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# Module 1

## Introduction

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This document replaces the BIO-GRO New Zealand Organic Standards, 30 April 2001: Module 1

The reasons for change are:

- regular review required under IFOAM accreditation;
- incorporation of notified changes since the 30 April 2001 Standards were published;
- incorporation of other changes required for ongoing compliance with the IFOAM Basic Standards, the NZFSA OOAP, and overseas market regulations;
- organic production systems are continuously evolving.

This document may be altered at any time. It was current at the date in the header of each page of the document. It is recommended that anyone intending to use this document contact BioGro or check the BioGro website [www.biogro.co.nz](http://www.biogro.co.nz) to confirm that this is the current version.

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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 The New Zealand Biological Producers & Consumers Council Inc.

The New Zealand Biological Producers & Consumers Council Inc. (NZBPCC) was founded in 1983 to promote the interests of organic production in New Zealand. It was originally formed by representatives of the Soil & Health Association of New Zealand Inc., The Bio Dynamic Farming & Gardening Association in New Zealand Inc., and the Doubleday Research Association of New Zealand Inc., as an umbrella organisation for organic agriculture. NZBPCC is the owner of:

- The BioGro Organic Standards (the BioGro Standards, or the Standards), and
- The BioGro logos and trademarks, and
- BioGro New Zealand Ltd (BioGro), which carries out audits and certification to the BioGro Organic Standards, and licenses BioGro certified operators to apply the BioGro logos and trademarks to certified products and services, and
- Organic Certification New Zealand Ltd (OCNZ), which provides training and promotion services for organics.

NZBPCC's activities include:

- the maintenance and development of the BioGro Organic Standards; and
- promotion and support of organics.

NZBPCC is an independent, non-profit charity, funded entirely by membership, donations, and grants, and net revenue earned by BioGro NZ Ltd from inspection and certification fees, and by OCNZ from training and promotion services. NZBPCC and its subsidiaries have no commercial affiliations.

The BioGro Organic Standards are at the heart of the value of the BioGro logos and trademarks, and are the formal basis and reference point for all questions and decisions concerning BioGro certification.

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### 1.1.1 Evolution and Review of the Standards

The first BioGro Standards were developed in 1984, and comprised one page. The Standards have evolved since then in line with the rapid growth in organics. BioGro is the largest and leading organic trademark and certifier for New Zealand's domestic and export markets, and hence must meet the expectations of New Zealand and overseas organic consumers, as well as the regulatory requirements of overseas markets.

The BioGro Standards are reviewed and updated as required to maintain compliance with the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM) Basic Standards and all relevant export market regulations. Changes to the Standards are notified either through the regular BioGro Technical Bulletins or by separate notifications.

BioGro must also regularly review the Standards as a condition of IFOAM Accreditation, and these reviews are notified through the BioGro Technical Bulletins, on the BioGro website, and in other industry and organic sector publications. Submissions on the review of the Standards are received from BioGro licensees and members, organic consumers, and other interested parties.

In New Zealand, consumer input to the Standards is also obtained through key organic sector organizations such as Soil & Health Assn. BioGro's international credibility with consumers is achieved through its involvement as an active member of IFOAM, and by participating in IFOAM Conferences and the IFOAM development and review processes for the IFOAM Norms which include both the IFOAM Basic Standards and the IFOAM Accreditation Criteria. As an IFOAM Accredited certifier, the BioGro Standards must meet or exceed the IFOAM Basic Standards.

As the main certifier for New Zealand's exports of organic products, the BioGro Standards must meet or exceed all regulatory requirements of overseas markets. As at the date of this version of the Standards, the use of the label "organic" is governed by regulations in the EU (plant products as from 1993, livestock products as from August 2000), Japan (plant products as from 1 April 2001), USA (plant and livestock products as from August 2002), Taiwan (plant and livestock products as from 31 January 2009), and Canada (plant and livestock products as from June 2009).

Since BioGro faces a continually changing commercial, technological, and regulatory environment, BioGro reserves the right to alter, amend, or revise its Standards, procedures, and requirements at any time, as it sees fit, without being bound to give prior notice. Any changes to the Standards will be notified in Technical Bulletins, separate notifications, and on the website, and where necessary the Standards will be issued as a new version.

The most recent version of the Standards is the one that is currently valid as notified on the BioGro website, [www.biogro.co.nz](http://www.biogro.co.nz), and all certification decisions are based on it. Any previous versions are invalid and should be removed from circulation and use.

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### **1.1.2 Interpretation**

The interpretation given to the meaning of, and descriptions used in, these Standards is that of BioGro's Board of Directors and/or the NZBPCC, or their designated representatives, in their sole and absolute discretion. In all cases the singular includes the plural and the masculine includes the feminine and vice versa.

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### **1.1.3 Variations**

All practices that vary in any way from those permitted in these Standards must be documented in writing by the applicant/licensee. In the case of disputes, the onus is always on the applicant/licensee to present written documentation of prior approval from BioGro. Verbal agreements are not acceptable.

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### **1.1.4 Language of operation**

BioGro operates in the English language. Where BioGro certifies in countries other than New Zealand, and where some or all of the producers being certified in that other country aren't proficient in English, then the certification offered can only be Group Certification or certification of Wild Products, and it is the responsibility of the Group Manager for Group Certification or the Authorised Representative for Wild Products to present the relevant sections of the Standards to those producers in a way which is adapted to the language and knowledge of those producers.

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## 1.2 The BioGro logos and trademarks

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### 1.2.1 Discretion

Licences to use the BioGro logos and trademarks are issued at BioGro's unqualified discretion, and are not automatic once fees are paid and audits carried out. The absence of technical breaches of the Standards alone is not sufficient to qualify for BioGro certification, applicants must be able to demonstrate the implementation of a positive management system based on the principles and requirements of the Standards.

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### 1.2.2 Interpretation

The BioGro logos and trademarks are an assurance that the licensee is committed to production in accordance with the BioGro Standards and has satisfied regular audits by BioGro. It is not a guarantee that the product is free of all environmental pollution residues, as background contamination is now so widespread that such an assurance could be misleading.

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### 1.2.3 Precedence

The laws of the land take precedence at all times over these Standards, even if this could result in loss of certification. All relevant regulations and industry requirements must be complied with.

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## 2 Principles of organic production

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### 2.1 Organic production

Organic production includes such terms as biological husbandry, eco-agriculture, natural, sustainable and bio-dynamic. Organic production seeks to produce food of optimum quality and quantity, by holistic management of productive ecosystems. This approach endeavours to make the ecosystems sustainable and non-polluting of the environment, while providing a sustainable income to the producer, families and communities. Some of the main principles and methods that are employed aim to:

- a. Foster beneficial processes and interactions such as occur in natural ecosystems, thus encouraging internal stability rather than heavy reliance on external control measures.
- b. Reduce external control to the absolute minimum required for maintaining the chosen state of production. Inputs used aim to work as far as possible in conjunction with natural cycles, rather than trying to dominate such cycles.
- c. Achieve cycles/flows of nutrients and materials that have as few losses as possible. This requires the conservation and recycling of nutrients and organic material.
- d. Sustain and enhance the fertility and life-supporting ability of the production medium, including its biological, physical and chemical components. For land-based production systems great emphasis is placed on the importance of soil organic matter, and soil flora and fauna.
- e. Minimise any deleterious environmental effects of particular management practices, including any that may reduce the natural diversity to the detriment of plant and wildlife habitats.
- f. Ensure the ethical treatment of animals.
- g. Minimise the use of non-renewable resources.

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## 2.2 Organic agriculture

Organic agriculture is based on appropriate stocking rates, consideration of animal welfare, sound rotations using diverse stock and cropping strategies with the extensive but rational use of animal manure and other vegetative residues, and the use of appropriate cultivation techniques. It aims to avoid the use of soluble and synthetic fertilisers and synthetic pesticides, and prohibits the use of genetically modified organisms. Similar considerations apply, where appropriate, to aquaculture, fishing, and wild harvesting.

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## 3 Using the BioGro Organic Standards

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The BioGro standards contain all you have to do to produce and sell your products as organic using the BioGro logo. The standards are divided into Guiding principles, Recommendations and Requirements of the standard.

**a. Guiding principles**

These are the intended goals of organic production and processing. They are provided for information and guidance.

**b. Recommendations**

These sections contain practical suggestions for operators to implement in organic systems.

**c. Requirements of the Standards**

These sections contain the minimum requirements that an operator must meet to be certified organic and are in green text.

**d. Supplementary requirements for export markets and regulations**

Where there are specific requirements for export markets that may vary from the BioGro standards, these are identified by shaded boxes.

**e. Must and should**

For the purposes of this standard, the word “**must**” refers to practices that are actual requirements, including what you must get BioGro permission for and what you must not do. The word “**should**” refers to practices that are ideal or best organic practice.



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## 4 Advice and information regarding certified organic production

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To avoid any conflict of interests, BioGro New Zealand Ltd does not offer any direct advice other than interpretation of its Standards on what can and cannot be done on BioGro certified properties and in BioGro certified production.

Organic Certification New Zealand Ltd (OCNZ) does provide training and advice on organics, and promotion services for organics.

In both cases contact:

**BioGro New Zealand**

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Website: [www.biogro.co.nz](http://www.biogro.co.nz)

Information can also be obtained from:

**The Soil & Health Association of New Zealand (Inc.)**

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Email: [info@organicnz.org](mailto:info@organicnz.org)  
Website: [www.organicnz.org.nz](http://www.organicnz.org.nz)

**The Bio Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association in New Zealand Incorporated**

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*BioGro New Zealand is the trading name of the New Zealand Biological Producers & Consumers Council Incorporated, a not-for-profit incorporated society.*