

Transitioning to Organic Production / Certification

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Steps to transition:

1. Talk to organic growers---what rotations have worked for them and why?
2. Project desired income
3. Select land to begin transitioning. To best manage risk:
 - start with modest acreage---10 to 30 A
 - start in fields close to home
 - start with soils that test medium to high in P and K
 - start in fields with lowest weed pressure / seed bank
4. Select one or more rotations that fit your income needs

Organic Grain Crop Rotations for Iowa

Length of Rotation	Year of Rotation					
	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	4 th year	5 th year	6 th year
3-year	Oat, Barley, Wheat or Rye with /legume underseeding	Corn	Soybean			
4-year	Small grain/ underseeding	Pasture	Corn	Soybeans		
4-year	Small grain/ underseeding	Hay	Corn	Soybeans		
5-year	Small grain/ underseeding	Pasture or hay	Corn	Soybeans	Corn	
6-year	Small grain/ underseeding	Hay	Pasture	Corn	Soybeans	Corn

Length of Rotation	Percent of Total Acreage in Various Crops					
	% Small grain	% Corn	% Soybean	% Pasture	% Hay	% Solid seeding
3-year	33	33	33	0	0	33
4-year	25	25	25	25	0	50
4-year	25	25	25	0	25	50
5-year	20	40	20	20		40
6-year	17	33	17	17	17	50

5. Analyze rotations for:
 - Profit potential. Use ISU spreadsheet @ <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/crops/xls/a1-26organictransition.xls>
 - Soil erosion potential-----Work with NRCS on RUSLE II analysis
 - Fit with other farm enterprises
6. Research certification process and certifying agencies See: Regulations and Certifying Agencies @<http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/organicag/certagencies.html>
7. Review Rodale Institute Organic Transition Guidelines
 - Begin with crops with low N requirement or that fix N. Use crops that can compete against weeds present.
 - Alternate between warm-and cool-season crops in the rotation
8. Calculate macronutrient fertility removal for selected rotation. Develop fertility management plan. See: PM 1688 A General Guide for Crop Nutrient and Limestone Recommendations in Iowa @ <file:///C:/Users/mrgsmith/Downloads/PM1688.pdf>
9. Develop a marketing plan-----talk to other growers.
10. Review machinery complement and investigate additional needs. Possible additions to equipment fleet:
 - Windrower
 - Pickup head for combine
 - Moldboard plow
 - Cultipacker
 - Rotary hoe
 - Harrow (possibly)
 - Heavy-duty cultivator w/ mirror or camera
 - Grain drill
 - Flame weeder
 - Haying equipment
11. Review your plan with an experienced grower.

Additional Resources:

Transition to Organic: Grain Crops

- Transitioning to Organic Crop Production @ http://mosesorganic.org/wp-content/uploads/Publications/Fact_Sheets/24transCrop.pdf
- Making the Transition from Conventional to Organic Agriculture (for economic analysis) <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/crops/pdf/a1-26.pdf> and companion spreadsheet <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/crops/xls/a1-26organictransition.xls>
- ATTRA Organic Farming Resources <https://attra.ncat.org/organic.html>
- ATTRA Organic Certification Process <https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/viewhtml.php?id=163>
- ATTRA Organic System Plans: Field and Row Crops and Pasture and Range Systems <https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/summaries/summary.php?pub=167>
- Rodale Institute online Organic Transition Course <http://rodaleinstitute.org/farm/organic-transition-course/>
- Organic Agriculture web based course, Iowa State University Extension (offered Fall, 2016) <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/organicag/homepage.html>

Organic No-till

- Organic No-till Farming---Advancing No-till Agriculture (softcover book)-----Jeff Moyers
- Evaluation of an Organic No-Till System for Organic Corn and Soybean Production--Agronomy Farm Trial, 2011----Iowa. <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/organicag/researchreports/nk11notill.pdf>