



## BioNews

The latest news from BioGro NZ Ltd

Special 2009 Christmas Review

Email and website edition



*Season's greetings and all the best for the New Year  
from the BioGro Council, staff and auditors.*

*Thank you for your support in 2009*

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*BioGro Christmas draw*

*And the winner of the BioGro Christmas draw is...*

*John Evans, Phoenix Organics*

*who was drawn from all our current NZBPCC members*

*Congratulations*

*A pack of fine organic wine and chocolate is on its way to you  
to celebrate the festive season.*

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## **BioGro News**

### **BioGro on the Road**

**Southern Field Days**  
(Waimumu) near Gore  
10th - 12th February 2010

**Northland Field Days**  
(Dargaville)  
Cnr Awakino Point East Road & SH14  
4 - 6th March 2010

**Central Districts Field Days**  
(Feilding)  
Manfield Park  
18th -20th March 2010

PLUS

BioGro is currently exploring the option of being involved in the

**Food and Wine Show**  
Wellington Trustbank Stadium  
14th - 16th May 2010

**Expressions of interest are sought for sharing site costs**

Please contact: [eljay@biogro.co.nz](mailto:eljay@biogro.co.nz) for further info.

## CELEBRATING SUCCESS

One of our key roles is to promote organics in New Zealand and internationally, by spreading the word about the success of our licensees & members - breaking new ground, launching new brands or products, winning awards, accessing new markets, reaching significant milestones...

In recent months, we've drawn attention to successes by Mike's Organic Brewery in the brewNZ Awards, Kokako Organic in the Sustainable Business Awards (see below), booming numbers seeking organic certification, and successes by the organic pipfruit sector. The stories have been picked up by media here and overseas.

### *Congratulations to the award winners in the 2009 OANZ Organic Awards*

*All of this year's award winners are BioGro licensees.*

#### **The Jon Manhire Award: (for Outstanding Contribution to the Organic Sector)**

**James Millton**

James has been a pioneer of biodynamic winemaking in New Zealand, and was instrumental in developing organic certification standards for wine in New Zealand, in forming Organic Winegrowers New Zealand Inc, and in developing a mentoring program for new organic wine producers.

#### **ANZ Organic Producer of the Year Award:**

**Seresin Estate**

Founded by New Zealand born cinematographer, Michael Seresin, Seresin Estate's conversion to organics began before the first vintage in 1996. The estate spans 165 hectares, encompassing olive groves, gardens, pasture, livestock, orchards and native wetlands.

#### **Organics Aotearoa New Zealand Organic Enterprise Award:**

**Homeopathic Farm Support**

Founded in 1997, Waikato-based Homeopathic Farm Support helps pastoral farmers around New Zealand and overseas with certified organic products and seasonally-focused management programmes, and recently partnered with Fonterra to promote organic dairy farming.

For the first time two Judges' Commendations were also presented in the Enterprise category – to Paraoa Bakehouse (also a BioGro licensee) and Green Monkey Ltd. OANZ Chair Derek Broadmore says “both of these organizations showed high levels of innovation, enterprise and a strong commitment to organic principles in their excellent ranges of baby food and baked goods”.

## A Radical Winning Vision

*While the 2009 Manhire Award is a fitting recognition for one of the country's organic pioneers, Gisborne viticulturist James Millton refuses to accept the accolade alone.*

*And he has plans for the future that promise to make his achievements to date pale by comparison: the wholesale conversion of the nation's wine industry to BioGro certification – as the most practical business strategy for that industry.*

“I think the award is good, it is timely, it is an award that I'm happy to receive, so long as those other people who are also practitioners can be part of the reception of it as well.

“I think also that for everybody who is involved in organics and biodynamic growing, any form of recognition that can be had for all of us – singularly or jointly – should be celebrated, because we certainly have an agenda out there that has to be heard, has to be seen, has to be memorised, and has to be taught and has to be spoken to.

“That agenda is about how to deal in a responsible way with the land and with the people and with the things that we're responsible for; so that the land gets to be improved, that the people start to feel warmer in their hearts and their responsibility for the land, and just not based simply on the greed and profit that corporations and science would otherwise like it to be.

“You can't be green if you're always in the red, and therefore we're always looking with an eye to make some money, but that's not the motivation.

“Of course we have to make money to pay our bills like everybody else, but we're here to make the best show of what it is we can do.

“If consumers can appreciate what we're doing, and moreso if politicians and scientists and those people who want to steer the pathway for the future, can stop and listen to what it is we have to say, then I think that would be the best payment that we could ever have.

“The best profit that we could ever have is just to get their ear.



“If we were operating simply for profit, then let's start talking about the taxes that should be put upon those people who treat the environment in a way that's negative or backward.

“If the sole motivation is profit, if they therefore want to draw up an equation that profit incorporates the environmental impact, then we can start talking about profit.

“Both Annie and myself are not second generation, coming from another occupation trying to find the ideology; we've been doing this since we were 21 years old, and still doing it together as a married couple, as a partnership, as a belief in each other's strengths. We're doing this as a bond.

“I can't find too many people who go through life and have a desire to achieve something collectively together and continue to do so. People tend to be more transient these days.

“I think that if there’s an accolade for the John Manhire Award it’s not for me; it’s for the both of us because we try our utmost to do the best that we can.

“I’ve been growing biodynamically for more than 25 years in Poverty Bay here. I think they think I’m a local now. Mind you they still think I’m mad.

“We’ve just got a new wine out called Crazy by Nature. It says “In 1984 they thought we were crazy to do what it is that we do, where we do it and how we do it. We’ve spent the last 25 years proving that they were right. The trouble is that now everybody wants to be crazy.”

### **BioGro and Demeter**

*Millton Vineyard is both biodynamic certified, and organic certified? Why both and how do you see the two fitting together?*

“There is a growing mistrust of food products for people, and particularly with the gatekeepers of the export markets we’re associated with. It seems to me that the simplest way to get into an export market is with organic certification, because that is quantified. A lot of other certifications are all ifs and buts, albeit that they have some degree of certification.

“Going on to biodynamic certification is simply because it becomes very much encapsulated into an ideology about how the producer feels and how the consumer thinks. That is almost beyond the gatekeepers’ appreciation.

“Biodynamics is about individuality, so maybe biodynamically certified produce is not necessarily destined for export, which I think is quite an interesting point of view.

“But in my game, which is growing wine, the largest interest is in Europe, America and South America, and Australia. As a result of that we have to export it. So being Demeter certified is one thing, but to try and get it into the

particular markets is more difficult, hence the need to be organically certified.

“When the biodynamic people get their act together and Demeter can see the true meaning of the three-folding social order about how you must trade to get benefit, then we can come to the point of exporting under Demeter.

“In the meantime, I think organic is for the world; biodynamic is for the individuality.

“But biodynamics is getting such a strong vote at the moment. It’s just incredible. Every day there is someone else who is doing something biodynamically in the world.

“Organic is easier for people to come to, biodynamic is a little more challenging, from the consumer’s point of view but also from the practitioner’s point of view.

“I see it as a transition from conventional thinking into sustainable thinking and going onwards into organic, and further onwards into biodynamic. Conventional thinking is about profit. Organic thinking is about enthusiasm. Biodynamic thinking is about intention. That’s the basis of it.

“And each one of those doors you open up and you have this glowing light that shines out from the inside, and you go ‘Wow, I’m really into that.’ So you transgress into that area. It might sound a little bit spiritual, but yes it is.”

### **The path forward**

“Looking forward, there’s a challenge that we have to brace ourselves against with this carbon tax, which in my personal opinion, is just based on yet another control that people want to have on some circumstantial, ecological requirements. Control is not an organic way of thinking.

“The way forward is, therefore, not necessarily dealing with carbon, but dealing with water and oxygen.

“If we think of those two elements as being the two most precious things to our life on earth, then we can go positively forward in a proactive manner, as opposed to negatively forward in a reactive manner.

“The future must lie in understanding the practice of organics, so that people can see that by applying healthy stimulants to the soil in the form of compost, and applying air and clean water to the soil, the carbon situation is negated. It’s not even part of the equation.

“If the people who are going so fast and so hard and so energetically towards trying to control what the next epoch is going to be, were to stop and listen and think about what organic practice does, they would realise that there is another way ahead.

“As practitioners therefore we have to stop being soft and sentimental, and maybe be a bit more reactionary, and learn the speak of science and politics, so that we can actually voice our opinions in the language that they understand

### **Teach your children well**

“The way ahead for organic production and organic appreciation, and for quality, is to actually influence those people who are going to be making the decisions after they become 21 years old.

“I wonder if children – preschool and primary school children – were subjected to more healthy foods, their insight and sensitivity would be increased to such a degree that they could then make a choice, because their mind is informed

“On the other hand, if we go to the politicians, we’re actually trying to swim upstream continuously. The classic example is in the primary schools where the sweet drinks have now been replaced with diet drinks. It is purely a branding exercise and it has nothing to do with health and nutrition at all. It’s just a domination of the market.

“So the problem is that the children are not given the opportunity to have good food that will let them think clearly to tomorrow.

“That’s the interesting thing regarding the stimulation that’s given to you. I was born on the West Coast of the South Island at Franz Joseph Glacier. I was educated in some nice little private school in Canterbury, from the age of 9 to 18, and I’m very proud of that because it taught me independence. Annie is a local and her family has farmed land in the Poverty Bay region for 5 generations, so she’s really a local.

“When I was 7 years old in those particular places, in educational institutions they used to give you packets of seed to grow vegetables. By the time I was seven I knew how to grow things, and by the time I was 14 I knew how to ferment. By the time I was 21 both Annie and I were in Europe, we’d met each other in Gisborne here. She was a florist, I was a wine nut.

“We have on our business card the words “artisan wine grower” and nobody ever asks us what it means being an artisan. An artisan goes and learns the trade from the masters, and both Annie and myself learnt our trade – her as a florist in London, me as a wine grower in Europe – at a very early age, 21 years old in fact, when impressions are set very clearly in your mind.

“The same as food for children, if you have impressions set at an early stage in your mind, you’re opening yourself up for inspiration. By being open to inspiration you then can go forward and attract the things that are stimulating to your mind subconsciously.

“We had this dream as young fellas about what we wanted to do. As a result it solidified. I think to a greater or lesser extent we’ve achieved it. No, we haven’t achieved it. We’re still on that journey.”

### **A comfortable journey?**

“Comfortable? I don’t know. When we started off we were paying 25% interest on our bank loan and 30% overdraft, and two years later in 1986 there was an oversupply of wine.

“We’ve been through three recessions. This is the third. Times are really tough. It doesn’t get any easier. We’ve never worked harder in our lives.

“The time that we can get out there in the vineyard or out there on the green-scape it is a pleasure just to be able to do it.

“I think that to a certain degree we can achieve the dream, albeit we’re still paying off bank loans and stuff, so we still have to be pretty damn sharp.

“What’s interesting in the current economic climate is that our wine is no more expensive than anybody else’s wine.

“Admittedly there are some people who have over-produced who’ve had to reduce their prices. Our prices have remained relatively stable but they’re certainly no greater than they were in the 1990s. ACC as an example has increased by how much percentage lately?”

### **A radical vision – a single wine standard**

“From my own personal point of view, my greatest joy is going to be that we can get BioGro to speak to our industry governance – which is Winegrowers NZ – and come to an understanding that the certified organic wine growing standards of BioGro can be adopted as the standard for the New Zealand wine industry.

“If that’s the one thing in this whole interview that I can say, that’s what I want to say: I want winegrowers to adopt the certified organic standards of BioGro New Zealand.

“Don’t go mucking around to try to come up with some international certified standard nonsense.

“BioGro is a profound and internationally recognized trademark that is accredited by IFOAM and audited by other certifying agencies. It is a trademark that symbolizes quality and it’s also a trademark that is maintained by a group of people who are seemingly totally dedicated to what it is that the product stands for.

“BioGro is an amazing organization run by people with a good warm heart and they are not in a position to have endless money to make their organization run seamlessly. Therefore it’s a pretty action/reaction organization.

“If only this government could realize what BioGro has done for this country in the last 25 years and they were able to give some support to it then BioGro would be in a better place to go forward and promote what their trademark represents.

“My licence number is 99. I’ve been around for a fair few years and I’ve seen the people come and go and come and go, and there’s been some really good intention and the system wears them down and they disappear. Then someone else comes up with some good intention and they run with it and the system wears them down and they go away again.

### **The best business plan**

“One quote I’d like to have in BioNews would be that James Milton says that the best business plan anyone can have is to go through BioGro certification.

“Every year I spit and swear at having to do my BioGro certification, but once I’ve done it I just have this warmth that flows over me and I think ‘Wow, that’s a really good retrospect of what I’ve done this last year’.

“That’s what I said to Michelle the other day: Let’s turn our certification into a retrospective appreciation about what it is we’ve achieved in the last year, and put it in such a format that it can become a document that other people can refer to as a point of reference, which I think is really cool.

Technology and information doesn’t have to be held up in the ivory towers.

“So I’m in full support of BioGro. I would hate to think that we’re going to have another series of trademarks that are more producer-friendly or more market entry oriented. I think BioGro does a fantastic job and they can be, as the time gets on, a little bit more stringent. There’s nothing like having the goalpost raised now and then.

“We’re going to have a really good chance of getting BioGro’s standards as the national wine industry standard because I’m going to knock two heads together.

“The first one is going to be on the left hand with BioGro, and the right hand with Winegrowers NZ and we’re going to get them sitting in one place and talking to each other. When we get to that point we’ll have some really good understanding for the way ahead.

“Tomorrow there is an organic field day in the Wairarapa which is not necessarily one of New Zealand’s biggest wine regions. They have between 50 and 60 people attending and they’ve had to shut the venue because there’s too many other people who want to come. The amount of enthusiasm among organic winegrowers who want to come out to this area is huge.

“When Winegrowers NZ can understand that; when Winegrowers NZ can realize that certified organic and certified biodynamic is the true meaning of their slogan – which is “pure discovery” – when they can understand that that is kaitiakitanga for the land, and we do it without prejudice, then I’ll be happy.”

### **The truth of the matter**

“The thing for primary production in New Zealand is that we have to express our individuality – even within the biodynamic sector we have to express our own individuality – and there’s no better way to do it than with the way we’re doing it. There’s always room for improvement but we’re trying our best.

“We have a little mantra that before a wine can be great it must first be true. That’s the thing that we’re batting for at the moment, both in terms of getting organics and biodynamics understood, but also getting down to the truth of what wine is about because there’s a lot of bullshit out there.

“The truth of our wine is that to the best of our ability we haven’t used any of those things that people use on the land, so the land is going to speak of it’s own true sense of place.

“We haven’t interrupted it with soluble fertilizer; we haven’t interrupted it with herbicide: so therefore when you look at our land, it’s just the way the land grows. When you dig our land and smell it, it’s just the way the land smells. There’s nothing else that goes on there.

“When the vine roots go into the soil and the grapevines flourish and the leaves grow and the flowers set fruit, they’re actually setting a presence of where they come from, or in other words a sense of place. I don’t think, hand on heart, that we interfere with that. We may stimulate it, but we don’t interfere with that, we don’t negate it.

“Then when you come to pick the grapes to make the wine we really aspire that we don’t use enzymes or bacteria or yeast that comes from foreign land to make the taste of our wine more common. We want to try to have that glass of our wine taste as it comes from our place.

“When you visit our place and look around and smell, you can see and smell what it is in the grass. That’s what I mean by the sense of truth.

“That’s what the basis of terroir is – all the aspects that contribute to the presence or place, and that includes human participation.

“We may not be perfect but god damn it we’re trying to get to that point. We may have to add a bit of acidity here and there in a hot year. We don’t add sugar, we don’t add enzymes, we try not to add any yeast, bacteria.

To make the wine taste agreeable on a commercial nature, if its selling for sub \$20, where in other words the consumer is a little more dull in their sense, then we might have to

use some fining agents which might include egg whites, or trim milk or an animal product.

But we have some wines out there now in 2009 vintage and in the last 15 years vintage in fact that haven’t had anything added to them at all that haven’t had anything added to them at all except sulfur dioxide, because we also have to sell the wine over the equator to the northern hemisphere. That’s where there is a vast intrigue and value and appreciation for what we’re doing. It’s coming here now to New Zealand quickly, but the northern hemisphere is where they really love what it is that we do.

“There’s always room for improvement but we’re trying our best.”

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## CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESS

We’d like to offer the media more ‘good news stories’ about organics on a regular basis.

As we look towards revamping BioNews and our website, there will also be more space available to celebrate your success.

So next time you have something worth shouting from the roof tops, let us know, so we can help you get the attention you deserve.

Email: [bionews@BioGro.co.nz](mailto:bionews@BioGro.co.nz) or [eljay@BioGro.co.nz](mailto:eljay@BioGro.co.nz), tell your local auditor, or call BioGro on (04) 801 9741.

## *The year past and ahead ~ A review from CEO, Michelle Glogau*

### **Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays**

It has been a busy and a hard 12 months.

The year began with the reissue of our Organic Standards in new user-friendly form, and fittingly closes with the launch of the first issue of the BioGro Input Directory.

Other highlights included participating in the international trade fair, BioFach in Germany and the OANZ conference in the Waikato, stands at Mystery Creek and regional field days, Romeo Bragato and New Zealand Institute of Food Science and Technology conferences.

We've also achieved good successes in raising the profile of organics in the media and drawing attention to the achievements of our licensees.

As 2009 comes to an end, we are looking forward to another busy year in 2010. There are a lot of projects that we want to get underway in the coming year. Many of them are building on what we've done so far.

### **Technical Committees**

We've just advertised for nominees for the new technical committees. In February we'll start to look at the spread of nominations for the Committees and make sure there's good representation.

While they are licensee committees, it may also be valuable for us to have outside input such as, for example, consumer representation. The broader input we have on how issues affect stakeholders, the more value I think everyone will get out of the committees.

Some of the committees we'll be working to get into action quite urgently. The dairy sector has numerous issues we need to work through before the next season starts.

### **Compost Standard**

Another committee we are keen to get up and running quickly is the compost one.

We're well overdue to move our compost guide into a standard, as there's been a lot of growth in the sector. While there are various standards and requirements that compost already has to meet, we want to provide clear rules for compost production under organics.

The livestock standard is due for revision as well because it's fallen out of sync with international standards.

But others like viticulture we are keen to get started on in terms of bringing sustainability into the standards.

### **Sustainability**

High on the list of projects for the year is a move to being proactive around standards, rather than reactive.

In that context we'll be looking at things such as making sustainability more apparent in the organic standards, so that consumers are not made to choose between different certifications. Instead we'd like organic certification recognized as also entailing sustainability, because organics does incorporate all those practices.

Different sectors will be at different stages in terms of taking on board sustainability criteria, and we also need to take into consideration the cost of additional compliance requirements.

The viticulture sector in particular is one that is keen to move on sustainability.

The technical committees will have sector representation and so will be able to gauge the appropriate direction for individual sectors. The overall direction of the BioGro Standards will of course be set at the policy level by our council.

### **Information Technology**

Also on the horizon is an IT project centred around replacing our database. The intent is to make the system a lot more streamlined and licensee-friendly, and cut down on processing time, while providing as much information as possible in one place.

In future, licensees will be able to review the stage their certification has reached via the website. The plan is that they will also be able to lodge their management plan that way, and receive an immediate response if they need to make changes.

The feedback we've been getting suggests that people currently consider the management plan a bureaucratic necessity, but not a useful tool in practice. We'd like that to shift so that management plans are a tool to improving the way properties are managed, and people are able to easily review and update them through an online facility.

Other information will be made accessible to licensees through the IT project as well, such as details of upcoming audits. We are also looking to make room for licensee profiles to help build brands and legitimize licensees' claims for consumers. It's an additional level of service we're providing licensees as part of their certification.

The IT project will be a three-stage process, initially involving streamlining of our own database.

The second stage, involves the website interface with licensees able to access information about their operations online, and in the third stage the facility to lodge management plans

electronically as "living documents" will be up and running.

### **Quality Surveys**

Another project we want to implement next year is a thorough quality survey among our licensees to get feedback about how we're delivering things.

One thing I acknowledge is there has been a backlog this year and this has meant a delay in issuing certification in recent months. We're taking steps to get that back on track.

We want not only to be able to supply the technical expertise that we offer, but to provide it in a timely service as well.

### **Return to licensees**

In general, our aim is to put more money back into the organization and expand the services available to our licensees - Adding value to our support to licensees in the year ahead and adding value to certification with us.

We'll have the new input directory, which we'll reissue and hopefully have feedback about additional features that it could have.

We'll be holding workshops in different regions following the positive feedback we've had about our first one in Waimate.

These provide an opportunity for licensees to get updates on standards and certification requirements, learn from the experiences of other licensees, ask those burning questions – and meet with like-minded producers.

We're looking at more process-related projects, like an ongoing review of accreditation.

We are constantly keeping an eye out to make sure we provide maximum market access for our licensees. To do that we need to apply to other markets for accreditation as they become regulated.

## **Challenges in the year ahead**

The challenge for New Zealand, as a predominantly export market, continues to be the increasing number of overseas markets that are becoming regulated, and ensuring access to those and the cost of compliance. The lack of harmonization between countries in terms of regulatory requirements is a particular obstacle, as they each tend to set their standards independent of pre-established guidelines and systems.

Aside from differences in actual standards, there is an additional cost for us because of the extra accreditation needed, and we often have to pass that on.

In the last year there has been Canada and Taiwan that we've had to seek extra accreditation for, and this coming year South Korea will become regulated.

As well as that extra cost, standards are becoming increasingly stringent internationally, and sometimes aren't compatible with practices that we have here.

It can be quite a challenge if resources aren't available in New Zealand to meet the standard that's required for other markets, for example if a particular component of a fertilizer is no longer permissible.

However, we view our relationship with our licensees as a partnership, so while we might not be able to give them all the answers, we work with them to find solutions that are feasible.

This is one area where we see the technical committees being useful, providing a forum to discuss the impact of changes occurring in international standards.

Particularly in situations where we have limited ability to petition for a change, we may be able to request an implementation timeframe which is more feasible.

There are variable amounts that we can do. For example in the U.S. we hold very little weight to be able to negotiate changes to be implemented, but we can put to them that it's unreasonable to be implemented in the proposed timeframe given our circumstances here in New Zealand.

Given the hemisphere difference it may be a completely impractical time of year for us to make that change.

We have our own technical expertise, but we also need to have input from the producer or the party that's affected as to why a proposed change is impractical or difficult to implement.

## **Taking stock**

It's been a really hard year, but we haven't gone backwards as some sectors have.

We haven't had the same growth as we were recording about a year ago, but it tends to be seasonal.

What we're finding at the moment is that there's still strong growth in sectors like the viticulture sector, but some other sectors are very prone to people jumping on the band wagon depending on what the premium is.

And we're continuing to grow in terms of our capabilities here at BioGro.

We've got two new auditors on board to enable us to meet future demand, as well as provide a better service to our existing licensees.

We allow at least 6 months to get our staff up to speed because we demand that they have very, very good technical understanding.

We've got a very enthusiastic team. We're all passionate about organics, but we also expect the team to know their stuff, and that's what's different about us.

## **Prospects for 2010**

The indication is that things are turning around for organics again, and that it's a strong opportunity for people.

It seems that people relate well to organics as opposed to other certifications that are emerging, such as the carbon neutral certification.

Organics has such a long standing reputation and covers so many different aspects that it continues to have a wide appeal to consumers, which is shown by the fact that people have continued to choose organic products despite having less discretionary spending.

New opportunities seem to lie in sectors like cosmetics and textiles which people will be purchasing as they come out of the recession.

I don't think there's any pot of gold at the end of a rainbow in the organic sector. It's just about making that business decision.

All the other benefits of organics are still the same as they were 20 years ago when people started moving down this track.

The opportunities aren't just about a money-making venture but also the benefits to the staff, community, and environment. Increasingly organics is seen as a viable part of the solution to mitigating climate change.

A lot of people want to be associated with BioGro because we have the history of leading in organics and we're seen as having a more robust and higher standard. Our licensees also have a sense of ownership through being able to be involved in the direction of the organization.

That's how we want it to stay. Our aim is to develop the organic sector for everyone – consumers and producers.

Thank you for your support. I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a well deserved holiday.

**Michelle Glogau**  
**CEO**  
**BioGro**

## Thoughts from the Chair

### BioGro Council Chair, Chris Morrison

There are some really positive stories coming out with organics this year.

I've just come back from Samoa where we're working with a group of growers called Women in Business. They have 300 small certified organic farms and they're planting ladyfinger bananas around the tsunami sites so that there will be food supply *and income* for families. The Prime Minister of Samoa is extremely supportive.

It's a fantastic story and it's an amazing thing to see organics at the forefront there.

People are concerned that as soon as things get tough organics goes out the door, but that hasn't been the case. It's been a pretty tough year all round, but BioGro is strong.

I wouldn't say that we have been unaffected by the recession, but licensee numbers are up. We haven't seen the growth in retail that we have in the past, in terms of double digit growth year on year, but we've still seen healthy growth and that's a strong signal in a fairly depressed market. Most industries would be very happy with single digit growth at the moment.

I'm very pleased to see that although people's incomes have been hit, they haven't walked away from organics.

I think people are now seeing organics as a staple part of their shopping basket. Even though we have been hit with a very high dollar, exporters in the organic sector are also still doing reasonably well.

Commodity prices are fairly temperamental, but I feel from all my contact with licensees across the board, that BioGro licensees are an optimistic bunch and are good adapters when necessary. They're in it for the long run, not just the short money cycles. I'm very heartened by that and I think the overall agricultural industry could learn quite a bit from that pragmatic approach to the ups and downs of cycles.

So these are very positive signs, and confirmation that organics is here to stay.

I am disappointed that we're still only 1-2% of the land area. I find that hard to understand when we see Switzerland at 11%.

In countries like Austria, Denmark, and Switzerland the government has been getting in and supporting the conversion of land over to organics.

They see a benefit for the health of their citizens and for the long term environmental benefits to the country and future generations.

I am continually frustrated by the short term election cycle where our people are only thinking 3 years out.

I think this is part of the reason why we're not seeing the organics industry being supported. There is seen to be no political gain in going out there and supporting organic farmers. I think that's very short sighted, especially now that climate change is becoming a real issue, and there are some significant solutions through organics.

I'm very positive about BioGro. We've been around for 25 years and there is a lot of trust.

We're looking at what we can incorporate into our standards that won't cost the licensee any more, but gives them a stronger reach with the consumer.

We've been considering how to incorporate more sustainability aspects to the label. We don't want people having to go and get three or four different certifications to meet consumers' needs.

Green-washing affects the organics industry. The new endorsements and certifications coming out all the time are very confusing. I get concerned that it's very difficult for the

consumer to decide what is an ethical logo, or stamp of approval, as opposed to one that's not. It's quite a complex issue that we're taking very seriously, and it will be an issue that we will be addressing next year.

If James Millton achieves his goal of getting the entire viticulture sector to meet BioGro standards (see p5), I think it would send a very strong message to the world.

I don't think we'd see a huge percentage difference in the total land area that's under organics because you have to take into consideration the sheep farmers and the big land blocks which make up the bulk of land in New Zealand under agriculture.

But our politicians like drinking wine, and they'll share a New Zealand wine with overseas visitors. To have right in their face "Certified BioGro" would be an absolutely wonderful thing to achieve.

I think it would send a very strong signal and I think the ramifications would be enormous.

It would be a marquee product that would send a strong signal and would have a huge flow on effect into other industries. Wine is seen as a premium product, and that is a fantastic way of communicating a message to the world about what is important to New Zealanders, farmers, and the food and beverage industry.

It's been a good year for BioGro and we're working to continue to add value for our licensees going into 2010.

In the meantime we wish you all a very merry Christmas.

**Chris Morrison**  
**Chair of New Zealand Biological Producers**  
**Consumers Council (NZBPCC)**  
BioGro NZ Ltd and Organic Certification NZ  
Ltd

## International News

### US Organic outstrips conventional

Sales of organic and ethical products in the US are on the increase, and outrunning growth of conventional products.

Despite the global economic downturn, a third of US consumers are still willing to fork out more for organic food, according to the report "Ethical Food and Beverage, Personal Care and Household Products in the U.S.," reported by FoodWeek Online.

Sales of environmentally sustainable and ethical products in the US pushed almost 9 percent growth this year.

According to the report, the biggest sales growth lies in organic bread, grain products, and "ethical" drinks. The trend is leading US retailers such as Walmart and Safeway to expand organic departments, even though over in the UK organic offerings are being reduced.

With growing awareness of ethical and sustainability issues, consumers are after what they perceive to be ecofriendly, natural, organic, local, and humane, and are ever more concerned about companies' corporate responsibility profiles.

[www.reportbuyer.com/go/PKF00176](http://www.reportbuyer.com/go/PKF00176)

### Survey reveals GE attitudes

Consumers want GE labeling on their food. A report commissioned by the UK's Food Standards Agency on consumer attitudes to GE labeling found that most UK consumers are undecided or opposed to GE food, and want more transparency in order to be able to make informed choices when shopping.

Consumers feel current labeling is confusing and inadequate.

According to FoodWeek, 87 percent of US consumers want GE labeling on food. In France, labeling is required by law, with 93 percent of consumers concerned about it, and a labeling project, "Fed without GEOs", was launched earlier this year. Similar initiatives are taking place in Ireland, Germany, and Australia.

[www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2009/nov/gmreport](http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2009/nov/gmreport)

### Diners go for organic

Three quarters of the 1800 professional chefs surveyed recently in Australia voted organic produce as a "hot" menu trend for 2010, with concerns about nutrition and sustainability top of the list.

Organic beer, wine and spirits were touted as the upcoming trends in alcoholic drinks, while organic coffee took out second place for hot trends in non-alcoholic beverages.

According to Farm Weekly, these trends are highlighted by the list of Australia's top chefs who swear by organics. Holly Vyner of the Biological Farmers of Australia, the organization who performed the survey, claims it's the superior taste and quality of organic produce as well as sustainability factors that entice chefs and discerning diners.

### Battle lines

The Organic Consumers Association reports "battle lines drawn" over the GE Roundup Ready beets about to be unleashed on the US.

According to the OCA report, sugar beets account for slightly more than half of US sugar production, and sugar produced by GE sugar beets may be included in products ranging from candy to breakfast cereal to bread, none of which will be required to be labeled as such. [www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article\\_10519.cf](http://www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_10519.cf)

## New Zealand News

### Celery at top of dirty dozen

A range of fruit, dairy products and bread are all ranked in the top dozen of foods most likely to contain pesticide residues in New Zealand.

Celery tops the list. Peaches, apricots, dairy products and wheat in bread complete the top 5 offenders, followed by a range of other fruit in which pesticides were found. Close contenders behind the worst 12 were cucumber, nectarines, lettuce, tomatoes, wine and pears.

Safe Food Campaign researcher Alison White says food was ranked according to the percentage of samples with pesticide residues and the number of pesticides detected in the total samples. Data is largely drawn from surveys carried out by the New Zealand Food Safety Authority.

“The Food Safety Authority attempts to reassure us that because the pesticides are below a certain level, they assume it to be safe. However, we don’t really know the effects of all these chemicals in our food”.

“What we do know is that there are various serious long term effects associated with particular pesticides that are found in our food, including endocrine or hormonal disruption, cancer, immune system suppression, nervous system damage, genetic damage and birth defects. We also know that various pesticides used to grow food have damaging effects on wildlife and the ecosystem.”

“The problem we have with the Food Safety Authority’s assurances, is that they only consider the effects of one pesticide by itself, as if that was all we were exposed to,” said Dr Meriel Watts of Pesticide Action Network Aotearoa New Zealand.

“In reality we are exposed daily to multiple residues in various combinations, the effects of which the Authority knows little about.

“In fact the Authority is still in denial about the problem of mixtures of residues. Yet there is plenty of good science showing that combinations of pesticides can have a much more toxic effect even at low levels, than single pesticides by themselves.”

“The ongoing daily ingestion of low levels of mixtures of toxic chemicals in our food may well be contributing to a raft of chronic health complaints including cancer and Parkinson’s disease,” said Dr Watts.

“While a raft of pesticides is applied to celery, chlorothalonil (Bravo) remains the most common, although it is carcinogenic, mutagenic, an environmental toxin and is thought responsible for aggravating the health effects of other pesticides,” said Soil & Health Association spokesperson Steffan Browning. (1).

“A study released this year found that exposure to certain pesticides, including dieldrin and chlorothalonil, increased the risks of a blood disorder that can lead to multiple myeloma 5.6 fold and 2.4 fold respectively.” (2).

“Considering that dieldrin was banned in agriculture in New Zealand in 1968 and from other uses in 1989, chlorothalonil, or Bravo, may be a significant culprit in New Zealand cancers.”

“A fresh approach to food is needed in New Zealand in line with the growth in organics internationally,” said Mr Browning.

“Women who are pregnant or breast feeding, those whose immune system is compromised, and young children, especially need to eat organic food, at least for those foods on the dirty dozen list. While washing and peeling foods where possible can reduce some pesticide residues, it is even better to go organic,” concluded Ms White. “In this way you support

a system which better protects our children as well as the environment.”

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(1) Lodovici, M. et al. 1994. Effect of a mixture of 15 commonly used pesticides on DNA levels of 8-hydroxy-2-deoxyguanosine and xenobiotic metabolizing enzymes in rat liver. /J. Environ. Pathol. Toxicol. Oncol./13(3):163-168.

<http://cat.inist.fr/?aModele=afficheN&cpsidt=3483984>Lodovici, M. et al, 1997, Oxidative liver DNA damage in

rats treated with pesticide mixtures, /Toxicology/, Volume 117, Issue 1, 14 February 1997, Pages 55-60

[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9020199](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9020199) These results indicate that the toxicity of low doses of pesticide mixtures present in food might be further reduced by eliminating diphenylamine and chlorothalonil.

(2)  
<http://checkorphan.getreelhealth.com/grid/news/all/individuals-who-apply-pesticides-are-found-have-double-risk-blood-disorder?from=checkorphan.org>

## The Dirty Dozen

Food in New Zealand more likely to contain pesticide residues ranked according to number of pesticides detected in total samples and percentage with pesticides

	Food	% with residues	No. of pesticides	Sample size
1.	Celery	98.2	21	56
2.	Peaches, fresh/canned	96.4	15	56
3.	Apricots, fresh/canned	96.4	14	56
4.	Butter/cream/cheese	100.0	3	24
5.	Wheat: bread, all products	79.3	23	232
6.	Apples	80.5	20	288
7.	Plums	91.6	8	48
8.	Mandarins	83.3	10	36
9.	Raspberries	85.4	7	48
10.	Oranges	82.1	9	56
11.	Strawberries	71.7	16	92
12.	Grapes/raisins/sultanas	57.1	25	28

Notes:

Data obtained from NZ Food Safety Authority surveys: 2003/04 New Zealand Total Diet Survey, NZ Food Residue Surveillance Programmes 2004-2008, all available at [www.nzfsa.govt.nz](http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz). Results from several years were combined to produce sample sizes that were more robust for analysis. A summary of residues from 280 apple samples taken from 120 orchards after harvest but before washing was supplied courtesy of Apple Futures.

## Factory dairy farming for NZ

Applications have been submitted to Environment Canterbury for 16 new dairy farms to be located in the Mackenzie Basin, housing 18,000 dairy cows in indoor cubicles for 8 months of the year. Federated Farmers have defended the plans, claiming that farmers have no choice, but are being forced into using these “new techniques”.

The Green Party co-leader Russell Norman says this is a shocking turn around from earlier in the year when Federated Farmers were “lauding our free-range, grass-fed dairy cows as giving New Zealand its competitive advantage, and Fonterra launched a promotion in the UK claiming ‘British consumers literally taste freedom when they eat New Zealand butter’.”

Russell Norman claims, “Economics, climate change, water pollution and animal welfare concerns all point us towards a sustainable path that maximises quality not quantity.” Counter arguments to the issue of food-miles raised by our European competitors rely on claims that our milk products are more environmentally friendly than factory-farmed milk.

If the plans go ahead, the need for certification schemes assuring the quality, sustainability, and morality of New Zealand exports are likely to become more pronounced. The organic industry will face added challenges to maintain New Zealand’s credibility in the international market place, and provide assurance for local consumers.

## Organic Sector Conference presentations

Presentations from the Organic Sector Conference are now available on OANZ’s website – along with a short video presentation reliving some of the conference highlights.  
[www.oanz.org.nz/events/conference09](http://www.oanz.org.nz/events/conference09)

## GE leak at Lincoln

Plants testing GE positive have been found growing outside a Plant & Food Research containment facility at Lincoln.

The leak has been called a wake up call to Government that a major GE catastrophe is just a matter of time. Steffan Browning, BioGro Council member and spokesperson for the Soil & Health Association of NZ says GE experiments are taking place in “risky containment” throughout New Zealand, and that MAF-Biosecurity New Zealand (MAFBNZ) have played down GE contamination risk despite obvious breaches.

“The risky unwanted GE products that Plant & Food, AgResearch and others keep pushing, fly in the face of clean, safe and desirable organic and sustainable production that the researchers could be putting so much more effort into,” said Mr Browning.

## Good Farm Stories

A new website featuring innovative and sustainable farming practices has been launched by Green Party MP Jeanette Fitzsimons.

The site features stories collected from around the country of local farmers on to a good thing, and “proving that we can have a healthy farming sector and a healthy environment,” said Ms Fitzsimons.

“I’ve collected stories about how to improve animal health, protect rivers and streams, reduce pesticide use, improve biodiversity, manage the soil, and protect against drought. These measures can reduce costs too.”

“There is a good farm story for every ‘dirty dairy’ story that turns up in the papers,” Ms Fitzsimons claims. “These good farmers are ambassadors for New Zealand’s clean, green brand.”

[www.goodfarmstories.org.nz](http://www.goodfarmstories.org.nz)

## Awards for women in organics

Women running businesses in the organic sector are being encouraged to enter the 2010 Enterprising Rural Women Awards.

National President Margaret Chapman says “The award represents an outstanding opportunity for all entrants to showcase their businesses and gain recognition for their achievements.”

Winner of this year’s inaugural Award was boutique tourism operator Tora Coastal Walk.

Co-owner Kiri Elworthy says her company is still enjoying the fruits of winning, as it has seen a huge growth in business as a result of publicity from the award.

“If anyone is thinking about entering, I would highly recommend it. It has given us a great sense that what we are doing is right - it has revitalised us.”

Entries close on February 17, 2010.  
enquiries@ruralwomen.org.nz. 04 473 5524

## GM News

### GE increases agrichemical use

A new report has revealed links between GE cropping and increased use of pesticides, herbicide-resistant weeds, and higher levels of chemical residues.

The report cites a net overall increase on US farm fields of 318 million pounds of pesticides over the first 13 years of commercial use.

“This report confirms what we've been saying for years,” said Bill Freese, science policy analyst for the Center for Food Safety. “This may be profitable for the biotech/pesticide companies, but it's bad news for farmers, human health and the environment.”

[www.gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=11682:gm-crops-cause-big-jump-in-pesticide-use-report](http://www.gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11682:gm-crops-cause-big-jump-in-pesticide-use-report)

### New govt. initiative to “inform” consumers

The UK's Food Standards Agency is to organize, at ministers' request, a “dialogue project” to, in theory, inform consumers about the food they eat.

The steering group is to be made up of “stakeholders with different views on GE”, but according to GM Watch, only two of the 11 group members are known to oppose GE.

The FSA's own recent study has found consumers to be suspicious of the Government's stance on GE, and distrusting of information.

The study indicated that rather than another quasi-government information programme, people want clear labeling of GE inputs in the food chain, and truly independent information to help them make up their minds about GE foods.

[http://www.gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=11679:will-our-views-on-gm-food-be-modified](http://www.gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11679:will-our-views-on-gm-food-be-modified)

[www.gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=11751:people-want-independent-info-on-gm-foods](http://www.gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11751:people-want-independent-info-on-gm-foods)

### French label GE animal feed

The French government is considering a new voluntary GE labeling system, which incorporates meat and dairy products from animals fed on GE feed.

Current GE labeling rules in France don't include a distinction between animals fed GE feed and those not. Recommendations include a 0.1 percent threshold for GE material in feed, and a minimum distance imposed between apiaries and GE crops being grown.

The system is designed to allow for labeling of food as GE free, or fed on GE-free feed, but skeptics warn a voluntary system will put those who do opt to label at a market disadvantage, due to the costs associated.

[http://gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=11756:more-on-gm-free-label-good-for-business](http://gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11756:more-on-gm-free-label-good-for-business)

### China approves GE rice

(while elite dine on organics)

A strain of GE Bt rice has been approved for commercial production for the first time in China.

The locally developed, pest-resistant rice is claimed to increase yields and reduce chemical inputs. Commercial production is forecast for 2-3 years time following trials.

Experts suggest this could shift the global balance of power in food trade and could prompt other countries to follow suit.

According to GM Watch, India and Iran are also developing Bt rice, and the Philippines could approve vitamin A-enriched GE Golden Rice by late 2011 or early 2012.

Meanwhile, China's political elite are dining on food supplied by a special government operation that provides all-organic goods from farms working under the strictest guidelines, GM Watch reports.

[www.gmwatch.org/latest-listing/1-news-items/11764-china-approves-gm-rice-safety](http://www.gmwatch.org/latest-listing/1-news-items/11764-china-approves-gm-rice-safety)

## GE safety studies sabotaged

Dr Judy Carman, senior scientist working under a grant from the Australian government to study the safety of GE feed, has been subjected to a sustained campaign of vilification by individuals associated with the biotech industry.

Political pressure is now being brought to bear on her research by the current Agriculture and Food Minister of Western Australia.

The clear intention is to prevent her from carrying out the research.

[www.gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=11704:scientists-concerned-for-academic-freedom](http://www.gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11704:scientists-concerned-for-academic-freedom)

## Europe rejects GM corn

A GM corn has been withdrawn from Europe because of safety concerns.

Monsanto has pulled its commercial development application for high lysine LY038 corn, originally intended only as feed for animals, after the European Food Safety Authority questioned the safety studies conducted by the company.

Rather than conduct additional research as the European authority requested, Monsanto decided to abandon its bid to introduce the corn to the European market.

[www.i-sis.org.uk/HighLysineGMMaize.php](http://www.i-sis.org.uk/HighLysineGMMaize.php)

## Industry leaves GE-Free farmers hanging

Australian agricultural industry is dodging questions from non-GE farmers over its handling of new GE canola cropping across the Tasman.

According to the Network of Concerned Farmers (NCF), the grain industry is accepting GE contamination but refusing to outline the difficult conditions and consequences for non-GE farmers.

[www.gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=11656:gm-segregation-nightmare](http://www.gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11656:gm-segregation-nightmare)

## Illegal GE flax seed found in bread

Illegal GE 'Triffid' flax seed has been found in bread sold by Marks & Spencer in the UK.

Critics of GE farming say the discovery provides damning evidence that Britain's food watchdogs are failing to police the nation's food chain.

<http://bit.ly/1IVeMs>

## Broken promises on new GE soya

Monsanto's new soya bean, genetically modified to produce omega-3 fatty acids, recently received a notice of safety from the US FDA.

The claim was that the bean will be great news for over-fished seas and health problems associated with omega-3 deficiency, but GM Watch identifies a number of holes in the theory.

The bean fails to solve over-fishing as it does not provide a replacement for the fish harvested as fish meal and animal feed. Mass production of soya creates serious environmental problems, and GMW claims that current testing regimes don't look closely enough for unintended compounds, so the effects of eating this soya remain unknown despite claims to safety.

GMW also points out that the cause of omega-3 deficiency is that we eat a lot of processed foods made with corn oil, palm oil, and hydrogenated soybean oil and we eat grain-fed animal products rather than that we eat few fish.

[www.gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=11657:problems-with-monsantos-omega-3-gm-soybean](http://www.gmwatch.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11657:problems-with-monsantos-omega-3-gm-soybean)

## Monsanto's new RR2 soybean disappoints

Monsanto said the increase in farmers' yields generated by its new GM soybeans is at the low end of its forecast range.

[www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601103&sid=aii\\_24MDZ8SU](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601103&sid=aii_24MDZ8SU)

## The BioGro Experience

### *Life on the battlelines*

### Tackling the hard issues ~ head on

*The security surrounding genetic engineering experiments in this country is so lax it's time to bite the bullet and accept that New Zealand probably has areas no longer GE free - and the organic sector needs to act before the damage becomes critical.*

*That's the call from BioGro Board member Steffan Browning. Steffan is former co-chair and still spokesperson for the Soil & Health Association of NZ, and after many years as an organic grower has dedicated most of the past decade to spearheading the public campaign to get responsible treatment of GE experiments by the scientific community and regulators. He works nominally half time for Soil & Health, and now teaches organics two days a week as well "to try and pay my interest".*



*Last year Plant & Food scrapped a 10-year trial of GE broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and forage kale after Steffan found engineered brassica plants re-growing in a cleared field trial plot. This month MAF Biosecurity staff confirmed the discovery of two wild arabidopsis plants in the grounds of Plant and Food Research at Lincoln.*

*Steffan says his expectation is that there have actually been numerous unacknowledged GE escapes into the environment from the various experiments that have been done by Plant and Food, Hort Research and other organizations over a number of years – despite the public assurances of rigorous security.*

#### **Time to test**

*It's time, says Steffan, to end the pretence, and do testing to actually identify the true extent of GE contamination.*

*“And to see if the escapes have been sustained in that environment, because sometimes an escape won't sustain because it hasn't got the genetic strength or the competitive edge to survive, and thankfully could sort of backburn. That would be great. And I take that approach.*

*“Some people look at it and say ‘Oh, the genie's out. We're stuffed.’ I'm not prepared to take that position.*

*“I'd rather take it on the chin, find it, and take whatever repercussions that might mean. Then you can hook in and make your response to it and jump on it.*

*“I don't know that there's a whole heap. I wouldn't say that – but I think there is likely to be other GE material loose around Lincoln.”*

*Steffan expects the publicly acknowledged escape sites are only some of the places testing is needed.*

*“I'm not sure exactly where the early canola trials were, but anywhere there has been GE experimentation – any labs and any field trials sites. They are the obvious low hanging fruit you might call it.*

“We’ve seen the sloppiness because of the number of photos we’ve got of the brassica trial – the absolute sloppiness that went on there.

“This is the same institution. Sure, they all blamed it on one scientist, but that’s rubbish. There’s a casualness, there’s an assumption that ‘she’ll be right’.

“The other thing that tells me that I’m right is that when earlier in the year I went to the forum for the NZ Institute of Agricultural and Horticultural Science – which has a big group of GE scientists – their new Chair even joked about it.

“He was pro-GE but I found him very open and friendly, and just not into this closed stuff that some of the PR people are doing. He said at one stage ‘Well, we all know about the containment problems’. He said, ‘PC1 and PC2 – they have their problems too, hahaha.’

“So amongst themselves they’ve acknowledged that there’s leakage, that there are problems in either their structures or their processes.

“It was reinforced by an experience I had with the brassica breach last summer.

“I wanted testing to be done. They (Plant & Food) insisted that should testing happen, any responsibility for anything found would have to be absolutely typed to the specific construct in the trial and I thought what’s your worry here?

“I realised there was a reasonable chance that there was other leakage in the Lincoln area.

“It now seems clear, they were only too aware that there was escaped GE material likely to be found, and they wanted to limit any liability to the specific leak that we were complaining about.

“It’s hardly surprising there are problems. We’ve got MAF theoretically doing monitoring, and doing the enforcement, checking and ticking the boxes for these field

trials, and for some lab stuff. But what’s happened out there is that Massey and the others have been given some sort of amendment to say that they don’t need to have MAF and ERMA looking at their stuff. They’ve been left to their own management.

“A lot of things go through without a public notification.

“If the effects are seen as being “not more than minor”, they don’t need to tell us, and they (ERMA) make that call on it.

*Regulatory controls on approval for the original import of GE arabidopsis seed were retrospectively changed in November 2006, with ERMA removing controls requiring facilities to be inspected by them, its agent or enforcement officers*

“ERMA are trying one on, right at the moment. A new one came through while I was still working last night, so there’s no rest. I’m looking at an amendment for approval for testing GE trees.

“I was disappointed that MAF didn’t do testing following the brassica one, even just to keep us happy, if I dare say that. There is no testing being done. There was a suggestion that the pollen wouldn’t blow more than 2 metres, and most of us laugh a fair amount at that in a black humoured way. It might have been 100 metres out.

### **Test, identify and respond**

“We probably should be doing some fairly rigorous and widespread testing in the Lincoln area and then taking it on the chin whichever way it comes, whichever way we find, and then actually doing clean up.

“It might be that we don’t have to do a clean up, but I suspect we do.

“I would rather see us say ‘Well, we’ve got this damn thing that’s out there – from the old canola trials maybe, or from something – and

we've got to have a look at a way of pulling it back in. That's where I'd be coming from.

"I'd say we test on the basis that there's some doubt out there, and there's some history.

"We have the Plant & Food guy in the past with his potatoes and he's a loose goose as far as his approach around GE. He does not take risk seriously. He's one that's become legend, but it is fact that he fed GE potatoes that he'd grown, to people attending a conference in Nelson years ago to prove that his spuds were no different than any others.

"So there's been that sort of attitude and unfortunately it has gone through the sham that ERMA is, as well. Because we've had ERMA making these decisions, with some people on the panels hearing the consent applications for ERMA coming from Plant and Food Research, and the organisations actively looking to do GE work.

"The people who are required to determine consents and set the conditions for the work are the same people who have very close links with the people trying to do the experiments.

"And then you've got a problem with MAF.

"I know they've got three different layers around this. They've got the people out there doing the monitoring – if there is monitoring still required, if ERMA haven't let them off the hook. Now, when something goes wrong, as with the brassicas, you then have MAF border control or the excursion response team and they have their formulaic protocols to go through to ascertain how bad it is and what the risks are and what clean up or containment might be required to deal with it.

"Separately in MAF you've got MAF enforcement, and MAF enforcement are the police who come in to see whether there's been criminal negligence and what the penalty should be; whether they get fined or whether they

should be sent to court even, for the more serious stuff.

"The trouble is, with the brassicas they were all at arms length because MAF had stuffed up on their own monitoring in the first place, as they did at Scion with the pine trees. So when they're doing a response, particularly when there has been a breach, part of that is looking at their own crew and whether they've let the crew down or whether it's just the scientists involved.

"We're back to the police investigating themselves.

"And they say 'No, no it's fine.'  
But they also say 'Oh well, we've done our part. "It's gone up the chain to a higher management level for sign off and to check that they're happy with it. Then you've got these enforcement ones. 'Oh no, this is all arms length, of course', but hey: it goes up the chain too. And the chain isn't vertical it's a pyramid, so as it's going up it's getting narrower, even if things were separated at the bottom.

### **Implications for organics**

"The glass house the arabidopsis were found outside is less than a kilometre from Kowhai farm, an important organic show-piece farm. Plant and Food is one side of the road, Kowhai farm is the other side of the road.

"Hopefully they're not contaminated. Because arabidopsis is a little bugger.

"It's a matter of checking for leakage. Biosecurity was saying it's such a small seed, and you can imprint it onto something very easily. It can blow in the wind.

"This is the same people who said pollen wouldn't go more than two metres from some brassicas. But now the seed can blow all over the place. And it can be carried – finch could be eating it and spit it out to the young in the nest somewhere. There's a whole lot of possibilities.

“So I tend to take a view that Kowhai Farm is GE free at this point until testing proves otherwise, but testing should happen.

“The same with the Biological Husbandry Unit which is roughly another kilometre in fact as the crow flies.

“There are likely a number of rogue GE escapes in an area adjacent to some of the most iconic organic properties.

“It really is an issue of risk, and that risk has to be explored taking an extremely precautionary approach. Not precautionary against maybe you’ll find something, but precautionary to make sure that if there is something we find it.

“If we don’t do that testing I think we diminish the quality of the material coming out of those institutions because there has to be an element of doubt. The risk could be low, but there’s doubt. And we need to remove the doubt.

“I want to be an optimist; to say that I would think the chances are slim, but because of that element of doubt I’m not sure. Because I don’t know what the worry was back when I was dealing with the brassicas and I wanted to test for contamination following the brassica trial leak. I wanted to test and he was saying well if you find something we will only be responsible for what this particular experiment was using. He was deadly serious about that.”

“And that alerts me that there’s a problem there.”

“BioGro has licensees in the Lincoln area. They need to be precautionary audited.

I think BioGro should be getting its licensees around Kowhai farm to probably get some independent testing done and Plant and Food

should be paying for it.

“I don’t believe its necessary on a widespread basis at all. I think where we know there’s been a breach there should be testing for it. I don’t think we have to be racing up to Taihape to test for GE, or Blenheim or whatever. I think we’re very fortunate we don’t yet.

“In Australia they’ve now got canola next to organic properties. And the organic guys are getting angry about people talking about it because they want to keep their head down in case they lose their margin. They don’t know whether its contaminated and they’d rather not know. That guy shouldn’t be certified organic. That’s a big issue there and they have not jumped on it. I’m disappointed...

“We need to jump on it here before it gets to that stage, loud and vigorous and I feel that I haven’t encouraged that enough.

“Organic producers around the country need to be really energetic about getting testing done early while the contamination is still containable. They need to get the monitoring and enforcement regimes actually enforced properly, so that the costs of this fall with the people spreading the GE, and we don’t start attending to it further down the track when it’s so widespread that actually you can’t trace the culprit anymore and therefore the costs have to be borne by the organic sector.

“Then it gets to 0.9% acceptance of contamination like in Europe. We’ve got a market advantage at the moment because we have zero tolerance. It has to be an aberration, not like over in Europe where you’re allowed .9% and still be called organic. That’s what I’m fighting against. If you start going down that road, where the hell does it stop?”

## BioNews Trading Post



### BioGro's new directory of certified organic inputs

Now Available

The first-ever Directory of Certified Organic Inputs for Producers offers organic businesses with user-friendly information needed for compliance with BioGro's organic standards.

If an input is listed in the current directory, it can be used in certified organic production.

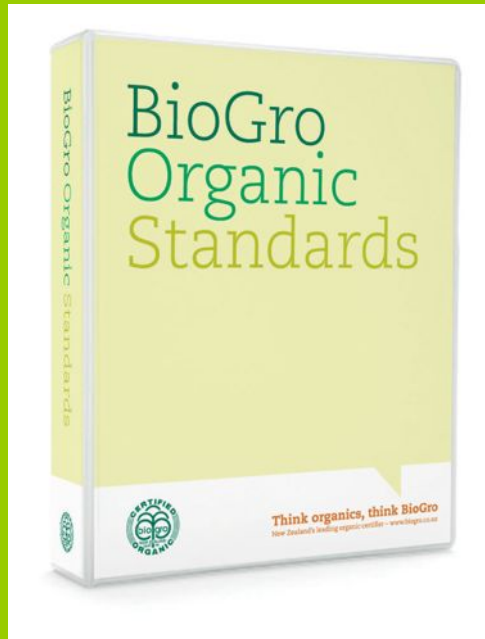
While the directory is aimed primarily at organic producers, the directory is a valuable resource for conventional farmers looking to move toward organics.

Home gardeners interested in organics will also find the directory useful.

The new directory is updated annually,  
and distributed free to BioGro-certified producers.

For those not BioGro-certified, it is available for \$28.70  
(inc GST and postage)  
by emailing [info@biogro.co.nz](mailto:info@biogro.co.nz).

## BioGro Standards



### **Our Organic Standards Redesigned, reissued and ready to order.**

We have reissued BioGro's organic standards to incorporate all the changes and amendments issued since April 2001.

The latest edition is much more user-friendly with specific standards for each sector (e.g. orchard production) issued as separate booklets.

In future, if any module is reviewed and therefore needs replacing, you only need to replace that particular module, not the entire document.

The new version is available in hard copy, CD or download from the BioGro website. Contact the BioGro office for an order form or email [info@BioGro.co.nz](mailto:info@BioGro.co.nz).

[www.BioGro.co.nz](http://www.BioGro.co.nz)