

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER - 8B – GMO Hearing Waikato District Plan.

HEARING OF SUBMISSIONS BY COMMISSIONERS OF THE WAIKATO DISTRICT COUNCIL

EVIDENCE OF JESIAH ALEXANDER ON BEHALF OF
GE FREE NEW ZEALAND

Dated 19 December 2019

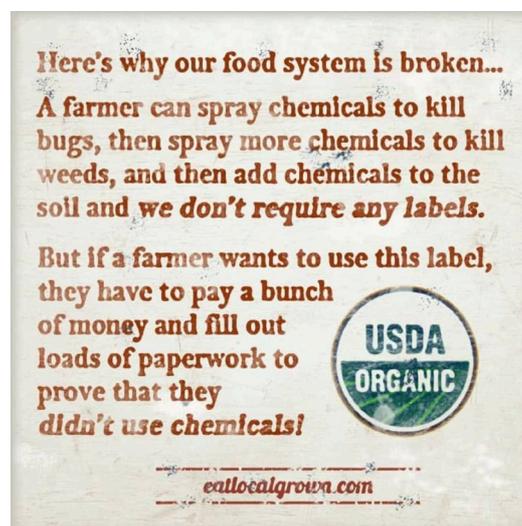
Alexander Organics
133 Flume Road
Cambridge.

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Jesiah Alexander. I am the owner of Alexander Organics Limited - a certified organic farm in Cambridge that sells (MPI Registered) raw milk, eggs and vegetables to the local Cambridge and Hamilton community. All of these are certified organic.
2. I farm with my wife Ellen.
3. We have a 123 acre/ 50 hectare property.
4. We have 180 beautiful mixed age cows, 24 Chickens: 8 Ducks: 4 Sheep.
5. The farm is a MPI Registered Raw Milk Provider.
6. I sell organic produce in the farm shop.
7. We certify the property with BIOGRO NZ.
8. We are
9. Full NZ Organic Certified
10. Full EU Organic Certified
11. Full NOP Organic Certified

LIFESTYLE AND BUSINESS

12. We are currently milking two herds, 13 cows in our raw milk herd and 88 cows in our factory supply herd.
13. As an organic farm, genetically modified/engineered/ gene edited organisms (GMO's) are prohibited in any form. All seeds purchased, stock grazing, feed imported all has to come with a declaration stating that no GMO foods or GE seed or forage fed to the stock.
14. Once GMOS are released into the Waikato, all farmers, non-GM and organic, will have to put in place, segregated facilities, huge testing regimes and protocols to show their produce is not GM contaminated.
15. This would immediately threaten our GE Free markets and affect our Clean Green reputation.
16. There are huge fines for non-compliance and mislabeling produce.
17. This is going to add cost to all farmers having to prove and record that our produce hasn't been contaminated with GMO's.
18. If GE's are released the possibility of my business becoming un-successful and failing altogether is extremely high.
19. If, I am unable to prove that my produce is able to uphold the certified organic standards, I would loose Organic certification.
20. My wife and I are both sustained 100% from our certified organic farm and farm shop. It is a personal choice for us to farm and eat this way, and we don't want to lose the ability to guarantee our practices because someone wants to play with plant genes.
21. I have chosen this as a lifestyle for me, Organic Farming is more than just a job or a business.
22. For me Organic Farming is Sustainable, Regenerative, Environmental, Biological and will help to affect climate extremes we are going to face.



23. I enjoy the real passion and a desire to be farming in a style that pays the bills and also looks after the earth/soil in the long term. Most of the time this takes a lot more effort and determination to achieve this while still being economic.
24. I love seeing the soil buzzing with life - from the fungi and bacteria thriving around all the healthy roots, nematodes and protozoa to the more obvious sign of healthy soils and that is WORMS! The soils best friend when it comes to soil life. That is just a small but effective sign that I am on the right path and that all the hard work and observation is paying off.
25. I do not use antibiotics and other conventional medicine. We like to aid our cows to have strong immunities.
26. Our cows always have Raw Himalayan Mineral Salt - these salts contain up to 80 different trace elements that are important to the animals' gut biology and general health.
27. They have Organic Apple Cider Vinegar with Garlic and a strong brew of Seaweed Extract that the cows consume through their water each day.
28. A good diversity of forage is also important to keep the cows healthy, just eating a single type of Rye Grass and Clover really isn't going to give the cow the best possible nutrients she needs. I don't thrive on eating only one food (like potatoes) all day every day so why would an animal either?
29. We like to have a large of diverse sward of pasture plants so they are getting all different types of proteins, fats (omega oils) and fibre everyday.



30. Our bees love all the different clovers and trees to pollinate and collect nectar from and the birds have plenty of habitat to call home.
31. I have observed that sustainable, diverse, regenerative farming methods help the environment and biology of the soil water and air. They also help keep the animals in top form and their immunity strong.
32. Organic Farming is Awesome and we wouldn't do it any other way!

RAW MILK HERD.

33. We are registered with the Ministry of Primary Industries (NZ) to supply raw milk directly to the consumer under the MPI RSC (Raw Milk for Sale to Consumers) document. Part of the registration is an annual audit from an independent verifier that confirms we have complied with the RSC.
34. The milk we supply to the public from our official 'Raw Milk Herd' is a completely separate herd.
35. The herd has all been individually tested for various pathogens and had a veterinarian sign off to say they are healthy.
36. The Raw Milk cows are always milked before our 'main herd'. This ensures the dairy is always clean to help eliminate any risk of bacteria ending up in your milk.
37. Every day before the shop opens we test our milk for the Somatic Cell Count reading. We have always had clean results.

CONCERNS OVER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

38. New Zealand INC. is considered around the World as the 'clean and green' country. Our animals are grass fed, low pesticide use and GE Free.
39. Organic Aotearoa New Zealand (OANZ) has been documenting the growth in the Organic Industry for many years. Their Organic Sector Market Report¹ released in 2018 found
 - *The New Zealand organic sector has grown 30 per cent since 2015 to now be worth \$600 million per year, buoyed by consumer demand here and globally.*
 - *The 2018 OANZ Organic Market shows retail sales of organic products are growing twice as fast as conventional products, up 8.8% to \$245 million.*
 - *Independent research in the report shows that eight out of 10 Kiwi consumers are buying organic fresh, frozen or packaged food and beauty products at least fortnightly. Just under half (48%) say they purchase organic products because they are concerned for the environment and sustainability.*
 - *Exports are booming, up 42 per cent since 2015 to \$355 million.*
40. Overseas studies show that genetically engineered (GE) crops need increased amount of herbicide and pesticides.
41. I am concerned after reading the Food and Water Watch report on Super weeds.² The report documents weed resistance to a range of herbicides now used on GE tolerant crops, Weed resistance and insect tolerance has risen significantly since the advent of GE crops in the US where it is seriously affecting farmers' economic viability. (**Appendix 1**)
42. CropWatch in Australia has also documented the unwanted contamination of farmers fields and seeds stocks from GM canola³. (**Appendix 2**)
43. I believe that the increased use of pesticides on the GE crops will detrimentally affect the soils, insect pollinators and increase the level of pesticides in our food.
44. Pesticides are proving world wide to have ill effects on our waterways, bird life and soil ecosystems invertebrates, which are all cogs in the wheel to a healthy environment.

¹ <http://www.oanz.org/publications/reports.html>

² Superweeds. *Food and Water Watch* (2013)

³ CropWatch - Summary of GM contamination incidents and their consequences in Australia

45. When you start using synthetic chemicals other issues arise requiring another chemical control, which will be never ending and polluting to our environment.
46. I have seen over the last 10 years a considerable rise in herbicides like “Round-up” that is hampering NZ’s reputation. Allowing GE seeds and crops to grown will only harm our reputation as a country even more.
47. The increased use of pesticides necessary to farm with GE crops will also further degrade our waterways - an issue that is seen by the urban New Zealander as a big farming issue. The on-going and non-targeted affects of pesticides and fertilisers are a huge part why waterways are in the state they are.
48. Spraying and using more pesticides will only further degrade them, and also degrade the urban New Zealander’s view of us farmers - whether we’re organic or not.
49. I have read that GE ryegrass is being trialed in the US⁴. If it was released and grown in the Waikato it cannot be contained and if it spread onto my paddocks would threaten my organic status and lifestyle.

OUR CUSTOMERS AND

50. Our local customers are actively seeking out our Organic milk and produce.
51. National Domestic markets are seeking products because they know that certified organic farms do not use GE products and they can rest assured that buying from certified organic means they are avoiding consuming any GE foods.
52. My business holds a reputation for being certified organic and our customers buy from us knowing they are eating humanely farmed, pesticide free, GE Free produce.

STAYING GE FREE.

53. However, the highest concern I have is from GE crops and pasture plants.
54. I have read the report on GM contamination of Organic famers⁵ and the economic losses the farmers have had in relation to GM contamination. (Appendix 3)
55. I am aware that whilst under field trial in 2003 there was an escape of GM Round Up resistant bent grass. The FDA has declined commercial release of the GM grass and called for Monsanto/ Simplot to actively eradicate it. The US fish and Water Society tested the spread and concluded that,

“if it was ever commercially approved, the grass would escape, spread, and edge-out native species and take over their habitat – likely causing the extinction of at least three endangered species (two endangered plants and a butterfly, the Fender Blue Butterfly), and potentially dozens more endangered species.” (2007)
56. Another investigative article by Julia Rosen ⁶ (2018) found that Eastern Oregon farmers were reporting that the GM bent grass has spread throughout Oregon and other counties, causing countries to stop imports, raised cost for testing and eradication and finding contamination of community land. (Appendix 4)
57. Any release of GE means our not only our cow but free-range chickens, ducks and sheep would lose certification if GE spreads onto our farm.

⁴ <https://www.agresearch.co.nz/news/hme-ryegrass-making-steady-progress/>

⁵ Organic Farmers Pay the Price for GMO Contamination (2015)

⁶ <https://www.hcn.org/issues/50.11/plants-genetically-modified-grass-creeps-across-eastern-oregon>

58. If we had a neighbouring property plant a GE crop of rye grass right beside our boundary the grass would quite quickly cross-pollinate with our grass. I would find it difficult to detect until the milk spiked a GE marker.
59. I would immediately be in breach of my contract with Fonterra, lose my organic certification status and my business would collapse.
60. The raw milk I sell would breach the consumer guarantees Act and I could be sued by the individuals that are buying our products. They are buying the milk to avoid pesticides, and GE supplements.
61. If GM/GE crops were released into Waikato, my passion for Organic farming would be crushed and the stress would really affect my whole family and lifestyle.

Summary

1. Any GE plants into the Waikato area would be an economic disaster to my business.
2. I ask that the Waikato district Council recognize my and my family's choice of lifestyle and place precautionary and prohibitive GMO rules in its plan.

Dated

Jesiah Alexander.

Attachments:

Appendix 1 Superweeds. *Food and Water Watch* (2013)

Appendix 2 CropWatch - Summary of GM contamination incidents and their consequences in Australia

Appendix 3 Organic Farmers Pay the Price for GMO Contamination (2015)

Appendix 4 GM Plants creeping across Oregon (2018)