



National Council of Women of New Zealand

Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa

Oral submission to the Primary Production Select Committee on the Organic Products Bill 22-1

By Sue Kedgley, Standing Committee Convener Consumer Affairs and Rae Duff, PWC at 1.20 pm on 11 June 2020 by Zoom

Primary Production Select Committee

We presented to Sub Committee B chaired by Kiri Allan

Members Present: Chairperson David Bennet (Nat); Kiritapu Allan (Lab); Rino Tirikatene (Lab);

Members Not Present: Andrew Falloon (Nat); Barbara Kruiger (Nat); Kieran McAnulty (Lab); Mark Patterson (NZ First); Hamish Walker (Nat);

Introduction

Kia Ora, Good afternoon, my name is Sue Kedgley and my colleague is Rae Duff. We are both members of the National Council of Women of New Zealand [NCWNZ].

NCWNZ has had a long-standing interest in consumer protection, the right of consumers to know what is in the food they eat and the promotion of safe, healthy food. We support the Organics Product bill and its goal to increase consumer confidence and trust when purchasing organic products.

We support the proposal for an organic mark as a way of making it easier for consumers to identify organic food and know that it is trustworthy.

We want to grow the domestic market for organic food, and we do have concerns about the proposed increased cost structure that seems to be implicit in the bill, and which could have the unintended effect of driving small growers out of the market.

Routine consumers of organic food, such as myself, have long had complete confidence in the present organic standards of Demeter and Biogro, and we question why these already existing organic standards, which enjoy high levels of consumer confidence, and have had considerable resource invested in them over the years, are not being used as the basis for the proposed organic standard and organic mark. In other words, do we need yet another standard, administered by MPI, in addition to the existing Biogro and Demeter organic standards?

As we have stated in our submission, we do not want to see a proposed new national standard becoming so onerous and expensive that it could drive small-scale organic producers out of the market.

Nor do we want to see organic production become more expensive, or small-scale producers deterred from switching to organic production, because of the expense of the proposed new system. For these reasons we would support a tiered system, so that small scale organic growers are not expected to face the same compliance costs as large producers and large-scale organic exporters.

We note that the legislation permits exemptions to be made and we would support small-scale producers being exempt from the proposed standard, provided that this would not result in consumers being misled about organic foods.

Kiri Allan thanked us for our submission and asked if we had any concerns about the lowering of the threshold proposition to a certain amount, for example the income threshold at the gate or farmer's market. Sue responded that we did not really have the expertise to respond and would leave it to the technical experts to work out the details of the standard. Our biggest concern was that we wanted to ensure that organic food did not become more expensive and the Bill did not penalise small growers of organic food as it was so beneficial to consumers.

Sue Kedgley, Consumer Affairs Standing Committee Convener
Rae Duff, Parliamentary Watch Committee.