

EDITORIAL: VIGILANT SERVANT LEADERSHIP

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Over the last 70 years the Organic community has espoused a set of principles on which to farm, grow and live by. We have actively advocated the lifestyle, technologies and means to resolve many local and global issues which are now the titles of best-selling novels and treatise of recent times, *Cradle to Cradle* and *Biomimicry* to name a couple (Benyus 2002, McDonough & Braungart 2002). A carbon economy is exactly what we have espoused for decades. It is nice to feel we were right.

Continuing on a theme in the previous editorial, it is also very frustrating times. It is difficult to celebrate when generations of work is not acknowledged, or actively ignored. The symptoms of frustration abound; little or no research funding for Organic systems approaches is proportioned to our value to the food chain or calculated wider environment benefits and definitely less for the organisations that may organise it. While at the primary school level of education we have some success, we find there is diminishing support at the tertiary level. The situation is not better, it is worse. How could this be? How could we have permitted this to happen? Have we been absorbed, or peaked as a culture, accomplishing what we set out to do. I suggest not; the fun is just beginning, and so too the challenges.

It is fundamentally a leadership issue requiring vigilance and a servant leadership style that engages our entire community. This is the time to critically reflect on our performance and what it is we have become. How do we want to engage in the 21st century, who we want the Organic sector to become or have achieved by the end of its second decade are issues not often raised in leadership forum.

A first leadership step is to recognise and acknowledge that we offer great value and have demonstrated this for several decades. We are rightful participants at the table to discuss the integrated nature of the environmental and food security issues facing us. However, we will have to change our communication strategies and recognise that we have not been very good at communicating and public relations especially amongst ourselves.

Are we willing to go deeper, further and address the complex challenges, knowing that the answers are often found in the profound simplicity of our principles? I certainly hope so. Those who are not should perhaps step aside, and make room for a new generation of leaders.

This requires us to be honest with ourselves, to reflect on the past and re-evaluate our visions for the future, so we can develop a pathway in a direction that allows others to want to be a part of it. In Australia and New Zealand we need help with this. I'd suggest we may have to engage the innovation of people's movements so well evolved in many developing nations to assist us.

We too as a movement must also evolve. For example, we may have been world leaders in environmental standard setting but being certified Organic is now no guarantee that the produce is sustainable, and markets know this. Being a biological farmer is what mainstream, conventional agriculture wants and are working very hard in trying to take our space. If we do not like the 'business as usual' model, then we have to embrace the challenge they place before us by being proactive and welcoming them.

A specific challenge for research and researchers is to truly engage and apply the knowledge. To listen and connect to the will of others is servant leadership and one that our particular community can demonstrate. There is so much potential, why stop at the farm or individual, why not whole watersheds, islands and nations as well as communities and civilizations becoming Organic and our culture based on the principles becoming the common one. I would suggest that this is worth working for.

References

Benyus, J.M. 2002. *Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature*. Perennial, New York.
McDonough, W. & Braungart, M. 2002. *Cradle to Cradle : Remaking the Way We Make Things*. North Point Press, New York.