares are tenanted and 101hecatres are owned by the family.
Date when farm competed organic conversion	1 April 2001.
History	Rainton was created out of several crofts about 250 years ago when the land was enclosed by the landlords. Grandfather Finlay came to Rainton in 1927 as a tenant farmer making cheddar cheese.

Physical features

General description	The farm is located 3 miles south of Gatehouse of Fleet and within ½ mile of the Solway coast. It faces south west and is rugged and wooded.
Soil types	The soils are generally free draining brown earth soils with some peaty hollows. There are a lot of stones and soil depths are generally shallow, overlaying bedrock whinstone.
Altitude	9 – 91 metres.
Rainfall	Too much! 112.5cm per year.

Land use

Crops	Grass is the only crop we grow at Rainton Farm. The grass is mainly for cattle and sheep grazing. An additional 120 acres are used to make silage and 10 acres for hay.
Crops used in rotation	Not applicable.
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Stewardship	Applied twice – no luck!
Woodland	40 hectares. Half the woodland is ancient semi-natural woodland, the other half was planted in 2001/2. A mixture of broadleaved species has been planted for the benefit of wildlife and to enhance access and enjoyment.

Animals

Cows	35 beef cows. The breed is Aberdeen Angus. 85 dairy cows. The breed is mainly Ayrshire. 200 younger cattle which are the offspring of the cows.
Sheep	550 sheep. The breeds are 'Scottish Blackface' and 'Scotch Mule'.

Labour	We employ 5 people on the farm. Stephen and his wife Elaine have looked after our dairy cows and their calves since 1990. Jim has worked here for 26 years and he is called in when anything needs to be built or fixed. Jim's brother, Billy has been here for 24 years. Billy is as strong as an ox and was the local arm wrestling champion for years. John has been here since leaving school and is a very dedicated stockman. David the farmer takes the total labour to 6 people.
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Machinery	Most of the machinery is quite old. The farm has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 forage harvesters (30 years old) • 5 tractors range (from 7 to 25 years old) • 1 JCB digger (17 years old) • 2 slurry tankers • 2 toppers • 1 quad bike • 1 landrover • 1 pickup truck.
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Markets for farm produce

Milk	We make 30 different flavours of ice cream from our own milk which is sold in many places, including Inverness and London.
Other markets for milk	Organic milk suppliers co-operative (OMSCO).
Beef	Beef is sold to Waitrose Direct.
Lamb	Lamb is sold to Sainsbury.

Diversification

Alternative sources of income	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adventure playground with obstacle courses, viewing tower, barrel slides, flying fox and a three dimensional maze. 2. Farm shop and tearoom.
Other features / attractions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organic, amenity, wildlife and herb garden. 2. Barn for infant play. 3. Viewing gallery over the ice cream dairy.

	<p>4. Over 4 kilometres of nature trails many of which are wheelchair accessible.</p> <p>5. Dedicated 1km dog walk through 7 acres of newly planted woodland.</p>
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Environmental benefits

Habitats	Woodland, pond, many gorse and thorn covered rocky outcrops.
Wildlife	Resident woodland, grassland and water birds plus migrants. Invertebrates, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians are all found here. Red squirrels are present but rarely seen.

Significant changes arising from organic conversion

Animals	Beef and sheep numbers have been reduced by half since we went organic. There is less grass for large numbers of animals because we no longer use chemical fertilisers to force the grass to grow.
Labour	No change.
Types of crops grown	We used to have 40 acres under crops but now we only have grass.
Change in balance of land use (arable v. animal)	Due to heavy weed seed numbers in the soil we have stopped ploughing.
Income from produce / profitability of farm	We have made a saving of approximately £20,000 on the cost of fertilisers, veterinary drugs and sprays. However, the increased cost of organic feed has far exceeded this saving.
Noticeable changes in wildlife	The creation of ponds has resulted in moorhens nesting. Mallards and herons are often seen. Teal and wigeon are seen in the winter months. More bumblebees, butterflies and dragonflies have been observed. A red squirrel monitoring programme is to begin in spring 2003.
Other – e.g. personal outlook on farming	Organic farming has been a new challenge blending traditional systems with modern knowledge of stock behaviour and parasite and disease life cycles. We were becoming increasingly uncomfortable with the ever rising levels of chemicals we were being encouraged to use to carry more and more livestock on an increasingly intensive farm. We found this depressing and demotivating. We are delighted by the results from 4 years of organic farming – dramatically cutting chemical usage yet animal welfare and health has never been better. It has renewed our interest and enthusiasm for farming.