



Looking back 12 months ago it would have been hard to imagine that the world would have been plunged into economic depression, that swine flu was the animal flavoured disease of the year and that general food prices would have increased by 12 to 30%, and that Bernadine Prince would want to endure another 17 hour flight to join us on the other side of the world for a Farmers Market forum. While both large and small countries have struggled with social and economic issues I have yet to hear of a real farmers market in NZ who has not increased in either local food producers or customers, or a real farmers market that has had to close its doors or pull in its high flying executives and close their expense accounts.

It has been a very busy 12 months and I would like to thank Ian Thomas who resigned from FMNZ earlier this year, for his enduring commitment to the grassroots of the Farmers market movement and to John and Rodger from Otago who have also moved on. Without Ian Thomas' vision or plain arrogance we would not be here today and there would not be the solid foundations that we now stand on. I have enjoyed working with our executive members, Catherine from Parnell you are showing the way by example and not just through talking about it, Helen from Fielding who gives her market the brute energy to allow it to grow and prosper, and it has been a great pleasure to work with Jono from Hamilton who shoots straight and is not afraid to stick up for the little guys. Special thanks must go to Angela Clifford as she holds the ambitious task of dealing with 12 markets in her region and I have great the satisfaction of telling her that I have received another enquiry for a FM in her region just yesterday. She is not only a full time mum but a leader by example and to eat at her house and from her gardens is better than any other dining experience that I have had or will have in NZ.

Jennie Crum who cannot be here today for personal reasons is the real rock behind the organisation for without her down to earth approach and sensibilities we would have been shaped into a different style of organisation that would not truly represent who our members are. Jennie has taught me and Ian that you must grow at a sustainable rate whether you are an organisation or a farm, organic or spray-free, conventional or non conventional. There has not been a day gone by in the last 12 months when the phone or email has not delivered yet more work on a organisation stretched for time within our own lives and jobs, and it has been a privilege to get to know Kerry Jensen our new secretary of FMNZ and I look forward to her involvement in the future, the first job of the executive will be to update her job description to include baggage handler and Goggle Mapping and Communications expert. I trust that FMNZ members will honour the universal unspoken code of Secretary's, that of showering her with chocolates (handmade in NZ of course), endless cups of herbal tea (made in NZ, of course) and praise her filing system of members paperwork that nobody without a recent bachelor degree of business would be able to understand.

While the past has been written only by our success and failures we must look forward to the next 12 months and beyond to ensure that what has begun with passion and commitment is now put into action and driven by great business and organisational skills, for passion is something that can not be bought or sold. While there is commitment in this room and at our members markets, it does not mean that this will be emulated by those that are enquiring about starting new farmers markets in NZ (6 more to open in the spring). FMNZ is an inclusive organisation and we were founded on the belief of sharing information (even if this did mean taking Ian Thomas out for dinner and getting him drunk to make him talk). We need to share the right information in a manner that emulates what our organisation and individual markets really stand for that; Value is not just for our farmers who sell their crops each week but to our consumers who support our farmers each week rain or shine. When we talk about Value we are often confused with what high street does, value in the money sense, but we need to promote the value in the social sense, the value of what our farmers markets do to enliven and make our communities prosper, the value of children who attend our markets and interact with food does to the culture of our communities and the value of what keeping real money in local communities does for the whole social structure of NZ and beyond. No farmers' market organiser or manager would have envisioned that when they had the great idea of putting a Farmers market in their backyards that they would be the catalyst for the way people change their lives as the social value of farmers markets are felt over a larger area. This applies to our smallest markets with just one stall in Diamond Heads to our largest farmers markets in Southland and Northland and cuts through all boundaries of social behaviour. Sometimes the real benefits of Farmers markets are normally misunderstood or poorly communicated; the main reason being

that we are in the business of providing a venue for our farmers to be able to sell directly to consumers does not mean that we should not be doing everything we can to promote the full circle of the food chain. This is happening in our communities and markets with gardens in schools, community's gardens plots, box systems, sustainable agriculture programs and "localvore" awareness.

The FMNZ executive has undertaken over the last 12 months the buy local campaign for which we received dollar for dollar funding from the ministry of Economic Development. This has allowed our smallest farmers and farmers markets to contribute to the value of the organisation so that we are able to do what many of us just don't have the time and resources to do, that of education and promotion at a higher level. The FMNZ executives have come up with a number of initiatives that more than quantify the \$1 per stallholder per week per market formula. Yes we are subsidising the true cost of a national organisation but we also do this each week at our own markets as we grow and nurture them. We also believe there are other partners in our communities that we can draw resources and capital from that will enable our Farmers the best chance of success not just tomorrow but into the future.

I implore that our members put faith into the executive of FMNZ to enable them to do what we have been entrusted to do, to promote and to educate the benefit of Farmers' markets and local food distribution systems. I believe that we have the expertise and we are beginning to have the resources available for us to make a real difference in the way the people shop on a regular basis. While FMNZ can not be held responsible for the weather at your markets each week we do need to be held responsible for the protecting of the words "farmers' markets" and the real value of our markets, that of being a food market where local growers, farmers and artisan food producers sell their ware directly to the consumer. Vendors may only sell what they grow, farm, pickle, preserve, bake, smoke or catch themselves within a defined local area.

I believe that the tools that we have developed will enable all of our members to be more effective in our communication, more effective with the time that they have to manage our markets and more effective at ensuing that the needs of both their consumers and farmers are meet. Unfortunately this is an endless job and the principle is based on the fact that the better you do the job the more work is created, if you put a small amount of energy into it then you will return only a little on your investment. The more energy you put something the more investment will be returned to you and the living example of this is Bernadine Prince from Washington DC. Bernie asked me what my longer term vision of the Farmers Markets in NZ was and my response is that we are guardians of the words "farmers markets" and that the seeds that had been sowed by herself and Jane Adams (her understudy in 1998) need to be used in a manner that ensures the real food producers of NZ are given the greatest opportunity to sustain them selves, their families and their communities –

Re-energising and inspiring the people is not rocket science. It can be done by honouring universal human truths: people need a vision to believe in, they need to be trained, equipped and trusted to implement that vision and they need to be praised and recognised for making the vision a reality

"I look forward to working with our new executive members and our current standing executive members to achieve and nurture the words "farmers market" in NZ"

Authenticity is our main issue moving forward and the energies of the buy local contributions and the 6 milestones have all led to Authenticity and what it means to farmers and consumers. I implore to all people who eat, (which is everybody) to embrace food as a part of our culture and life, that when you sit at the table that you communicate, laugh, cry, get angry, be happy, network, negate and most of all support our farmers and food producers as a part of our families and as a integral part of our communities.

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