

Auditor Training Guide

Auditor Training to Cover

1. **Introduction to OrganicFarmNZ** – including organisation structure, certification diagram/process, and key differences between OrganicFarmNZ and other certification bodies
2. **Auditor Job Description** – purpose, role, skills, requirements (N.B. It has been suggested this needs to be developed, perhaps using the OFNZ Auditor Accreditation Checklist.)
3. **Auditor Contract** – generic (It has been suggested this needs to be developed)
4. **Property Management Plans** – ins and outs, guidelines for reading papers
The Pod Peer Review – how it works
The role of the Certification Manager (and relationship with Auditor)
The Certification Committee (and relationship with Auditor)
5. **Auditor Paperwork Explained** – Auditing an Individual, Auditing a Pod
6. **Powers and Limits** – the ethics of Auditing and code of conduct
7. **The Physical Audit** – advice, insights, do's & don'ts: General Advice, Specific Issues, Corrective Actions/Flags, Testing, Restricted Inputs

The Role of Auditor

The primary role and responsibility of Auditor is to ensure that the Grower/Producer is continuing to comply with the Production Standards and Regional Guidelines.

The chief role of the Auditor for the pods is simply to oversee the peer review process.

The auditor is to highlight any areas where this is not occurring and report this to the Regional Certification Committee.

The position the Auditor takes must be unbiased and neutral and be able to be backed by Organic farm NZ standards.

The Auditor must be able to express themselves well in English.

Experience in organic growing is very desirable, as is practicality.

A good grounding in biological and agricultural science coupled with knowledge of ecological principles an advantage but not a requirement if the person is practical in nature.

The Process

At the commencement of each new round of certification, the Certification Manager (CM) will issue documentation to Pod and Individual Members.

Pod leaders will see that all pod members complete their Management Plans and arrange and conduct pod peer reviews at the completion of which, the pod leader will collate and return all documentation to the CM.

Individual growers will complete and return their documentation directly to the CM.

Upon receipt of documents the CM will review them, insert them into the particular growers' file, complete the CM template and forward all the files of all the pod members to the Auditor.

Any particular areas of note or concern are highlighted via the CM template. The CM will often speak directly with the Auditor to pass on concerns or views (Flags) and may ask the Auditor to pay particular attention to any area for any grower.

The Paper Audit

Upon receipt of the files the Auditor will thoroughly review the current year's documentation (referring at times to the previous years contained in the file), making notes of any instances where the grower deviates from the Standards, where information given is not sufficiently clear, or where items are not fully explained.

The auditor may at this point contact firstly the CM for clarification, or the grower directly for explanation, or to request further documents, or to explore the grower's knowledge of and/or interpretation of any particular item, question or clause pertaining to the Standards.

A. Pods

The Auditor will complete the form – 'Auditors Checklist-Pods' for each pod member, noting any areas of non-compliance and making comments and recommendations as deemed necessary.

CARs may be ordered at this point.

The Auditor will recommend a certification level on the form.

B. Individual Growers

For individual growers the Audit is essentially split into two parts, the paper audit and the property inspection.

The Auditor will use the form – 'Auditors Checklist-Individual Audit', completing those sections of this checklist that apply to the actual documentation. The remainder of this checklist is completed at the actual property inspection.

The Property Inspection

The property inspection is essentially a direct test and observation to confirm that the grower is complying with the Standards. It is most useful in that the Auditor interacts directly with the grower. The Auditor will contact the grower (be it an individual audit or a designated pod member audit) to arrange a suitable date and time to conduct the inspection.

- It is important to identify inconsistencies between documentation supplied and observations on site.
- It is important to conduct the audit in a positive manner, using good communication skills. This does not go as far as giving advice. Examples can be given of other methods employed
- The producer should be able to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the Standards.
- The producer should have good grounding in the philosophy of organics. However this can be observed over a period, especially as new members slowly develop that understanding.

A. Pods

The principal task is to audit the Peer Review process. This can be done by simultaneously going through the Management Plan and Peer Review Form of a property.

In any pod, 25% of members should be subject to a property inspection in each round. This selection rotates through the pod to ensure that each grower undergoes a property inspection prior to attaining Full Certification. The Auditor decides which property is to be inspected after doing the paperwork.

B. Individual Growers

By definition, an individual grower (i.e., a grower who is not a member of a pod) will be subject to a comprehensive property inspection each year by the Auditor.

C. The Inspection

When conducting a property inspection, the Auditor should decide the flow and direction of the inspection.

Growers, particularly new growers, are often understandably nervous, so a friendly manner will help to put them at their ease. A relaxed grower is apt to be more forthcoming and communicative.

Here the audit is the equivalent of the Peer Review process.

All receipts and declarations for inputs, and all tests should be sited at this point.

It is important that the Auditor not be side-tracked into giving advice, or by the grower going off on a tangent.

The visit must be professional. This includes arriving promptly and keeping the visit to a reasonable length.

Running through the paper audit will probably have brought up a few items for clarification. These items should be resolved during the course of the inspection.

The Auditor's Checklist is a useful guide through the process. Each question in each section must be marked, comments being made as necessary. If not fully satisfied with the response from the grower, the Auditor should keep probing until satisfied that the question is resolved. If resolution is not reached then this fact should be reflected in comments and the report to the Certification Committee.

Comments are of course of benefit to the grower, who will get a copy of the checklist at the end of the certification process.

Comments are most important to the members of the Certification Committee whose deliberations will ultimately decide on the growers' certification status. The inspection of the property is essentially the eyes and ears of this committee.

Thoroughness is essential.

Recommendations cannot be enforced, but CARs must be, and should be followed up by the Auditor or the CM.

Reporting

At the completion of the audit, all documentation and checklists should be reviewed to ensure that there are no discrepancies or omissions.

In conjunction with the checklists, a short report must be written to the Committee.

Such things as the thoroughness of the peer review, record keeping regimes, understanding of the Standards, whether previous year's CARs have been discharged should be commented on.

Any items that the Committee should note or, take into consideration, or discuss should be highlighted.

At the conclusion, all files, documents, checklists and reports must go back to the Certification Manager.

When the Certification Committee meets to go over the year's paperwork, the Auditor should be present or available by phone to answer any questions or to clarify any points.

Glossary

Audit: A thorough, detailed check of work carried out by during the peer review.

Inspection: A visit to a property during which, by an observant tour of the site with the grower and site manager/s are in attendance, it is ascertained how the various processes and precautions pertaining to organic agricultural production have been carried out.

Certification: The endorsement of a grower, their property and product as meeting the requirements of the organic standards. A certificate proving this.

Standards: The current organic production standards and operational procedures employed by the regional authority under Organic Farm NZ.

Grower: A grower/producer and or their respective partner. The names appearing on the certificate.

CAR: Corrective Action Request. These are actions required of the, producer, to remedy any violation of the Standards that are sited. A due by date is always given.

Recommendation: A suggestion that need not necessarily be enforced.

Flag: An item that the CM (and /or the peer reviewers) wish to highlight for attention by the Auditor in the producer's paperwork.