

**Organic Farm New Zealand Incorporated  
Annual General Meeting 2020  
Saturday 8 August 2020 from 3pm  
Zoom**



1. Welcome – round table introductions from participants
2. Attendees: - Jim Bennett, Linda Samways, Rory Fogerty, John Palmer, Chris May, Jim Drury, Alice Baird-Henley, Ann Broadfoot, Betsy Kettle, Paula Allen, Bridget Henderson, Carrie Wainwright, Clinton Chambers, Dennis Enright, Valda Muller, Barbara Harford, Jennifer Kerr, Jenny Lux, John Clarke, Duncan Maas, Marion Thomson, Meriel Watts, Peter Schmuck-Poschl, Korby Poschl, Pia Dickhaut, Rogan Boyle, Valda Muller, Philippa Jamieson, Andy Barratt, Alvina Murphy
3. Apologies: - Brendan Hoare, Trevor Tilyard, Derina Turner, Claire Belcik, Jan and Ewen Willis, Chris and Judy Coney, Peter and Dyan Downard, Audrey Stanley, Rich and Jose Van Alphen, Jon Russell, Margaret McQuillan, Debs Butterfield, Jon Russell, Bob Uhu, Arthur Dixon. Moved to accept the apologies. Rory. Seconded Korby.
4. Minutes of last AGM - Moved to accept the Minutes– Barbara. Seconded - Pia. All in favour.  
Matters arising – Dennis Enright’s name spelling needs correcting.
5. Chair Report - Moved to accept Chair's Report – Jim. Seconded - Korby . All in favour.  
Chris May thanks Jim on behalf of NCC
6. Financial Report presented by Linda Samways - Moved to accept the Financial Report – Jim. Seconded - Chris. All in favour.
7. Confirmation of National Coordinating Council (NCC) Members.  
Both sitting members from South Island re-elected – Alvina Murphy (Canterbury/Nelson Bays) and Clinton Chambers (Otago) South Island members begin a 2 year term as follows:  
Moved to ratify the South Island members as elected by the regions - Meriel. Seconded - Chris. All in favour.
8. Remits - None
9. Reports from the Regions circulated and taken as pre-read. Coromandel and Auckland to be circulated.  
Moved to accept regional reports - Korby. Seconded – Marion.

**Other Business.**

10. No other business
11. Closed AGM - 3.34pm

## **Member Forum discussion following AGM:**

The National Committee has spent much time in the past couple of years considering how to revitalise OFNZ. We are agreed on the need for this but we have differing ideas on what the changes should look like.

Change is needed because -

- 1) The pool of willing volunteers to fill the various roles in OFNZ is diminishing.
- 2) There are anomalies appearing in procedures between different regions.
- 3) MPI may require some extra procedures under the coming organic regulation.

While it is our purpose to retain our low-cost, participatory certification system and help facilitate the growth of organics in New Zealand, there are aspects of our organisation we think should change. These are the questions which formed the framework of this discussion in the Member Forum.

- 1) Should we have a national certification manager?
- 2) How do we bring individual members into the PGS (group) model?
- 3) How can we improve our certification processes through electronic technology?
- 4) What should be the role of regional committees in the future?
- 5) What should be the role of the NCC and how should it be elected?

### **1) Should we have a national certification manager?**

How do we move away from being a regional organisation and more toward a national organisation? We want to retain the strengths we have, while building on efficiencies for the cause of organics in NZ and for OFNZ.

OFNZ currently has 11 regions, 11 Certification Managers and 11 certification committees. Nine out of the eleven regions have ten or fewer members which creates difficulties. A lot of key stakeholders are reiterating there is difficulty in filling key roles given many regions have so few members. We need to be one integrated organisation.

An overview from the forum's comments:

We need to present to MPI that we can operate a cohesive, robust system.

Bridget: is there a difference in the interpretation for the standards in the regions? Jim – there is consistency on the whole but sometimes small variations.

Jenny: supports the idea of a National Cert Manager; the person would be more efficient as it would be a paid position.

Andy: you can have other branches looking from across other regions. Jim: charge of collusion being a problem.

Meriel: agrees with charge of collusion being a problem. Important to separate the certification process from individual farms. It is clear from MPI that if we are going to end up with a PGS scheme, we need to be absolutely consistent across the board.

Alice: what would the differences be for the growers if we did go to a national CM? What about the regional CM's paid positions? How are they compensated for if this national role does go ahead? Would they be offered redundancy packages?

John P: Note the CM does not make the decisions; the cert committee does.

Korby: Strongly in favour. The hours do add up and so thinks it would be more efficient. We could be seen to be getting too comfortable in how we view a group of properties and the idea of a National Cert Manager would concentrate on the paperwork and would be a little more dispassionate than a regional CM.

Philippa: has anyone looked at any other models overseas for comparable models?

Betsy: – in favour at arm's length. It seems like a lot of work.

Barbara: We must be careful that the committee meets once or twice a month. Each region has a particular time of doing this. It may not be eight hours a week – it may be two hours a month.

## **2) How do we bring individual members into the PGS (group) model?**

Chris: First topic highlighted the importance of consistency. We have peer review around pods and individuals currently. The two are not complementary. MPI sees inconsistencies as weaknesses. So how do we harmonise the two systems which are currently running parallel? We don't have to be stuck with one or the other, but we do have to embrace the principles of a PGS, and that whatever we choose is consistent with this.

The thinking we have touched on so far is rather than use this term POD, MPI have been using the term 'group'. We can use the wording 'group' as it is better understood terminology. A group system recognises people do live remotely. There is the opportunity to use electronics like Zoom. We have the opportunity to think more creatively on who the peers are who will visit the farms. If we embrace community supported agriculture, there are ways of engaging consumers, retailers etc.

Once our people start developing their thinking around this, we can start to develop a system. Today is about igniting the idea and figuring out how we do this. (Part of the learning process). The process is also part of the trust building process – how do we do this with the more remote farms and the current learning process? How do we approach this using all our powers to getting the individual growers into the peer review process – to be more cohesive but not forcefully? To embrace the PGS guidelines.

There is also slight concern about the scenario under the regulated regime in that if we are to be accredited as an agency, we may have difficulty providing certification for members if we do not have the ISO accreditation which is very expensive.

Rory: if one person is auditing another, then under an ISO system the auditor has proper training in how to not blur the lines and they are taught various techniques to stay at arm's length and to ask the tricky questions. That is what third party verification is all about. We would need our auditors trained in those skills if we did go down this road, which is very expensive.

Jenny Lux: Auditor training in a future regime – we should not jump to too many conclusions. Govt is aiming for MPI accreditation of recognised agencies, and there may be a scheme to apply for money to be recognised for training of auditors. Nothing in the documents say that we must be ISO accredited. This may be jumping the gun a bit.

Meriel: likes the idea of local communities coming in but they have to be familiar with all processes etc otherwise it isn't really a peer review system.

Chris: his experience with PGS – they were schooled in the standards and leading the groups themselves. Knowledge of standards etc are integral to PMP. How do we have one model to operate from if we are required to have this?

Valda: can see strengths in this centralised system

Barbara: there may be issues on how we are viewed internationally. If the trading partners see our system as not matching their systems in both domestic and export systems. They want to see this parallel.

Jim: We did learn in the recent MPI meetings that they have expressed that one of their perspectives is their international trading partners want to see the total organics package is similar to the countries they trade from – both domestic and export.

Jenny: – we can't assume anything as we haven't been consulted with the regulations.

Rory – although we don't know what is in the pipeline, we do need to prepare ourselves for all eventualities and not be taken by surprise.

Chris – how do we harmonise the two systems -individuals and pods? To harmonise the two to make integration simpler?

### **3) How can we improve our certification processes through electronic technology?**

Rory: issues in physical distances from each other in pods, and like-mindedness of producers – e.g. nuts vs dairy. You can electronically link into each other understanding the reviews of the others. There are systems such as Zoom and Lumeo and other technologies that allow collaborating, decision making etc.

Barbara - The database should be set up nationally and be more online than paper based.

Jenny: Agree with Barbara. An online PMP backed by database so no copies on Word files. Can apply for funding to get help for this. It is costly but will be efficient for our QMS. We need significant IT advice put into this.

Alice – agrees the electronic system would be great

Meriel: have to be mindful of members' technology – both hardware and software and abilities. We need to be aware that the more technology we get into the more issues the producers are going to come up against.

Peter: – very valid way to do a peer review if you had the technological ability. Wi-Fi etc is required. Hotspot etc may not work everywhere.

Rory: database would be a start. Regions aligned to support a national technology direction which then makes it more feasible for MPI to look at with cohesion.

Duncan: agrees technology side of things.

### **4) What should be the role of regional committees in the future?**

Bridget: how do we plan on attracting younger people moving into organisation? How do you promote younger people coming in? Otago has been putting a lot of effort into this as are other regions.

Barbara: is in a growing area. We hold outings and events to tap into local groups and encourage them to come out and join in. Living near cities helps but we all live near to a city of some kind. Regional concentration helps. National Organic week activities are popular.

Dennis – Otago faced with problem in regard to growing membership regardless of effort put into activities etc. They have trouble getting people along and are unsure why.

John Clarke – field days do bring people in, but they are home gardeners who want to learn but not so much commercial growers who wish to be certified.

Meriel – struggles with membership and misses the field days they used to hold.

Barbara – the SWNI communicate with other groups Tree Croppers, BioDynamic, Permaculture etc and are holding field days together. Get new members this way.

Chris: is question of regional groups to make them stronger? Where are the strengths and weaknesses of the different regions?

John – what is the role of the regional committees if there is a national cert manager?

Rory – how do regions feel if National Office provided them with marketing material?

## 5) What should be the role of the NCC and how should it be elected?

Jim: How do we rejuvenate NCC and get new people coming on?

We have a Facebook page which is used minimally.

We have seconded people on to NCC with skills required at the time.

Another issue raised is the imbalance in the membership size in regions. How should we ensure there is equality of membership representation on the NCC?

There are suggestions of a couple of different ways in which NCC could be elected.

Presently an NCC member is elected by each region. Sometimes it is a struggle to find someone to fulfill this role. The role is important to maintain the line of communication with members.

Possible options are:

- Retain the existing system of electing Committee members by each region.
- Have NCC elected totally nationwide by members nationwide. What would be the consequences? Every two years the people elected would stand down and need to be re-elected. It would be arranged that half the Committee was elected each year.
- Marry the two paths – Continue to elect regional representatives but also have small additional number elected by the membership “at large”.

The options involving change would require altering the constitution.

If we were to opt for a solution which added to the existing reps, it would increase the size of the NCC. Does it make it unwieldy?

With a larger Committee, an idea would be to have a management committee of 5 or 6 people which would meet regularly. The management committee would report to NCC and decisions would be made in consultation with NCC.

Where does the idea of a national ballot versus a regional ballot lie?

Dennis: Happy with regional representation but could also be married with any additional process.

Meriel: Concerned to lose regional representation as it would be less of a reason for regions to exist. If we didn't have a certification role also then what would be the purpose for the regions to exist? Reluctant to take the role of elected NCC away from regions.

Rory: Has concerns that there is a large amount of work which a couple of people are doing, and it is not fair. This means there is little governance being done by NCC. There should be a governance organisation (could be from external bodies with expertise) and this governance should be separated from the operational role. There are few NFP's in NZ that are experiencing the same issues. A few dedicated carrying all the weight. There needs to be some way of getting the regions involved and to shoulder some of the burden. Remuneration, working groups, whatever it needs under the guidance of a governance body which is not only NCC people but experts in fields which we require.

Meriel: opposed to bringing outside people in for governance purposes. Ok to be for operational reasons but not for governance. Governance is for NCC to do not for external parties.

Bridget: having worked with Betsy it is a continual larger job going on for only CM remuneration. She is finding while doing audits that the PGS approach seems to be forgotten. They see the CM as OFNZ and not as part of a participatory group scheme. Members are divided a bit between pods and individuals also.

John P: Have we got too many regions? We have one with no members and many with less than 10. There needs to be a critical mass to be effective otherwise there are a lot of tasks falling to a few people. Could amalgamate regions to be big enough to be effective.

Rory: doesn't agree. We have split regions up already to make more representation from the regions.

Jim: Representing community interests regionally definitely works. It is geographical placement which enables communities to be together and support each other in their local area. Yes there needs to be a critical mass. If not, then we may need to look at amalgamation, but our expectation is to grow the membership. Let's look to the way in which things will change. We are entering a new era where we will get increases in membership again.

Rory: Is it right to have so many people like Jim in the organisation or should we have more participation as a participatory group scheme.

Jim: Part of the low cost certification is members participating so we need to remind people of that. We want to retain the volunteer component and bring people on board to contribute with time and skills.

Forum discussion ended: 5.15pm