



National Office
Level 5, Technology House,
86 Victoria Street

PO Box 12-021, Wellington
New Zealand

Phone 04 473 5524
e-mail: enquiries@ruralwomen.org.nz

12 March 2018

Emma Shaw,
Ministry for Primary Industries
Emma.Shaw@mpi.govt.nz
Via email

Rural Women New Zealand Organic production regulation

Introduction

Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) welcomes the opportunity to add to share our thoughts on the *Proposed changes to the way organic production is regulated*.

About Rural Women New Zealand

1. Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) is a not-for-profit, member-based organisation that reaches into all rural communities and has an authoritative voice on rural environment, health, education, technology, business and social issues. RWNZ strives to ensure that all rural residents, workers and families have equitable access to services, inequalities are addressed by Government, and the wellbeing of rural communities is considered from the beginning of all policy and legislative development.
2. RWNZ is affiliated to the Associated Country Women of the World and as such upholds all United Nations, ILO and WHO conventions and outcome statements as they relate to women and rural women in particular.
3. RWNZ has used the BioGro submission template as the basis of our submission:

Part 1: Introduction, purpose and context

1. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed scope? Are there any other products, for example aquaculture products, that should be considered? Please specify.
 - a. RWNZ agrees with the proposed scope and would like aquaculture products to be considered, particularly those food products farmed in the water and/or wild harvested.

2. To what extent do you agree with the description of the current context for organics? Please explain why.
 - a. We agree. The market information shared is accurate as far as we can ascertain.

3. To what extent do you agree with the description of the current regulatory environment for organics? Please explain why.
 - a. Agree with the current regulatory environment. The BioGro standards were heavily referenced in the development of NZ Standard 8410. Currently all BioGro licensees and all OFNZ producers certify to the BioGro standards, which began in 1983. This standard is registered with IPONZ under the BioGro Certification Seal Trademark. In this sense the use of the BioGro logo and we presume the AsureQuality certification seal are currently regulated.
 - b. To add, when a certification logo is displayed, it is a requirement for BioGro to also present the certification number of the IPONZ registered trademark licensee associated allowing for transparency.

4. Do you agree that this is a good opportunity to change the way organics are currently regulated in New Zealand? In your opinion, what needs to change? Please explain why.
 - a. This is a good way to change the way organics is currently regulated – regulations need to be fair and consistent for all organic producers. We would not like to see organic producers unfairly competing with companies that aren't necessarily selling genuine organic products. It's also confusing to consumers as to what is truly organic. Implementing and enforcing a regulation that limits these issues will help New Zealand to develop as a nation that is passionate about organic food production and create further export and trade opportunities.

5. Do you think that the appropriate objectives for a new organic regime have been identified? What would you suggest a new regime should achieve? Please explain why.
 - a. Agree with the objectives outlined for a new organic regime. A new regime should also incorporate the importance of export abilities available to those operating in the organic sector - making sure equivalencies are identified sooner rather than later. The ability of all producers being able to buy feed or seed or stock from each other lowers much of the confusion and barrier to growth in the sector.

Part 2: Options for how a new regime for organics could work

6. Do you think that a standard setting out requirements for production methods would be best suited to organic production? Please explain why.
 - a. Organic Certification requires transparency the whole way through production and supply chain, and audits are carried out to analyse every aspect of this. Because of this, a standard setting out requirements for production methods is best suited to organic production.
 - b. We think that as a signatory to Codex Alimentarius, which outlines how organic standards are to be implemented, New Zealand is obligated to take this approach.

7. Issue 1: Should a new standard be voluntary or mandatory?
 - a. Do you think that the correct options have been identified? Are there alternative option(s) that should be considered? Please describe.
 - i. There are no other alternatives we believe should be considered.

- b. Are there positive or negative impacts of any options that are not described? Please describe any impacts that we've missed.
 - i. Option 1c raises concern for the potential of increased costs due to the change in production, if current companies that are claiming organic will need to alter their practices to comply. We don't see that as a negative because regardless it means that consumers are no longer being misled to believe something that is not true - removing the organic claim would be the companies simplest option. Implementing a mandatory standard could in fact reduce current costs of certification, as the current system requires Third Party Agencies to be assessed on their ability to carry out their job by international certifiers, and this in turn means those certified may be positively affected by this.
 - c. If a standard became mandatory for all organic operators, what would be the positive and/or negative impacts on you or your business?
 - i. We are not aware of any negatives however, would want to know that any costs are not onerous to small, local organic producers.
 - d. To what extent do you support or oppose the use of a logo to help distinguish organic products from non-organic products? Please explain why.
 - i. The word organic should mean the product is certified organic. We support the use of a logo to distinguish an organic product from a non-organic product. This is a very positive branding exercise which will help consumers make informed choices for their families. Consideration could be given to the cost of some businesses who will need to change their packaging because they are currently using the BioGro logo or similar – if there was a change in logo.
8. Issue 2: How should we check that relevant businesses meet the standard?
- a. Do you think that the correct options have been identified? Are there alternative option(s) that should be considered? Please describe.
 - i. On the basis of what we know has been tried and tested overseas, the options identified are substantial enough.
 - b. Are there positive or negative impacts of any options that are not described in the above section? Please describe any impacts that we've missed.
 - i. No other positive or negative impacts of the options outlined recognised.
 - c. If ongoing verification (with limited exemptions) was used to check compliance, what would be the positive and/or negative impacts on you or your business?
 - i. We would not like to see any producer selling their products as organic without certification. Our concern is that truly small producers aren't disadvantaged, and that the system can't be abused.
 - d. If some businesses were not required to be verified on an ongoing basis, what do you think the criteria for exemption could be? For example, method of sale, annual turnover, volume sold, others...
 - i. It is viewed that a combination of the approaches outlined should be required for an exception to be made. Despite a self-determined process, it's important to ensure that a procedure is in place to assess the validity of the claims made by the businesses.

- ii. Annual total turnover, not only organic turnover should be assessed. If there are multiple companies held by a single individual this would not be allowed to have an exception.

9. Summary of Proposals

- a. To what extent do you support this combination? Please explain why.
 - i. We support this combination as a preferred method in the implementation of a National Standard. Mandatory compliance is important to ensure that we are getting the most of what a National Regulation should be - and that is transparency and clarification for the nation and for export opportunities. Ongoing verification is crucial to ensure that the quality of this precedent is always being maintained - however the limited exceptions aspect takes into consideration the smaller companies and avoids any exclusion where possible.
 - ii. We envisioned that the OFNZ style PGS system or the Demeter style audit system would be recognised as organic.
- b. What changes or impacts would this combination of options involve for you and/or your organisation?
 - i. We would not want to see any adverse impact on organic producers who are our members.
- c. What would be your preferred combination of options? This can include any listed options and any other possible option not listed.
 - i. We support that which is proposed.

Part 3: If needed, Proposed Features of Empowering Legislation

- 10. Have the powers required to implement a new regime been correctly identified? Are there any other components you think would be necessary?
 - a. An additional point to note as mentioned before is to allow for an easy process for those already certified to respected standards, what would be the proposed method of this?
 - b. We don't think that MPI needs to implement a recognised persons scheme, only a recognised agencies scheme under ISO17065 as the EU / UK certifiers use.
 - c. We feel that an expert panel made of industry representatives and recognised agencies should be funded from the fees MPI charges for exports.
 - d. We think the OOAP should remain to work on market access issues however the issuing of export verifications should be eliminated.
- 11. Do you have any comments on the range of proposed compliance and enforcement tools?
 - a. Non-compliances should to be recognised for the risk factor that would then determine what action should be taken as a result. Minor non-compliances and a first offence should not be handled the same as a major non-compliance from a repeat offender, for example. It is possible and should remain so that major repeated faults can lead to decertification of a company completely and be red flagged as so.

Part 4: Next Steps

12. What evidence should be examined to inform further analysis of this proposal?
 - a. Please benchmark accreditation costs in the EU vs New Zealand for recognised agencies of similar sizes.

We would be happy to be included in future discussions on this topic.

Yours sincerely

Penelope England
Chief Executive Officer
Rural Women New Zealand
PO Box 12-021, Wellington 6144
p 04 473 5524
e penelope.England@ruralwomen.org.nz
w www.ruralwomen.org.nz