

OrganicFarmNZ



Certification Manager Manual

“The job is fairly simple – just a lot of paperwork.”

This Manual should be used in conjunction with a current set of the OrganicFarmNZ Production Standards, Compliance Procedures and Documentation.

Throughout the Manual the following abbreviations are used:

CAR	Corrective Action Request
CC	Certification Committee
CM	Certification Manager
NCC	OFNZ National Coordinating Committee
NO	OFNZ National Office
OFNZ	OrganicFarmNZ
PMP	Property Management Plan
Pod	A group of 3-5 Producers
RB	Regional Body
RBMC	Regional Body Management Committee

In order to facilitate the sharing of information and the discussion of problems and ideas an email loop for Certification Managers has been set up. To gain access to it, contact the National Office.

This Manual is designed to be a living document and will be updated as OrganicFarmNZ develops further.

Where there may be an appearance of conflict with the advice given in this Manual, the OrganicFarmNZ Compliances, Operational Guidelines and Production Standards over-rule.

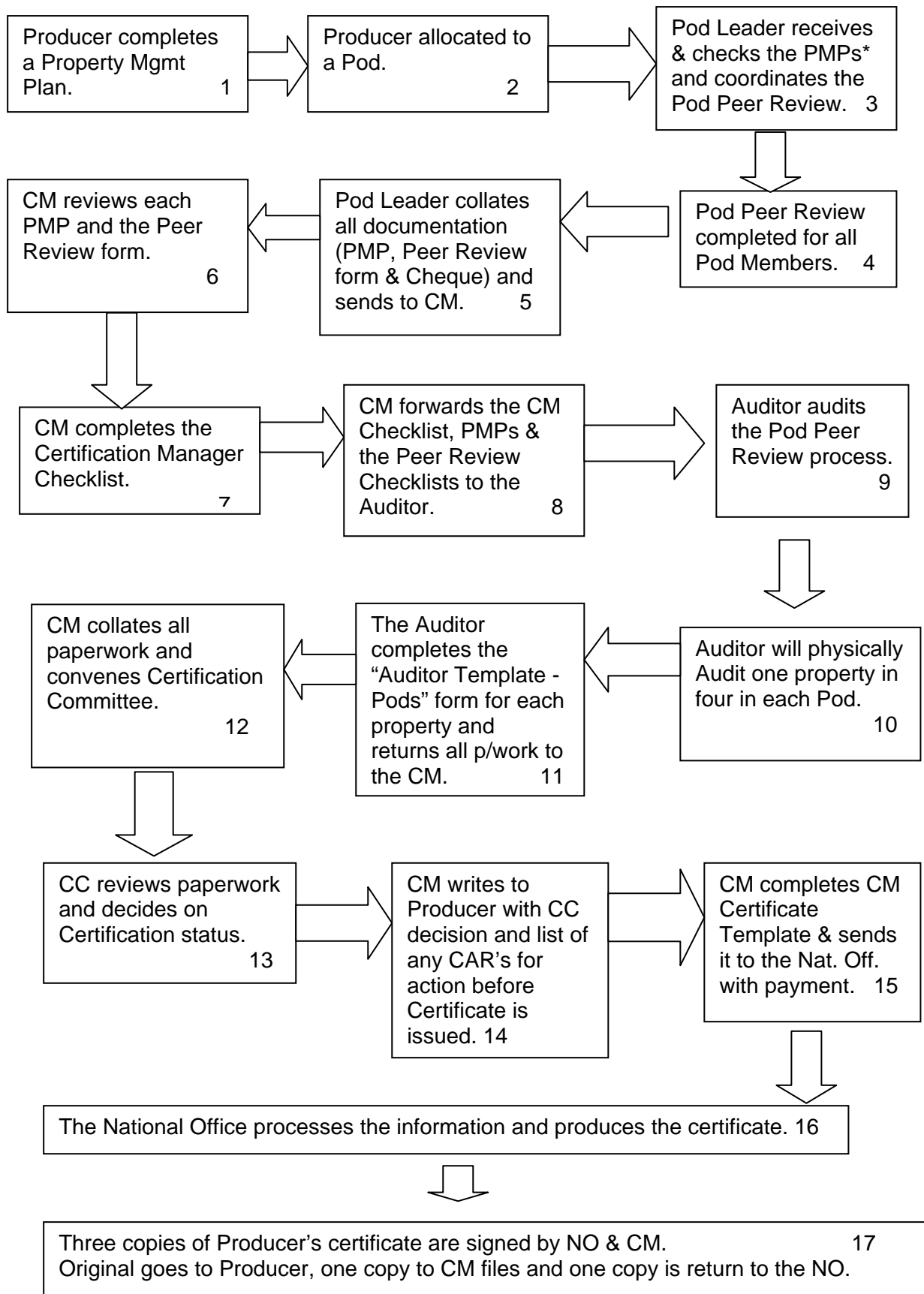
Useful web addresses for Certification Managers

OrganicFarmNZ web site	www.organicfarm.org.nz
Soil & Health Association of NZ	www.organicnz.org
Certification Manager Yahoo Group Email	ofnz-cm@yahoogroups.com
BioGro	www.biogro.co.nz
MAF Organic Standards	www.nzfsa.govt.nz/organics/framework/ooap-rules.pdf
Hill Laboratories (for Soil Tests)	www.hill-labs.co.nz
Email OrganicFarmNZ National Office	manager@organicnz.org

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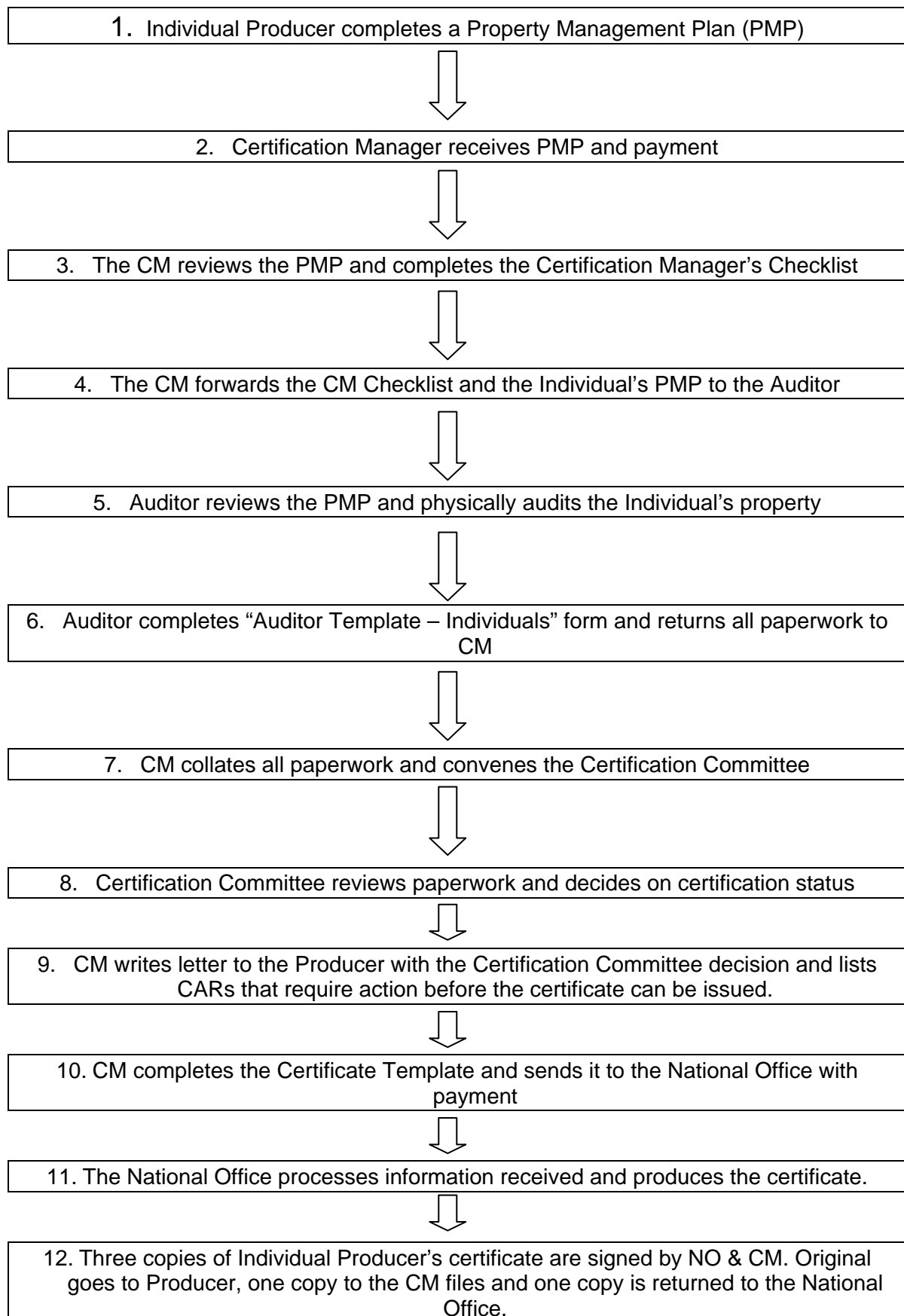
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The Certification Process – For Pods



- - the CM may have a role in this stage

The Certification Process – For Individuals



Certification Manager Job Description

General guidelines

1. **The position of Certification Manager (CM) is central to the processes involved in the delivery of OrganicFarmNZ certification.**
2. All the paperwork for a Producer passes through the hands of the CM.
3. The CM is responsible for the maintenance of the completed records for each grower. These records are confidential and should be kept in a secure place.
4. The CM works from basic principles and needs to keep things as simple as possible.
5. The Regional Body Management Committee (RBMC) appoints the CM.
6. It is envisaged that the position should at least in part be a paid post.
7. In order to understand where the CM fits into the process please review the flow chart of the Certification process.

Skills required by the Certification Manager

1. Have a good working knowledge of the Production Standards, Compliance Procedures and Documentation.
2. Exhibit an attention to detail.
3. A tolerance of paperwork.
4. Have commonsense and the ability to use logic to find answers.
5. Have a computer and access to the internet.
6. Basic Computer skills i.e. ability to type, use email, MS Word, use the internet.
7. Be efficient.
8. Space to store the paperwork generated by the position.

Key responsibilities of the Certification Manager

1. Co-ordination of Certification Committee.
2. Allocate members to Pods and manage Pod related issues such as Members changing Pods. (This responsibility may be delegated.)
3. Management of the certification process to enable the Producer's certificate to be issued.
4. Response to queries re Derogations, Restricted Inputs, Prohibited Inputs etc.
5. Appoint and assign Auditors.
6. Screen all Auditor's reports.
7. Hold each Producer's paperwork for one year after which it is returned to the Producer who is required to hold for a further five years.

Guidelines for Property Management Plan

This page has been removed and a separate, expanded version has been created, available from the OFNZ website.

The new version is intended to help the new OFNZ applicant find an explanation of the relevant requirements in the Compliance Procedures so that their PMP document is complete and accurate.

Pods

For definitions of a Pod and its purpose see the OrganicFarmNZ Operational Guidelines.

1. The allocation of Producers around the Pods has to be worked through with the RBMC. Each Region will have its own method of allocation. The CM will be the one with their finger on the pulse of the Region and should ideally take a leading role.
2. Some people may wish to join and be certified as Individuals and not be part of a Pod Peer Review. This is perfectly acceptable. (See Individuals)
3. The theory suggests that in practice the CM should not have much to do with the Pod but more with the individual Pod members and their properties. The Auditor deals more with the Pod process. In practice, some CMs take a more proactive role in fostering the Pod, including reviewing the Pods' PMPs instead of the Pod Leader.
4. New members will be allocated to a Pod on receipt of their Application Form by the CM (or in the case of Auckland Region by the Secretary).
5. The optimum size of a Pod is five. The minimum number in a Pod is three and more than five becomes cumbersome. It is ideal to complete all Peer Reviews within one day.
6. It is ideal to form Pods based on geography rather than by production type – but not essential. It can sometimes be useful to match like-production units but caution should be exercised if Producers are too alike. Good organic management is the common basis for Producers.
7. An idea. One Auckland Pod gathers a few days before their Peer Review to exchange PMPs, clarify any issues and better prepare Pod members for the property inspection. As a consequence, the property inspection is more thorough and efficient.
8. Producers should not be forced into Pods, since they have to work together and support each other.
9. As new members join there will be a natural splitting to form new Pods within the Region to maintain an optimum size.
10. The challenge when forming (or re-arranging) Pods is to get a mixture of experience within a Pod.
11. New Pods and/or new members may require some training to complete the Management Plan and/or the Peer Review for the first time. This may become an extra role for the CM or another experienced grower may be used. If this is required a charge should be levied against the individual producer or Pod for this service. This should be standard charge set by the RBMC and made clear in advance of any training.
12. Because the Auckland Region has a common Certification Date, a New Member wishing to join a Pod in the Auckland Region whose joining date (i.e. Completion and submission to Pod Leader of their Management Plan) is less than 6 months after the date of the Pod Peer Review then a Peer Review is carried out and a Certificate issued to run until the next Peer Review. If more than six months after the Pod Peer Review then the new member must wait until the next Peer Review.
13. Common sense should prevail when introducing new Producers to a Pod or moving members between Pods outside of the annual renewal date for that Pod.
14. Remember, it is better to bring people into OrganicFarmNZ certification rather than lose them because of timing issues.
15. In the Waikato Region an individual audit is done and then they join the Pod the next time round.

Individuals

1. There may be Producers who were with other bodies (i.e. BioGro) who would prefer to carry on as Individuals and not become part of a Pod.
2. Any Producer may opt to become an Individual Producer.
3. The key difference in the process for an Individual versus a Pod member is that the Peer Review is replaced by an annual property audit by an Auditor. The rest of the process is the same.
4. An Individual Producer is required to complete a PMP and have an annual property audit.
5. On receipt of the PMP the CM will review and complete the CM Checklist and forward it to the Auditor.
6. The Auditor carries out a review of the Individual PMP and property using the “Auditors Template – Individuals” form.
7. The Auditor’s recommendation is then sent to the CM who will convene a meeting of the CC to decide the level of Certification.
8. A separate scale of fees for an Individual Producer will need to be set by the RBMC as the property will require a Property Audit to be carried out each year.
9. Fees for Individuals are usually higher than for a Pod member as the cost of the Auditor is not divided between Pod members.

The Pod Leader

The Pod Leader has various responsibilities within the Peer Review Process.

1. The Pod Leader coordinates the Peer Review. This involves setting a date or dates for the Peer Review and arranging for all Pod members to attend the review on the specified date(s).
2. The role of the Pod Leader should circulate around members of the Pod on an annual basis.
3. The Pod Leader should check that the PMPs and Peer Review forms are completed correctly and signed.
4. Check that the Input Schedules are complete and correct. **(You cannot audit a person’s word - only their written word.)**
5. Declarations/Organic Status Certificates sighted and initialled on Input List as having been sighted. (Or attached to the PMP and Peer Review as required by individual Regions).
6. At the conclusion of the Pod Peer Reviews the Pod Leader forwards all documents (PMP, Peer Review Form and cheque) to the CM.

Guidelines to the Pod Peer Review

Background

- A Pod is made up of between 3-8 producers – who are either in close geographical spread and/or production type.
- The Pod Peer Review allows for all the members of the Pod to review one another and measure each other against a set of organic production standards i.e. they check you out and you check them out.
- The Pod Peer Review is designed to support and educate Producers in their organic production. It is not intended to be threatening but rather a learning experience for all the participants.
- An external/independent Auditor will then review the Pod Peer Review to ensure that the process (the Peer Review and paperwork) was followed correctly. The Auditor must physically audit one property in every four per year.

Key steps in the Pod Peer Review

1. Pod members complete their Property Management Plans (PMP) for their own property.
2. A copy of the PMP is sent to the Pod Leader.
3. The Pod Leader checks the PMP of all Pod Members to ensure that it is completed correctly and that ALL boxes have a response recorded and the necessary records are attached.
4. The Pod Leader then circulates a copy of each PMP to each member of the Pod.
5. The Pod Leader coordinates with the members of the Pod an appropriate time for the Pod Peer Review.
6. The Pod Peer Review is carried out on ALL properties of Pod members – with ALL members of the Pod attending.
7. The Pod Peer Review Checklist (PPRC) is completed for each property – a copy of which is provided to the property owner.
8. Once all Pod Peer Reviews have been completed – the Pod Leader sends the (original) PMP and PPRC for each Pod Member – to the Certification Manager (CM) of the Regional Body.

Corrective Actions

- At the conclusion of the Pod Peer Review, corrective actions (CAs) or corrective action requests (CARs) may be recorded on your Pod Peer Review Checklist (PPRC).
- A CA occurs where the property is failing (in part or on whole) with a certain requirement of the OFNZ Organic Production Standards ('the Standards').
- CAs may vary in number and severity. A severe CA may result in a CAR – a 'corrective action request' requiring immediate action – before a certificate can be issued.
- A date will be recorded against all CARs. Some will only require corrective action before the property is next reviewed. Others will require immediate action if the property is to be considered for certification.
- All CAs listed must be based strictly on, and referenced to, the OFNZ Organic Production Standards.
- Depending on the severity, number and response to a CA – this may impact on the certification status of the property. Certification status may remain the same, regress or potentially be downgraded to C0.
- Examples of CAs include: poor paperwork, poor records, non-permitted use of a restricted input, use of 'non-certified' inputs, lack of quarantine facilities etc.

Pod Peer Review Process

1. For each property, one member of the Pod will be responsible for leading the review and completing the PPRC.
 - a. The written responses should reflect the group's decisions – not necessarily those of the Reviewer.
 - b. The task of Peer Reviewer should rotate around the group.
 - c. A Pod Member cannot complete the PPRC for his or her own property.
2. The reviewer should have:
 - a. A copy of the PMP for the property under review
 - b. A copy of the OrganicFarmNZ Production Standards, Operational Guidelines and Compliance Procedures.
 - c. A Pod Peer Review Checklist.
3. ALL members of a Pod must be present at ALL Peer Reviews of other Pod Members' properties.
 - a. The absence of any Pod Member from the Peer Review process is deemed a non-compliance for that Pod Member. A non-compliance means the Member will not be able to progress their certification status and may even see it regress.
 - b. In exceptional circumstances a waiver may be granted; this waiver must be requested in writing and recorded and approved by the CM.
4. All PMPs must be available for all Pod Members prior to the inspection. No PMP – no inspection.
5. Ensure the correct documentation is being used. To check go to: www.organicfarm.org.nz
6. It is important that Pod Members should remain focused on interpreting the management activities of each property as they compare to the OrganicFarmNZ Production Standards.
 - a. A non-hierarchical approach is essential for the well-being of this process.
 - b. The Pod should be careful not to be distracted by an enthusiastic property owner.
 - c. The Pod Peer Review IS NOT a 'property tour'.
 - d. The Pod Peer Review IS a review of the property's management – lead by a nominated Peer Reviewer.
 - e. The Pod should be careful not to be distracted by an individual with strong opinions or view on particular aspects of what constitutes organic production. The Pod can only assess the status of the property against the current OrganicFarmNZ Production Standards.
 - f. Some individuals, who have been 'uncertified organic' for years, may be defensive when coming under review against a set of Production Standards.
7. The process for suggesting changes to the OrganicFarmNZ Production Standards is via the Regional Body – who are linked with the National Body – who oversee and review the Standards and Compliances.
8. Clear writing is most important. Ask someone else to complete the Checklist if you have illegible handwriting.
9. Please avoid using "N/A" (not applicable) as usually the answer requires a Yes or No answer. If "N/A" is used, please give comments as to why.
10. Comments on the PPRC are very useful. Give brief details where there is room, as this makes it easier for the Certification Committee and the Auditor to understand the property.
11. All members of the Pod present at the Peer Review have to sign the PPRC to confirm their presence at the audit.
12. The Pod Leader must sign the PPRC at the Peer Review to confirm the presence of the Pod Members.
13. After the Checklist is completed, remove a copy of the PPRC Recommendation Form and hand it to the property owner.
14. The Pod Leader should take a note of all Corrective Actions for all Pod members, to follow up for immediate attention or for the following year.
15. The Pod Leader collects the completed PPRCs and PMPs and forwards them, together with the Members' fees, to the Regional Body.

Confidentiality – All Information gathered during the Pod Peer Review must not be talked about or written about in any way other than when part of the certification process for the property and owners concerned.

The Peer Review Process

The key purpose of the Peer Review is to act as the “eyes” of the Auditor.

1. Where possible the Pod Peer Review process should be completed within one day. This helps with continuity, reduces time demands and ensures the Pod remains focussed on the key role of the Peer Review (as opposed to being distracted by growing techniques.)
2. The initial Peer Review of a new Producer should take approximately 2 hours but with experience this can be reduced as the conversion years progress.
3. It is the goal of the Pod Review to pick up on any problems, followed by the CM. By the time the audit is carried out most problems should have been highlighted.

Peer Review Form & Property Management Plans – Points to Note

1. Incomplete Answers. As much information as possible must be included on these forms. More information is better than less.
2. Relevant comment is very useful to build up a “picture” of the property.
3. Any livestock on the Property, whether or not they are included for certification, is still livestock. This includes chickens. Remember that their activities will have an effect on the soil.
4. Maps and Plans are important and must be accurate. If the property is complicated more than one map may be needed to record all the information that the CM and Auditor may need.
5. Property location maps are important and should be detailed enough to allow others to find the property easily.
6. The Peer Review should question and understand where the property’s boundaries are in order to understand potential contamination risks. This is a common fault of the Peer Review.
7. The Pod must know what the neighbours are doing.
8. Letters to the neighbours are important so that they are informed of the property’s organic status.
9. Lack of signatures in the relevant places. The Property Management Plan and Peer Review require a number of Signatures from the Reviewer, Pod Leader, Pod Members as well as Producer. This is a common fault amongst Producers and the Peer Review.
10. Paperwork incomplete – Have all the various copies of suppliers certificates and declarations been attached? (**You cannot audit a person’s word - only their written word.**)
11. Do the maps properly define those areas covered by certification? This is of particularly concern if not all the property is being certified i.e. Partial Certification.
12. The curtilage is the area around buildings which is not covered by certification for example house, drive and garage. These areas need to be physically defined by fencing or kerbing etc. A lack of understanding of this issue is a common problem.
13. Is there a quarantine area and is it properly defined on the property map? Another common fault with many Producers.
14. The quarantine area needs to be properly fenced. Temporary electric fencing is not permissible.
15. The quarantine area is a designated area where any treated stock and any incoming conventional stock can be run for the duration of the required quarantine period. When 12 months has elapsed since the last use of the quarantine area for quarantining, the area regains the Certification status of the lowest certification status land on the property.
16. Contractor’s Declarations. These are required by Producers to ensure that agriculture contractors are not inadvertently contaminating their properties. It may be easier for the

Producer to write the declaration themselves and get the contractor to sign it. (**You cannot audit a person's word - only their written word.**)

17. Has the Producer retained their copy of the CARs by the Pod and/or Auditor. Or was it still attached to the PMP? Remember that one copy of the CARs has to be signed by the Producer and held by them for reference.
18. It is important that the CM keeps track of CARs and checks that they have been signed off from the previous year. Signing off means that they have been actioned /corrected or the necessary information has been provided.
19. Input Lists – Check that everything coming on to the property for use on the Certified area is listed and that they are correct, not Prohibited or Restricted. (**You cannot audit a person's word - only their written word.**)
20. Paperwork/Certificates from suppliers. The Pod should go through them at the time of the Peer Review and the Pod Reviewer/Leader can initial as sighted. This can be a tedious job if there are multiple inputs but it is important. This is a very common CAR.
21. It is up to the Producer to ensure that the inputs are certified. Getting a copy of the certificate from the supplier by fax or post best does this.
22. Does the supplier's certificate match the product? Some suppliers do not certify all their products and some products may be similar.

Certification Manager Checklist Form

1. Upon receipt of the Pod paperwork the CM carries out a review of each property using the Certification Manager Checklist form.
2. By completing this form as fully as possible the CM provides the Auditor with a lot of the detail needed for an informed decision.
3. The CM does not need to know each property intimately though in the course of things they will get to know the property and meet people.

Points to note for the CM Property Review / Flags

1. Read all the documentation and check carefully for any omissions e.g. incomplete maps, forms not signed or dated, questions not answered, not fully answered, or incorrectly answered etc.
2. The contents of the Property Management Plan should be studied in line with the Standards and Compliance procedures to get a feel for the property.
3. All the products that the Producer's wants to appear on the certificate must be listed on the CM Checklist.
4. CARs need listing. A CAR is a Corrective Action that needs implementing when a Producer is doing something wrong or a practice needs correcting.
5. List any Flags. A Flag is something noted by the Peer Review or CM that requires clarification or needs to be brought to the attention of the CM, Auditor or CC.
6. Review the previous year's CAR list (if applicable) and confirm that these have been signed off as completed within the time frame set.
7. Any derogation that has been granted by the CM during the year must be included with PMP.
8. Where there is confusion or uncertainty (from the Producer or the CM) over a derogation / compliance / Standards – commonsense must prevail. Seek advice. Follow a path.
 - Contact Pod Leader or property owner for clarification.
 - Go to the Standards, these are available on the net.
 - Speak to the Auditor and / or flag it for the Auditor to consider.
 - Use CM email loop for advice.
9. **Remember that this process may not lead to the answer that the Producer may want to hear. Most problems / challenges are surmountable.**
10. Any questionable issues and items of interest or concern should be noted on the CM Checklist to bring to the Auditors attention.
11. Any missing documentation should be dealt with and Producers should be contacted directly at this point to clarify any queries.

Derogations

- A Derogation is permission granted to a Producer by their Regional Body (namely the CM) to be excluded from the need to comply with normal requirements of the Standards.
- Derogations are granted on the basis of clear criteria, with clear justification and for a limited time period only.

Certification Manager Checklist

The Certification manager Checklist is now a separate document and is available from the OFNZ National Office. This checklist is to be completed for each Producer once documentation is received. A copy is provided to the Auditor.

The Auditor

The key purpose of the Auditor's work is to review the Pod Peer Review.

1. On completion of the CM review an Auditor is appointed.
2. THE ROLE OF THE AUDITOR IS TO AUDIT THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS.
3. THE PEER REVIEW AUDITS THE PROPERTY, PERSON AND PRODUCT.
4. The focus of the audit is on the capacity of the Pod members to accurately assess the organic status of the properties in their Pod.
5. For Individuals' properties the Auditor will audit the whole property and the PMP.
6. The Auditor may (and has the right to) require an individual to carry out chemical residue tests on soil and or plants before a certificate can be issued.
7. The audit process may be supported by spot checks by the Auditor on various properties from time to time.
8. In addition to a review of the paperwork, 1 in 4 properties or 2 in 5 will be physically audited annually. At least one property audit must be done per pod per year.
9. The CM has the responsibility to contract the Auditor on behalf of the RBMC. A contract template is currently under development. The process of accrediting Auditors is also being considered.
10. It is the Auditor's decision on which property is to be audited. All properties must be audited at least once every 3 or 4 year. This will ensure a Producer is physically audited prior to becoming fully certified.

The Audit Process

1. The Auditor receives the relevant documentation (CM Checklist, Peer Review form, PMPs and any extra documentation) from the CM.
2. The Auditor reviews all PMPs and respective Peer Review forms to ensure that the Pod understands the rules and completes the "Auditor Template – Pods" form for each property.
3. The Auditor chooses 1 in 4 properties to physically audit. Each property is audited at least every four years.
4. The Auditor contacts either the Pod Leader or Producer directly to arrange the property audit within that Pod.
5. The goal is for the Pod first to pick up on any problems, then the CM. By the time of the Audit most problems should have been highlighted.
6. A copy of any individual audit should be left with the Producer of each property visited.
7. If the Auditor has concerns about a Pods performance, this should be highlighted to the CM. Remedial action should be taken to better train the Pod. This may include moving a more experienced Producer into the Pod.
8. If there are concerns with how the Pod is carrying out its peer reviews – it may be useful to have the other Pod members present at the audit to help train them. Generally it should be a one-on-one audit with the property owner/producer.
9. The Auditor returns all paperwork to the CM.

The Certification Committee

1. The Certification Committee (CC) is appointed by the Regional Body Management Committee (RBMC) and is there to assist the CM.
2. The CC consists of the CM and at least TWO other persons appointed by the RBMC.
3. These persons may or may not be members of the RB. If conflicts of interest arise they should excuse themselves from any relevant discussion.
4. The first criterion for their appointment is that they have the ability to understand the Production Standards and Compliances and apply the certification process.
5. The CC should meet in person. Discussions may vary in length depending on the frequency of meetings.
6. The Auditor may attend the CC meeting. This is not essential but may help the CC gain a better understanding.

Certification Committee Responsibility

The key responsibility of the Certification Committee is to determine a Producer's Certification status.

1. Review the Auditor Report, the CM Report and the Peer Review recommendations and decide the Certification Status for each Producer.
2. Any points raised by the Auditor, CM or Peer Review in the form of flags, CARs or comments should be discussed and any CARs should be passed on to the Producer at the time of issuing the Certificate in the form of a letter from the CM.
3. Advice may also be given to Producers arising from points noted in the various reports.
4. In rare situations, should the CC be unable to reach agreement the paperwork should be sent to NO for arbitration.
5. The Regional Body should pass on any concerns or disagreements about the Production Standards, Compliances, or Operational Guidelines that arise through the course of the certification process to the NO for consideration on a national level.
6. The Certification Committee does not have to follow the Auditor and/or the CM and/or Pod recommendations. Clearly any decision reached should not be arbitrary and should be backed by reason.

Certification Status

1. By default, OrganicFarmNZ certification for primary producers usually takes a minimum of 36 months to become fully certified.
2. By default, all new members should commence their certification at **C0**. There are exceptions to this rule.
3. Certification is not automatic simply because fees have been paid and the certification process is completed. Applicants must demonstrate the implementation of a positive organic management system.
4. Progressing to the next certification status is not automatic – simply because fees and the paperwork have been completed. Serious CARs may result in the certification status remaining the same or potentially seeing the certification status reducing.
5. New members who have previously been certified by another recognised certifier (namely BioGro, AsureQuality or Demeter) may be able to transfer their certification across at the equivalent level.
6. Understanding the reasons for transferring (ie they did not break the rules with their previous certifier) and if there is a gap between their certification coverage are some points to note with those transferring certification.

7. New members who are solely processing, and therefore purchasing all of their inputs, may be able jump stages in their certification status.
8. Note – certification status is tied to both the person and property. Previous land use is only one consideration for determining certification status.
9. The person needs to be exhibiting the right attitude and understanding of the organic process. Understanding and exhibiting this attitude may take up to 3 years to develop. The purchase of an already certified property does not mean that the current status of that property will be maintained, as the new owner may have only limited knowledge of organic management.

Certification

1. Upon receipt of the Auditor's reports, the reports should be reviewed by the CM and CC and actioned as required.
2. The decision of the Certification Committee is final. This may differ from the Pods recommendation, CM recommendation or Auditor recommendation.
3. By using the CM Checklist a database for each property has essentially been completed.
4. The CM Certificate Template is sent to the National Office together with the fee for the preparation of the Producer's certificate. No fee no certificate.
5. The National Office receives and enters the Producer's details into the national database.
6. The NO completes, signs and posts to the CM three Certificates. The CM checks the details, signs and sends the original to the Producer, returns one copy to the National Office and keeps one copy for their own records.
7. Certificates run for a period of 12 months.
8. The CC sets the original certification expiry date. Dates may be set for practical reasons – to coincide with crop harvesting for example. The original date of receipt, the date of the Peer Review or audit, or a practical date for the Pod may be used as the expiry date.
9. It is preferable for all members in a Pod to have the same expiry date. This is not critical. One region has 3 different certification dates to assist in the movement of Pods. Auckland has ALL certificates expiring on the 31st of July.
10. The Certificate is then renewed annually from that date unless specifically changed by agreement of the Producer / RB / NO.
11. The Peer Review and audit can be completed several months in advance of the expiry date (and preferably not several months after!!).
12. The current certificate must be kept on file by the Producer and be available for scrutiny by persons wishing to buy product from the certificate holder.
13. Copies of the PMPs and Peer Reviews are to be kept by the Regional Body (CM) for 12 months after a Certificate is issued. After the 12-month period the PMPs are to be returned to the property owners and should be kept by the Producers for a further 5 years.

Certificate Information for National Database

This form is now a separate document, available from the OFNZ website.

1. The Cert National Database form needs to be completed and sent to the National Office, so the certification is recorded in the national database, and for certificates to be issued.
2. To receive the most up-to-date version, please request this form from National Office.

Soil Tests

The method of taking soil tests and information required from a soil test is laid down in the Compliance Procedures.

1. A soil test (including organic matter) is required in the first year together with any requested residue tests.
2. A subsequent soil test (including organic matter) is required prior to the Producer moving to full certification.
3. Some properties and/or some parts of the country are highly likely to require a multi-residue and/or DDT test while some properties/regions do not. Former conventional orchards will need residue tests. DDT was widely used in some parts of the country and not used in other parts. Care should be taken to balance consumer confidence in OrganicFarmNZ produce and loading unnecessary costs onto Producers.
4. Do not forget that the organic matter content has to be specifically asked for when soil test are carried out.
5. The Auditor and CM has the right to request either a multi-residue test, DDT or soil tests.

Off Farm Inputs and Restricted Inputs

1. A major portion of the CMs job is dealing with derogations. These can be dealt with by email. The derogation must detail usage and applies for the short term only.
2. They must always refer to the Standards and the specific clause.
3. Prohibited inputs may NOT be used on the property and their presence on the property will require a good explanation.
4. Restricted inputs may be used on the property. However they must have prior written permission from the CM before purchase and use. Every effort by the Producer should be made to limit the use of restricted inputs and alternative permitted inputs should be sourced. The CM should endeavour to encourage Producers to seek out and ask for certified organic products first before seeking a derogation E.g. Blood & Bone. Unless organic producers ask, retailers will not provide organic alternatives.
5. Permitted inputs may be used on the property and do not require prior approval.
6. Uncertified composting material must be hot composted before use.
7. If home sprays are made – whatever they are – the ingredients need to be recorded.
8. Use of conventional livestock feeds will require written approval from the CM. Declarations stating that the product is free from GM and prohibited substances should be sought.
9. Interceptor (and similar products) will require written CM approval and should not be used on production areas.
10. Wild/Natural inputs (Seaweed, sand etc) should be sourced with care. All reasonable means should be used to ensure there is no contamination. Refer to the Standards.
11. If agricultural contractors are used on the property it may be easier if the Producer writes 'clean down declaration'. The Producer must then get the Contractor to sign the declaration. Some contractors are happy to clean their equipment while others are not. Again it is important to promote this practise despite its difficulties at times.
12. Hay making. The first two conventional rectangular bales made on the property should be discarded and stated on the declaration.
13. Full information regarding Restricted Inputs can be found in Bio-Gro New Zealand Organic Standards. SECTION 3.1 - Procedures for the Evaluation of Inputs. ANNEX THREE Permitted and Restricted Materials and Practices.
14. AsureQuality and BioGro certified products are all acceptable in OrganicFarmNZ production. In saying that, restricted products (even those certified by AQ or BG) still require derogation prior to use.

General Advice

1. **Read the Standards. Got a problem – read the Standards. BTW, read the Standards.**
2. **Things may not work out.** In rare occasions some Producers, current or prospective, may simply be too difficult to accommodate in the OrganicFarmNZ certification. The Producer's needs may be too much for the CM and/or Regional Body to satisfy. In some instances this may be due to their lack of knowledge or a desire to 'bend' the rules. It may simply mean that they are better suited to another certifier – such as BioGro orASUREQuality. Alternatively, the Producer may be too disruptive to the region. These instances are rare. In these cases please contact the National Office for advice.
3. **Dealing with disputes.** In instances where matters or disputes cannot be resolved at a regional level, it may be advisable to contact the National Office for advice. Alternatively, it may be suitable to seek a decision from the Standards Sub-Committee of the NCC.
4. **Only the written word can be audited.** This is why written declarations and supporting documentation (suppliers certificates, receipts etc) are important. While it may be convenient to accept a person's assurances – this will not protect the Producer.
5. **Building trust.** It is ideal if the CM can build a trusting relationship with Producers. This will help ensure Producers seek advice from the CM before proceeding with something that may fall outside the rules.
6. **The Peer Review acts as the 'eyes' of the Auditor.** This is an important principle to understand. The Pod Peer Review should be sufficiently detailed to provide the Auditor with a "picture" of the property and to highlight any concerns.
7. **Timeframe** - the certification process should take 3 months. This provides 1 month for completion of the PMP, 1 month for the Pod Peer Review and 1 month for auditing. The CM should ensure that Producers are made aware of the timeframes that have been put in place.
8. **BioGro versus OrganicFarmNZ.** A key difference is that under the BioGro process Producers seek advice, derogations and permission from the Auditor and the National Office in the first instance. Under OrganicFarmNZ, Producers go to the CM first.
9. **Payment.** It is important for the RBMC to establish a clear process for ensuring payment is received and accounted for. Remember that if there is no payment, there is no certification.
10. **Contracting the Auditor.** A default Auditor Contract template will soon be developed by the NCC for use when contracting Auditors. It is critical for the CM and Auditor to clearly establish costs **BEFORE** the Auditor commences their work. Some regions have faced 'unexpected' bills from some Auditors when firm arrangements were not already in place.
11. Some kind of **Auditor accreditation** process will also be established by the NCC.
12. **Let commonsense guide you.** Organic certification is based on a set of principles. Work to these. Read the Standards.
13. **Common faults.** There are a handful of common areas where Producers and/or the Peer Review often get wrong. These include: ensuring the curtilage area is physically defined and recorded; ensuring property maps are accurate – especially with quarantine areas, boundaries, curtilage areas; ensuring that all the necessary signatures are signed; and ensuring that suppliers' organic certificates are received by the Producer.