

BEFORE THE BOARD OF INQUIRY

IN THE MATTER of the Resource
Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of applications for
resource consent and
notices of requirement
by Transpower New
Zealand Limited for the
North Island Grid
Upgrade Project

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF JAMES KENNETH ALLEN FOR TRANSPOWER
NEW ZEALAND LIMITED
(Organic farming issues)**

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INTRODUCTION

Qualifications

1. **MY** name is James Kenneth Allen. I co-own AgFirst Waikato Limited, an agricultural consultancy company.
2. **MY** qualifications include a Bachelor of Commerce (Agriculture) and Professional Masters in Agriculture from Lincoln University. I am a registered member of the New Zealand Institute of Primary Industry Management, and a registered farm management consultant.
3. I have been working as an agricultural consultant since 1996. I started my career with Agriculture New Zealand. Since 2002, I have been self employed, with AgFirst Waikato Limited. My experience includes all areas of farm management for dairy, sheep, beef and deer farms.
4. I have experience with the strategic direction, and day to day operation, of organic farms. AgFirst Waikato Limited manages an organic focus farm in the Waikato region. Through that management, I am aware of the requirements and importance of maintaining organic certification. I have a Certificate in Sustainable Nutrient Management from Massey University.

Role in relation to Upgrade Project

5. **ALONG** with Mr Hall, I was approached by MWH New Zealand Limited (**MWH**), in March 2005, to assess the agricultural related issues with regard to the North Island Grid Upgrade Project (**Upgrade Project**). I have been involved since that time.
6. **IN** 2005, I assisted with the preparation of a specialist report for the route selection decision. This report was included as a Working Paper as part of the Interim Route Report, Working Paper 4, "*Report on Air Strips and Other Aspects of Rural Land Use*". I was also involved in the two indicative centreline workshops, as outlined by Ms Allan's evidence.

7. **IN** early 2006, Mr Hall and I travelled the route of the proposed line. A number of other experts involved in the Upgrade Project and Transpower representatives also attended. The purpose of this route inspection was to identify the potential effects of the proposed line in as much detail as possible.
8. **THE** focus of my involvement in relation to the Upgrade Project then shifted to providing input for Transpower New Zealand Limited (**Transpower**) from the perspective of an agricultural specialist.
9. **MORE** recently, I have been asked to consider organic farming issues. In November 2007, I carried out an initial assessment for Transpower of the potential impacts of the proposed line on organic farming.
10. I have subsequently been asked to respond to a submission by Dr Paul Robinson (**submission 0094**).
11. I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for expert witnesses in the Environment Court Consolidated Practice Note (2006). I have approached the preparation of this evidence in the same manner that I would for the Environment Court.

Scope of evidence

12. **IN** this statement of evidence, I discuss potential impacts of the Upgrade Project on organic farming. I am aware that there are 4 organically certified farms along the route of the proposed 400kV capable line (**proposed line**). My evidence focuses on the potential impacts of the proposed line on the certification of these 4 farms, and on the ability of any other farm on the route of the proposed line to attain organic certification.
13. I do not comment on the general effects of the construction and operation of the Upgrade Project on farm management activities. My colleague, Mr Hall, provides evidence on matters such as fertiliser application, stock movement, cropping, paddock layout, and shelter. I also do not discuss potential impacts on aerial topdressing. Mr Nichol discusses these potential impacts.

EXTENT OF ASSESSMENT OF ORGANIC FARMING ISSUES

14. **IN** late 2007, I visited an organic farm property (BJ and MC Chegwidden) to address specific issues and concerns over organic farm management, in the company of the landowner and Transpower's property and engineering advisers. While at the Chegwidden's property, I met with a representative of Biogrow (the organisation that provides the Chegwidden's organic certification).
15. **MY** site visits, knowledge of organic farming requirements, and assessment have confirmed my opinion of the likely impacts of the Upgrade Project on organic farming.

ORGANIC FARMING: OVERVIEW

Organic farms along the proposed line

16. **AS** indicated earlier, I am aware that there are 4 organically certified farms that would be crossed by the route of the proposed line, as follows:
 - (a) Haven Farm Organics;
 - (b) Transpower-owned property (ex-Hamilton);
 - (c) BJ and MC Chegwidden; and
 - (d) AL Loveridge.

General

17. **THERE** are a number of specific management issues for organic farms. These issues arise from the need to comply with the relevant certification requirements. Having said that, the fundamentals of running an organic farm are the same as for any other farm property.

Certification

18. **ORGANIC** farmers are typically certified by one or more of the following organisations - Agriquality, Biogrow or Demeter. Agriquality (using the brand name Assure Quality) and BioGrow certification are the most common standards.
19. **ADDITIONALLY**, there is an organisation called IFOAM (International Federation on Organic Agriculture Movements). Organic certifiers may also offer IFOAM accreditation. Both Agriquality and BioGrow offer IFOAM accreditation.
20. **AS** there are a variety of certifying organisations, there may be varying requirements of organic producers based on the certification standard used. It is important that anyone dealing with an organic farm establishes the certification type.
21. I have reviewed the Agriquality, Biogrow and Demeter standards, as the most likely to apply to any organic farm along the proposed line.
22. **IF** organic farmers are producing product for export they must adhere to the standards laid down by the New Food Safety Authority (**NZFSA**). I have also reviewed these standards. The document titled NZFSA Technical Rules for Organic Production:

“describes the scope and rules of production applying to NZFSA standards for giving official assurances of organic production to importing countries”.

(NZFSA Standard OP3: Appendix 2, NZFSA Technical Rules for Organic Production, November 2006, Version 6, Page 3)

OPERATIONAL EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED LINE

23. **THE** presence of the proposed line adjacent to, on, or over a property would not affect organic certification in itself. The relevant organic standards set out

above would not prevent organic certification due to the presence of the proposed line. In fact, I have been advised that all 4 certified properties are already crossed by transmission lines. I understand that these are:

- (a) Haven Farm Organics: OTA-WKM A and B (with 2 towers on the property);
 - (b) the Transpower-owned property (ex-Hamilton): OTA-WKM A and B (with 2 towers on the property);
 - (c) B J and M C Chegwidde: ARI-PAK A (with 2 towers on the property); and
 - (d) A L Loveridge: ARI-PAK A (with 4 towers on the property).
24. **AS** far as I am aware, the location of existing transmission lines, or towers, on these properties has not affected their organic certification to date.
25. **IN** my opinion, there would be no ongoing impacts for the organic certification of farms along the route of the proposed line arising from its operation. However, the construction and any subsequent maintenance of the proposed line raise a number of potential issues, which I discuss below.

POTENTIAL CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED LINE

26. **MR** Rasul and Mr Patrick provide evidence about the construction process.
27. I consider that the potential effects on organic certification during the construction process relate to:
- (a) vehicle access;
 - (b) regrassing;
 - (c) fertiliser use;

- (d) sprays;
- (e) exclusion zones;
- (f) stock transfer and purchased feed; and
- (g) earthworks and construction materials brought on site.

28. **FUTURE** maintenance of the proposed line, depending on the extent of access required, may also raise similar issues to those set out above. However, it is worth noting that all of the properties are currently crossed by existing lines. I am not aware that there have been any such issues to date, and I am advised that no submissions have referred to difficulties with maintaining existing organic certification.

29. **IN** any event, I consider that any maintenance issues which may arise can be addressed by Transpower and the landowner in the context of a negotiated easement agreement.

Vehicle access

30. **CONTAMINATION** of organic farms can occur by the transfer of material (particularly seeds) on vehicles accessing a site. Organic farmers require all contractors to wash their vehicles before coming onto the property, in order to avoid contamination from other sites (eg foreign seeds, etc). As an example, fertiliser truck spreaders will usually go to an organic farm for their first run of the day, where their trucks have been washed the night before.

Regrassing

31. **IF** areas of land need to be re-established in pasture, then organic seed (preferably), or untreated seed, must be used. However, I note that limited availability of seed means seed must be ordered well in advance of requirement.

Fertiliser

32. **THERE** are specific types of fertiliser that must be used on an organic farm. The specifications will vary depending on the type of certification. These fertilisers are generally readily available.

Sprays

33. **CHEMICAL** sprays cannot be used on organically certified farms.

Exclusion zones

34. **MAINTAINING** separation between stock from the organic farm and stock from neighbouring farms is important. There is no specifically stated requirement in either the Bio-Grow or Agriquality standards which imply Transpower would need to fence off any areas that are being worked on. Separation from neighbouring stock should be maintained, however.

Stock transfer/purchased feed

35. **FROM** my understanding of the construction process for the towers, I consider it unlikely that stock would need to be moved from the property. It is more likely that the stock would simply be fenced off from the construction site. However, at any time that stock is required to be grazed off the property, Transpower would need to agree the basis on which that off-site grazing occurs to maintain certification, or presumably offer compensation if this is not practical.
36. **LIKEWISE**, if supplementary feed is to be purchased, this must also be organically certified. While there is (limited) grazing and feed available, any such decision would need to be planned well in advance to ensure supply.

Earthworks and construction materials brought on site

37. I have considered the range of other material which would be brought on site. The bulk of material used would be temporary, and relate to the construction period. It would include construction tooling and machinery, vehicles, and some timber packing for the material laid out prior to construction. Permanent

material brought onto the site would include galvanised steel and similar plant for the towers and lines, new fencing and gates, some concrete and reinforced steel for tower foundations, and roading material.

38. **SUBJECT** to the points I have made above about vehicle access, I do not consider that the machinery or material on site for construction will cause any impact on the organic certification that cannot be addressed through the Construction Management Plan and relevant Site Management Plans. Any permanent material such as the roading material must be sourced to ensure compliance with organic certification requirements.

Mitigation measures

39. I consider that all potential impacts can be addressed through the Construction Management Plan and relevant Site Works Plans for any organic certified farm by including:
- (a) a requirement for contractors to wash machinery when transferred from neighbouring property or, if machinery is coming from a depot, to ensure that the machinery is washed at the depot before travelling to the organically certified farm during construction;
 - (b) specification of the type of organic seed to be used for regrassing;
 - (c) specification of the fertilisers that may be used;
 - (d) a prohibition on use of chemical sprays;
 - (e) where boundary fences are removed between neighbouring properties, provision for alternative fencing to ensure that neighbouring stock are not permitted to enter or leave the property;
 - (f) if supplementary feed is to be purchased, a requirement that this feed be organically certified;
 - (g) a requirement that the source of any construction material (such as imported roading material) brought to the site be checked to ensure that the organic certification of the farm will not be compromised.

LAND LIAISON OFFICER

40. I consider that Transpower will need to liaise carefully with the individual landowners to ensure that potential impacts on organic farming operations are avoided or mitigated throughout the construction phase, where practical. Given the issues surrounding potential violation of the integrity of the organic status of farms it would be important that there is a high level of communication between any parties entering the property and the land owner.
41. **THERE** would need to be an additional level of care shown by contractors on these properties, eg with regard to closing of gates, ensuring no chemical spills. I understand that Transpower would appoint a Land Liaison Officer, to be the first point of contact with the farmer in relation to the construction phase of the Upgrade Project. I also understand that the Land Liaison Officer would offer the services of an agricultural advisor to consider site specific issues in relation to the construction phase. In my opinion, this appointment would assist the mitigation of effects of construction.

LIAISON WITH ORGANIC CERTIFIERS

42. I consider that the Stakeholder Management Plan should also provide that Transpower liaise with Agriquality and Biogrow to develop protocols for working on organic certified farms. This liaison would ensure a consistent approach for Transpower's contractors and provide confidence to any organic farm operator that certification will not be compromised. In fact, my meeting with BioGrow at the Chegwiddden property has already resulted in a draft protocol being agreed. That protocol reflects the mitigation measures that I have suggested in this evidence.

ISSUES RAISED IN SUBMISSIONS

43. **ONE** submitter (Dr Paul Robinson) raised issues about an organic farming operation at Haven Farm Organics Limited (**Submission 0094**). This submission expressed concern that "*the discharge of Contaminants necessary to construct the towers will cause my farm to lose its organic status for years if*

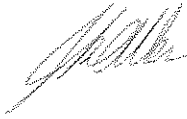
not permanently. The earthworks required will also have a negative environmental impact and disrupt the natural farm cycle and structure".

44. **FOR** the reasons I have set out above, with appropriate mitigation measures within the Construction Management Plan and Site Works Plan, I do not consider that any contaminants would be released onto the submitter's farm in a manner which would affect its organic certification. Fill material may be required for road construction. However, the earthworks can be managed in a way which would not affect organic certification.
45. **IN** my opinion, for the reasons discussed above, the proposed line would not affect the organic certification of Haven Farm Organics Limited.
46. I also understand that submissions have been received from Mr A L Loveridge (**submission 0240**) and members of his family (**submissions 0642 and 0997**). These submissions make no reference to impacts on organic farming, or impacts on farming operations in general. However, for the reasons set out in my evidence, and with those mitigation measures I have recommended above, I do not consider that Mr Loveridge's organic certification will be at risk.
47. I am not aware that any submissions have been received relating to the other 2 certified properties, or relating to more general impacts on organic farming operations.

CONCLUSIONS

48. **THE** operation of the proposed line would not affect the organic certification of the 4 organic farms on the route of the proposed line. In fact, all of these properties are currently crossed by existing transmission lines.
49. **THERE** are potential impacts on organic farming operations caused by the construction and, to a lesser extent, maintenance of the proposed line.
50. I consider that it is practical to address these impacts in most places. The extent of the potential impact would be greatest during the construction phase. However, these impacts would be temporary.

51. I consider that the Construction Management Plan and any Site Works Plan for any organically certified farm will enable impacts to be minimised, where practicable.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Allen', written in a cursive style.

James Kenneth Allen

31 January 2008