



NZ Grass-Fed Standard: Technical Advisory Group Meeting Minutes

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| Date | Tuesday, 11 March 2025 2:30-4pm online |
| Chair | John Roche (MPI) |
| Members | s9(2)(a) (Ziwi Pets), s9(2)(a) (Westland), s9(2)(a) (Westland), s9(2)(a) (Silver Fern Farms), s9(2)(a) (SATE), s9(2)(a) (Westland), s9(2)(a) (Fonterra), s9(2)(a) (Fonterra), s9(2)(a) (ANZCO), s9(2)(a) (Beef + Lamb NZ), s9(2)(a) (First Light) |
| Apologies | |
| Guests | Jenny Cameron (MPI), Andrew Curtis (Primary Insights), Fiona McLachlan (MPI) |

Key points, decisions and actions

1. The chair opened the meeting at 2:33pm.
2. Jenny outlined the agenda and purpose of the meeting and provided an update since the last meeting.
 - a. MPI is aiming to launch the standard/definition domestically at Fieldays in June. ^{6(a)}
 - b. MPI is identifying options for a Fieldays launch. Industry partners may wish to consider potential offshore marketing opportunities.
 - c. Note that the internal MPI working group is considering how to frame this work as either a 'grass-fed standard' or a 'grass-fed definition' to work within its assurance requirements.

Action: Companies to consider potential offshore marketing opportunities for the second half of 2025 and provide feedback to Jenny by end of April.

3. Jenny and Andrew led a discussion of the draft standard/definition.
 - a. Definitions (including Appendix):
 - i. Andrew will meet with the dairy processor representatives (and others not in the TAG) to further discuss what constitutes a grass feed type, and maintaining consistency with international standards.
 - ii. The red meat sector representatives reiterated their strong recommendation not to change the definition contained in the Animal Status Declaration (ASD) document, but agreed that there is value in defining some of the terms in the NZ Grass-fed standard/definition, such as what constitutes a feedlot. Greg noted he will set up a call to talk this through more.

Action: Andrew to arrange meeting(s) with dairy processors. s9(2)(a) to arrange a call with Andrew/Jenny and the red meat sector representatives.

- b. Eligibility:



- i. There was discussion over whether the definition should include farm level or focus on the meat supply and milk pool level. There was general agreement that it should be at the supply/pool level, however some farmers may value being able to demonstrate a more detailed level (through to farm level) for their own business's provenance and traceability.
- ii. 'Or' will be added after each bullet in the draft to provide greater clarity that the intention is to allow the NZ grass-fed standard/definition to be used by both processors (at pool/supply level) and products.
- iii. Focusing on the product and processor level will allow customers to use the grass-fed claim where the product contains New Zealand grass-fed ingredients.
- iv. It was noted that the intention of the design for this process is not for MPI to be auditing compliance with the definition. s9(2)(g)(i)
[REDACTED]. If the definition is eventually linked with a mark, such as with a registered lockup with the FernMark, then this would be through a licensed process and can be enforced through that IP protection mechanism. Jenny noted that Fernmark is developing a draft model for how this could potentially work, which will be ready for the next TAG.

4. Delivery:

- a. There was discussion around the possibility of creating a New Zealand Grass-Fed mark (see above). There is an opportunity to create a FernMark licence but, as there will be a cost associated with this (for design, registration, and licensing), it is important to first establish what the likely uptake would be.

Action: TAG members to consider if and how they might use a brand for "NZ Grass-fed" that is government endorsed.

- b. Andrew will change the ordering in the draft so that the 'permitted to graze outdoors' statement is upfront. This helps recognise that one of New Zealand's key differentiators is that livestock is not only fed grass but eats grass in situ, outdoors.
 - i. The draft (point 6) allows for dairy animals to be removed from the pasture for particular reasons, such as exceedingly wet weather or welfare concerns, but that they are permitted to graze outside. There was agreement to this approach and necessary to provide for circumstances where animals will need to be removed from grass or fed differently, such as managing in adverse weather events.
- c. The percentage threshold for dairy needs to be worked through once the grass feed types have been agreed, taking into account overseas standards (such as Origin Green).
 - i. There was discussion over whether the percentage would be feed offered or feed consumed; how this would sit alongside other calculations, such as Overseer; and the need to work through fresh weight vs dry matter within the methodology.
- d. Calculation methodology was discussed.
 - i. It was agreed that the milk pool calculation method needs to be defined, to ensure consistency.
 - ii. Dairy companies already collect data regarding non-grass feed types, as well as time spent off pasture/forage. There was discussion around feed offered vs feed consumed, noting that using a feed consumed method would require the definition to include a utilisation factor.
 - iii. It was noted that MPI already publishes the GHG calculation methodology; a similar management approach could be used.



- e. There was agreement that, for red meat, 'Option 1: ASD Definition' is the preferred approach.
 - i. There was agreement that there is value in exploring whether the standard could help make the ASD definition clearer (for example, defining "feedlot" and possible "normal New Zealand farming conditions").
 - ii. s9(2)(g)(i)

Action: Andrew to make agreed edits to the draft definition/standard.

5. Assurance:

- a. There was discussion over who would audit the scheme. Jenny noted that once the standard/definition and administration was further developed, a further working group with assurance bodies (such as QCONZ, AQ) would be established.
- b. It was noted that administrative compliance should be made pragmatic– for example, recording time off grass but not for specific reasons, such as milking or a vet visit.
- c. There was agreement that the language in the draft definition is a sound approach (i.e. not identifying a percentage of time off grass but providing exclusions). It is important not to penalise compliance.

6. Grass-fed mark:

- a. FernMark is developing a process chart for what the process could look like and how it would work.

Action: TAG members to consider whether they would see value in using a mark, and whether their customers would be likely to use it.

7. General business:

- a. MPI is setting up a governance group meeting, which Ray Smith will chair. Other members include Fonterra s9(2)(a), Open Country Dairy (s9(2)(a)), Silver Fern Farms (s9(2)(a)), Greenlea (s9(2)(a)). This meeting has been set for Thurs 20 March 10-11:30am.
- b. The next TAG meeting will be Tuesday, 25 March 3-4:30pm

8. The chair closed the meeting at 3:28pm.

Action Register

| | What | Who | When |
|------------|---|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 130325/001 | Companies to consider potential offshore marketing opportunities for the second half of 2025. | All TAG members | By end of April |
| 130325/002 | Arrange meeting(s) with dairy processors to discuss further the definition of what constitutes a grass feed type. | Andrew Curtis | Before next TAG (26 March) |
| 130325/003 | Arrange a call with Andrew/Jenny and the red meat sector representatives. | s9(2)(a) | 14 March (8am) |



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|------------|--|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 130325/004 | Companies to consider whether they would see value in using a mark, and whether their customers would be likely to use it. | All TAG members | Before next TAG (26 March) |
| 130325/005 | Make agreed edits to the draft definition/standard. | Andrew Curtis | Before next TAG (26 March) |

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MEMORANDUM TO THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

To: Ray Smith, Director-General

From: Jenny Cameron, Double Export Value - Chief Transformation Officer

s9(2)(a)

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| Date | 9 June 2025 |
|-------------|-------------|

| Decision required | Date decision required by |
|---|---------------------------|
| YES <input type="checkbox"/> / NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |

| Recommendations |
|---|
| Note that the New Zealand Grass-Fed Administrative Standards for red meat and dairy have been co-developed by the Ministry for Primary Industries and the red meat and dairy sectors. |
| Note that a New Zealand Grass-Fed FernMark lockup has been developed by NZ Story and Ministry for Primary Industries, with input from industry. |
| Note that the New Zealand Grass-Fed Administrative Standards will be launched and the New Zealand Grass-Fed FernMark unveiled at the Fieldays Leaders Lunch on 11 June 2025. |
| s6(a) |
| Note that the Ministry for Primary Industries will maintain the administrative standards, with New Zealand Food Safety managing the listing and review processes, and with Policy and Trade proposed to maintain the list of grass-fed feed types. |

| Contact for discussion (if required) | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| Name | Position | Contact number |
| Jenny Cameron | Chief Transformation Officer | s9(2)(a) |

| Consultation | | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|----------|
| Name | Position | Comments |
| Veronica Hall | Manager, Food Safety & Fisheries Law | |

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| Amelia Jones | Senior Solicitor, Food Safety & Fisheries Law | |
| Konrad Brown | Senior Solicitor, Corporate Law | |
| Bruce Arnold | Director, Cost Recovery | |
| Marion Castle | Director, Assurance, NZFS | |
| Kate Kilkenny | Director, Regulatory Support & Performance, NZFS | |
| Shaleen Narayan | Manager, Approvals, NZFS | |
| Steve Ainsworth, | Divisional Manager, Bilateral Relations & Trade | |
| Bill Jolly, | Principal Advisor, Trade Strategy | |
| Fiona Duncan | Director, Regulatory Systems, Policy | |
| Jen Radich | Director, Verification Services | |
| Steph Preston | Director, Programmes & Planning | |
| Oliver Boys | Agricultural Emissions Programmes Specialist | |

| Key messages | |
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| The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on the status of the New Zealand Grass-Fed Administrative Standards for red meat and dairy (the administrative standards). | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The administrative standards have been developed by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and the red meat and dairy sectors. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A New Zealand Grass-Fed FernMark lockup has been developed by MPI and NZStory, with input from industry. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The administrative standards are to be launched, and the New Zealand Grass-Fed FernMark unveiled, at the Fieldays Leaders Lunch that you will be attending on 11 June 2025. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An in-market launch of the Standard is planned for Shanghai in late June with the PM's visit, ^{6(a)} [REDACTED] | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MPI will maintain the administrative standards, with New Zealand Food Safety (NZFS) managing the scheme listing and review processes. DDG NZFS (Arbuckle) as approved this process | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy and Trade (P&T) will maintain the schedule of grass-fed feed types and their metabolisable energy rates. DDG Policy & Trade has approved this process. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NZStory will maintain responsibility for the New Zealand Grass-Fed FernMark through the processes developed for administration and protection of the New Zealand FernMark. | |

- The administrative standards will be reviewed one year after launch and at least every three years thereafter.

Background

- 1) As one of its strategic actions to double export value by 2034 in both the MPI Action Plan and the Double Export Value Eight-Point Plan, MPI has worked with industry and NZ Story to develop pre-competitive 'NZ Grass-Fed Administrative Standards' for red meat and dairy and a New Zealand Grass-Fed FernMark lock up. The administrative standards and Grass-Fed Fernmark are intended for use by exporters and their customers (business to business and business to consumer) in market to support their grass-fed attributes.
- 2) Currently individual processors and exporters have their own schemes for use in market. Business, particularly in the dairy sector, informed MPI that there are customer requests for a government-backed standard that would increase demand for New Zealand products, particularly in the China market.
- 3) Key competitors in-market make similar claims, notably Ireland with its Irish Government-endorsed 'Origin Green' programme, Australia, Uruguay, Argentina are all putting more effort into promoting the attributes of their country brand.
- 4) Fonterra has advised that delivering a government-backed standard would enable them to protect the existing value derived from promoting the New Zealand grass-fed attribute and develop a market advantage, or 'moat' compared to competitors (such as Ireland), particularly in their most important market of China.
- 5) The grass-fed administrative standards were the first pilot for a broader proof of provenance programme to build trust and traceability in New Zealand food products. The experience of and lessons learned from developing the administrative standards will inform further proof of provenance work, if and when any further work happens.

Developing the New Zealand Grass-Fed Administrative Standard

- 6) The administrative standards were developed through three workstreams:
 - Workstream 1 involved the development of the administrative standards themselves. John Roche, MPI's Chief Science Advisor and now also Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor, chaired a technical advisory group (TAG) made up of subject matter experts from red meat and dairy processors.
 - Workstream 2 established an administrative framework for implementing the administrative standards within MPI, and the necessary verification requirements. This workstream involved staff from NZFS, P&T, and the Double Export Value team within Public Affairs. MPI's legal, cost recovery and finance teams provided subject matter expert advice as required.
 - Workstream 3 involved standard and assurance bodies, such as AsureQuality, QCONZ, and JASANZ to test that this model would be credible and in line with domestic and international best practice for audit and assurance purposes.

- 7) A governance group was made up of senior leaders from meat and dairy processors (Fonterra, Open Country Dairy, Greenlea, and Silver Fern Farms), and Chaired by yourself.
- 8) Two administrative standards have been completed: one for red meat and one for dairy. This makes it easier for applicants to understand the definition of grass-fed that their scheme must reach. It also reflects differences between red meat and dairy farming systems, to keep the administrative standards as reflective of current New Zealand farming systems as possible.
- 9) The administrative standards will be launched at the Fieldays Leaders Lunch you are attending on 11 June 2025. The Prime Minister is expected to make the announcement and various industry leaders whose businesses have been involved in the administrative standards' development will also be in attendance.
- 10) Scheme owners have the opportunity to submit applications for assessment under the administrative standards prior to Fieldays, so businesses can announce their listing under the administrative standard as soon as it goes live. As of 9 June 2025, three applications have been received from the dairy sector and one officially approved. The dairy and red meat administrative standards are included at Appendix One.
- 11) The administrative standards have been favourably peer reviewed by AgResearch, "*the NZ Grass-Fed Standard represents a valid description of grass-fed status that conforms with the principles that have been used in other countries (Canada, Ireland, UK and USA) for defining grass-fed status, with some variations.*" The AgResearch report is attached at Appendix Two.
- 12) A journal article submission to the New Zealand Journal of Agricultural Research is planned for FY2025/26 Quarter One.

Key components of the administrative standards

- 13) To meet the grass-fed threshold, dairy animals must be on pasture for, on average, at least 340 days per year, at least eight hours per day. Grass-fed feed types must make up, on average, at least 90 percent of their diet. This reflects a higher standard of time outside than Ireland's Origin Green programme.
- 14) The definition of grass-fed for red meat animals reflects the Animal Status Declaration form. To meet the administrative standard, red meat animals must be raised under normal New Zealand farming conditions with year-round access to grass-fed feed types. Other supplementary feeds are permissible, but feedlots may not be used, and animals must only be removed from pasture or forage crops for the purposes of animal management or to safeguard the or the environment from adverse events.
- 15) The administrative standards primarily target processors and exports rather than individual farmers. Processors and exporters (scheme owners) who own and operate a scheme that includes grass-fed claims will be able to apply to have their grass-fed status recognised by MPI. Individual farmers will not be required to apply, although will need to confirm their grass-fed status to the scheme owner they supply. In the case of dairy farmers, this will be through data they already provide. For red meat, this data will be

gathered through additional questions in the existing Farm Assurance Programme (FAP) audit, so there is no requirement for a separate verification process.

Developing the New Zealand Grass-Fed FernMark

- 16) MPI has worked with NZ Story, with input from industry, to develop a Grass-Fed FernMark. Scheme owners assessed as meeting one of the administrative standards will be able to apply for a license to use the Grass-Fed FernMark and, in certain circumstances, authorise their customers to use the grass-fed claim.
- 17) The grass-fed mark has been developed as a 'lock-up' with the New Zealand FernMark to enable use of the implementation, management and intellectual property systems that NZ Story already maintains. The New Zealand FernMark is already widely used by the red meat and dairy industries.¹
- 18) The Grass-Fed FernMark will be unveiled at the Fieldays Leaders Lunch. A copy of the mark and short versions of the Standards can be found at Appendix Three.
- 19) Work to further refine implementation processes around the Grass-Fed FernMark and business rules around claims customers can make when using New Zealand grass-fed ingredients will be completed post-Fieldays.^{6(a)}

Administering and maintaining the administrative standards

- 20) The delivery system for the administrative standards has been designed by a working group made up of MPI staff from the Double Export Value team, NZFS and P&T. Subject matter expert advice has been provided by Corporate Services, particularly the legal, finance and cost recovery teams.
- 21) Government recognition of a grass-fed scheme as meeting one of the administrative standards will be via a listing process, with similar listing processes already administered by NZFS under existing food safety regimes.
- 22) The DDG NZFS has approved that the NZFS Approvals team will maintain the listing process, given it fills this function regarding other registrations and listings under New Zealand's food safety regimes. The proposed scheme endorsement process under the administrative standard, including MPI listing. A copy of the approved memo signed by DDG NZFS is attached at Appendix Four.
- 23) While the NZFS Approvals team will manage the application and listing process, ongoing 'ownership', oversight and maintenance including addressing technical enquiries of the standard sit with the NZFS Assurance Directorate, which, already

¹ Fernmark already has over 600 existing licencees in the Programme, currently 90 of these are in the dairy (38), dairy based supplements/formula (15), meat (11) or pet food (26) sectors.

manages legislative and administrative standards for the provision of official government assurances.

- 24) A separate briefing from the DDG P&T that approves the maintenance of the administrative standards' schedule that details grass-fed feed types, and their metabolisable energy rates sit within Policy and Trade. As the schedule utilises the MPI Greenhouse Gas Emissions Methodology, already developed and maintained within the branch, having the same team maintain the relevant schedule in the administrative standards will ensure consistency between MPI-administered frameworks, and avoid duplication for farmers. Maintaining this schedule is not anticipated to cause any resource burdens, beyond alerting the NZFS Assurance Directorate of any changes to the GHG Emissions Methodology so that the same changes can be made to the administrative standards.

Next steps

- 25) Launch of the Administrative at Fielddays, including the MPI webpage.
- 26) Assess applications received.
- 27) Following Fielddays, MPI will continue to work with NZ Story and industry to finalise business rules around use of the New Zealand grass-fed claim by international customers. NZ Story will also conduct in-market^{6(a)}

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that you:
- a) **Note** that the New Zealand Grass-Fed Administrative Standards for red meat and dairy have been co-developed by the Ministry for Primary Industries and the livestock sector.
 - b) **Note** that a New Zealand Grass-Fed FernMark lockup has been developed by NZ Story and the Ministry for Primary Industries, with input from industry.
 - c) **Note** that the New Zealand Grass-Fed Administrative Standards will be launched and the New Zealand Grass-Fed FernMark unveiled at the Fielddays Leaders Lunch on 11 June 2025.

NOTED

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- June with the PM's visit, and an in-market launch of the [REDACTED] 6(a)

NOTED

- NOTED**

Ray Smith
Director-General
Ministry for Primary Industries

/06/ 2025

| Director-General's comments |
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