



The Biological Husbandry Unit Future Farming Centre Permanent Agriculture and Horticulture: Science and Extension

7 November 2011

A new vision for farming

Head of the Biological Husbandry Unit (BHU) Future Farming Centre Dr Charles Merfield proposed a new vision for agriculture, horticulture and wider society to ensure the future prosperity of both farming and humanity.

Speaking at the launch of the BHU Future Farming Centre on Monday 31st October 2011, on the theme 'A New Agricultural Testament', Dr Merfield said "Farming cannot continue down the industrial path. It has to turn to 'alternative' paradigms such as agro-ecology and organic agriculture to ensure future generations can meet their food and fibre needs. The Future Farming Centre is dedicated to permanent agriculture and horticulture by helping farmers and other stakeholders' transition to a new way of meeting present needs without compromising future needs."

A key element of the Future Farming Centre (FFC) is a strong participatory extension system, to ground and inform the science, especially research aimed at solving practical farming problems, and also to ensure researchers understand real-world farming.

The dissemination of knowledge to farmers needs to be both new science and more importantly the collation and synthesis of whole areas of existing knowledge. Permanent and related agricultures represents a shift in the location of knowledge from specialists, such as biochemists, to farmers.

Lincoln University's Chancellor Tom Lambie, himself an organic farmer, officially launched The BHU Future Farming Centre. "The launch of the Future Farming Centre is an excellent step forward in creating a better place for all of us to live. It is focused on working collaboratively with the farming community and key stakeholders ensuring solutions are found to meet long-term needs."

While science and extension will be the main work of the FFC, it also aspires to higher academic and intellectual goals by promoting the philosophy and history of agriculture and agricultural science.

"I also want the FFC to maintain independence from commercial and business interests as much as possible, so that it can truly offer impartial advice to farmers. Globally, organisations that used to be non-commercial have increasingly commercialised the intellectual property that they had previously given away for free, to make up for funding shortfalls. However that has often come at a loss of impartiality, both at the level of the individual, and the organisation. Farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to find impartial advice and I want to ensure the FFC is as free of such biases as possible, and where they exist, to clearly declare such conflicts of interest" says Dr Merfield.

About the BHU and FFC:

Established in 1976 and re-launched in 2001 as a charity, The Biological Husbandry Unit Organics Trust's role is to undertake research and promotion of organic and holistic management through: education and training, research and development and extension activities.

The Future Farming Centre is dedicated to permanent, organic, sustainable and ecological science and extension to provide practical tools to help mainstream agriculture transition to production systems that meet both current and future needs of humanity and the planet.

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To view a copy of the presentation visit www.bhu.org.nz/index.php/future-farming-centre

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