

# Chairman's Report 2006



## 2006 – The Pro's and Con's

Another year has passed during which time I visited a number of regions and the organisation as a whole made some achievements.

- The website is finally up and running. Although lacking in some information it is a step in the right direction.
- The certification managers manual is now operating effectively and various paper work has been rewritten and brought into use.
- The NCC now meets regularly on the second Monday of every month and all regions should be receiving the minutes from these meetings via either their NCC rep or their CM.
- Organic Aotearoa New Zealand is now operating as the umbrella organisation for all organic groups and OrganicFarmNZ was a signatory to the founding document.

However we have not made progress in the area of growth. Here we are stagnating. As an organisation we are running the risk of closing as the costs will be too great for a small number of members to carry.

I get frustrated with the regions that don't want anything done on a national basis on the grounds that everything must be done by the grass roots members. These same regions in their selfish, self centered way, sit on the status quo with their small number of members quite satisfied with their own certification and nothing is done towards growing the over all organisation.

## Exchanging Paperwork

A call by some regions for a central auditor to give an overall uniformity to our certification is a very valid point but without more certified members the cost would cripple our current members and force OrganicFarmNZ under.

I have proposed an alternative method where by copies of a small number of papers from a region would be sent to another region for their certification committee to go over and check out to see if the standards are being implemented uniformly around the country. With all regions being organised annually on a rotation basis then eventually every region would in effect be audited by all other regions. The cost of this would be negligible and would in effect ensure that all regions were auditing to the same level.

However again some members objected as they don't want another region's certification committee looking at copies of their paper work. At a time when there are more people in this country being affected by cancer and heart disease and these being linked to chemicals and poor diet we should be putting up our hands and saying that we are proud to be producing clean healthy food, free of chemicals and poisons, that is certified to an organic standard. Surely, if we are too ashamed of what we do that we don't want anyone else to see it then this must give cause to wonder why.

## **National versus Regional**

Our members need to look at what is best for the overall organisation, and on occasions be prepared to put their regional preferences aside in favour of the results that can be achieved on a national level.

## **NCC**

When elections are being held for the NCC representatives it is imperative that the best people for the job are put forward, and if they don't perform, for whatever reason, they should be replaced and not just leave a vacant seat at the table.

I am proposing a code of compliance for all members that are elected to the NCC. This will in part, ensure that all NCC members have a stable e-mail address, with a computer that enables them to receive large emails. They will be required to have 3 way dialing to enable them to partake in phone meetings and each member will have to be able to take part in sub committees if required.

We need more vigor within the NCC. Elected representatives need to have a mandate from their regions to make decisions. The current situation is very difficult and frustrating to operate under. Especially so when a decision needs to be made and a NCC member say they must go back to their regions for instructions. Often this can take some time while we wait for a region to have a meeting.

## **BioGro**

OrganicFarmNZ is at present using the Bio-Gro production rules as part of our certification system. We are still in a situation with Bio-Gro in that they wish to audit us to make sure their production rules are being used correctly, while again we have insufficient funds to pay for an audit. This is a difficult situation which at this point is going to be difficult to resolve.

Bio-Gro have started their own small domestic grower scheme and now see us as being in competition to this scheme. It has been made very clear to us that if we do not use the Bio-Gro production rules it will be significantly more complicated for anyone to stair case from OrganicFarm to Bio-Gro should they wish to do so.

## **Future AGMs**

With the thought of keeping costs down I would like to float the idea of having future AGMs in Wellington using the OANZ boardroom, if this is possible. I believe this would allow more people to attend and be less expensive to get the NCC reps there.

It is imperative that postal voting be brought into being for all issues requiring a vote, so that all members can cast a vote and have a say in the future of the organisation. Currently only those people who live near to where an AGM is being held can get to vote which isn't particularly democratic.

## **Standard Fees**

I believe for uniformity within OrganicFarmNZ, the NCC needs to set (or guide) the fees to be paid by all members. This would cover such items as the payment to certification managers, auditors fees, travel reimbursements and the national office fee. At present these costs vary widely and the total cost to members in some regions is double that of others.

OrganicFarm will only survive into the future if there is an increase in members, and I ask all of you to make the effort to invite new people to join our organisation.