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Dear Producer

Organic Farming Conversion Scheme (OFCS) Wales

I wrote to you in late July advising you of a 'window of opportunity' to apply for entry into the Organic Farming Conversion Scheme (OFCS) in the autumn of 2009. The Welsh Assembly Government has now released the relevant details, and a copy of the press release is enclosed. If you were in contact with the Welsh Assembly Government regarding the OFS application window in March, they should send out an application pack shortly. If you do not receive one in the next few days, I suggest you contact your Divisional Office.

While you will need to read all the information in the in the explanatory booklet and scheme rules very carefully, please pay particular attention to the following points:

- The scheme covers organic conversion only, and is a 2 year commitment. Provision of support to the organic sector in the longer term (i.e. through Glastir) is unclear at the time of writing.
- Even if you submitted an application in March, you have to apply again on the new application form, and enclose a conversion plan.
- You must prepare the conversion plan yourself. Reports prepared by OCIS advisors (or indeed any other advisor) will not be acceptable and your application will be rejected.
- Submitting your application does not guarantee you access to OFCS payments. We strongly advise you to wait until you have received confirmation from the Welsh Assembly Government that you are eligible to claim on the 2010 SAF before registering with an organic certification body and beginning conversion.
- Once you have received this confirmation, you must start organic conversion by 01 January 2010. You then have until 31 March 2010 to submit the certificate and field schedule from your Organic Certification Body (but this must state that you started conversion prior to 01 January)
- The European Commission has advised WAG that the same parcel of land cannot be used to claim European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) payments by more than one farmer. In practice, this means that it will no longer be possible for one person (e.g. the tenant) to claim the OFCS payments, and another (e.g. the landlord) to claim the SPS on the same land.

There is some capacity to assist in the preparation of applications through the Organic Conversion Information Service. However, we expect demand to services to be very high during this period, so please contact me, or my colleague Philip Jones, on the details below for more details as soon as possible if you require assistance

Yours faithfully

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