**Eilidh Manson (2018)**

# **Identifying the barriers during conversion from conventional to organic dairy farming systems in Scotland**

Over current years farming practices have come under scrutiny as “farming practices and

systems have a profound effect on the environment.” (Padel et al. 2018) As discussion within

the industry focuses on farms becoming greener, and more environmentally aware in order

to receive subsidy payments, farmers are worried about the security of their businesses. With

the focus more on sustainable farming, organic or agroecological farming systems are often

considered to have greater sustainability and security due to differing environmental

practices, with aspects of organic farming are being praised for their environmental awareness.

In regards to this, this study will focus on the organic dairy industry within Scotland.

Organic has many connotations attached to it, such as being greener, more environmentally

friendly and having greater animal welfare. Combined with increased consumer awareness of

food traceability and origin, the organic market is expanding at a greater rate than the

conventional market (OMSCo Milk Report, 2017). Due to the expansions within the dairy

industry, this study wants to examine the conversions made from conventional to organic

dairy farming in detail to observe if there are any barriers that restrict, stop or slow down a

farm conversion process. Within this discussion, the motivations of farmers are also

considered in order to understand any potential barriers found.

This work will be carried out through interviews with farmers within Scotland that have

converted their farming systems to organic. Policy and document analysis will also be used

within this research. Following on from interviews, the data will be transcribed and coded,

through the programme NVivo. This research shows that the greatest motive for farmers to convert

their business was economic benefits. Farmers faced the option of either expanding their business to

remain viable to remain in the milk market or turning to organic production as a way of remaining in

the sector. Research found that the greatest barrier was a variety of external factors, mainly

the market and the issues associated with it, such as consumer behaviour, the economy,

government, and marketing of organic produce.