



Soil & Health Association (Est. 1941)
Healthy Soil, Healthy Food, Healthy People

Soil & Health AGM September 2021

Management Report – Peter Huggins

Membership

Our current membership is 1738. We also have about 200 non-member magazine subscribers (for example people who have been gifted a subscription, or who have recently expired and are expected to renew).

Membership growth

Efforts to increase membership numbers have focused on improved communication to retain existing members on the one hand, and magazine marketing and promotion to gain new members on the other.

Soil & Health memberships expire on a rolling basis every two months, as people receive their sixth and final magazine issue. We are seeing roughly a 30-50% drop off rate of members each time this occurs. It seems like a high rate of churn; however, we have not benchmarked this against other organisations or magazine publishers, so it may be normal. Efforts to retain more of our current members are probably the easiest way to build membership numbers and we will continue to explore how to do this.

We attract roughly 40 brand new members a month. We wish to build on this number further. We believe that improved magazine marketing is a key pathway to increasing the number of new members. Work to market the magazine professionally began in earnest in December 2020 and culminated in the magazine review which was finalised in July 2021. More information on this is available below.

Note: We are also trialling a new ‘online reader’ service through the magazine website. This allows people to read our articles (online only) for a paid subscription rate of \$2 per month (\$24 a year). People using this service are not Soil & Health members and do not receive the magazine. Since the launch of this service at the end of August 2021 we have had a handful of people sign up and will be monitoring whether this is a useful and worthwhile thing to continue.

New website functions for members

Our new membership system is now a year old and is proving up to most tasks we throw at it. This includes facilitating member-only web content which is fully integrated with the OrganicNZ website. We have recently begun publishing magazine articles digitally for paid subscribers. We will continue to build this back catalogue of articles which is available for all members. Further online functions for members are also being explored.

Magazine Review

Late in 2020 National Council agreed a budget and timeline for reviewing the audience and marketing orientation of Organic NZ magazine. This review was based on two key assumptions: that Organic NZ is a tool to reach a wide and varied audience with our message, and that it's a way to help build revenue for the association.

Soil & Health engaged GoodSense which is an Auckland based ethical marketing company. With the support of GoodSense, the magazine team and national council collectively reviewed and considered the audiences and potential future direction for the magazine. Two key audiences were adopted for our marketing strategy. These include the familiar and traditional 'committed organic' audience which is probably representative of most of the membership, and an adjacent 'generation zero waste' audience that is more representative of younger environmental and food-conscious people.

A new magazine website, look and feel resulted from this review. In addition we have been working as a team to commission more articles with the two key audiences in mind. We are marketing and advertising the magazine directly to these audiences and will continue to do so over the coming 12-24 months.

Soil4Climate

Our flagship climate change project has been delayed and frustrated by Covid-19 restrictions over the last year. However, we have still been able to deliver six locations where soil testing and education on soil health has taken place.

We are currently working with the Auckland branch to establish our first Auckland test location.

The future of this project will depend on finding increased numbers of individuals confident in undertaking soil testing, and partnerships with community gardens to provide test sites.

Glyphosate campaign

We have successfully launched an online petition and campaign resource highlighting the need for stronger regulation on glyphosate.

This campaign is timely, with the EPA now in the process of reviewing glyphosate. This process gives the Soil & Health Association a unique opportunity to highlight the benefits of going glyphosate-free, and could also better establish Soil & Health as a reliable source of public comment and information on glyphosate.

Next steps for the glyphosate campaign include a standalone campaign website and ground operation focused on organic consumers. We hope to begin delivering this work between now and Christmas.

Organic Week

The Soil & Health Association has taken a lead role in organising and running Organic Week this year.

Thanks to the hard work of our national promoter Tiffany Tompkins, Organic Week is a hugely successful sponsored project this year with a greater national profile and reach than ever before.

It is very sad and disappointing that the recent Delta variant outbreak has forced the cancellation of in person events. However we have been able (again due to Tiffany's hard work) to turn this around into a series of online events.

We think association members can be proud of the role we have played in helping to bring the organic sector together around Organic Week, and we can look forward to continued improvements as we plan for next year and beyond!

Financial

Please see the annual performance report filed separately.

Our financial position overall reflects a similar year to the 2019-20 financial year. Given the feared impacts of Covid-19 on our business, we can be satisfied with this result.

Please note that an accounting change is responsible for an apparent large increase in magazine sales value, and a corresponding increase in magazine production costs. This is a change of accounting practise recommended to us by our accountant. It means that we now accrue the full value of the retail magazines sold to our commercial distributor Ovato (about \$20k per issue) and subsequently lodge a cost against production for all returned magazines (unsold) from stores. This is typically about \$13k per issue. In previous years we have only accounted for actual cash income and therefore have not been recording the lost revenue represented by the returned magazines.

Please also note that in the previous year (2019-20) we received a large bequest. This is the reason for the difference in surplus this year, which reflects the difference in donations income.

Pete Huggins

General Manager, Soil & Health Association of New Zealand