

Canterbury Commercial Organic Group

Newsletter

Issue No 3 : April 1998

Contents

<i>Item</i>	<i>Page</i>
Events galore!	1
Farm walk at Ian & Gita Henderson's	2
Wanted - diamondback moths!	2
CCOG's purpose	2
Buyers and producers forum	3
Organics for life Ltd.	4
BHU open day	5
Icons of sustainability: Lincoln bio-village	6
Certification services	7
The standards meeting: A personal view	9
Organic weed control	10
Christchurch permaculture group	11
Free apple pruning and bee keeping demo	12
Classified	12

<i>Coming Events</i>	<i>Date</i>
Farm walk at Ian Henderson's	3 May

The Newsletter is published quarterly in January, April, July and October. Deadline for submissions is the first day of the month of publication.

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Events Galore!

Well, it has been a busy three months since the last newsletter, many of you will have been flat out with the harvest, and the group has been busy with two successful events. I hope that you have weathered this seasons drought OK. Even with the lower temperature and the onset of autumn it shows little sign of breaking - even though we are told that the el-nino weather patterns have broken down and we should be back to our normal weather now.

Please note that we have had to move the date of the farm walk at Ian and Gita Henderson's forward. It is now on **this Sunday 3rd** of May, and should prove to be a very valuable visit. Ian was recently pictured in a lead article in the farming pages of The Press holding a sample of his Dinkle wheat. This is a farm walk not to be missed. More information later in the newsletter.

Our two meetings were the Bio-Gro certification standards review and the Buyers and Producers Forum. The standards meeting, while not producing any concrete suggestions for changes to the standards, did raise a number of issues, and allowed people to express their concerns and ideas for the revisions. The Buyers and Producers Forum saw not only well know players such as Heinz Watties, and BioGrains but also keen new entrants including Pyne Gould Guinness and Cropmark.

On the house keeping front we have decided that the previous name of the Organic Garden City Trust Commercial Group was rather unwieldy and did not describe who we are very well. We have plumped for a new name, the Canterbury Commercial Organics Group which also comes with a pronounceable acronym 'CCOG'. We have also clarified what we are hoping to achieve, which is spelt out in detail later on.

For those of you involved in exporting to the USA, or just interested, the latest word on the USDA organic standards is that they have had more than 15,000 comments at the end of March, most of them critical of the proposals. According to a New York Times article there has been a very impressive grass roots campaign against the proposals, which would of seen such things as genetic engineering, irradiation and sewerage sludge (which in the USA is frequently contaminated due to industrial discharges), to name a few, allowed in certified organic production. With such an overwhelming response it is going to be difficult for the USDA not to make serious revisions to their proposal. See <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/> for more information on the proposals.

Some of you may of seen the March issue of Horticulture News with a front page picture of Scott Lawson along with a large feature article. Scott is not only a successful organic grower and director of Bio-Gro but is also a part of Organics for Life Ltd. This is a company set up by Pauline Blaikie, Scott, Kim Baker and Barry Foster, to address the marketing of organic produce, both domestic and export. This is an exciting new venture and well worth considering - check out the details later in the newsletter.

Looking forward to seeing you at Ian Henderson's on Sunday. Merf



Farm Walk at Ian & Gita Henderson's

Ian and Gita Henderson have kindly agreed to a field day at their Farm "Milmore Downs" at Scargill on the 17 May.

Ian and Gita have been leading figures in both Biodynamics and Organics for many years, with Ian having served on the Governing Board of the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association for many years. The farm is a leading example of biodynamic and organic production. This is a farm walk not to be missed. The farm was converted in 1980, and carries both Demeter and Bio-Gro certification. Ian has a zentrofan flour mill producing a range of high quality flours, and he also produces rolled oats, flakes and kibbled grains which are sold to local outlets. Livestock includes cattle, sheep and pigs, with the meat sold to several organic butchers and also processed into salami, biersticks, luncheon meat and frankfurters. Wool is sold to a local broker. Crops include dinkie, wheat, rye, barley, oats, brown and red lentils. Ian has also recently appeared in the farming pages of the press talking about dinkie, also known as spelt, which many people with wheat allergies or intolerance's can eat.

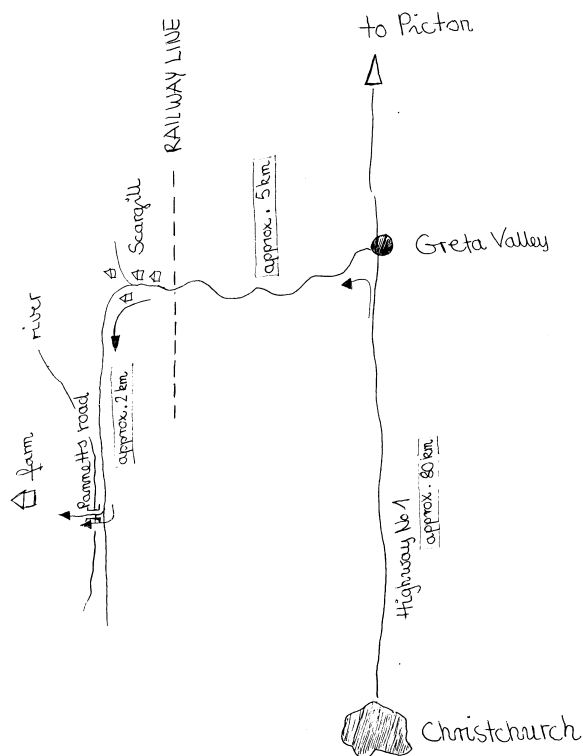
The day will start at midday with a shared lunch - please bring a plate of food. At 1pm Ian will introduce the farm and his marketing strategy, followed by discussion and questions. This will be followed by a tour of the farm starting around 2.00pm, looking at the livestock operation, green crops, rye, shelter trees and their management, irrigation system and reservoir, the flower mill and biodynamic practices and their preparation.

WANTED - Diamondback Moths!

My name is John Daly and I am working on the control of Diamondback Moth with fungi for my MSc research project at Lincoln University. This is part of a larger Diamondback Moth control project conducted by Hort Research. If you have, or know of, Diamondback Moths, in either market brassicas or fodder crops, I would very much like to hear from you. Please ring me on (03) 325 6601 or e-mail daly@tui.lincoln.ac.nz. Thank you.

John Daly

Map for directions to Ian and Gita Henderson's



CCOG's Purpose

With the groups origins as a section of the Organic Garden City Trust, unlike the old Canterbury Organic Producers which was a stand alone organisation, we felt that we ought to clearly define what it is we hope to achieve and who we are working for. To this end we have come up with the following. Our vision is to expand organics in Canterbury, i.e. the number of people engaged in commercial organics and the amount of organic product produced, processed and sold. With limited funds, we hope to achieve this by providing a network for mutual support and information sharing, through such things as field days, seminars and the newsletter. For this to work we need your support both in terms of subscriptions to the newsletter, which is our main means of communicating with you, and also coming along to events. We are also aware that to succeed in our vision that we need to reach beyond the 'converted' and attract new people, to increase their interest and understanding of organics. We are using the media as best we can, but word of mouth in the farming community is often the most effective means of reaching new people, so please pass this



newsletter onto others, make copies, and pass the word on.

Vision: Expand the Canterbury Organic Industry

Goals: Support the existing organic industry, and attract newcomers. The Industry is made up of the following;

- Producers
- Processors
- Distributors
- Wholesalers
- Retailers
- Researchers

Objectives:

Information provision

- Newsletter
- Field Days
- Speakers
- Fora

Networking

- Field Days
- Speakers
- Fora

Promotion

- Media
- Press releases

Linking with

- Certifying bodies
- Organic Garden City Trust

Merf

Buyers and Producers Forum

This was a very up beat event, with a range of speakers, including two companies new to organics - Pyne Gould Guinness and Cropmark, with buyers looking for considerable amounts of a wide variety of certified produce. Speakers ranged from local retailers to international corporates. The main message coming through loud and clear is that all the buyers needed many more growers for their crops than they have at present and in many cases there was no upper limit on the produce they could buy. On top of a large demand there was also plenty of free help and advice on offer, showing that buyers are committed and determined to increase their supplier base. The new players coming into the organic arena, with their demands for an increasing range of crops, makes the decision go organic even more viable due to the increasing

range of outlets and products for certified produce, an area that has been a problem in the past. And while there were no livestock buyers present there is movement on this front. Richmond Meats in the Hawks Bay is now killing certified livestock, and there is increasing and often strident demands from European buyers for organic meat. This combination has the potential to show other meat processors that killing organic livestock is not only feasible but profitable - something that is desperately needed in the livestock market.

Our only disappointment is there were few new faces at the event. We understand that Christchurch is not an easy place for many of you to get to, so we are holding events in other areas as well, for example the next farm walk which is at Ian Henderson's near Amberly. We look forward to seeing you there.

Local retailers Janice Schaper and Joep Nederpelt need organic fruit and vegetables of consistent supply and quality as local demand far outstrips supply. Also there is a big opportunity to sell more dry goods such as beans and pulses and processed foods for example potato chips. Contact Janice on 03 337-0022.

Brian Patchett of Cropmark, is keenly looking for organic white clover seed producers, for both new and existing cultivars. They want more than 50 tonnes of organic seed for this season alone, which would require 100ha of land. New Zealand has most of the world market in white clover seed production. Cropmark is offering a range of free support and advice, and Brian also added that it is only 30 years since white clover was produced without chemicals so there is plenty of knowledge available. Contact Brian on 03-308-2181.

Bio Grains represented by Harry Lowe, who are selling cereal grains on the local organic market are keen to hear from any organic grain producers as they are able to find markets for any quality grain crops - at present they are having to import 50% of their grains - a gap which local organic growers could profitably fill. Again considerable help and advice is available for their growers.. Contact Harry on 03-308-7349.

Pyne Gould Guinness Ltd. are enthusiastic newcomers to the organic scene. They have identified several important trends in the market place, these include limited future growth options for cereal farmers, due to increasing yields and more competitive markets. They are keenly aware of the large growth in organic demand and milestones such as Swissair offering only organic food on all flights from Switzerland, Denmark having 10% of its land organic and other countries



such as Sweden and Holland rapidly catching up. PGG is therefore developing cultivars that are tuned to the organic system, and looking at more unusual crops such as purple amethyst targeted at niche markets. Contact Philip Anstey in Christchurch 03-343-3999 or Tom Patrick in Ashburton 03-302-7912

Simon Musgrave from Waihi Bush informed the audience of a range of organic oil seeds they want. They have an almost unlimited market for linseed (flax seed) for oil, and need at least 500 tonnes a year to meet current markets. New Zealand flax oil is by far the best in the world as it has the best taste and is very high in omega 3 fatty acid. Simon is also after borage and evening primrose seed. David Musgrave is an experienced organic consultant (Ex MAF) and will provide free advice on the whole farms cropping as well as crops grown for them. David or Simon 03-692-2842.

Watties under their newest name of Heinz-Watties Australasia talked about the huge demand for their organic produce overseas and the problems they have meeting that demand. They are buying organic peas, carrots, green beans, sweetcorn and potatoes. They too provide considerable advice from a team of experienced field advisors, and have also paid for a large amount of research of benefit for organics in the areas of pest, disease and weed control, by the likes of Lincoln University, Landcare and AgResearch. Bruce Snowdon 03-349-5699

Almeric Cheng of Only Organics who produce organic baby food and other processed products talked about their need for any ingredients suitable for baby food. Almeric stressed that they produce a quality product and they need to have quality raw materials of consistent quantity and continuity. Almeric is keen to deal with growers of any size from the smallest to the biggest who have suitable crops, and is keen on long term agreements. Contact Almeric on 03 349 6622.

Merf

ORGANICS FOR LIFE LIMITED

Background

Organics for Life Limited is a New Zealand registered company which has been put together by a network of fully certified producers around New Zealand (each of whom represents a different Category of product) and a professional marketing person. All members retain their individuality as

growers and suppliers - a very important policy of the company.

Organics for Life has a three pronged fully integrated focus coming from the market place (on shore and off shore) and offers the following services:

- The Consumer: research - promotion - education - awareness
- The Retailer: service; development of 'preferred supplier' relationships and Category Management programmes - on shore and off shore
- The Producer/suppliers: networking opportunities- production/quality standards - 365 day of the year supply programmes and planners; branding/labelling; negotiating appropriate and profitable pricing structures; streamlining distribution; increasing sales; expanding markets.

Organics for Life Limited - representing fully certified growers/suppliers

The company has been set up for the specific purpose of offering a service to **all** interested New Zealand certified organic growers and suppliers to more effectively market their range of fully certified products direct to strategic retail outlets both in New Zealand, and, as the programme progresses, into specific off shore markets. Whilst Organics for Life will market individual suppliers products to all appropriate outlets, the concept as a whole, will also be designed to set up fully certified organic concept shops inside mainstream retail outlets and thus actively expand both the market and general organic awareness, by bringing the organic philosophy and the suppliers closer to the average consumer.

Testing the Concept

To get up and running, and **before** being in a position to open opportunities and offer services to the organic industry as a whole, Organics for Life Limited first has to test the concept and programme. Because of an offer to do just this by a brand new produce store in Tauranga, this is where the test programme is taking place.

The programme had only been in operation a few weeks when Organics for Life were asked to **set up and supply** six more retail outlets in the northern half of the North Island with a full range of certified organic products. It has also been asked to supply other stores and is currently doing just this. Further, it has already had strong offers from



off shore both for individual products and for the whole concept.

From this initial response to the project, and also taking into consideration consumer response to date in the test store, it is becoming increasingly clear to Organics for Life that the concept is right on target with its strategic direction. That is, bringing the organic philosophy closer to the everyday consumer and bringing the needs of the organic suppliers to the retailers. Only through this integrated approach can we hope to grow, expand and sustain the organic market in New Zealand.

Long Term Project - interest welcomed

Organics for Life view this as a long term project. We are interested in hearing from all certified growers who share a similar interest to grow and expand their market and their market share and who wish to get closer to their end user.

Because retailers here in New Zealand and, indeed, all around the world today wish to be offered one full Category from centrally co-ordinated sources, Organics for Life are currently in the process of facilitating a number of fully certified strategic product specific grower networks in the following areas:

Fruit, Apples & Pears, Berryfruits, Citrus, Green Vegetables, Salad Vegetables, Honey, Eggs & Chickens, Bakery, Grape Wines, Fruit Wines, Dairy products, Meat products, Small Goods, Herbs - fresh and dried, Beverages, Preserves & Jams, Seafood, Garden Fertilisers. If you are interested in working with us to expand and grow the organic market, or you are in a network already and wish for that network to expand their market, please give the following people a ring:

Pauline Blaikie - 06 328 6842, Scott Lawson - 06 879 9929, Kim Baker - 06 368 0833, Barry Foster - 06 867 4591. Alternatively write to P O Box 1175, Tauranga with details of who you are and what you produce.

Pauline Blaikie

Biological Husbandry Unit (BHU) Open Day 19th April

Vision statements are all the rage at present, and if past Visions are anything to go by the future of the

Biological Husbandry Unit would appear to be assured back in 1976 the BHU was established.

On Sunday 19th April 1998 well over 1000 people came to see what had been created and what the Vision would be for the future. On a perfect autumn day, no mists in evidence but mellow fruitfulness in abundance, another record crowd of people was attracted to the Lincoln University BHU. Over the years this has become commonplace. In 1988 the North Canterbury Soil/Health Assoc. based their conference at Lincoln College and over 600 persons registered, a record for a conference at the College and for Soil/Health. In 1994 the IFOAM Conference attracted over 800 registrants, another record for the University, this time an International Conference and for the IFOAM Organisation itself. This time it was just the BHU on its own that drew the crowds, far bigger than anything experienced before. Seven of our top BHU Certified Organic Guides were kept busy from 11am-3-30pm taking visitors throughout the Unit. Some took as many as three tours others just one but over several hours and all well attended. Others took the advice of Brendon Hoare, newly elected President of Soil/Health, and wandered alone or in small groups to experience the ambience of what has been created on the Canterbury Plains. For those wanting more of a chat on specific issues then specialists were located around the Unit. David Musgrave an acknowledged expert on the mixed herb ley, was located in the agricultural rotation. Merf was amongst the Amaranthus with the Flame weeder and other tillage equipment. Rose Donaghy was to be found in her shelter belt discussing the finer points of landscape and aesthetic appreciation while the fantails twittered and flitted excitedly nearby. In the intensive rotation area members of the Christchurch Herb Society were to be found proudly showing off their treasures and giving freely of their experience. Down at the compost heap Ken a dedicated student at Lincoln and long time volunteer at the Unit ably helped by Dallas another long term volunteer exposed the mysteries of the compost heap. Of special significance was the welcome presence of Dr. Trevor Jackson from Canterbury Science Centre just down the road at Lincoln. He was to be found among the Brussel Sprouts discussing pest, parasites and predators from the entomologists point of view. Trevor started his very successful career using Brussel Sprouts on this very same area right at the establishment of the BHU in the late 70's. Before all these tours started 60-80 dedicated followers of Organics were treated to a 21st anniversary breakfast co-ordinated by Mary Proudlock in association with Lincoln catering at the University. Holder Frey has long been an



enthusiastic supporter of the Organic movement and it has never been a problem getting co-operation in supplying Certified Organic catering for all our functions at the University. It goes without saying that it was a time of thanks and reflection. It was so appropriate that Andrew and Jane Strange, long time initiators and organisers of WWOOF were present as without that organisation the BHU just would not have survived. The same can be said for Soil/Health and their Project GRO contributors who have given so generously over the years. We wished Geoff Barnett, long time Unit Manager, all the best as he leaves to spend more time on the development of his own Organic Farm. Robert Proudlock, Geoff's assistant manager, returned for the Open Day, after only one week, from his new career with Dick Roberts in the Todds Valley, Nelson. Finally there were thanks to all those growers and farmers, volunteers to numerous to mention who have made the last 21 years at the BHU so momentous, stimulating and controversial. The success of the day is a reflection of the dedication and enthusiasm of many. The enthusiasm of Holger Kahl and his Polytech team in many ways encouraged the Open Day to take place, without them the flame may have gone out. It is Vicki Buck who should have the last word as she received her Honary Ph. D from Lincoln University Friday 24th April as reported in the Press. "When all those people from ??? who know the price of everything and the value of nothing?" We have much lobbying to do yet. But the flame burns brighter now thanks to the success of the Open Day and hope springs eternal with the welcome presence and support at the breakfast of Professor Ian Spellerberg recently elevated to a prestigious personal Chair of Nature Conservation at Lincoln University and significantly a member of the Lincoln University Executive Management team. Also seen at the Open Day a few other notable Lincoln University faces and members of the corporate and business world. Hopefully they will see that the BHU has value that will equal its price and even allow for expansion into a NEW VISION for the future. Here endeth the first lesson of the beginning.

Bob Crowder.

Icons of Sustainability: Lincoln Bio-Village

The Landscape Architecture Group at Lincoln University is launching an international design

competition for the conceptual design of a Bio-Village on the Biological Husbandry Unit.

Today, as the organic food industry is growing rapidly in New Zealand, the potential of the Biological Husbandry Unit at Lincoln University to reach beyond sustainable food production exists. Last year the University set up an advisory committee to discuss a future management strategy for the unit. The committee is proposing to construct a 'Bio-Village'. The vision is to establish a place that will lead the way as a model of a sustainable and environmentally and socially responsible lifestyle. Underlying the concept of the Bio-Village is the philosophy of organic food production representing an interconnected relationship between people and the land. A holistic perspective in which the health of soil, animal and humans is believed to be dependent on each is at the heart of the organic production concept. The Bio-Village will be developed on the existing organic production area and will be a focus for research and teaching within Lincoln University as well as being a place to demonstrate existing knowledge. Strong community linkages will promote this approach to sustainable management through education and involvement.

The design for the Bio-Village will express sustainability in tangible form. Designers are challenged to address issues relating to sustainability from the philosophical level right through to operational aspects. The requirement is to develop innovative design expression of environmental and social responsibility throughout the design - from layout through to management schemes and the use of materials. The place should be a model for self sufficiency not relying on external infrastructure.

The goal of the competition is to open up opportunities for creative design professionals and students to participate in this international design exercise and contribute innovative ideas. We are also interested in promoting the cause of environmental sustainability in New Zealand and emphasising the contribution of organic food production to this cause. An internet home page advertising the competition has had more than 140 visitors in just 20 days. We hope to receive entries from New Zealand as well as Australia, South East Asia, Europe, the United States and possibly further international locations. For that purpose we will need to offer prizes to the winning entries. Our aim is to recruit about \$2000 to cover prizes. We intend to have media coverage of the award winning designs. Prize supporters will be acknowledged at that event. We believe that this coverage will contribute to the promotion of 'organics' in New



Zealand. Any donations from the organic industry to support competition prizes will help to promote New Zealand's Clean Green image and would be greatly appreciated.

For further details contact: Shelley Egoz 325-3804.
Our Home Page Address:
<http://www.lincoln.ac.nz/land/comp98.htm>.

Please send donations (cheques payable to Lincoln University) to: The Landscape Architecture Group
Division of Environmental Management and Design
Lincoln University PO Box 84 Canterbury New Zealand

Shelley Egoz

Certification Services

With the aim of raising awareness of certification services the following letter was sent out to all certification agencies that the group could identify. There responses are detailed below in no particular order.

"The Canterbury Regional Organic Industry Group (the Organic Garden City Trust) is going to run an article on certification agencies, in its next quarterly newsletter. The newsletter reaches the majority of people involved in commercial organics in the Canterbury region.

To this end we would like you to write an article (maximum of 500 words) describing / selling your agency, certification scheme, procedures and charges, and any other details you consider relevant for printing in our newsletter.

We are sending an identical letter to all agencies which we have been able to identify as providing organic certification services in New Zealand, which include Bio-Gro, Demeter, the Far North Organic Growers and Producers, and MQM. We will then publish this letter and **all** responses or lack of response to it in an article in the April edition of the newsletter.

I would be most grateful if you would send your reply before the end of March 1998, in both hard and electronic copy, either on email or disk.

If you have any queries or questions please do not hesitate to contact me at the earliest instance. "

BIO-GRO NEW ZEALAND

Certifying Sustainable Land Management
Production Systems

BIO-GRO NZ (BGNZ) is a non-profit Incorporated Society and is the registered owner of the BIO-

GRO Trademark. The Bio-Gro Certification Trademark signifies that the products using it are from organic farming or production systems as defined by the BGNZ Production Standards. BGNZ has developed this set of Organic Production Standards which are internationally recognised, respected and accredited by the only International Organic Accreditation Organisation in the world. The BGNZ Organic Production Standards are specifically written for New Zealand farming conditions and have been in use since 1983. They were developed by, and in consultation with, the BGNZ members, Industry, and both Regional and Central Government agencies, and are based on the IFOAM International Standards for Organic Agriculture.

The BGNZ Standards cover all sectors of agricultural / horticultural production and processing, and currently BGNZ has licensees in New Zealand, the Pacific Islands, UK and Japan. The produce from these licensees includes fresh and frozen fruit, fruit juices, fresh and frozen vegetables and vegetable juices, cocoa, vanilla beans and essence, grains and flours, herbs, meat, wool and knitted garments, honeys, wines, cider vinegar, essential oils, poultry, nuts, dairy products, teas, baby foods, and breads and many more.

Certification by BGNZ does not mean that there is merely an absence of the use of, or the residues of, artificial chemical fertilisers or pesticides. Instead, systems certified by BGNZ indicate a positive management principle is in place, and that the licensee has an understanding of the environment's natural diversity, natural cycles, animal welfare, sound crop rotations and appropriate land management strategies. The principles of BGNZ Certified Organic production are based around productive eco-systems, that are sustainable, contribute to minimal pollution of the environment, while still providing an appropriate level of income to the producer.

Prior to achieving any Bio-Gro Certification an applicant must register with BGNZ and be inspected and confirmed to be complying with the BGNZ Production Standards, over the **preceding** 12 months.

BGNZ Certified systems are inspected annually by experienced Organic Inspectors who are required to have the appropriate qualifications for this job. These qualifications include, extensive personal experience in organic growing and / or management, as well as the relevant tertiary / academic qualifications.

Recently with the public realisation of the substantial financial premiums available for organic



produce, there has been an influx of applications from growers and producers applying for Bio-Gro Certification. BGNZ considers it is of paramount importance that the credibility of the Bio-Gro Trademark is maintained, whilst still allowing the opportunity for these new applicants to convert to organic management.

At the same time this renaissance in organic production has created the opportunity for other organisations to claim to have the ability to certify organic products and production. BGNZ urges potential applicants to check that these organisations do consider the wider implications of organic production, and will ensure access to both domestic and the international organic markets.

Bio-Gro NZ Certification offers the producer, retailer and consumer, an independent assurance that the label claim is genuine and complies with **all** International Organic Certification requirements.

For more details or information please contact Mark Levick at Bio-Gro NZ, PO Box 9693, Wellington, Ph 04 801 9741, Fx 04 801 9742 email levick@bio-gro.co.nz.

Bio Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association.

Bio Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association runs both a certification scheme and an educational programme.

The Association teaches the biodynamic method of agriculture, a specific branch of organics based on the work of Rudolf Steiner. The educational programme features the Association's magazine *Harvests*, various books and short and long courses, mostly run through regional groups and branches. The Canterbury Branch has regular on-farm field days for this purpose (contact person Annalie Mulholland, 03-381-0909). There is a diploma course in Havelock North which runs for approximately eight months, some of which time has often been spent doing practical work on Canterbury farms.

Around the world, biodynamic agriculture uses the Demeter trademark as its certification logo. The logo was registered in Germany in 1930, and is now registered or has registration pending in over fifty countries, and more are being added all the time. Thus Demeter is an international trademark, long established and well known in countries, such as Germany Sweden and Holland. This leads to consumer recognition, and to Demeter certifiers being bound to the standards of Demeter International, in much the same way as IFOAM accredited agencies must conform to IFOAM

standards. Demeter International is developing an international accreditation system to go with the international standards, and Demeter NZ has participated in a pilot evaluation.

To get Demeter certification, a farmer must have and understanding of biodynamic methods (and the Demeter standards) and be using them. The farm must go through a conversion period of at least a year for Transition Demeter, beginning when the farm is managed to the standards, and when an Association representative, who may be an advisor or an inspector, visits. Time before the visit is not counted as part of the Demeter conversion period. At the end of the conversion period a formal inspection collects information to enable the Demeter Assessment group to decided whether a contract for the use of the Demeter label can be awarded. Full Demeter takes at least three years. At the time of writing farms are being inspected or re-inspected for the annual renewal. Demeter standards require a high level of organic practice, including, in the case of animal husbandry, no routine use of conventional dips and drenches. In emergencies animals must be treated to save life or prevent suffering, then be quarantined, and remain decertified for at least twelve months.

Inspection costs \$400 including GST, and a visit by a farmer-advisor costs \$250 plus GST plus agreed travel costs. The farmer-advisors assists with problems of conversion and provide a short written report, but do not offer a complete consultancy service. Once certification is granter there is a levy on all produce sold using the Demeter label or whose sale relies on the Demeter reputation. The levy is half a percent in the first year and one percent in the second and subsequent years, assessed on farm gate return. Processed produce is assessed at the same rates, on the value added by the processing.

Contact David Wright, Bio Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association PO Box 39045, Wellington Mail Centre, Ph 04-589-5366, Fx04-589-5365.

MAF Quality Management Organic Certification Services

Thank you for the opportunity of allowing MAF Quality Management (MQM) to place an article in your upcoming newsletter. Attached is a brief outline of MQM's involvement with organic certification. If you have any further queries or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully, David Brown, Organic Services Co-ordinator, MAF Quality Management



MAF Quality Management (MQM) is an independent service organisation providing both official and industry certification services.

MQM has been involved in organic certification work for the last 3 years with a number of producers and manufactures. MQM does not have its own organic standard, rather it prefers to work with existing international standards. Currently most of MQM's organic clients are working to a draft CODEX organic standard. CODEX is a part of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, and the World Health Organisation. Currently 146 countries belong to CODEX, with the government of member countries recognising its standards.

New Zealand currently does not have a government to government organic certification service. MQM understands that the organic industry has had discussions with MAF Regulatory Authority (MAFRA) regarding setting up an official organic certification service. When this is set up, MQM will be applying to become MAFRA accredited to provide this service to the industry.

MQM has a network of staff throughout New Zealand. Therefore MQM is able to offer a very competitive and comprehensive service to the organic industry. The current price for undertaking organic audits is based on the inputs required to complete each audit. The current average price per organic audit is \$600. Usually each producer has one audit per year. MQM does not charge any additional levies.

MQM audits are undertaken in a professional objective manner comparing what the auditee is doing to what is allowed under the standard. Audits are undertaken at a time that is mutually agreeable to both parties. In all cases the auditee will know at the end of the audit whether they meet the standard or not, or what they will have to do to meet the standard.

For more details or information please contact David Brown at MAF Quality Management, PO Box 307, Pukekohe, Ph 09 238 5255, Fx 09 238 3757, email brownd@pukekohe.mqm.govt.nz,

Far North Organic Growers & Producers Assn

Thank you for your letter of the 4.3.98, which I read out at our meeting last Wednesday (18th). As we have only a small organisation and don't extend our membership beyond the 100km we don't feel we need to 'sell' our agency at this point in time. We do wish you all the very best with what you are doing and enclose a copy of our standards which,

along with the constitution, is in the process of undergoing changes. We do follow the Bio-Gro rules though. Thank you very much for your correspondence and who knows, we may all meet up one day when N.Z. is (hopefully) an organic nation, in the meantime we all endeavour to help others to understand this method of growing.

For more information contact Terry Higginson, Wells Road, RD2 Kaitaia, Ph 09-408-4212.

The Standards Meeting: A Personal View

The standards meeting was an 'interesting' event, and we were fortunate to have three Bio-Gro representatives present - Mark Levick, Jim Kebbell and Marinus La Rooij. While the meeting was a couple of months ago and much of the content is now old news the meeting raised a some larger issues beyond specific changes to the standards (which the meeting did not produce nor was it specifically designed to do so). The big ones from my point of view is not so much the standards themselves, (through there are changes to the standards I would like to see) but rather the process of the review itself and communication between Bio-Gro and members.

It was apparent from the meeting that the members were not well informed on many aspects of Bio-Gro or the inspectors work (did you know for example, that until last year the directors had to give a personal \$12,000 guarantee to Bio-Gro's bankers?) nor were they familiar with the review process or how to go about making a submission to the review. This is not surprising. While there have been numerous notifications that a review is pending there has no detail on what is required in a submission. Indeed, during the meeting there was a range of ideas put forward on what was wanted, from giving the directors a broad plan and let them work out the details to having detailed alternative wordings submitted, for presentation to the members in the first draft. I have outlined my feelings on this and related matters in an article in Bio-News (page 20) and I do not wish to repeat myself too much, so I will limit myself to a few points.

The standards are arguably the most crucial document for the organic industry - peoples livelihoods, consumers choice and the environment depends on it. There is wide and divergent opinion on what should be in it (and what should not), so



there should be full and wide ranging input into the standards with an attempt to increase the level of consensus. This can only be achieved with thorough, active, independent, consultation with membership and possibly the wider community. If the people who hold the power to revoke your license, or just raise questions about your production methods are canvassing your opinion they are unlikely to get an unbiased response. There are obvious financial and personnel limitations within Bio-Gro to achieve this, however, the first step must be the identification of a clear, agreed, procedure and process on how reviews should be done. We should not just decide how much money is available then just get stuck in. There will also be alternative benefits from a good review process, in that it will give the board valuable feedback from members. I am involved with another association that has a turnover of over a quarter of a million dollars and 4000 members. We believed that members views were not well understood within the organisation so we asked them what they wanted in a comprehensive, anonymous, survey. The results have only just started being analysed, but we have already had several shocks. Bio-Gro has fewer members and a bigger turnover, but the need for the board and the staff to have a good understanding of what the members want is just as essential. If such issues of communication and understanding are clarified, in my view many other issues often sort themselves out of their own accord.

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Organic Weed Control: Part 2

Last issues article outlined the 'framework' in which weed control is practised. This article is going to look at the first of the seven key points of organic weed control; Rotations

Many articles on how to do X Y or Z in organics often starts with rotations - so often non organic people could be excused for thinking it is some kind of mantra. It is also often difficult to see how such a simple practise can be so important, but it is an essential foundation of organic production. Rotations work by introducing different ecological environments to a piece of land so that no one ecological system dominates, this often summed up as rotations introduce diversity. In any ecosystem - which is what farms are, some species will do well and others will fare badly. For example in winter cereals black grass or wild oats can be a problem as the time of cultivation, drilling and crop type

favour those weeds, where as horticultural crops rarely suffer from those weeds, but they can be swamped by fat hen or chickweed. If similar crops, or livestock, are grown continuously in the same place then problem weeds will increase, often dramatically. By growing different crops in succession, no one weed is given the chance to proliferate as some years it will be favoured, but others it will be disadvantaged. The corollary to this is that rotations that have a wide range of different crops will be more effective at controlling weeds (and other problems) than a narrow rotation. For example it is possible to design a very long rotation for a vegetable holding, however there are a number of similarities between all the crops (e.g. they are mostly spring sown), so some weeds will still thrive and increase.

The keys to a good rotation are that you should alternate between crops that have different;

- Times of cultivation and planting
- Rooting habits
- Growth habits
- Length of production
- Cultivation and harvesting requirements
- Weeding machine requirements

And use green manures and cover crops, where appropriate.

Cultivation and planting times. Weeds have specific times when they prefer to germinate, for example the field poppy is an autumn germinating species, spring sown cereal crops have a much reduced level of poppies compared to autumn sown ones. By varying cultivation and planting dates you will select different weed species, ensuring that none are selected year after year.

Rooting habits is less commonly thought about for weed control, and for many annual crops it is a minor factor. For some situations it is quite important, for example lucerne, which has a very tough and deep root can vigorously compete with perennial weeds such as Californian thistle, weakening it. On the flip side weeds with similar root systems will be more vigorous competitors with crops.

Growth habits is a vital area, not only because of direct effects such as shading weeds out, but also associated issues such as cultivations and weeding machines. Some crops e.g. onions are very poor competitors and will suffer disastrous yield reductions if weeds are not effectively controlled - especially in the early stages of crop growth. The ideal is to have weed suppressing crops, e.g. potatoes or squash, which can be easily hoed for some period then rapidly cover the entire soil



surface, before weed susceptible crops such as onions.

Length of production. The time a crop is in the ground for also favours some weeds over others. Perennial crops e.g. pasture and orchards experience problems with perennial weeds, such as docks, perennial thistles etc., while short term crops suffer from annual weeds. Having several years in cropping helps knock perennials out which longer term crops such as pasture allow time for a proportion of annual seeds to lose viability.

Different cultivations can produce considerable variations in weeds that germinate and survive. Ploughing is an obvious example but there are differences between implements such as the rotary hoe and power harrow. Unfortunately there is limited information on this area at present, but a key point to remember is that seeds can only germinate in the top few centimetres of soil. If no weeds go to seed then avoid cultivations that bring up soil from below as this will bring up fresh seed ready to germinate. If a large number of weeds go to seed, especially annuals, then ploughing will give you some grace. However if ploughing is used within a few years much of the seed will be brought back up ready to germinate.

Different weeding machines control different weeds with different efficiencies. Flame weeders and tine weeders have much less effect on grass weeds than dicotyledonous ones. One farm in the hawks bay used these two tools almost exclusively for weed control which rapidly resulted in a carpet of grass establishing after cultivation. Ring the changes of machines used preferably within the same crop, but at least between crops.

Green manures and cover crops can be very useful. If they are grown where there is a weed problem, and the weeds are allowed to grow with them, they can be turned in before seeding occurs. Green manures are often very competitive and can weaken perennial weeds, and increase the time annuals take to reach maturity. Several short term green manures coupled with the right cultivations can rapidly clean up a piece of land and also improve the humus and nutrient levels and soil structure.

Customising and tweaking rotations, is essential. Rotations are often viewed as being fixed, you design your rotation and then stick to it. Apart from the obvious factors such as some parts of the farm are suited to different crops or livestock e.g. flat land vs. hill country, the past history of fields will determine what to do next with them. Rotations need to be re-designed on an annual basis for each field using the past history and the above key points

(plus others for pest and disease control). A field that has a weed problem will require different cultivations and crops, compared to a clean field. For example if a field has had fat hen go to seed, then ploughing followed by potatoes, which are relatively easy to control weeds in could be used - this will bury much of the seed and that which does remain will be killed with cultivations, hoeing and smothered by the potato. Alternatives could be to surface till, maybe get a couple of weed strikes, put it down to grass and let livestock control those weeds that emerge, or surface till and plant a succession of quick growing green crops, to be turned in before the fat hen seeds again. Onions on the other hand - even if they had been planned would be a very bad idea.

As noted in the previous article, a holistic/systems approach is required, you could think of it as Integrated Weed Management (IWM) the weed version of IPM (integrated pest management) which is all the rage in conventional agriculture at present. Inevitably compromises have to be made due to market demands - there may be limited quantities wanted or lower prices for some crops. Also many weeds have very long lived seeds, so that even long rotations have limited effects on depleting some species. So while a good rotation is the foundation for weed control, it is not the complete answer. Without it most of the other techniques will have limited effect, but if they are used together in an integrated way it will yield success. The next issue will consider the details of soil humus and nutrient levels.

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Christchurch Permaculture Group

This is a 'growing' informal group of keen permaculturalists, with aims of putting permaculture into practices (less gassing and more doing), to share permaculture principles and practices with the community and to learn from and help one another and have a lots of laughs. They are working bees at peoples homes (design gardens, building herb spirals, mulch trees), organise workshops on appropriate technology and permaculture practices (pruning, healthy homes, earth building, alternative energy, welding, cooking...). We meet once a month, on the second Thursday at 6.00pm at 265 Selwyn Street, with a pot luck dinner. Upcoming events and courses include earth and straw bale building, appropriate technology, raised beds, working party at the BHU,



viewing energy efficient house and its gardens, winter solstice party, garden design ideas, mulching and ideas for a summer garden, tree planting working party, and advanced permaculture design. For more information contact Gilda 337 6048, Lil 365 6851 or Nicole 347 9339.

Edited from information provided by Gilda

Apple Pruning and Bee keeping Demo

There will be free demonstrations by Ron Bell of apple pruning techniques at Lincoln University on the morning of the 17th May. In the afternoon there will be talks and demo's on bee keeping by Dave Mitchell. The day starts at 10.00am and finishes about 3.00pm. Bring your own lunch and tea. For more information please phone Anne Seyder on 03-347-8817.

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