



Fertiliser Quality Council Strategy

2021 to 2024

Introduction

The Fertiliser Quality Council (FQC) was established “for farmers, by farmers” in 1992. Its initial objective was to develop and provide an assurance programme to support the use of fertiliser products, this became known as Fertmark. Products with the “Fertmark tick” have been independently audited as reaching the standards described in the Fertmark Code. There are currently 14 companies in Fertmark and 69 registered products. In addition to Fertmark, the FQC is also responsible for a certification scheme to promote accurate and on-target fertiliser application, known as Spreadmark. The Spreadmark logo is found on the trucks of 75 companies throughout New Zealand.

Independently auditing the Spreadmark and Fertmark schemes are the core business of the FQC, operating these schemes broadens the FQC’s scope to include:

- Independent audit of nutrients present in Fertmark products;
- Independent audit of Spreadmark accredited companies (ground and aerial);
- Oversight of spreader testing programmes (ground and aerial);
- Operating a Fertmark Test Methods Reference Group which develops laboratory test methods;
- The establishment of an Agronomic Panel to adjudicate issues of agronomic trials and promotional claims on all fertiliser sold in New Zealand; and
- Promoting the value of Spreadmark and Fertmark schemes to New Zealand farmers.

In addition to operating the Spreadmark and Fertmark schemes, the FQC has also undertaken a number of promotional programmes, including:

- Promoting to regulators (local, regional and central) the role of fertiliser products;
- Educating the New Zealand public on the fertiliser story; and
- Promoting research into the measurement of accuracy of fertiliser placement.

Through its independent assurance quality schemes, the FQC makes an important contribution to the sustainability of the New Zealand primary sector. However, the use of fertiliser is coming under increasing scrutiny as the New Zealand public associate fertiliser application with environmental degradation; at the same time central Government has introduced the “Action for Healthy Waterways” freshwater regulations which establish a cap on the use of synthetic nitrogen of 190 kilograms of nitrogen/ha/year. In addition, there are a number of new products coming into the market which enhance plant growth and/or provide environmental benefits but are not currently included in the Fertmark Code; and with them opportunities for growth of the Fertmark and Spreadmark schemes.

The FQC Strategy will drive the activities of the organisation and its schemes for the next five years and may be subject to a review after three years.

Definitions

Name	Definition
Farmer or grower	Anyone managing a growing system which requires nutrient management.
Fertiliser	Fertiliser is a subset of agricultural chemicals that are used to sustain or increase growth, productivity, quality of plants, or indirectly animals through the application of nutrients; and meets the requirements of the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act (1997) (ACVM).
Fertmark	Holding the Fertmark tick means that the fertiliser has been independently audited to ensure accurate labelling of ingredients, and that the product is as described by the manufacturer. This means that users can be confident that the fertiliser supplied by Fertmark companies meets the claimed nutrient content, and if as directed, does not pose hazards to food safety and animal welfare; and meets the requirements of the ACVM Act (1997).
National regulator	The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) is the national regulator helping to generate export opportunities for the primary sector, improve sector productivity, ensure that food is safe, increase sustainable resource use and protect New Zealand from biological risk.
Nutrients	Essential elements required for normal growth and development of animals and/or plants.
On farm assurance schemes	On farm assurance schemes are product certification schemes that provide assurances of integrity, traceability, biosecurity, food safety, environmental sustainability, and animal health and welfare (amongst other things).
Primary Industry	Agricultural, horticultural, food, fishing, aquaculture and forestry industry.
Application equipment	A device, mechanism or machine that is used specifically for the application of fertiliser.
Product distributor/supplier	Distributor of fertiliser or other nutrients.
Regional regulator	A regional regulator is a regional council responsible for managing its region's natural resources (air, soil, water) and how land use affects the environment. Regional councils are responsible for drafting regional plans which describe the objectives, policies, and methods for the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.
Spreadmark	Spreadmark is the fertiliser spreading quality assurance programme that guarantees the placement of fertilisers in locations where they can be of the most agricultural benefit and the least environmental harm. The Spreadmark logo provides users with assurance that the spreading company (ground or aerial) is certified to distribute the fertiliser accurately and evenly.
Sustainable management	Managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing and for their health and safety. Enabling this while sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and avoiding, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.

FQC Stakeholders

The FQC has a range of stakeholders who contribute to, and benefit from, the activities that the organisation undertakes. This includes stakeholders whose management is informed by the FQC such as growers, farmers and their advisors, product distributors and their representatives, and product applicators. Through its independent verification programmes, the FQC provides growers and farmers with assurance that high quality nutrient products are available for use, proof of placement on product application and independent verification for product distributors that their products are manufactured to the required standard.

There is also a group of stakeholders who give credit to our certification schemes in their regulations or on farm assurance schemes. These stakeholders include district, regional and national level regulators and those operating farm assurance schemes to support compliance with the requirements of regulators and those in our export markets. The public is an important stakeholder for the FQC as it contributes to the debate and needs to be informed of the facts supporting nutrient application.

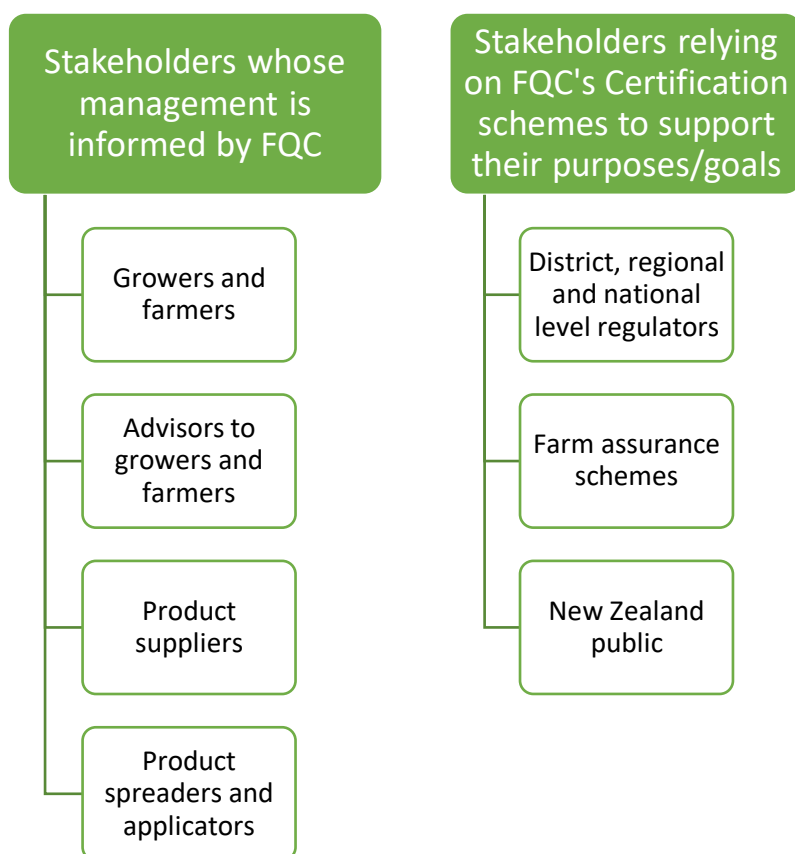


Figure 1 FQC Stakeholders

Strategic Vision

To be widely recognised across the primary sector as New Zealand's only independent authority overseeing auditing of fertiliser nutrient products and their accurate placement on land.

Mission Statement

To support the primary sector by ensuring fertiliser nutrients are independently verified as true to label and to promote and oversee accurate fertiliser and nutrient placement.

Key Principles

1. The FQC will operate independently, transparently, and credibly for the benefit of all stakeholders and users of fertiliser nutrients in New Zealand.
2. The FQC plays a key role in signalling quality assured products which are used in a sustainable manner.
3. The FQC maintains significant farmer input on the Executive to ensure services required by farmers are delivered.
4. The FQC provides an industry forum for stakeholders to drive the strategic direction of product quality and application in New Zealand.
5. The FQC promotes effective and efficient nutrient management and the role that nutrients play in the primary sector.
6. The FQC promotes environmental stewardship and sustainability around nutrient application.

Strategic Objectives

1. Operate as an independent and credible organisation representing the interests of fertiliser nutrient users in New Zealand.
2. To administer the Fertmark and Spreadmark assurance schemes, grow awareness and brand strength.
3. To manage any conflicts as they arise for Fertmark and Spreadmark members.
4. To provide advice on the process which enables members to test the veracity of product claims.
5. To provide advice on the process for lodging complaints which are made by product and spreading companies.
6. To educate and promote the benefits of appropriate nutrient application.
7. Align with other stakeholders in the primary sector to ensure sustainable fertiliser nutrient application is achieved.

Overarching goals to deliver the Strategic Objectives

1. To deliver value for farmers, growers and other users of nutrient products

To **achieve** this goal, the FQC will undertake the following activities:

- Manage and regularly review the Fertmark and Spreadmark accreditation schemes to ensure they are fit for purpose and deliver relevant industry needs.
- Provide an ongoing forum for stakeholders to develop agreed solutions to issues as they arise.
- Educate farmers and growers on product quality, including such things as the physical properties of fertiliser.
- The development of a Communications Plan which drives publication of media content (print, social and digital). The Communications Plan is presented and approved at the May meeting of the FQC.
- Regular and ongoing engagement with farmers, growers and their advisors.
- A review of the FQC Society and Executive structure to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- Ongoing updates of the Fertmark and Spreadmark schemes and reporting on these changes.
- Writing submissions on relevant local, regional or national consultations and/or supporting the submissions of other primary sector stakeholders.

The following will be used to **measure** whether the FQC is achieving the goal of delivering value for farmers, growers, and other users of nutrient products:

- The number of products in Fertmark increases.
- The percentage of Spreadmark certified operators increases.
- Fertmark and Spreadmark are recognised in national and regional regulation, and in product assurance schemes.
- Regular publication and uptake of media content on Fertmark and Spreadmark.
- Social media followers on Facebook and Twitter, and engagement with social media content increases.
- Increase of website traffic to the FQC site.
- Active engagement in the FQC Forum by Fertmark and Spreadmark members.

2. To provide ongoing verification of product quality and proof of placement

To **achieve** this goal of providing ongoing verification of product quality and proof of placement, the FQC will undertake the following activities:

- Maintain independence from funding providers.
- Maintain and build the Fertmark and Spreadmark brands.
- Initiate industry good research on issues as required.
- Offer support for training in nutrient application.
- Maintain independent evaluation of nutrient quality and placement.
- Investigate the opportunities for adding other products to the Fertmark Code.

Key **outputs** of this include:

- Investigate whether Fertmark can be extended to include other products which may be applied to land.
- The independent audit of product quality and spreading applicators is undertaken.
- Research projects delivering benefit to the primary sector are delivered, reported on and communicated to stakeholders.
- Nutrient applicators undertake ongoing driver training on nutrient application.
- Ongoing engagement with stakeholders such as Dairy Companies and Regional Councils, on Fertmark and Spreadmark.
- Maintain an ongoing dialogue with Overseer and related organisations.

The following can be used as a **measure** of whether the FQC is achieving the goal of providing ongoing verification of product quality and proof of placement:

- Research projects deliver benefit to stakeholders and engage with FQC when projects are delivered.
- Primary stakeholders recognise the value that FQC delivers as an assurance agency.
- The number of nutrient applicators undertaking training and other continuous improvements increases.
- Other products are added to the Fertmark Code.

3. To educate, inform and promote the role nutrient application plays in the primary sector.

To **achieve** the goal of educating, informing and promoting the role nutrient application plays in the primary sector, the FQC will undertake the following:

- Provide content around product quality and application for use in media (social, digital and print) and by third parties/stakeholders.
- Develop a stakeholder engagement plan within the communications and marketing plan.
- Initiate contact with stakeholders to demonstrate the role that FQC plays in assuring nutrient quality and proof of placement.
- Participate in relevant conferences and other activities promoting the role of nutrients and proof of placement.
- Where possible, collaborate with other stakeholders to educate, inform and promote the role nutrient application, quality and placement plays in the primary sector.
- Review the programme that FQC contracts to Young Farmers.

Key **outputs** of these activities undertaken by the FQC include:

- The communications plan describes the role nutrients and nutrient placement play in the primary industry, and identifies content for publishing on various media forums (print, social and digital).
- The stakeholder engagement plan identifies stakeholders that the FQC will engage with annually, messages that will be delivered and how they will be communicated.

The following can be used as a **measure** of whether the FQC is achieving the goal of educating, informing, and promoting the activities of FQC to stakeholders:



- Content is published regularly across the media platforms.
- Traffic visiting www.fertqual.co.nz increases and available content is easily accessible.
- Ongoing engagement with Government and NGOs about the role of quality nutrients and proof of placement.
- Strong participation with the public or other stakeholders at conference or other events the FQC participates in.

