

Website

Other certifiers list licensees on websites. Demeter NZ will do the same, but listing will be optional.

Humates

Humates are used in some commercial fertilisers, some of which are allowed by organic certifiers. *They are not permitted by Demeter standards.* Gary Zimmer wrote in *Acre USA* (January 2004)

“Humate is a common term used to describe dry-mined carbonaceous materials found in areas where coal is mined. They are correctly called leonardites or oxidized lignites.”

Humates are fossil carbon, on the way to becoming coal or oil. In biodynamic farming soil carbon comes from the atmosphere, from carbon dioxide absorbed for photosynthesis. Plant growth has a positive effect on greenhouse gases, but use of fossil carbon does not.

The meaning of available

The Demeter standards don't define “available” but they do define “unavailable”: Glossary, p 103: Unavailable: Not able to be obtained in the quality (such as full Demeter, In Conversion to Demeter) required, after diligent and wide ranging effort has been made. Assumption that an ingredient is unavailable requires prior approval of Demeter New Zealand.

How “widely” you need to check depends on what you are sourcing. A single animal for a breeding needn't travel more than the permitted trucking distance for the type (see: transporting animals, p 79). Raisins for muesli can come from much further afield – you might import them if you use a lot.

The most likely farm inputs not available are certified organic plants and seeds. See next section.

Brought-in plant material

Brought-in plant material (including seeds) must be certified Demeter if available or certified organic if it's not. When neither is available, the standards allow conventional plant material with prior permission from Demeter NZ.

So:

- If Demeter plants or seeds are available you must use them.
- If they are not available but certified organic is available, that must be used.
- If neither is available you may get permission to use conventional untreated non-GE material.

None of this requires you to use an unsuitable cultivar – see below.

You don't need to phone the Demeter office each time **if your Management Plan is properly constructed**. It should state that Demeter or certified material is used if available, and then say what you do to find that out. e.g. you might contact two or three suppliers and/or look on the BioGro orASUREQuality websites. The actual procedure will depend on what it is you are seeking. A hybrid cultivar may be licensed to only one or two suppliers; open pollinated traditional varieties may have many suppliers, so wider checking will be appropriate.

The Assessment Group wants to give permission in advance based on clear procedures in your Management Plan. If you expect to need uncertified seeds and/or plants please ensure that your Management Plan has a suitable section and submit it for approval.

If you don't have such a section in an approved Management Plan, and during the season need uncertified seeds/plants, write an amendment to your Management Plan and submit it for approval. Incorporate it into the overall plan later.

All seeds and plant material must be documented GE free and all seeds must be documented untreated. Treated seeds are never allowed.

Sample management plan section

We grow a wide variety of vegetables from seed.

Our seed sourcing procedure is

1. We check with 3 suppliers for certified organic or Demeter seed of the required cultivar
 - a. Super Duper Seeds for Beautiful Growers Ltd
 - b. Heavenly Seed and Plant Paradigm Shift Ltd
 - c. We Are the Greatest Seeds Ltd
2. If no Demeter or certified organic seeds are available untreated seeds will be purchased.
3. A declaration that they are GE free and untreated will be obtained at the time.
4. In case the supplier does not have such a declaration readily available, we take our own form with us for them to fill out and sign. We keep copies in the farm truck.

If you have an additional certification include the procedures your other certifier requires as well.

E.g. if you must fax them for permission, you could include something like this:

5. We also have BioGro certification so we get written BioGro permission before going ahead.

The Annual Report form now has a space where you ask for permission renewal.

Unreliable Documentation

Don't accept any farm input if the documentation doesn't fit the product. E.g. seed that's obviously treated but is stated to be untreated. Don't accept the product or the declaration.

Brought-in livestock and the Animal Status Declaration

For brought-in uncertified livestock you may be offered an Animal Status Declaration (ASD) when you ask for documentation. The ASD is a standard questionnaire from NZ Food Safety Authority. It must, by law, be supplied in some cases. It doesn't cover all the Demeter requirements.

The ASD has whole of life information about a few things – feeding with ruminant protein, Johne's disease vaccination, hormone treatment – but doesn't say enough about drug treatments generally. It just asks if the animal is within the withholding period. Demeter requires you to know if the animal is within **twice** the withholding period. Some treatments have a six-month withholding period, so Demeter standards ask for a one-year history. (Animals less than a year old: a whole of life history.)

You will be given an ASD with incoming stock but you'll need additional information

- *What treatments have the animals received in the last year, and when?*
- *What is the longest label withholding period for that drug on that type of livestock?*

You work out the date that the animals reach **twice** the withholding period, and quarantine them until then, or for 48 hours, whichever gives the longer quarantine. There are different rules for animals documented as certified organic. (see s7.17.2)

What is a suitable quarantine area?

It should be a part of the farm that doesn't normally get used for anything else except perhaps cutting hay for animal feed or for composting.

It should be securely fenced so that animals will be retained even when they have to be separated from their fellows – the instinct to rejoin the herd can be strong.

The size of the quarantine area depends on the way you use it.

E.g. 1: A grower often brings in sheep to graze an orchard. They normally need many days quarantine. From the number of animals and days, she works out how much land she needs.

E.g. 2: Sometimes a cow gets sick. And very rarely the farmer emergency drenched a large mob of sheep in the past. So he fences off enough land for the cow, but has plans for enlarging the quarantine area in an emergency. He states in his Management Plan which land is **fenced**, and which additional land is **designated** for use if needed.

Quarantine area is an exception to the rule that all land must be converted to Demeter standard – because animals may be treated on it with prohibited substances.

Everything else about it must meet the standards (e.g. prep use). On some properties years go by without any treatment being necessary. In which case it can be worked as part of the certified area (e.g. grazed to reduce fire risk) after a year since the last time an animal was treated on it. Nevertheless it is there, waiting should it be needed at short notice.

Because a quarantine area may be used for sick animals it's usually where it's readily observable. E.g. near a homestead or regular work area.

Area of outdoor space for poultry

What is the Demeter minimum area per bird for out doors space? BioGro and RSPCANZ state so many birds per hectare, but Demeter standards state only minimum perching and floor areas for the henhouse. For the outdoors they say

7.16.5 For poultry ranging, birds shall have free access to a diverse and well vegetated free range, and management shall ensure that they actually do range. This is applicable at 4 weeks of age for meat birds and from 6 weeks for laying birds. Moveable housing rotational ranging or similar special provisions shall be made for meat birds to overcome their natural tendency to limit their ranging.

What is enough space varies with the terrain and climate – with the farm individuality. *If your free range ceases to be well vegetated, or your birds do not use it, you are non-compliant.* You may need to enlarge or to change it. You will need to take action to ensure continued compliance.

Reporting to you

Some licensees have home-garden practices that are non-compliant. These include use of uncertified feed such as kitchen scraps for hens or brought-in donated uncertified plants. For the sake of consistency in standards interpretation we'll tell you that the home garden is non-compliant, but won't ask for any corrective action.

Demeter Exporting

In other countries the Demeter logos are owned and registered by other Demeter organisations. They have the absolute right to decide what is sold as Demeter and what is not.

Through Demeter International (an association of national Demeter organisations) these organisations have agreed (in most cases) to accept each other's produce provided the exporting country meets Demeter International requirements.

The requirements are

1. The Demeter organisation in the exporting country is accredited by the Demeter International Accreditation Council. Demeter New Zealand is currently accredited.
2. The exporter has a Demeter licence. Whoever is the exporter – you or an exporting company – must have an exporter's contract from us and a current certificate. Otherwise the sale may be blocked, as happened recently to dates going to Europe from Tunisia.
3. The exporter sells only to a licensed Demeter importer/distributor.
4. Packaging and labelling meet both Demeter International labelling standards (see www.demeter.net for details) and destination Demeter requirements. Demeter New Zealand does not take responsibility for particular requirements in the destination country – the exporter liaises with the importer to ensure that all such requirements are met.

Demeter New Zealand is **not** accredited for government requirements. So for example, export to EU countries requires a BioGro or AsureQuality certification in addition.

There are exceptions to the rule that Demeter New Zealand produce is automatically acceptable as Demeter in other countries. Examples:

- Demeter Australia is not part of the Demeter International system, but has accepted Demeter New Zealand produce so long as it doesn't come from properties using flowforms to stir preparations 500 & 501. Demeter Australia doesn't allow flowform stirring.
- Demeter USA has not (so far) adopted Demeter International wine standards. It still has additional requirements.
- In the USA "Biodynamic®" must be used on the label according to particular rules.

Blood and Bone

Demeter International doesn't allow blood products to be used in manures. But there is a system of country exemptions to permit an exception in named countries only. Demeter NZ will apply for such an exemption. Until and unless such an exemption is obtained, you are advised not to use blood and bone in your compost if you intend to export.

Compostable Packaging

A common compostable plastic is polylactic acid or PLA. Products made from renewable sources such as maize or sugar cane are available. There are things to consider before using them.

So long it's not from GE crops, PLA use doesn't encourage GE plantings. But maybe it's grown with synthetic nitrogen? If so oil is still being used – for fertiliser instead of for the plastic itself.

Fully compostable plastics, like PLA, break down to carbon dioxide and water but they use less energy and produce fewer greenhouse gases than conventional plastics, according to some reports.

Compostable doesn't mean that the product breaks down in home compost systems or in landfills. It usually needs hot composting that maintains a high temperature for over a week. "Compostable" and "Made from cornstarch" can mislead if it's a plastic like PLA that won't break down at home.

Compostable plastics often can't be recycled and must be kept out of the recycling stream. And if they get into landfill they may last just as long as other plastics.

"Degradable" or "oxy-degradable" plastics are usually very different – some contain heavy metals which are undesirable both in contact with food and in the waste stream.

The Demeter Assessment Group has decided that

- Compostable packaging is acceptable for Demeter products
- The product should meet international standards, such as the Euro Norm EN13432
- The source of the raw material should be non GE plants
- The production process should not use GE organisms or GE enzymes
- The non GE status should be confirmed by reliable documentation
- The packaging should if possible advise consumers
 - To keep it out of recycling streams e.g. "Do not recycle"
 - That it is compostable and what is required for that e.g. "Compostable in commercial hot composting systems"
- Degradable plastics that are not compostable should not be used.

When more information becomes available on compostable plastics and the position other certifiers adopt towards them, this may be reviewed.

Further information:

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/plastic.html>

http://www.biobags.co.uk/resouces_certific/description.pdf