

Annual Report

Non-Organic Seed Authorisations 2024

Northern Ireland

Authorisations to use seed, seed potatoes and vegetative propagating material not produced by the organic production method, in organic farming.

In accordance with current (at time of writing) trading arrangements with the EU, authorisations for Northern Ireland are reported separate to the rest of the UK.

Prepared by Soil Association on behalf of the Department for Environmental, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)

March 2025



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the varieties and quantities of non-organic seed used by organic farmers and growers in Northern Ireland in 2024.

This information is intended for use by the seed industry, producers, policy makers and organic control bodies to increase the use of organic seed and comply with relevant regulatory requirements. The aim is to improve the diversity, quantity, and quality of organic seed so authorisations for the use of non-organic seed are required only in extreme circumstances. This report also benefits the transparency of the organic sector more broadly.

The report and associated dataset are compiled by the Soil Association on behalf of the Northern Ireland Competent Authority for organics and made publicly available via the OrganicXseeds (Northern Ireland) website: nir.organicxseeds.com

Summary

In 2024, the total number of authorisations granted for non-organic seed in Northern Ireland was 31. A decrease of 43% from 2023 when the total number of authorisations was 54 (Figure 1). The majority of authorisations granted in 2024 were for vegetables and fodder and forage crops, with only a single authorisation each for field peas, potatoes and fruits (Figure 2). This report covers eight of the major crop types: cereals, field peas & beans, fodder & forage, grasses, cover crops, vegetables, potatoes and fruit.

Figure 1. The total number of authorisations for non-organic seed from 2020-2024.

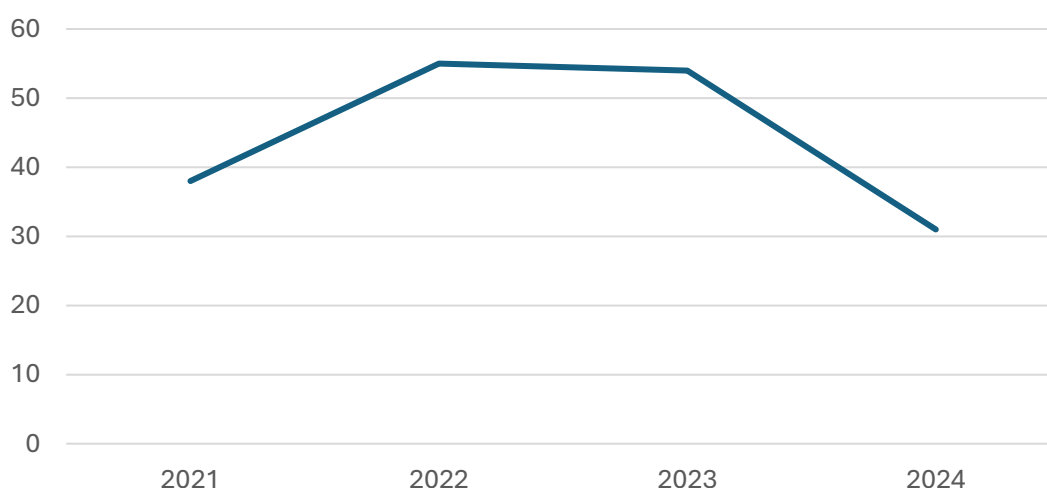
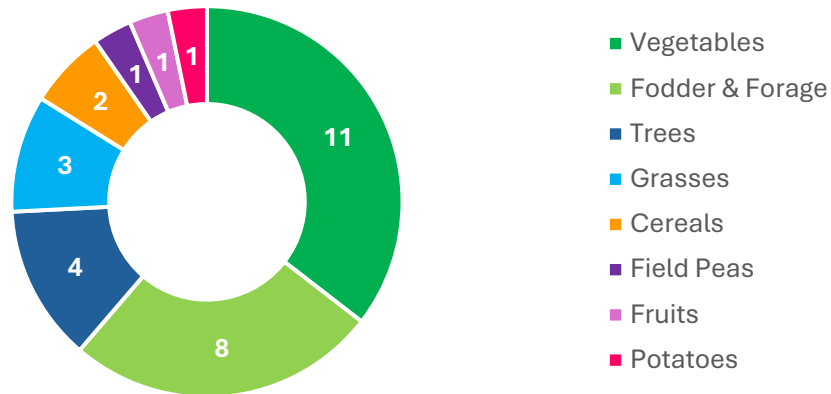


Figure 2. The number of authorisations per category in 2024.



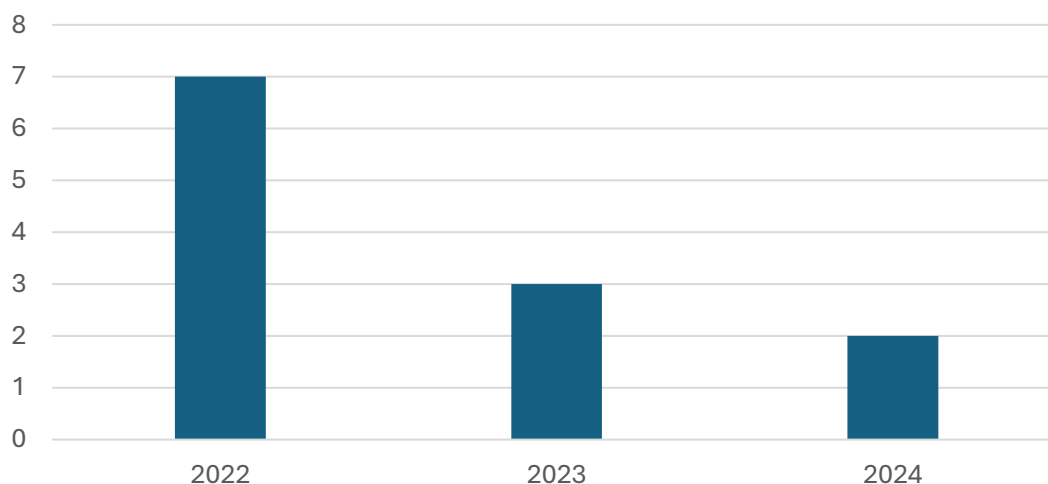
Cereals

In 2024, there were two authorisations granted for cereal crops, one for spring oats and one for spring barley, totalling 300kg of seed (Table 1). This represents a continued decline in the total number of authorisations for cereals over the last three years (Figure 3) and a continued decline in the total quantity of those authorisations.

Table 1. The number of authorisations granted for cereal crops in 2024 and the associated quantity of those authorisations in kilograms.

	No. of auths	Seed (kg)
Spring oats	1	200
Spring barley	1	100
<i>Total</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>300</i>

Figure 3. The number of non-organic seed authorisations for cereal crops from 2022-2024.



Field Peas & Beans

In 2024, there was only a single authorisation for field peas totalling 1,080kg of non-organic seed (Table 2), and no authorisations for field beans. In 2023, there was also only a single authorisation for field peas totalling 1,620kg and two authorisations in 2022 totalling 1,080kg.

Table 2. The number of authorisations granted for field peas in 2024 and the associated quantity in kilograms.

	No. of auths	Seed (kg)
Field peas	1	1,080

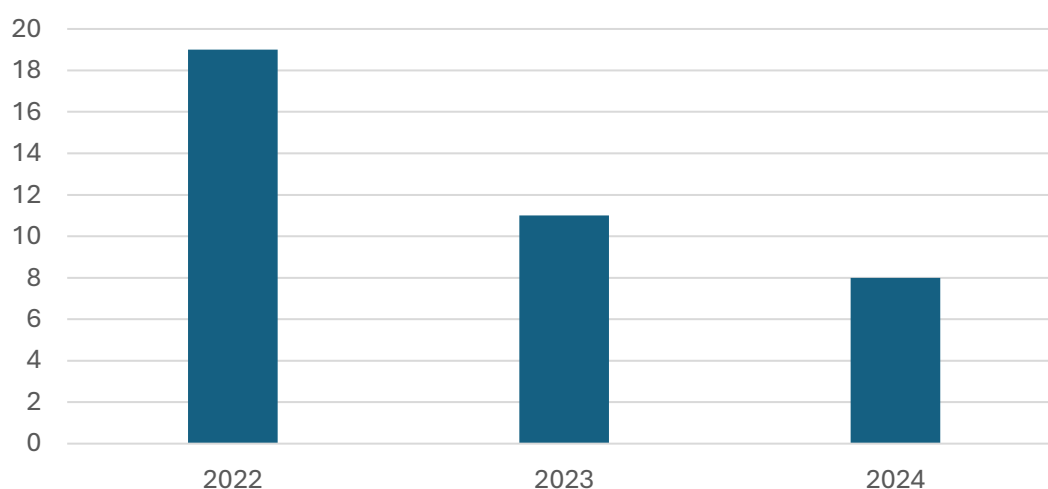
Fodder & Forage

There were eight authorisations granted for fodder and forage crops in 2024, totalling 122kg of non-organic seed (Table 3). This represents a continued decline in the number of authorisations granted for fodder and forage crops in the last three years (Figure 4), as well as a continued decline in the total quantity of those authorisations.

Table 3. The number of authorisations granted for fodder and forage crops in 2024 and the associated quantity of those authorisations in kilograms.

	No. of auths	Seed (kg)
Forage rape	1	50
Fodder kale	1	12
White clover	6	60
<i>Total</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>122</i>

Figure 4. The number of non-organic seed authorisations for fodder and forage crops from 2022-2024.



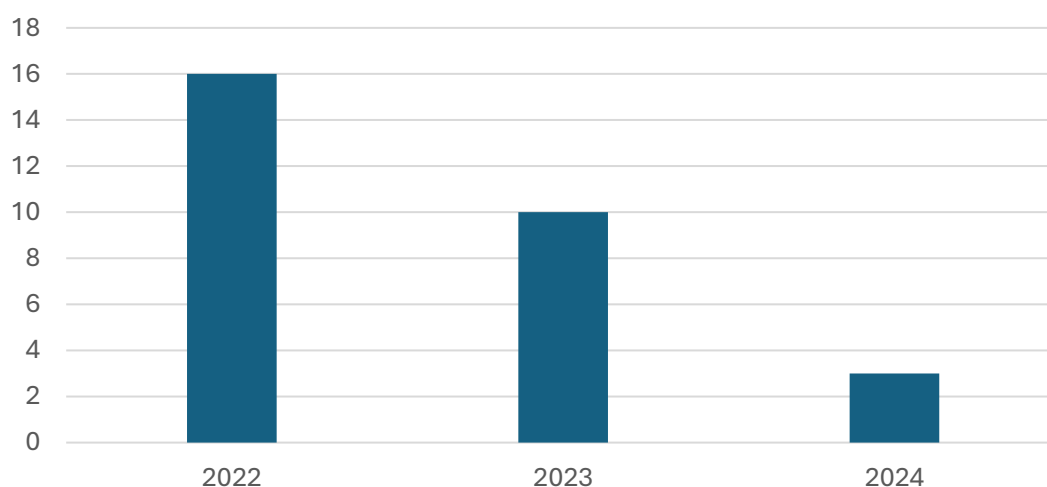
Grasses

In 2024, there were a total of three authorisations for grass species, totalling 25.8kg of seed (Table 4). This represents a continued decline in the number of authorisations granted for grass species in the last three years (Figure 5), as well as a continued decline in the total quantity of those authorisations.

Table 4. The number of authorisations granted for grass species in 2024 and the associated quantity of those authorisations in kilograms.

	No. of auths	Seed (kg)
Perennial ryegrass	1	16.8
Timothy grass	1	6
Festulolium	1	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>25.8</i>

Figure 5. The number of non-organic seed authorisations for grass species from 2022-2024.



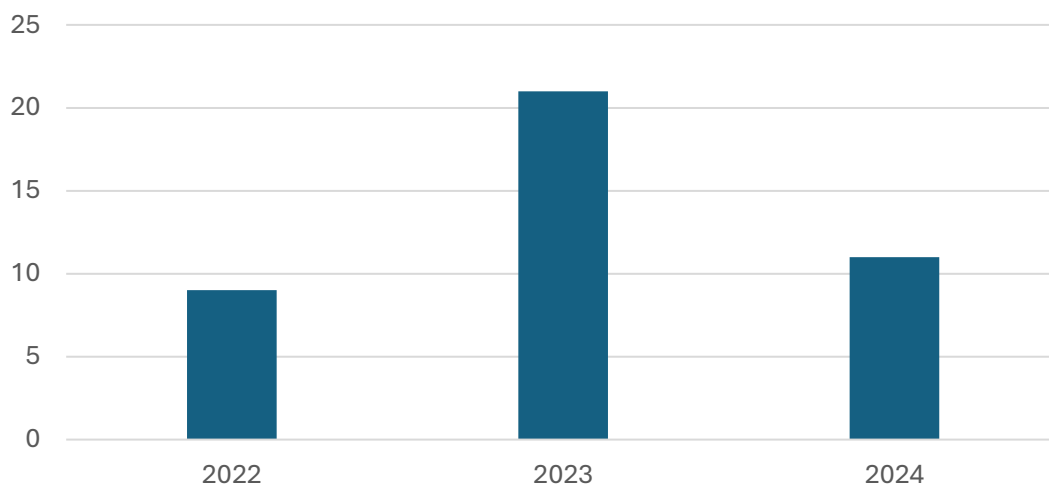
Vegetables

Vegetable crops cover a wide range of varieties and cultivars. For reporting, these have been grouped into core crop types. In addition, vegetable seeds are typically acquired by count, the weight of which can vary widely between varieties of the same species. For this reason, the number of seeds has not been converted to kilograms for reporting. In 2024, there were a total of 11 authorisations granted for vegetable crops (Table 5), a decrease of 48% from 2023 when the total number of authorisations granted was 21 (Figure 6).

Table 5. The number of authorisations granted for vegetables in 2024 and the associated quantity of those authorisations.

	No. of auths	Total quantity of authorisations	
		No. of seeds	Seed (kg)
Kale	4	7,500	0.05
Lettuce	3	15,000	0
Parsnip	1	50,000	0
Leek	1	10,000	0
Cabbage	1	2,000	0
Chard	1	0	0.2
<i>Total</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>84,500</i>	<i>0.25</i>

Figure 6. The number of non-organic seed authorisations for vegetables from 2022-2024.



Potatoes

In 2024, there was only one authorisation granted for seed potatoes (Table 6). There were no authorisations for potatoes in 2022 and 2023.

Table 6. The number of authorisations granted for potatoes in 2024 and the associated quantity in kilograms.

	No. of auths	Seed (kg)
Potato	1	4

Fruit

In 2024, there was only one authorisation for fruit (Table 7). There were no authorisations for fruit in 2022 and 2023.

Table 7. The number of authorisations granted for fruits in 2024 and the associated quantity of authorisations.

	No. of auths	No. of cuttings
Apple	1	50

OrganicXseeds

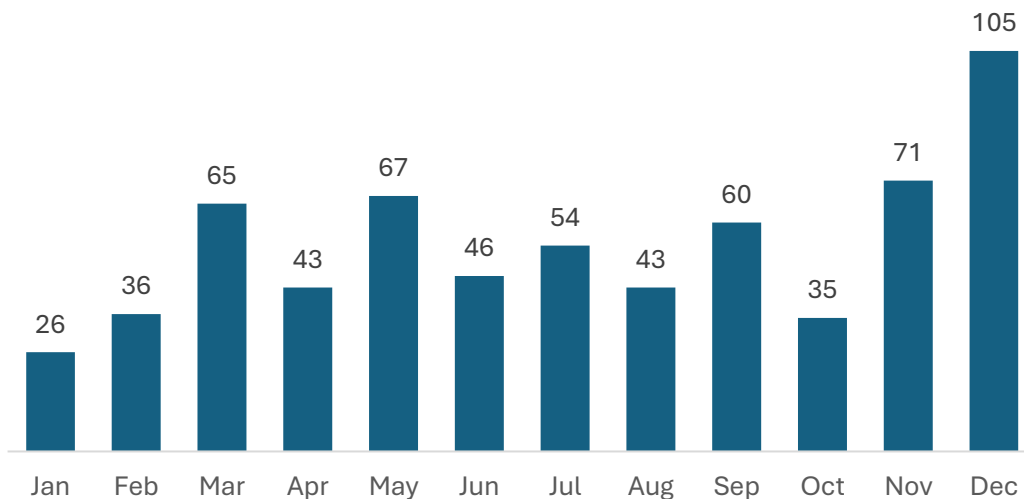
[OrganicXseeds](#) (Northern Ireland) is the official database of organic seed availability in Northern Ireland. It is designed for organic farmers and growers to source organic seed, seed suppliers to list organic seed they have available, and to assist organic control bodies in the authorisation of non-organic seed requests.

The database is a requirement of EU Regulation (EU) 2018/848, which regulates the use of organic seed in organic farming. The use of this database is funded by the Northern Ireland Competent Authority for organics and managed by the Soil Association in partnership with database operator [FiBL](#).

Organic farmers and growers are legally obliged to use organic seed listed in the database, and control bodies are legally obliged to check the database for organic seed availability before issuing authorisations for the use of non-organic seed. Seed suppliers can choose to list organic seed on the database and are required to update their listings in line with current availability.

As of March 2025, there were 17 seed suppliers registered in the OrganicXseeds (Northern Ireland) database, up from 15 in March 2024. Figure 7 shows the number of monthly visits to the OrganicXseeds (Northern Ireland) website in 2024 (data provided by FiBL).

Figure 7. The number of monthly visits to the OrganicXseeds (Northern Ireland) website in 2024.



Annual Dataset

The complete dataset of non-organic seed authorisations granted for Northern Ireland in 2024 can be found accompanying this report on the OrganicXseeds (Northern Ireland) website: nir.organicxseeds.com

In accordance with Article 54 of Assimilated Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2007, the dataset contains, for each species concerned by an authorisation, the following information:

- The scientific name of the species and variety denomination.
- The English or common name of the species.
- The justification for the authorisation indicated by reference to Article 45(5), (described below).
- The total number of authorisations.
- The total quantity of seed and/or vegetative propagating material authorised.
- The chemical treatment for phytosanitary purposes as referred to in Article 45(2), (there are currently no chemical treatments allowed for phytosanitary purposes in the UK).

Note: The unit of measurement used to report authorisations varies. For example, some authorisations are reported in the weight of seeds and others in the number of seeds. These have been recorded in the dataset as they were received. For this report, the number of seeds has been converted to weight of seeds where appropriate.

Justification criteria

The justification for an authorisation is indicated by reference to Article 45(5). In Northern Ireland, it has been agreed by the Northern Ireland Competent Authority for organics to modify the Article and use the following justifications:

- (a) No variety of the species which the user wants to obtain is registered in the organic seed database provided for in Article 48.
- (b) The seed supplier is unable to deliver the seed before sowing or planting despite the user ordering in reasonable time.
- (c) No variety which the user wants to obtain is registered in the database, and the user can demonstrate that none of the registered alternatives of the same species are appropriate for production.
- (d1) For research purposes.
- (d2) To test in small-scale field trials.
- (d3) For variety conservation purposes.
- (e) The seed is part of a grass or forage mix containing at least 70% organic seeds.