



Application Information dated March 2025
Interest-free loans from the Organic Research Centre
for small-scale organic/ecological producers and food businesses

1. Background

The Dean Organic Trust was established in 1993 by Jennie Bone to support the conservation of wildlife in the farmed environment, and to promote and encourage organic farming and growing in this context. The Trust pursued these aims by giving interest-free loans to organic growers.

Following Jennie Bone's death in 2016, the Trust's assets, and a legacy from Jennie Bone's estate, have been transferred to the Organic Research Centre to create a significantly larger Dean Organic Fund (DOF).

The Progressive Farming Trust (PFT) trading as the Organic Research Centre (ORC) invites applications for loans from small-scale organic/ecological producers and food businesses, including those that are not certified organic, but which ensure their operations are closely aligned to organic principles.

2. Scope of loans

The purpose of DOF loans is to support the development of organic/ecological farming and food businesses. Applications are considered by DOF Management Committee and the decision of the Organic Research Centre concerning any applications will be final.

DOF loans will be in the range of £5,000-£25,000. Loans are interest-free, unsecured and are intended to facilitate **transformative** advances in the Borrower's business.

Loans can be used for targeted investment in equipment, stock, innovative technology or to contribute towards organic conversion, knowledge exchange and training. All applications must **specifically** identify the purpose of the loan and what the funds will be used for as part of a wider business plan.

Purchasing of land and/or property is expressly excluded from the scope of DOF loans. The loans are not available for short-term finance; cash-flow support; as a routine credit facility/overdraft; or cover day-to-day operating expenses.

Loans for training activities may be considered on a case-by-case basis. The scope of any training should closely align with the Borrower's business and identify:

- What value and purpose the training provides

- The expected outcome's of training
- The tangible and intangible value of training
- A means of measuring output and analysis
- A clear timescale, structure and methodology for delivery of training

3. Who can apply

Applications are welcome from:

- Businesses, whether incorporated, sole traders or partnerships.
- Not-for-profit organisations.
- Start-up businesses or new ventures with sufficient capital and evidence of financial runway to fund three-years' worth of projected operating costs and capital investment.

All applicants must be over 18 years of age and eligible to work in the UK. The businesses /applicants must be UK-based.

4. Repayment

Loans will be repayable in instalments over periods of up to five years, with repayment schedules tailored flexibly to suit the returns from the proposed investment. In the case of multi-year loans, repayments will not normally be required in the first year of the loan.

An administration fee, currently £350 plus VAT, will be payable by incorporated Borrowers at the time of the first loan repayment.

5. What is expected of Borrowers

If ORC establishes a mentoring scheme the Borrowers should be prepared to interact with a mentor. Borrowers should also be prepared to join a forum of DOF loan recipients to enable them to share knowledge and experiences.

The Borrower shall provide short annual reports outlining business progress over the past 12-months; the benefits (both to the business and public) arising from the Loan and associated investment, and (if requested) a copy of certified financial statements.

Borrowers will be expected to publicise the advantages and viability of organic/agroecological approaches to farming and growing. This may include holding open days, school visits, or other activities that would promote the cause of organic/ecological food production.

Borrowers must consent to the use of their business's outline details as a DOF Loan case study; for use by DOF and/or ORC in publications, marketing and for promotion of the scheme and its benefits.

Borrowers should endeavour to include DOF promotional material in business marketing, promotions, and events. For instance, inclusion of DOF branding for inclusion on websites and social media.

Borrowers should be prepared to interact with DOF representatives; both in relation to Loan administration, and regular progress meetings.

6. Supporting information required from new applicants.

Applications must be supported by the following documents, as further detailed on the Application Form, attached. Please note that the DOF Committee may request a site visit and/or interview with the Applicant to satisfy itself of the Applicant's ability to make repayments.

- Financial and trade references
- The Applicant's CV, and in the case of corporate applications; a schedule of personnel appointments and the most recent confirmation statement.
- Trading information for the last 2-years to include certified, or audited accounts, management accounts or draft accounts where relevant
- A statement of capital, to include provision of existing/secured loans, grants, donations or private creditors
- Projected financial statements for the next 2-years; to include budgeted profit and loss; cashflow and balance sheets (particularly including the repayment of debt, valuation changes in net assets and drawings)
- Existing tenure – freehold or leasehold details for business premises
- A business case to outline the nature of the business; its objectives; the organic operations or principles in operation; and purpose of the loan in contributing towards a transformative change.

7. Submission of application

Please submit the completed application form, and all supporting materials submitted either electronically copy as preferably in electronic format to DOF@organicresearchcentre.com or paper copy posted to the address below, to the Organic Research Centre if you wish to be considered. Applications will be considered on a first come, first served basis as funds permit. We endeavour to respond to applications within 8 weeks of us acknowledging receipt of your application.

Applications can be submitted by email to: DOF@organicresearchcentre.com or hard copy to: Dean Organic Fund Applications, Organic Research Centre, Trent Lodge, Stroud Road, Cirencester. GL7 6JN