



# Organics in Canterbury

Issue No 35: July 2007

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This newsletter is published by the Canterbury Commercial Organics Group, in association with Heinz Watties, MAF Sustainable Farming Fund, Canterbury Organics and the Biological Husbandry Unit, Lincoln University.

Back issues of the newsletter can be found on our website:  
[www.organics.org.nz/](http://www.organics.org.nz/)

## Newsletter contact:

Mary Ralston,  
Back Track,  
RD 12 Rakaia.  
Email: [kem@xtra.co.nz](mailto:kem@xtra.co.nz)  
Phone: 03 3029202.

Articles, letters to the editor and advertisements are always welcome.

## Organic Conference 17 – 19 August

This is a fantastic opportunity for all of us who live in Canterbury...a world-class conference right here at Lincoln!! Don't miss this wonderful event – expert speakers from NZ and overseas, workshops, farm visits and an organic dinner.

Organics Aotearoa New Zealand (OANZ) will host the conference at Lincoln University on 17 – 19 August. The conference incorporates the annual gatherings of OANZ constituent members BioGro, the Biodynamic Association and the Soil & Health Association, and is being hailed as the most significant gathering of the organic sector in New Zealand for several years.

### Speakers:

**Roger Hitchings**, Head of the United Kingdom's Organic Advisory Service, will bring insights and information from European organic education, extension and research programmes.

**Professor Ton Baars**, Professor of Biodynamics at Kassel University, will lead discussion on the first day of the conference.

**Tom Lambie**, local organic dairy farmer and a Past President of Federated Farmers. Tom will directly tackle the conference theme of "Our Organic Future: Cottage or Corporate?"

**Morgan Williams**, former NZ Commissioner for the Environment, will discuss the links between organic production and environmental sustainability.

*(More conference details next page).*





**Dr Arden Andersen**, US agronomist and medical doctor, who teaches farmers about soil science and the link with high quality biological production for nutrition and health.

**Other sessions** will include certification, financial and social aspects, Maori values and plant and animal health.

**Workshops:** On Saturday include Tineke Verkade on Introductory Animal Homeopathy, Dr Arden Andersen on Soil Mineralisation. On Sunday, Effective Microorganisms, Biodynamic preparations.

**Farm visits:** Harts Creek Farm, Kowhai Farm, A Cracker of a Nut (walnuts).

**Cost:** Saturday & Sunday Conference \$180, (before 1 August), \$200 after.  
Research day & conference (Friday, Sat & Sunday) \$230 (\$250 after 1 August)  
Conference dinner \$55

**Online registration for the conference is available by following the link from [www.oanz.org.nz](http://www.oanz.org.nz). To request a brochure for postal registration, phone 03 325.3832.**

*For further information please contact Sara Russell [russels4@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:russels4@lincoln.ac.nz) at Lincoln University or Holger Kahl of the OANZ Organic Advisory Programme [holger.kahl@oanz.org.nz](mailto:holger.kahl@oanz.org.nz)*

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**Advertisements & notices** contact Mary [kem@xtra.co.nz](mailto:kem@xtra.co.nz) or 03 3029202 to place your ad

## FOR SALE

After years of dreaming and planning, Clearwater's Organic Dairy is proud to announce the production and distribution of our delicious Cream Top Yoghurt.

With our comprehensive soil nutrition plus compost tea, we believe the vitality and health of our cows is reflected in the quality of our Cream Top Yoghurt.

**Available in Christchurch:** Pikos, Cheesemongers, Seven Fields, Natures Organics, Opawa Organics.

**Timaru:** Only Natural, Bin Inn, North Town Nutrition

**Ashburton:** Cabouts Tinwald &

Allenton **Dunedin:** Taste Nature

**Rangiora:** North Canterbury Organics

**Bon Appetite!!** Bryan, Jackie, Sam & Rose Clearwater (Farmers) & Ad Sintenie (Chief Yoghurt Maker)

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Clearwater's  
MADE ON THE FARM



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## FOR SALE:

**Roller Undercutter for bed preparation**, built under supervision of Charles Merfield.  
**Flexitunnel Model DW22**, 5 m wide, 3 years old, half price. Ph: Philippe, Goldenfields, 347 9954.

**Greenhouse equipment** 4 metal tables, each 10m long. Growing trays, approx 220. Electric Heaters (4). Fogger. Bags (PB 40)



approx 100. Any offers considered. Phone Mary or Kem 03-3029202. [kem@xtra.co.nz](mailto:kem@xtra.co.nz)

**HAZELNUTS** OFNZ organic certified hazelnuts for sale. Jim and Eleanor Jolly, Totaranui Organics Geraldine 03-693-9906.

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## Calendar of Events

**July 28 (Sat), Workshop on Options for Marketing Your Produce.** See details below. Organised by Canterbury Organic (Organic Farm NZ). To register, contact Gilda, ph. 03 325 1344 or email [corganic@organics.org.nz](mailto:corganic@organics.org.nz)

**August 17-19, National Organics Conference 2007.** "Our Organic Future – Cottage or Corporate?" Lincoln University, Canterbury. See details p.1-2.

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### Workshop on **Options for Marketing Your Produce** plus a delicious Organic Lunch with the Organic Farm NZ scheme

This will be a not-to-be-missed seminar – take advantage of hearing from organic growers and processors who are successfully marketing their produce in a variety of ways. Register with Gilda now.

**At:** *Lincoln University, Room C1, Lincoln.*

**Date:** *Saturday July 28th, 9am until 1pm. 1-2 pm lunch. 2-3 pm AGM*

**Speakers:**

**Growers & Processors:** Jenny Lawrence Cracker of a Nut "Nutting it Out"

David Musgrave, Functional Wholefoods New Zealand Ltd (Flaxseed oil business)

**Vege Box scheme:** Amanda Brennan

**Wholesaler:** Steve Wiley of Fresh Direct & past owner of Eat Your Greenz

**Organic Retail Shop:** Co-op members from Piko's

**Farmers market:** Karen Joblin

**Cost:** *\$10 for workshop per person \$15 for lunch per person*

**Contact:** Gilda to obtain a booking & payment form for the workshop &/or lunch; email [corganic@organics.org.nz](mailto:corganic@organics.org.nz)

**Other workshops – details still to be finalised, contact Gilda for more information & dates**

**August:** Organic Livestock, **September:** Non chemical disease control,

**October:** Organic pest management, **November:** Organic weed control

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**See CCOG's new website** [www.organics.org.nz/](http://www.organics.org.nz/)

CCOG's website has been updated!! It's still no-frills so it doesn't take forever to download. Have a look at it – feedback welcome. Please contact Mary [kem@xtra.co.nz](mailto:kem@xtra.co.nz) if you have suggestions.



## News from Kowhai Farm

The month of May saw the final organic crops (carrots and potatoes) harvested and processed from Kowhai Farm, Heinz Wattie's Organic Farm at Lincoln University, for the 2006-07 season. The carrot crop yielded 45 tonnes/hectare which was a great result for an organically grown carrot crop.

Kowhai Farm has been managed for the last 8 years by Heinz Wattie's Agronomist Anthony White. During that time the 57 hectare property has grown a diverse range of crops including organic peas, beans, sweet corn, carrots and potatoes for processing plus organic borage, buckwheat, carrot seed, linseed, onion, and ryecorn crops.

Heinz Wattie's is now handing over the day-to-day management of Kowhai Farm to well known local organic farmer Tim Chamberlain who will continue to produce organic crops and livestock from the farm. Tim's presence on the farm will enhance the research, monitoring, teaching and extension activities which will continue to be driven by Lincoln University and Heinz Wattie's and other interested parties.

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## Reminder - OANZ advisory programme & Smart Start service

The Organic Advisory Programme, operated through Organics Aotearoa New Zealand aims:

- To promote organics to non-organic growers,
- To support non-organic growers to make good decisions to convert,
- To support newly converted and existing organic growers.

### **'Smart Start' service – helping farmers convert to organics**

The highlight of the programme is the 'Smart Start' service, providing growers considering conversion to organics with a subsidised on-farm consultancy service. The Smart Start service gives producers access to a one-on-one consultancy on their own property, looking at the property's potential for conversion to certified organic production.

The current criteria for Smart Start require the producer to have commercial organic aims in excess of \$20,000. Cost of the subsidised service is only \$200 which includes a ½ day visit from a consultant who will answer questions on organic production, and systematically review your current management system, performance and goals to identify issues that may arise following conversion to organic production. The consultant will then prepare a report outlining options, strategies, impacts and support available for organic conversion. For more information about the Smart Start Service, contact Holger Kahl, Organic Advisory Programme's Southern Co-ordinator, ph. 03 3293299, 0272.270181, [holger.kahl@oanz.org.nz](mailto:holger.kahl@oanz.org.nz)

Other initiatives underway from the Organic Advisory Programme include the 0800-Organic Helpline, a website [www.oanz.org.nz](http://www.oanz.org.nz), workshops, a mentorship programme and focus groups.

**Organic mentors** A mentorship programme to help new organic farmers in Canterbury is starting up with funding from the Organic Advisory Programme.

New growers will be paired with experienced growers for advice and support on converting to organic production. This project is organised through the Biological Husbandry Unit at Lincoln University. Anyone interested please contact Rebecca Reider, [rebecca.reider@gmail.com](mailto:rebecca.reider@gmail.com) or phone 027-359-4522.



## “Organics – the future”

“Organics – the future” was the theme of the Canterbury Organic Growers Group’s seminar held at Lincoln University on 8 May. The seminar and organic dinner was a celebration to mark the end of the three year Risk Management Project funded by the Sustainable Farming Fund, Foundation for Arable Research and Heinz Wattie’s.

Keynote speaker Mark Houghton-Brown spoke on the topic "An Outsiders View – New Zealand organic agriculture and global developments and opportunities". He gave a very interesting summary of the organic industry around the world and in the UK, and compared it to the situation in New Zealand:

- 31 million certified hectares worldwide
- 62 million hectares wild harvest certified
- Total global value of sales Euro 30 billion; UK organic sales approaching £2 billion
- Market still growing by >20% pa
- 65% of UK consumers buy organic food but in New Zealand, the figure is about 0.6% and most of our organic produce is exported
- 14% of Austrian farmland certified organic

Why is the situation so different in the UK?

- Agricultural disasters (bse, foot & mouth, ge) have been good for organics,
- Environmental and production subsidies (£150/acre)
- Huge demand from wealthy consumers
- Strong inspirational leadership, media sympathy
- Financially strong unitary organic movement
- Support of pop stars and royalty.....Eco=Cool
- Organic “wins” the argument with integrity and quality
- Politicians and the public get to realise multiple objectives (health-flavour-rural employment-low food miles-environment-biodiversity-climate change-feel good)
- And NZ is (so far) perceived as clean green anyway

In New Zealand, organics is not “consumer led” but is driven by export opportunities. The New Zealand population is small, we are a long way from markets, there is little government support, there is an uncoordinated and underfunded research sector and there is a difficult investment climate and a volatile currency.

However Mark believes there are lots of opportunities for organics to expand in NZ:

- Growth in global organic markets (exports)
- Scarcity will increase demand and prices
- Demand for added-value high quality/gourmet/boutique processed/branded products
- Specialist foods (concentrates, essences, oils, seeds, drinks, flavours, ingredients) are in demand
- The local market - restaurants, cafes, bars, farm shops, farmers markets, tourists, schools, hospitals
- New areas - aquaculture, health & beauty, textiles, certified timber

But there are factors that threaten the expansion of organics in NZ:

- Over reliance on bulk exports (little value added)
- Increasing anti-food miles prejudice in distant markets
- Air freight restrictions may be imminent



- Peak oil inevitable (however that will also raise expense of nitrate fertiliser and other conventional inputs)
- Climate change may jeopardise production systems and infrastructure investments
- Disconnect with consumer - local and export
- Clean green “100% pure” image – a fraudulent house of cards??

Globally organic sales have hit 30 billion Euros and the market is still growing at over 20% per annum. To take advantage of this opportunity, Mark stressed that government in New Zealand has to come on board and support organic agriculture, with research, a recognition of its “multiple benefits” (e.g., reduced pesticide use, advantages for waterways and wildlife, aiding our 100% pure image, etc.) and the implementation of a national strategy to encourage conversion and educate consumers would be a good start.

On an individual level, Mark said organic farmers or those thinking of converting should remember that *quality is always the key to the successful marketing of food products*. He also made the comment that “paradoxically, the best way to maximise profits is not to make them the primary goal of business.” Because of the huge global demand, organic farmers have the opportunity to be price makers rather than price takers. Options for organic farmers include:

- Get bigger or stay small?
- Monocropping or diversity?
- Is vertical integration the answer? (e.g., establishing processing as well as growing the crops)
- FOBs? (farmer owned businesses)
- If not co-ops then cooperation is essential
- Form pressure groups with real bite!
- Collaboration with research groups and other farmers

At an individual level, he advised farmers to:

- Talk to customers
- Make appropriate choices
- Take good advice and collaborate
- Build dynamic innovative businesses
- The “Long Tail” provides many opportunities
- Remember: Quality is always the key
- Marketing is (nearly) everything

Ken Shirley, the Executive Director of Organics Aotearoa New Zealand (OANZ) also spoke at the seminar. His message was the government was indeed encouraging organics in New Zealand with the funding of the Organic Advisory Programme operated through OANZ. This programme includes funding of the “Smart Start” service, an organic consultancy service designed to support conventional farmers thinking of converting to organics by providing technical advice. Other initiatives include supporting a mentoring service and the funding of local workshops for small scale producers.

Sue Cumberworth summarised group’s activities. At an initial seminar on managing risk, farmers identified that soil health and fertility was the most important factor in managing the risk in their organic farming businesses. This led to an emphasis on soils over the course of the project – seminars, workshops and research trials were held on soil fertility, cover crops, pastures, and a demonstration day.



After the speakers, we enjoyed a wonderful organic meal and organic wine and beer (very thoughtfully provided by Heinz Watties). It was a great way to round off a very successful 3 years. A very big thankyou to Sue Cumberworth, the facilitator of the project, whose energy, enthusiasm and organisation have driven the project.

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## How to Save the World (DVD review)

How to Save the World is essentially about the potential organics and biodynamics have to rescue India and Indian farmers from the clutches of multinationals and chemical agriculture.

The story is also about 80 year old Peter Proctor, an inspiring New Zealander who is considered the “father” of biodynamics in New Zealand. After travelling to India many times to teach biodynamic techniques to local farmers, he decide to move there permanently to continue this important work.

He sees working in India as the completion of his life’s work and biodynamics as the “last chance this planet has.” Most people, he says, are removed from food production and the space left is occupied by multi-nationals. Rather than battling this problem, he “lives the solution” – introducing biodynamics to farmers so they can once again “own” their food production system. In 15 years he has observed a groundswell with farmers all over India turning to organic techniques and rejecting chemical agriculture.

The big agri-chemical companies have infiltrated Indian agriculture to a very great extent. The “Green Revolution” promised much to farmers – however the increased yields came with increased necessity for artificial fertilisers and pesticides. The crops needed more irrigation in a country with barely enough water. Soils have become lifeless, in some places salty and useless, pests have become plagues on monocultures and poor farmers indebted. Viewed holistically, the Green Revolution was a failure. 150,000 farmers have committed suicide since 1993 because of the hopelessness of their debt burden. In the last few years a second wave of biotech seeds such as cotton have been released with devastating effect. Some cost 400% more and many farmers have been forced to take these as part of a credit package.

However, there is hope. 60% of Indians are dependent on farming and most of these are small family farms ideally suited to using compost and other biodynamic techniques. With the many cows in India, there is a ready supply of cow dung to make the preparations and compost heaps (the Goddess of Posterity lies in cow dung). At the village and district level, the organic movement is taking off and becoming, in many places, a model for the post fossil fuel and chemical era. Farmers are teaching other farmers, becoming extension workers, gaining communication skills in the process.

Already there are 400,000 ha under organic farming and 10,000 compost heaps. Importantly the farmers have not had to buy anything from outside. From simple beginnings, if the rate of adoption continues, almost all of India could be biodynamic in 5-10 years.

This is a fantastic DVD – well worth watching. Its horrifying to see the impact of chemical agriculture, but also inspiring to see a simple solution is possible and is happening. There are lessons there for NZ too, keep control of our agriculture out of multi-nationals’ hands. And it’s worth thinking about that the Goddess of Posterity lies in cow dung – there’s a lesson there for all farmers! More information at [www.howtosavetheworld.co.nz](http://www.howtosavetheworld.co.nz)



## “Improving Farm Profitability by Balancing your Soil”

This is the title of a 3 day course on Biological Agriculture run by Dr Arden Andersen. The course will be held in Tauranga on August 10-12. \$650. These courses receive rave reviews. For more information see [www.bioagnz.com/](http://www.bioagnz.com/) or contact Phyllis Tichinin, phone 06 877 1565, or email: [phyllis@bioagnz.com](mailto:phyllis@bioagnz.com)

What is biological agriculture? Biological agriculture is a mix of conventional and organic farming practices involving careful crop and soil monitoring to ensure optimum yields, nutritional density and humus production. It focuses on re-establishing mineral balance and enhancing beneficial microbiology in the soil.

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## Walnut Themed Harvest Dinner At Langdales Winery, West Melton, 7 September

Organic walnut factory tour and walnut oil press open to the public. The tour is in conjunction with our second walnut themed dinner which will be held at Langdale Vineyard on Friday 7 September. The factory tour and oil press starts at 6.30pm followed by the dinner at 7.45pm. The cost for Canterbury Organics members is \$50pp [includes a \$5 discount]. For more information or to book (bookings essential) email Malcolm & Jenny Lawrence on [crackernut@clear.net.nz](mailto:crackernut@clear.net.nz) or ph. 03 3478 103.

### **Organics in Canterbury Newsletter**

C/- Mary Ralston  
Back Track  
RD 12 Rakaia 7782

If any of your details are incorrect please contact Mary at the return address.

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