

Organic Updates

*Information from the Technology Transfer and
Risk Management Projects*

Canterbury Organic Growers
2001 - 2007



CCOG



Disclaimer

The information in this publication has been compiled with due care but is for the purpose of guidelines only, and not for reliance upon for making business decisions. Any person wishing to use the information in business decisions is urged to consult a professional expert in the field before taking such decisions. Canterbury Organic Growers, its employees, agents and consultants disclaim all and any liability for any loss, damage, injury or expense to any person, whether a purchaser or reader of the publication or not, in respect of anything, and the consequences of anything done or omitted to be done in reliance, or partial reliance, on anything in this publication.

Published by
Canterbury Commercial Organics Group

October 2007

ISBN 978-0-478-29591-7 (Print)

ISBN 978-0-478-29592-4 (Online)

Individual updates are available on the following websites:

- CCOG www.organics.org.nz/
- Foundation for Arable Research <http://far.org.nz/>
- Sustainable Farming Fund www.maf.govt.nz/sff/about-projects/search/03-021/index.htm

or the series can be purchased in bound hard copy by sending a cheque for \$10 payable to Canterbury Commercial Organics Group, c/- Mary Ralston, Back Track, RD 12, Rakaia.

Foreword

This publication comprises 20 Organic Updates written to record the information presented at the seminars, workshops and field days of the Canterbury Organic Growers' Group from 2001 to 2007. The activities were part of two projects titled Technology Transfer and Risk Management.

In 2000 large gaps in the availability of technical information specific to organic farmers had been identified as one of the main barriers to growth of the organic industry. In response the Canterbury Organic Growers commenced a technology transfer project in 2001 to improve their access to technical information specific to organic farmers with the aim of improving their financial and environmental performance. Funding and support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) Sustainable Farming Fund, Heinz Wattie's and the Foundation of Arable Research (FAR) assisted the project.

To achieve its objective the project brought together a common interest group of farmers and industry people to access, explore and disseminate information to group members and the wider community of interest. The project activities operated from March 2001 through to October 2003 and included on-farm discussion group meetings, public field days, public seminars, and newsletters. Information gathered at these events is recorded in Organic Updates 1-6.

An initiative from the technology transfer project was to explore methods and systems of improved risk management for the farmers and growers to make organic farming more sustainable, especially financially.

The result was a risk management workshop in 2004 at which participants identified soil fertility and health as the major business risk for Canterbury organic arable farmers. This provided the focus of activities for a further three year project of seminars and field days on topics including soil fertility and soil testing, the pasture phase, mixed species pastures, grazing management and organic stock management. Key activities were also a cover crops literature review and field trial in recognition of the vital role that winter crops have in maintaining and enhancing soil health and fertility. The results of these activities are recorded in Organic Updates Nos. 8-20.

The Canterbury Organic Growers acknowledge with thanks the MAF Sustainable Farming Fund, Heinz Wattie's and FAR for their funding and support of the two projects, the Biological Husbandry Unit at Lincoln University for trial management and the many farmers, community and industry people who have given so generously of their time and expertise. They have greatly contributed to the success of the projects. Grateful thanks also go to Mary Ralston, the author of the organic updates and editor/publisher of the Organics in Canterbury newsletter.

We trust that this publication of Organic Updates will provide a lasting resource of value to present and aspiring organic farmers in Canterbury and throughout New Zealand.

Sue Cumberworth
Project Facilitator

The AgriBusiness Group, PO Box 4354, Christchurch
Ph/Fax 03 329 6456, Email sue@agribusinessgroup.com



CONTENTS

SFF Project 00/355 – Central Canterbury Organic Growers Technology Transfer (2001 – 2003)

1. Effective Microorganisms
2. Weed management 1. Mechanical weed management of vegetable and cereal crops
3. Cover crop mulching, minimum tillage and organics
4. The soil foodweb and compost teas
5. Animal health 1. Mineral nutrition
6. Animal health 2. Internal parasites

SFF Project 03/021 – Organic Growers Risk Management (2004 – 2007)

7. Risk management
8. Mixed species pastures
9. Soil health and fertility 1. physical, chemical and biological fertility
10. Soil health and fertility 2. pasture phase
11. Soil health and fertility 3. soil testing
12. Soil health and fertility 4. cover crop/green manure crop trial
13. Soil health and fertility 5. New Zealand cover crop literature review
14. Holistic grazing management
15. Weed management 2. Physical weed management
16. Organic stock management
17. Growing organic process peas
18. Organic carrot seed production
19. Undersowing
20. Kowhai Farm