

New Zealand Zero Standard

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New Zealand Zero Standard

Introduction

1 Purpose

The purpose of the New Zealand Zero Certification Scheme, hereinafter called the “Scheme”, is to enable certification for fossil fuel-free growing and processing of New Zealand-produced food products, creating clear guidance for consumers identifying sustainable growing practices in the retail space.

2 Scope

The New Zealand Zero Standard covers the foundation criteria for orchards, farms, and vineyards (referred to as ‘farms’) and processing sites. These criteria are intended to avoid all fossil fuel combustion on site during all growing and transportation processes and minimise emissions from fossil fuel combustion elsewhere in the supply chain. Emissions unrelated to fossil fuel combustion are not included in this Standard; however, all Certified Operators are expected to record and minimise emissions from non-fossil sources, such as refrigerants, purchased materials, carbon dioxide gas emissions from processing, and carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide emissions from other processes on the site. Certified Operators are also expected to take a proactive approach to other environmental and social impacts, demonstrating a high level of responsibility.

3 Application and Auditing

Compliance with the New Zealand Zero Standard will be verified through auditing against this standard.

Operators shall apply to this programme using the New Zealand Zero Programme Application Form found at www.nz0.com. Submitted forms will be reviewed by AsureQuality (as the programme’s Conformity Assessment Body) for completeness. AsureQuality will contact the Operator if additional information is required and to schedule an audit.

Operators may also apply for Transitional Membership, as outlined in Section 3 of the Standard. The CAB shall review the Transition Plan and conduct a document review of the biannual reporting.

Audits shall be scheduled for every 12 months, to certify the current crop/product.

For audits, including for Transitional Operators, evidence must be provided that all requirements of the assurance programme are met, including:

- Evidence of energy purchases and usage
- Photographs of equipment used onsite
- Documentation of any fossil fuel use in instances where no alternative is available
- Records of suppliers used and supplier selection due diligence
- Records of carbon offset purchases or other compensation, if required
- Documented plans to improve other sustainability practices onsite

Unannounced audits may be conducted by the CAB at any time to ensure that fossil fuels are not used in any on-site practices.

4 Non-Conformance Structure

Non-conformances found during audit will be classed as either 'minor' or 'major'.

Minor

Minor: *a non-conformance that presents a low risk to the Certification's integrity.*

Minor non-conformances shall occur if:

- Fossil fuel use is 50 litres (or equivalent) or less per NC.
 - If the total fuel use of all minor NC's is greater than 100 litres, this shall be classified as a major non-conformance.
 - If the total fuel use of all minor NC's is greater than 200 litres, this may result in suspension from the programme.

All minor non-conformances will be noted as improvements to be made prior to the next audit (full or surveillance). If fossil fuel use is a component of any minor non-conformance, this must be compensated within 14 days of the audit.

Major

Major: *a non-conformance that is a major deviation from scheme requirements and raises significant doubt about the ability of the site to achieve the zero fossil fuel intention of the Scheme.*

Major non-conformances shall occur if:

- More than 50 litres of fossil fuels or equivalent is used without prior consent from the MC.

Major non-conformances must be rectified within 3 months from the audit. This must include:

- Root cause analysis for the Major NC,
- Implementation of new or amended operating practices to avoid a similar non-conformance in the future,
- Compensation of any fossil emissions within 14 days of the audit in line with 1.3.1 in the Grower or Producer Standard.

Suspension

Suspension from the programme may occur if:

- There are 2 or more major non-conformances
- There are repeated major non-conformances
- Failure to implement major-non-conformance corrective actions within the agreed timeframe
- Minor non-conformances equate to more than 200 litres of fossil fuel used

If suspensions are not resolved within a period of 6 months at the MC's discretion, the Operator will be terminated from the Scheme.

The full non-conformance structure can be found in the NZO Scheme Rules.

5 Claims and Usage of the Certification Mark

See the accompanying document 'NZ Zero Mark and Communication Guide'.

6 Confidentiality

All information and data collected by the auditing body will be treated with the strictest confidence. The auditing body will:

- Ensure programme application forms include a declaration for the disclosure of all audit information to AsureQuality,
- Respect the privacy and commercial sensitivity of the information they may have access to during the audit,
- Ensure all files, records and manuals related to certification and audits are held securely,
- Advise auditors that they may not enter auditee sites unaccompanied or look at any files, records, or manuals without express permission from the site manager or owner.

7 Getting the Job Done Safely

Participating sites shall consider their health and safety risks and processes such as:

- Legal obligations and expectations,
- Requirements for a health and safety induction at a designated safe meeting point,
- Requirements for adequate and safe facilities and access to them.

The person in charge of the site and owner has legal responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act for any workers or contractors on the site. The induction process ensures that all parties' legal obligations are met and only needs to be completed once unless circumstances change between visits.

Glossary

Audit - A systematic and independent examination to determine whether activities comply with the stated objectives being audited e.g., documented procedures in a program / standard.

Audit Scope - Extent and boundaries of an audit.

Auditee - A person or site being audited.

Auditor - Person employed or contracted by the CAB to carry out certification audits.

Biofuel - Liquid or gaseous fuel that comes from plants, including (but not limited to) biodiesel, biogas from organic waste, and other oils from crops.

Biomass – Renewable organic solid material that comes from plants, including (but not limited to) wood, wood chips, wood pellets, sawdust, straw, chaff, and other agricultural residues.

CAB - Conformance Assessment Body (AsureQuality).

Certified Site - Any farm or processing site in New Zealand verified as fulfilling the NZ0 requirements.

Certified Operator - Operator of an NZ0 Certified Site.

Contractor – Entity providing contracted services to an operator (includes subcontractors).

Corrective Action - Measures taken to rectify a non-conformity.

Covered Activities - activities within the legal property boundary of the site being assessed. This includes (but is not limited to) employee accommodation, packhouse, and use of workshop, sheds, outbuildings etc.

Farm - One or more blocks of land no more than 20 kms apart linearly that are managed as one entity including one set of farm polices and records.

Fossil Fuel – non-renewable, organic material, other than biomass, used as fuel. This includes (but is not limited to) petrol, diesel, natural gas, LPG, coal, and peat.

ICE - Internal Combustion Engine vehicle.

MC - Managing Committee for the New Zealand Zero Scheme.

NC – Non-conformance.

NZ0 – New Zealand Zero.

Operator – Owner or nominated representative of the farm or processing site being audited.

Overseas Port – First port the product arrives in within the country where the product is to be consumed or further processed.

Processing Site - A site where raw produce from one or more NZ0 certified farms undergoes further processing to manufacture an added value food product.

Scheme Owner - Owner of the NZ0 certification scheme and marks (New Zealand Zero Inc).

Staff – All persons employed by the Operator (excludes contractors).

TOR – Terms of Reference.

Transitional Membership – A status of the Scheme where the Operator is transitioning to a fossil fuel free system.

Transitional Operator – An operator that has been accepted for Transitional Membership in the Scheme.

Section 1: Standard for Growers

1 Procurement (except transport and logistics)

No fossil fuels purchased by the Operator.

- 1.1. No purchases of fossil fuels made by the Operator for farm activities. This includes purchases from the company bank accounts, credit cards, debit cards, vouchers, or gifts as well as purchases by employees in a work-related capacity.
- 1.2. The Operator must choose suppliers/contractors including processing/manufacturing sites according to the hierarchy outlined in Appendix 1.
- 1.3. Unavoidable Fossil Fuel Use Compensation (Compensation). Fuel used onsite from contractors (regardless of whether it is being offset via another scheme) shall be recorded and compensated for via a method listed in the NZ Zero Compensation Guidance document.
 - 1.3.1. Any non-conformances and/or uses of fossil fuels shall be notified to the MC within 10 days of the event.

2 Transport and logistics

Transport and logistic providers are selected based on a no fossil fuel hierarchy.

- 2.1. The Operator must use the following hierarchy (with 2.1.1 being most favourable) to select transportation methods for off-farm transport of products, work-related trips (excluding employee commuting) for all owners and employees, and air travel for the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme:
 - 2.1.1. Electric
 - 2.1.2. Green Hydrogen from renewable sources (wind, solar or hydro)
 - 2.1.3. Biofuel (e.g., 100% bioethanol or biodiesel. Blends with conventional fossil fuels are not acceptable)
 - 2.1.4. Transport provider that is certified to Toitū Climate Positive or Ekos Climate Positive (certification must include transport operations).
 - 2.1.5. Transport provider that is certified to Toitū Carbon Zero or Ekos Zero Carbon (certification must include transport operations).
 - 2.1.6. Transport provider that is certified to Toitū Carbon Reduce or Ekos Carbon Friendly or has a Science Based Target approved by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). (Certification/target must include transport operations).
 - 2.1.7. All other providers
- 2.2. Compensation
 - 2.2.1. Distance and tonnage transported must be recorded and compensated for via a method listed in the Compensation Guidance document.

3 Storage

No fossil fuels stored within the farm

- 3.1. No fossil fuels stored on-site. This includes within any residential dwelling, farm buildings or elsewhere on the property including permanent or temporary storage. Employee and visitor ICE vehicles are allowed in a designated parking area as specified on the farm map.

4 Use

No fossil fuels used as fuels within the farm boundary.

- 4.1. No fossil fuel powered equipment or vehicles used within the farm. This includes contractors that bring in equipment or vehicles to provide services related to growing, harvesting, and packing, etc.
- 4.2. Exceptions to 4.1 can be made for necessary equipment where no electric or fossil-fuel-free alternatives exist, or if electric equipment is out of service and alternative equipment is required to prevent loss of product.
 - 4.2.1. For fossil fuel quantities greater than 50 litres, electronic written approval from a member of the Management Committee (MC) shall be obtained.
 - 4.2.1.1. Approval shall be sought prior to use by submitting the approved Fuel Use Application Form. Permission will be accepted or denied within three business days of the application being received by the MC.
 - 4.2.2. For any fossil fuel used onsite, quantity and kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalent shall be recorded as per 6.1b and compensated as per 1.3.1.
- 4.3. Contractors shall write and sign an approved declaration form listing all equipment using fossil fuels which was used on farm, hours equipment was used for, the fuel type, and estimated fuel usage measured in litres.
- 4.4. Fossil fuel use on farm is permitted in the case of an emergency where there is significant health and safety risk, or risk of loss or significant damage of crop. All situations shall be declared as per 6.3 and compensated as per 1.3.1

5 Infrastructure

No functional fossil fuel infrastructure within the farm.

- 5.1. No functional fossil fuel infrastructure within the farm. This includes obsolete and unused infrastructure including but not limited to pipework and connections that could feasibly be returned to service.

6 Records

Relevant records and information are retained and available.

- 6.1. Records of the following must be retained and made available to the auditor:
 - a. All electricity consumed on farm (kilowatt hours per financial year)
 - b. An 'Emissions Declaration' using the approved template detailing instances where any fossil fuel was used on-site, including reasoning and detail of why no fossil-fuel-free alternative was able to be used. Records of compensation must be included as per 6.1e.
 - c. All biomass and biofuel combusted on farm (kg, litres or cubic metres by matter type e.g., crop residue, trees etc.)

- d. Contractor/supplier and processing/manufacturing site selection due diligence and associated evidence of relevant certifications or claims.
- e. Records of compensation as defined in the Compensation Guidance document.
- f. All marketing collateral related to NZO certification claims and logo use.
- g. Records of staff training/induction activities. Operators shall retain all staff declaration forms as required by 7.2

7 Staff

Staff will be trained to recognise fossil fuel use and report to NZO

- 7.1. All staff shall have a training/induction session with farm owner/manager outlining:
 - a. Use of electric equipment
 - b. Identification of fossil fuels and equipment
 - c. Reporting process if fossil fuels are found on farm
- 7.2. All staff must sign a declaration that they have attended the training session from 7.1 and will not use any fossil fuels on farm or drive/park an ICE vehicle outside the designated area unless in the case of an emergency.

Section 2: Standard for Processors

1 Procurement (except transport and logistics)

No fossil fuels purchased directly by the Operator.

- 1.1 No purchases of fossil fuels made by the Operator for production activities. This includes purchases from the company bank accounts, credit cards, debit cards, vouchers, or gifts as well as purchases by employees in a work-related capacity.
- 1.2 The Operator must choose suppliers/contractors according to the hierarchy outlined in Appendix 1. Primary ingredients for a finished product bearing the New Zealand Zero certification mark must be sourced from New Zealand Zero Suppliers.
- 1.3 Unavoidable Fossil Fuel Use Compensation (Compensation)
 - 1.3.1 Fuel used or stored onsite by contractors or others (regardless of whether it is being offset via another scheme) must be recorded and compensated in accordance with a system described in the Approved Fossil Fuel Compensations Guide.

2 Transport and logistics

Transport and logistic providers are selected based on a no fossil fuel hierarchy.

- 2.1 The Operator must use the following hierarchy to select transportation methods for off-site transport of products, work-related trips (excluding employee commuting) for all owners and employees:
 - 2.1.1 Electric
 - 2.1.2 Green Hydrogen from renewable sources (wind, solar or hydro)
 - 2.1.3 Biofuel (e.g., 100% bioethanol or biodiesel. Blends with conventional fossil fuels are not acceptable)
 - 2.1.4 Transport provider that is certified to Toitū Climate Positive or Ekos Climate Positive (certification must include transport operations).
 - 2.1.5 Transport provider that is certified to Toitū Carbon Zero or Ekos Zero Carbon (certification must include transport operations).
 - 2.1.6 Transport provider that is certified to Toitū Carbon Reduce or Ekos Carbon Friendly or a Science Based Target approved by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). (Certification/target must include transport operations).
 - 2.1.7 All other providers
- 2.2 Compensation
 - 2.2.1 If transportation used (to NZ retailer or Overseas Port) requires fossil fuels, freight related emissions must be recorded as distance and tonnage transported and compensated in accordance with a system described on the Approved Fossil Fuel Compensations List.

3 Storage

No fossil fuels stored on the processing site.

3.1 No fossil fuels stored on-site. This includes within any residential dwelling, site buildings or elsewhere on the property including permanent or temporary storage. Employee and visitor ICE vehicles are allowed in a designated parking area as specified on the processor's site map.

3.1.1 Exceptions can be made for emergency/backup equipment required for health & safety or food safety reasons. Fuel used for this equipment must be compensated for according to 1.3.1.

4 Use

No fossil fuels used as fuels on the processing site.

4.1. No fossil fuel powered equipment or vehicles used on the processing site. This includes contractors that bring in equipment or vehicles to provide services related to growing, harvesting, and packing.

4.2. Exceptions to 4.1 can be made for necessary equipment where no electric or fossil-fuel-free alternatives exist, or if electric equipment is out of service and alternative equipment is required to prevent loss of product.

4.2.1. For fossil fuel quantities greater than 50 litres, electronic written approval from a representative of the Management Committee (MC) must be obtained.

4.2.1.1. Approval shall be sought prior to use by submitting the approved Fuel Use Application Form. Permission will be accepted or denied within three working days of the application being received by the MC.

4.2.2. For any fossil fuel used onsite, quantity and kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalent shall be recorded as per 6.1b and compensated as per 1.3.1.

4.3. Contractors shall write and sign an approved declaration form listing all equipment using fossil fuels which was used on farm, hours equipment was used for, the fuel type, and estimated fuel usage measured in litres.

4.4. Fossil fuel use on site is permitted in case of an emergency where there is significant health and safety risk, or risk of loss or damage of product. All situations shall be declared as per 6.3 and compensated as per 1.3.1.

5 Infrastructure

No functional fossil fuel infrastructure on the processing site.

5.1 No functional fossil fuel infrastructure on the processing site. This includes obsolete and unused infrastructure including but not limited to pipework and connections, that could feasibly be returned to service.

6 Records

Relevant records and information are retained and available.

6.1. Recording of the following must be retained and available to the auditor:

- a. All electricity consumed on the processing site (kilowatt hours per financial year).
- b. An 'Emissions Declaration' using the approved template detailing instances where any fossil fuel was used on-site, including reasoning and detail of why no fossil-fuel-free alternative was able to be used. Records of compensations must be included as per 6.1e.
- c. All biomass and/or biofuel combusted on the processing site (kg, litres or cubic metres by fuel type, e.g., wood chip, wood pellets, hog fuel, biodiesel).
- d. Contractor/supplier selection due diligence and associated evidence of relevant certifications or claims.
- e. Records of compensations as defined in the Approved Fossil Fuel Compensations List for the relevant compensation type used.
- f. All marketing collateral related to NZO certification claims and logo use.
- g. Records of staff training/induction activities.

6.2. Operators shall retain all staff declaration forms as required by 7.2

7 Staff

Staff will be trained to recognise fossil fuel use and report to NZO

7.1. All staff shall have a training/induction session with company owner/manager/supervisor outlining:

- a. Use of electric equipment
- b. Identification of fossil fuels and equipment
- c. Reporting process if fossil fuels are found on site

7.2. All staff must sign a declaration that they have attended the training session from 7.1 and will not use any fossil fuels on site or drive/park an ICE vehicle outside the designated area unless in the case of an emergency.

Section 3: Transitional Membership

This section allows for a Farm or Processing Site to transition to a fossil fuel free operating system over a maximum timeframe of 3 years with the intent of becoming a Certified Operator of the NZ Zero standard. It allows time to overcome financial and operational challenges of upgrading to fossil-fuel-free infrastructure.

1 Application

Applicants shall apply to the MC for Transitional Membership status

- 1.1 Applicants shall submit the Application Form to the MC for review.
- 1.2 Applicants shall complete and submit a Transition Plan using the template provided by NZO. The plan must indicate areas of needed investment and operational changes and include a reasonable timeframe to complete transition.
- 1.3 Approval shall be granted at the MC's discretion if the Transitional Plan is complete and both timeline and budget are deemed feasible.

2 Public Registry

Declaration of moving to a fossil fuel free growing system

- 2.1 If the application is approved by the MC, the Transitional Operator shall be added to the publicly available registry of sites transitioning to a fossil fuel free growing or producing system.

3 Timeframe for certification

Site shall be certified within 3-years of application approval

- 3.1 The Transitional Operator has 3-years to complete transition and pass a full certification audit. If the Transitional Operator fails to become certified within 3-years, either by not completing an audit or not resolving non-conformances from the audit, they will be suspended from the certification programme.
- 3.2 The 3-year period begins from the day that the application is approved by the MC.
- 3.3 A Transitional Operator that has not completed certification within the 3-year period may apply for a full certification audit at any time to gain re-entry to the programme and attain certification but cannot re-enter Transitional Membership.

4 Compensation

Transitional Membership shall compensate all fossil fuel use on farm

- 4.1 Transitional Operators are required to compensate for all fossil fuel used on the property in accordance with a system described on the Approved Fossil Fuel Compensations List.
 - 4.1.1 This includes on-site fossil fuels used by contractors, employees in a work-related capacity, owners and or, any other fossil fuel use.
- 4.2 Fossil fuel use shall be recorded and compensated from the date the application is approved.
- 4.3 Unavoidable Fossil Fuel Use Compensation
 - 4.3.1 Fossil fuel use shall be recorded and compensated in accordance with a system described on the Approved Fossil Fuel Compensations List.


5 Records and reporting

Relevant records and information are retained and available

- 5.1 Every 6 months following the approval of application, a report must be submitted to the CAB which details:
 - 5.1.1 Progression towards goals outlined in the submitted plan.
 - 5.1.2 An assessment of the ability for the farm to become certified within the 3-year period.
 - 5.1.3 Estimated fossil fuel use during the previous 6-month period
 - 5.1.4 Records of offsets as in 6.1 d
- 5.2 Reports shall be assessed by the CAB to ascertain if a Transitional Operator on track for certification. If the Transitional Operator is identified to be behind schedule as outlined in their Transitional Plan, the MC will be notified and if unresolved, the Transitional Operator may be suspended.
- 5.3 Recording of the following must be retained and available to the auditor:
 - a. All electricity consumed on Farm or Production Site (kilowatt hours per financial year)
 - b. All biomass and biofuel combusted on Farm or Production Site (kg, litres or cubic metres by matter type e.g., crop residue, trees etc)
 - c. Contractor/supplier and processing/manufacturing site selection due diligence and associated evidence of relevant certifications or claims.
 - d. Records of compensations as defined in the Approved Fossil Fuel Compensations List.
 - e. All marketing collateral related to NZO transitional claims and logo use.
- 5.5 Contractors shall write and sign an approved declaration form listing all equipment using fossil fuels which was used on Farm or Production Site, hours equipment was used for, the fuel type, and estimated fuel usage measured in litres.

Appendix 1: Procurement decision hierarchy

The hierarchy is from the start of the list to the bottom, with the start being the most preferred option and the end being least preferred.

<p>Most Preferred</p>  <p>Least Preferred</p>	<p>Supplier is New Zealand Zero certified*</p>
	<p>Supplier is certified Toitū Climate Positive or Ekos Carbon Positive</p>
	<p>Supplier is certified Toitū Carbon Zero or Ekos Zero Carbon</p>
	<p>Supplier is certified Toitū Carbon Reduce or Ekos Carbon Friendly or has a Science Based Target approved by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi).</p>
	<p>Supplier has public commitments or claims around carbon e.g., Environmental Choice New Zealand or an overseas equivalent, verified carbon product footprint (ISO 14067), verified organisation carbon footprint (ISO 14064-1), or Ekos Carbon Footprint.</p>
	<p>Supplier has a certified environmental management or energy management system e.g., ISO 14001, Enviro-Mark Diamond, or ISO 50001.</p>
	<p>All other suppliers</p>

*Essential for all primary ingredients into a finished product that will use the New Zealand Zero certification mark