

# 2022 Annual General Meeting

## Draft Minutes

24 September 2022, 9.15am, Prefab Hall, Wellington

Minute Taker: Meghan Read

Chairperson: Marion Wood



### 1. Welcome & Notice of General Business

Marion Wood opened the meeting by welcoming members and reading the agenda. Marion also noted the process and limitations of using Zoom alongside the meeting.

### 2. Acceptance of Agenda

Marion received agreement of agenda from the meeting. Marion inquired as to any general business the meeting would like to raise. Bronwyn Stevenson raised the topic of whether Organic NZ Magazine is being received by BioGro licensees.

**Decision:** The topic of whether Organic NZ Magazine is being received by BioGro licensees was accepted as a piece of general business.

### 3. Attendance and Apologies

In attendance: Monique Bartosh, Clare Bleakley, Derek Broadmore, Kath Dewar, Zane Brown, Steffan Browning, Jim Drury, Pete Huggins, Don Hunter (by Zoom), Charles Hyland, Philippa Jamieson, Noel Josephson, Jim Kebell, Jenny Lux, Matt Morris, Liam Prince (non-member attendee), Meghan Read, Joseph Stevens (non-member attendee), Bronwyn Stevenson, Tiffany Tompkins, Joanne Turner, Greg Turner, Alison White, Emma Wilson, Marion Wood, Gillian Woods (by Zoom), David Woods (by Zoom), Pete Huggins

Apologies recorded: Brendan Hoare, Li Chen, Barbara Collis, Roseanne Allen, Bernie Mabbs.

### 4. Confirmation of the Minutes of the 2021 AGM

**Decision:** Minutes from the last AGM were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

### 5. Introduction of voting for the National Council Election

Pete Huggins outlined that there were four places on National Council and four nominations.

Marion Wood proposed that the meeting suspend the constitution in order to decide on the nominations by general consensus without casting individual votes. Marion also proposed the same process be applied to the two remits.

Marion proposed, Chris Morrison seconded.

**Decision:** it was agreed that the meeting suspend the constitution in order to decide on the nominations by general consensus without casting individual votes.

## 6. Nominees address to members

Jenny Lux introduced the nominees for National Council: Barbara Collis, Don Hunter, Charles Hyland, and Marion Wood.

Each nominee addressed the meeting for three minutes. Don Hunter addressed the meeting via Zoom. Marion Wood spoke on her own behalf as well as on the behalf of Barbara Collis.

There were no questions for the nominees from the meeting.

Pete Huggins proposed that all four nominees be elected to the National Council. Steffan Browning seconded.

**Decision:** Barbara Collis, Don Hunter, Charles Hyland, and Marion Wood were elected to the National Council.

## 7. Chair's report

The report was tabled by Marion Wood and was received by the meeting.

The Chair thanked past councillors Jodie Bruning and Bernie Mabbs, particularly Jodie's work with anti-GE and glyphosate, and Bernie's work within the Pasifika branch of organics.

Marion noted in particular the negative impact of Covid, particularly to Organic Week 2021 and Organic NZ magazine; the promotion of Organic Regenerative Agriculture (ORA) as key to Soil and Health's current strategy; and the upcoming work to the constitution due to the passing of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022.

Marion also gave acknowledgement to Tiffany Tompkins and Pete Huggins for their work with Organic Week 2021 and recognised the work that underpinned the refresh of Organic NZ magazine in late 2021.

Marion recognised Philippa Jamieson and Charles Merfield for their work with the advocacy of low- and no-till farming. She thanked the tangata whenua of Aotearoa, particularly Te Waka Kai Ora, and cited Soil and Health's support of Hua Parakore as an example of Soil and Health's ongoing support to get like-minded organisations off the ground.

She thanked Jenny Lux for her work in championing small organic growers and Pete for his lobbying through Parliament.

Marion spoke to Soil and Health's involvement with BioGro. She thanked Donald Nordeng for his work as CEO.

Marion thanked Pete Huggins, Meghan Read, and Rachel Clare for their work with the magazine.

## 8. Manager's report

The report was tabled by Pete Huggins and was received by the meeting.

Pete noted in particular the support of members over the difficult last two and a half years; the upcoming work for Organic Week 2022; the need for a reappraisal of finances due to rising magazine production costs. Pete also announced the appointment of a new editor for Organic NZ magazine, Sheryn Dean.

Pete thanked Tiffany Tompkins for her work during Organic Week.

Pete acknowledged the work of Philippa Jamieson as previous editor of Organic NZ magazine.

Pete spoke to the work begun during the Strategy Hui 2021, around organic and regenerative agriculture in Aotearoa.

Pete acknowledged OANZ and the work of Tiffany and Chris. He acknowledged OTANZ and Greenpeace for their partnerships.

Pete acknowledged the beginning of partnerships with two organisations, Health Coalition Aotearoa and the Climate Action Network.

He acknowledged the work and resources that Organic Week 2022 will need and thanks the Organic Week Steering Group for the help.

Pete acknowledged the work begun with EPA and GE-Free Coalition and spoke to the desire to continue this significant work.

Pete acknowledged the small grants that were made available to Soil and Health members this year.

Pete acknowledged that the majority of his work is with Organic NZ magazine, and that the magazine is Soil and Health Association's main source of revenue. Pete announced that there will be a new editor, Sheryn Dean, beginning in three weeks.

Pete acknowledged the need for a reappraisal of finances due to rising costs of magazine production.

Steffan Browning raised Organic NZ magazine's perceived lack of distribution and asked for it to be more significantly considered as a priority. He also acknowledged his support of rebalancing the content, due to Organic NZ's unique quality as the only organic magazine in New Zealand. Pete acknowledged the challenges with distribution and spoke to the efforts the magazine team had put to this over the last year.

Matt Morris asked after how many members there are of Organic NZ membership.

Pete confirmed the current financial membership is 1840.

Clinton Chambers asked about partnerships with other news and media outlets about resharing content.

Pete responded that this was an active area of work, but that the larger news organisations had not been interested at this stage.

Clare Beakley asked after any work distributing to libraries and sharing work with farming papers.

Pete confirmed that libraries are a strong source of revenue, and thanked Clare for the suggestion about farming papers.

Philippa Jamieson asked after how many digital subscribers we have.

Pete confirmed that there are about 30 digital readers.

Jenny Lux closed this section by asking for a vote of thanks for Pete's work, particularly due to Pete only working part time hours. She asked the meeting to support Pete and the magazine through their own advocacy.

## 9. Joseph Stewart of BioGro

Joseph presented an update from BioGro as the current chairperson. He informed the meeting of various recent appointments to the BioGro board, acknowledging the expertise in dairy, horticulture, kiwifruit, and winegrowers on the board.

He presented BioGro's figures from the last year, with a strong revenue and over 1000 licensees. He acknowledged the aggregation of small growers being absorbed by larger corporations.

He acknowledged the priority of collaboration with the wider organic community moving forward and thanked Soil and Health for their partnership.

Steffan Browning asked if a reason has been identified as to why the smaller growers are dropping off.

Joseph acknowledged older licensees moving on, the impacts of Covid, and the cost of certification.

Steffan also asked if BioGro is considering strengthening the framework of BioGro's auditing, specifically asking after soil carbon.

Joseph spoke to BioGro's efforts but acknowledged that a 'one size fits all' approach can't be applied across the sector.

Kath Dewar asked if a second tier of certification could be added as an additional organic regenerative license.

Joseph acknowledged this as an ongoing consideration of BioGro and recognised the compliance pressure on the licensees within the current licensing structure. A new level of certification, however, would incur a large amount of training for BioGro auditors.

Chris Morrison brought up the Organic Products and Production Bill and asked about BioGro's strategy navigating this while remaining viable.

Joseph thanked BioGro CEO Donald Nordeng for his focus on the Bill and ensuring BioGro's future as the legislation changes the operating environment.

Tiffany Tompkins asked how OANZ and the organic sector could better access the data BioGro collects.

Joseph acknowledged the Market Report as a useful resource, and that the new digital platform better enables monitoring and mapping of data.

Clare Beakley asked if there can be a comparison of data between the soil of organic growers versus the soil of regenerative growers that use pesticides such as glyphosate.

Joseph acknowledged the importance of these comparisons but said that this work was not within BioGro's role as certifiers.

## 10. Acceptance of financial statements

Marion acknowledged the financial statements submitted to the meeting and asked for questions about the financial statements.

Steffan asked about increased costs, such as contractors and magazine production.

Pete acknowledged that most of these costs relate to the returned magazine costs from Are Direct, which were previously unreported. He also pointed out that paper costs have increased by 50% over the last year.

Chris asked which percentage of BioGro surplus is donated to Soil and Health.

Marion's answer was a third of BioGro's income.

Joseph spoke to the fairness of this redistribution considering BioGro's priorities of a business.

Clare asked where most of the expenses have come from over the last financial year.

Pete's answer was the redesign of the magazine, a decision made by the National Council.

Philippa asked how much money Soil and Health donated to Te Waka Kai Ora.

Marion answered as \$47,000 paid in two tranches. The second tranche will be granted upon confirmation that Te Waka Kai Ora is employing a kaiwhakahaere for a second year.

Marion Wood sought agreement to approve the Soil & Health Association financial statements, including BioGro's accounts.

Steffan proposed, Clare seconded.

**Decision:** the 2022 Soil & Health Association financial statements were approved.

Marion Wood sought agreement to the consolidated financial statements of the Soil & Health Group (including BioGro).

Chris proposed, Joanne seconded.

**Decision:** the 2022 consolidated financial statements of the Soil & Health Group were approved.

## 11. Strategy report

A recorded presentation was given by Bernie Mabbs. Four focus areas were identified: Organic Regenerative Agriculture, climate change, healthy food, cohesion and unity. Results from a recent members' survey were included.

Matt raised if an opt-in survey could be created for new members. This was acknowledged by National Council and Pete stated the ongoing discussion around surveying new, renewing, and leaving members.

Steffan thanked Bernie for her input as a previous National Councillor.

## **12. Break – 11am to 11.15am**

## **13. Guest Speaker – Liam Prince from Kaicycle.**

Marion introduced Liam to the meeting. Liam presented the work Kaicycle has undertaken since 2015, their verification journey with Hua Parakore, and their vision for expansion.

## **14. Constitution update**

Pete explained the process regarding a review of the constitution, with a view to a new version being adopted at AGM 2023, triggered by the passing of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022.

Three types of changes are being suggested.

- Firstly, the necessary changes resulting from new law; including a disputes resolution process and clear rules on how people cease to be members.
- Secondly, how branches are set up within the organization, including how we encourage members to personally take up work of Soil and Health Association.
- Thirdly, how the rules are written and presented in order to be more concise and clear.

Jenny stated that there is a new draft constitution, which will be discussed and amended over the next year with input from interested members.

Joanne Turner asked as to the timeline for these changes. Jenny answered that the changes cannot be made before October 2023, and organisations will have two to three years from October 2023 to make these changes.

## **15. Remits**

Alison White and Clare Bleakley presented two remits

### **Remit 1 (Alison White/Claire Bleakley) – Urge set up of Technology Ethics Council**

That the Soil & Health National Council write to appropriate MPs in all the major political parties to urge them to (re-)establish a Technology Ethics Council that would deal with emerging technologies such as gene editing, gene therapies and their various uses, synthetic biology, nanotechnology, geoengineering and artificial intelligence.

Rationale: These new technologies are set to quite possibly negatively impact all aspects of life and the environment, and in particular present new challenges to the principles and values of the organic community. Since the disestablishment of the Bioethics Council, Toi Te Taiao, in 2009, there has been no body of independent experts overseeing the moral or ethical impacts of such technologies in New Zealand. Commercial pressures risk the voices of the organic community, tangata whenua and diverse communities being silenced or misled. We note with concern the immediate global push by powerful interests to deregulate gene editing (such a bill is currently before the UK parliament), with consequences including unlabelled food and a potential threat to organic growing. NZ and overseas organic standards do not permit any GE contamination threshold.

Claire Bleakley noted that a new council could be counterproductive if appointed solely by government and industry.

Kath raised caution with the remit due to the possible calibre of the Technology Ethics Council members being nominated by the government.

Philippa Jamieson raised her support with the remit as submitted to the meeting.

Alison proposed the remit, Clare seconded.

**Decision:** Remit 1 was agreed by the meeting.

### **Remit 2 (Alison White/Claire Bleakley) – Climate change & organic agriculture**

That the Soil & Health National Council write to appropriate MPs in all the major political parties to emphasise to them how vital a role that carbon cycling in a healthy soil and organic agriculture in particular can play in mitigating New Zealand's role in climate change.

Rationale: As one of the oldest and leading proponents of organic growing in New Zealand, Soil & Health has a responsibility to raise awareness of the importance of soil health in relation to reducing carbon in the atmosphere. There is a risk that industry sectors will push high tech and profit-making solutions at the expense of a healthy and diverse ecosystem. For too long organic agriculture has been sidelined by the Government, except for exports.

Pete raised his and Tiffany's continuing work in lobbying Parliament over the content of the letter requested.

Philippa raised that Jon Manhire's work provides evidence of the impact of soil health.

Bronwyn Stevenson raised the need for a scientist to publicise the impact of soil health.

Greg Turner raised that the key to the success of the remit is the wording, relating to what the letter asks of Parliament.

Matt Morris raised the timing of the delivery of the remit.

Steffan Browning raised the importance of good practice organic agriculture.

Alison proposed the remit, Clare seconded.

**Decision:** Remit 2 was agreed by the meeting.

## **16. Proposal of honorary life membership**

Marion Wood proposed that Philippa Jamieson be granted honorary life membership (HLM) of the Soil and Health Association. Marion acknowledged the depth of gratitude Soil and Health has for Philippa's work, both before, during, and after her 13 years as editor of Organic NZ magazine. She thanked Philippa for her ongoing support of Soil and Health's advocacy.

**Decision:** Philippa Jamieson was confirmed as an honorary life member of Soil & Health.

Philippa thanked the meeting for her nomination and acknowledged the work and support of many others along her journey with Soil and Health.

## **17. Branch reports**

Time was given to each regional branch to present to the meeting.

Emma Wilson from the Auckland branch, as vice president and treasurer, spoke about the work of the branch, particularly noting the field trips. She thanked Zane Brown for his videography work. There are currently 46 members of the branch.

Steffan asked if the members of the Auckland branch are also members of the Soil and Association, the answer of which was some, depending on their priorities.

Matt Morris from the Canterbury branch notified the meeting that the branch has closed as a legal entity. The branch remains open as a membership branch rather than an incorporated society.

## **18. General Business**

Bronwyn Stevenson, representing the Southern Organic Group, raised that BioGro licensees no longer receive the Organic NZ magazine as part of their BioGro license and requested this be raised with the BioGro board. Marion acknowledged this and stated this would be raised with BioGro.

Alison White shared that the Safe Food Campaign had submitted to Parliament, asking for the urgent reassessment and ban of chlorpyrifos. The Safe Food Campaign will submit a petition and asked for Soil and Health Associations' support.

Matt Morris raised that the newly appointed King Charles III is a public advocate of organics and asked whether this should spur any contact with the Royal household from the Soil and Health Association.

## **19. Meeting closed**

Marion thanked the meeting for their attendance and support and reiterated Soil and Health's priority to unify the organic sector. The chair closed the meeting.

Meeting ended 12.40pm