

NZ Standards 8410:2003 Organic Standard.

This is an opinion piece by Bill Quinn.

A number of the submissions appear to be little more than driven by self-interest and anti-competitive objectives.

The idea that only certain businesses should be able to provide verification of an organic production system or that one is 'better than another' is not a basis to 'fix what is not broke'.

Many producers indicated in their submissions they just want the returns (\$) without 'the hassle and cost' of verification---many thought this would provide a cheap, government supported (free) service and only one audit.

The first point is very clear in the Bill and associated papers that cost recovery will lead to higher costs for both producer and consumer. With regard to easing the verification process and reduction in needing to meet the importing requirements of other nations --- this also will not change quickly or dramatically from the current, we will still need to meet the importing nations regulations and this will require some form of verification as seen in the USA/ EU equivalency arrangement.

Many submissions elude to products at retail that claim organic status yet are not certified by one of the 4 recognised agencies (AsureQuality, BioGro, Demeter, OrganicFarmNZ), some of these products do however state clearly that they are produced in 'accordance with NZ Standard 8410'.

Who is Standards NZ?

<https://www.standards.govt.nz/about-us/>

Standards New Zealand is a business unit within the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. We are New Zealand's leading developer of standards and standards based solutions

The majority of our standards are developed in partnership with Standards Australia. As New Zealand's representative for the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), Standards New Zealand ensures that New Zealand has a voice in the international standards community.

So what is NZS8410?

This is a 'standard' produced in 2003 by many of those who have made submissions in June 2018!

It is a NZ Government department/ministry document. Funded by MAF (now MPI)

The standard committee thanks 23 organisations for their input to creating the Organic Standard.

These included 8 organisations directly involved in providing organic certification or organic representation at the time and also industry bodies that have organic production as part of their membership. It also included NZ government ministries, general primary production organisations, Maori representation, research and others to provide a strong 'industry' document.

It also notes the support and relationship with the Australian National Standard for Organic and Bio-Dynamic Produce. This is still the base of organic claims in Australia and will remain so under the NZ / Aust. trade agreements with regards to organic products imported to NZ if the proposed legislation is enacted.

One of the representative's role in creating this standard received an Honour in the 2020 New Year's Honours. <https://dpmc.govt.nz/honours/lists/ny2020-mnzm> see citation at base of this article.

So who uses it?

A small number of producers use NZS8410 to provide market provenance as to the production methods used in their operation.

The standout one most people will see at the supermarket, and most commented on in submissions and press releases/articles over the years is Sungold organic eggs or Golden Downs organic eggs. These are both trade names relating to the organic arm of the Nelson based Ewing Poultry Ltd.

Egg carton photo lower on page.

<https://sungold.co.nz/oureggs.html>

How can this be used in the marketplace?

NZS8410 provides support to a credence claim.

This is a serious matter that can be challenged—the parties using this NZS have not made up some loose rules on the back of an envelope, they purport to be producing product to a NZ Government supported document relating to their market claim.

The document states clearly matters pertaining to origin of livestock and feed, stocking rates and healthcare etc., etc. and to verification.

You don't believe them?

Then it is everyone's right to challenge them via the Fair Trading Act administered by the NZ Commerce Commission.

This does not just apply to NZS8410 claims but to all 'credence claims' and the CC has challenged various entities (including high profile BioGro certified processors/marketers) in the past ([click here](#)).

OrganicAg has requested information under the Official Information Act as to the complaints registered relating to organic compliance—the resulting documents will be added upon delivery (first week of May 2020)

Another case is Wholesome who promote certified organic eggs, (photo lower) from their website;

Organic certified eggs



These are the pride and joy of our company. So wholesome that we couldn't help but naming this brand after our own name. Fully complying with the highest organic standards, these eggs delight even the most demanding consumers. Our organic farmers have been audited and accredited to our Wholesome NZ Organic Standards by Avivet, a specialist in avian health who provides impartial advices for farmers in New Zealand and the South Pacific. Principle Neil Christensen is of course an approved IATCA auditor cert LA-2105-SC

So again if in doubt ask the grower for the standards, ask the auditor re the operation. If not fully satisfied report to the Commerce Commission (FTA).

So do we support consumer choice and the principle of 'buyer beware', ensuring the consumer has enough information to choose a particular product that meets their expectation balanced by the price point. Or do I wish in this small domestic market to have one organic interpretation administered by the State.

We do have the safeguards currently ----if we choose to use them.

Bill Quinn

OrganicAg.





<https://dpmc.govt.nz/honours/lists/ny2020-mnzm>

WRIGHT, Mr David Philip

For services to biodynamic agriculture

Mr David Wright worked as the Secretary of the Bio Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association charity (Biodynamics NZ) for 27 years and helped the development of the knowledge and practice of biodynamic agriculture and horticulture in New Zealand.

Mr Wright was the sole full-time employee of Biodynamics NZ for the majority of his tenure, working effectively as a paid volunteer for minimal remuneration, and was made a Life Member of the Association in 2018. He served on the Board of BioGro New Zealand between 1995 and 2015. He was a member of the Board of Organics Aotearoa New Zealand from its founding in 2005 until 2011. He was a founding Trustee of the Kete Ora Charitable Trust, set up in 1997 to enable education and research into biodynamic and organic agricultural practices. He was Treasurer and Trustee until stepping down in 2017. He has been Secretary and continues as Inspector for Demeter New Zealand on a voluntary basis, facilitating interactions between Demeter New Zealand and Demeter International. He has been instrumental over the years in the development of New Zealand's Demeter Biodynamic Certification standards to an equivalent of Demeter International's standards. Mr Wright was a member of the team that developed the NZS8410:2003 Organic Production minimum standard for defining the term "organic" in New Zealand in the early 2000s.