

# Northern Ireland Non-Organic Seed Authorisation Report for 2023

Northern Ireland authorisations to use seed and seed potatoes and vegetative propagating material not produced by the organic production method in organic farming

(in order to align with current (February 2024) trading arrangements with the EU, a non-organic seed usage report is compiled for Northern Ireland, in addition to the similar report compiled for the rest of the UK)



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Prepared by the Soil Association on behalf of Defra  
March 2024

## Purpose of the report

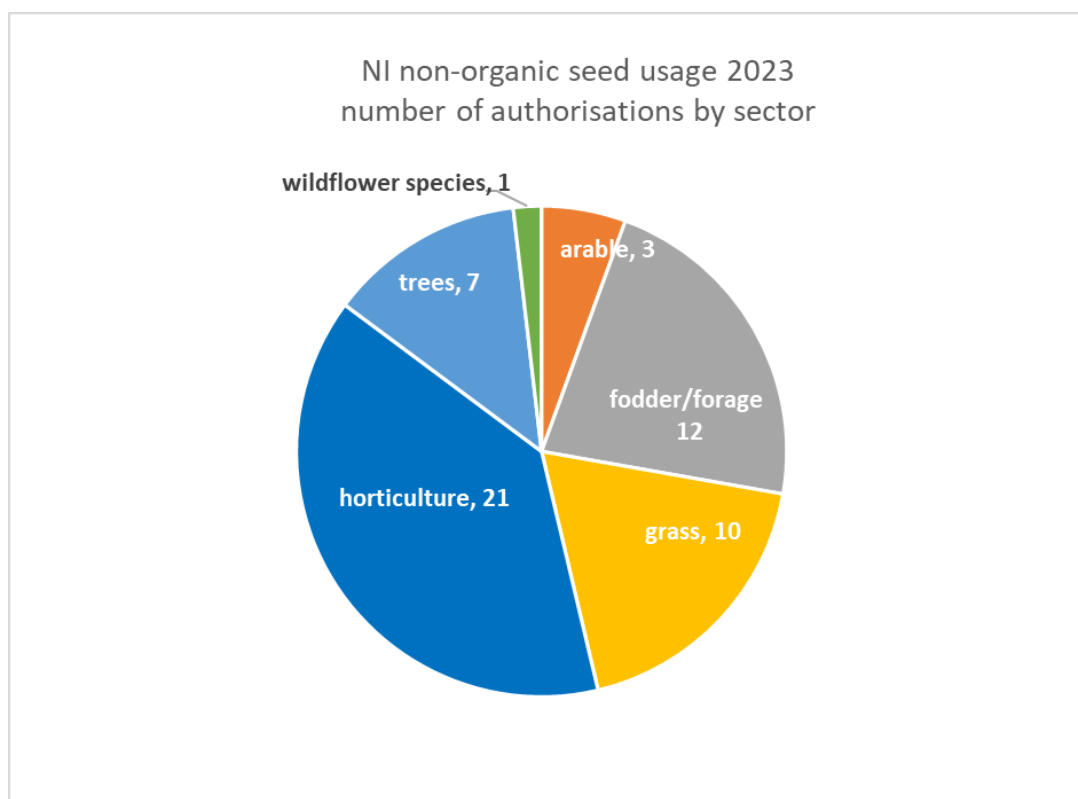
The UK non-organic annual seed authorisation report provides information on the quantities and varieties of non-organic seed used by organic farmers and growers. This information is intended for use by the seed industry, producers, policy makers and organic control bodies to increase use of organic seed and comply with relevant regulatory requirements. The objective is to expand the diversity, quantity and quality of organic seed availability so that authorisations for the use of non-organic seed would only need to be given in extreme circumstances. The report also helps to make the sector transparent to buyers and suppliers of seed and consumers.

In order to align with current trading arrangements with the EU, a non-organic seed usage report is compiled for Northern Ireland, in addition to the similar report compiled for the rest of the UK.

## Summary

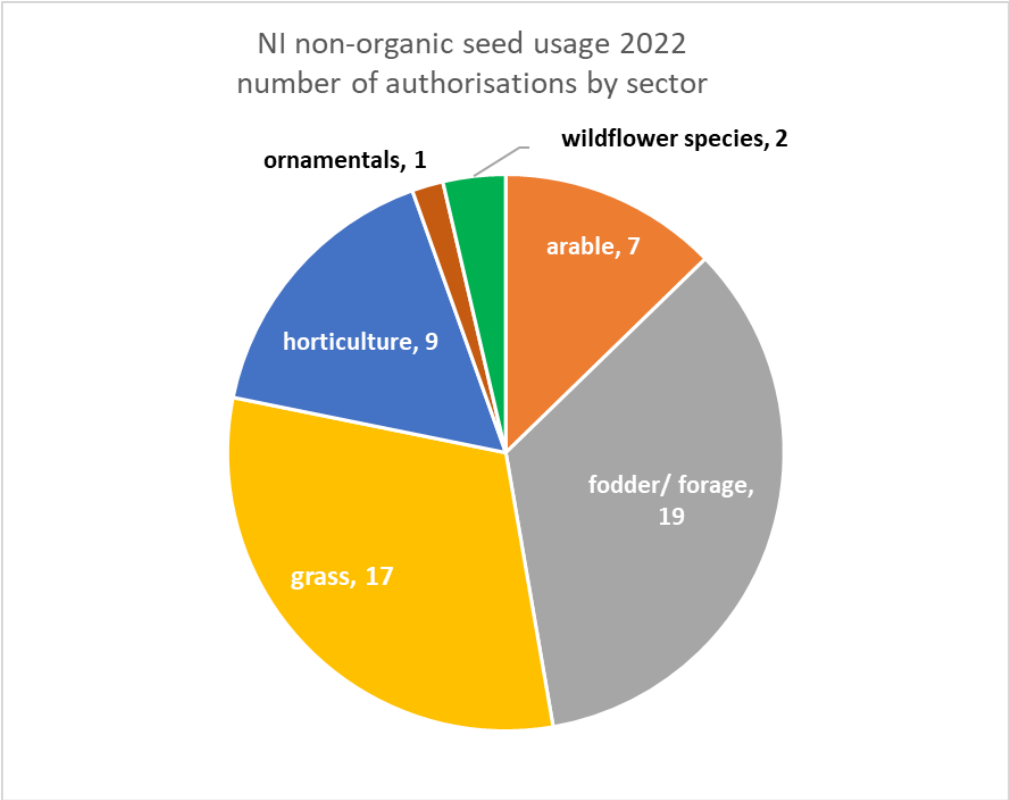
The total number of non-organic seed authorisations issued to organic farmers in Northern Ireland in 2023 was **54** (the total for 2022 was 55 and 38 for 2021). These split into sectors as shown in the graph below. For further detail, please see the accompanying spreadsheet.

**Graph 1: NI non-organic authorisations 2023**

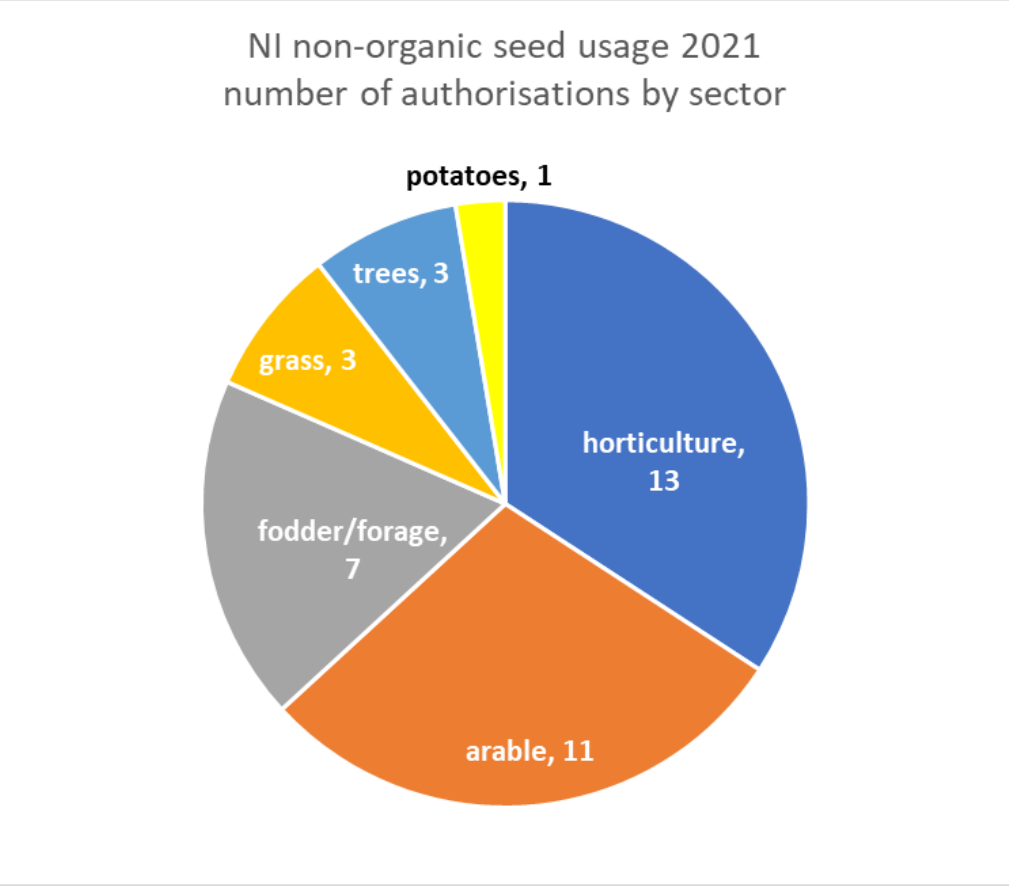


For reference, the sector splits for 2022 and 2023 are shown graphs 2 and 3 below. *(For avoidance of doubt, there were no potato authorisations in 2022 and 2023, no tree authorisations in 2022, and no ornamental authorisations in 2021 and 2023)*

**Graph 2: NI non-organic authorisations 2022**



**Graph 3: NI non-organic authorisations 2021**



## The NI database: <https://nir.organicxseeds.com/>

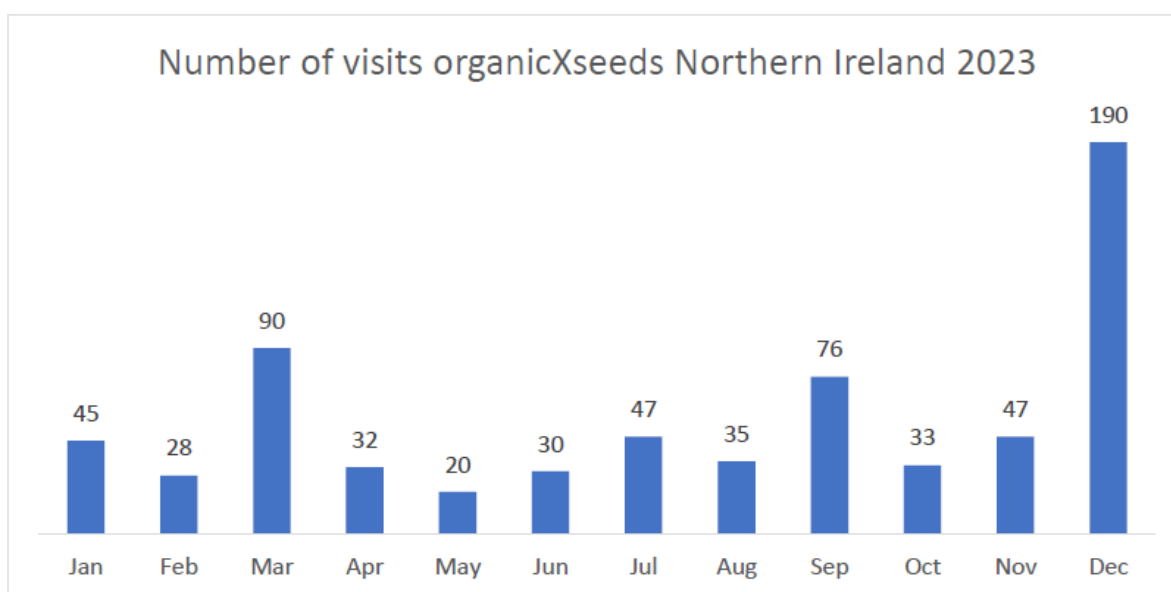
This database is a requirement of EU Regulation (EU) 2018/848 which regulates the use of seeds and seed potatoes in organic farming.

There are currently (February 2024) 15 seed companies registered in the database who are able to supply organic seed and/or organic seed potatoes to organic farmers and growers in Northern Ireland. In February 2023 there were 11 such suppliers, and 10 suppliers in 2022.

Seed suppliers can register species of organic seed and/or organic seed potatoes by variety via a login and password. They are regulated by a signed contract with the Soil Association requiring them to update their seed listings in accordance with current availability.

Organic producers are legally obliged to use organic seed that is registered in the database. UK control bodies are legally obliged to check the database for organic seed availability before issuing authorisations to use non-organic seed.

Statistics provided by [FiBL](#) relating to the Organic X Seeds website (which operates across several EU member states) are shown below:



## Explanation of authorisation data

The authorisation data follows the format given in Article 12 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1452/2003, which requires that the report shall contain, for each species concerned by an authorisation according to Article 5(1), the following information:

- The scientific name of the species and the variety denomination
  - The English or common name of the species and the variety denomination
  - The justification for the authorisation indicated by a reference to Article 5(1)
  - The total number of authorisations
  - The total quantity of non-organic seed or seed potatoes authorised for use
  - The chemical treatment for phytosanitary purposes as referred to in Article 3(a)
- Authorisation according to Article 5(1) for seed (agricultural crop)

### Column 1

Scientific name of the species

### Column 2

English or common name of the species

### Column 3

Variety name

### Column 4

Justification / Reason for authorisation

The justification for the authorisation is indicated by a reference to Article 5(1) (a), (b), (c) or (d) (**NB:** In the UK it has been agreed by Defra to modify Article 5(1) and use the following justifications).

- (a) If no variety of the species, which the user wants to obtain is registered in the database provided for in article 6;
- (b) If no supplier is able to deliver the seed or seed potatoes before sowing or planting in situations where the user has ordered the seed or seed potatoes in reasonable time;
- (c) If the variety which the user wants to obtain is not registered in the database, and the user is able to demonstrate that none of the registered alternatives of the same species are appropriate and that the authorisation therefore is significant for his production;
- (d1) It is justified for use in research;
- (d2) To test in small-scale field trials;
- (d3) For variety conservation purposes, agreed by the competent authority of the member state;

(e) The seed is part of a grass or forage mix containing at least 70% organic seeds.

#### **Column 5**

The chemical treatment for phytosanitary purposes

**There are currently no chemical treatments allowed for phytosanitary purposes in the UK.**

*[This column is informally used for seed-for-seed production]*

#### **Column 6**

The total number of authorisations for each variety

#### **Column 7**

The total number of authorisations for each species

#### **Column 8**

The total quantity of seed, plants or seed potatoes (by variety)

For each variety it is stated, how many units of seed or vegetative propagating material have been authorised. Where two or more authorisations have been granted, the amounts have been added.

#### **Column 9**

The total quantity of seed or seed potatoes (by species)

### **Seed authorisation data**

The accompanying document - "Northern Ireland Non-Organic Seed Authorisation Report 2023 Data" - summarises the authorisations granted in 2023 by all of the organic control bodies which operate in Northern Ireland.

There are some anomalies in the way that the data is collected by the control bodies. For example, the same variety of a particular crop may have some entries recorded by the number of seeds or plants and others by the weight of the seed. Where this has occurred the entries have been added to give a total by each unit of measurement. Although the control bodies are aware of this they often receive the request for authorisations in various units from the producer, who in turn records the information as provided by the seed company.

The 'justification codes' which assign a reason for each authorisation have been recorded as given by the control bodies, even though it is evident that in some cases the original coding is incorrect.

### **Acknowledgements**

Report compiled by Martin Parkinson, Jerry Alford, Carolyn Coxe and Hugh Blogg. Data compiled by Martin Parkinson. Seed working groups chaired by Ben Raskin, Adrian Steele and Carolyn Coxe.