



VILLA MARIA  
NEW ZEALAND

# Villa Maria's Sustainability Journey

—— *and the path to the future* ——





We're often told there's a lot of jargon in the sustainability area and we're constantly asked what does it actually mean?

Well here's our journey so far, what we're doing and why we're doing it, plain and simple.





“As a family company, the desire to leave something for the next generation is an ever-present and overriding business objective.”

*Sir George Fistonich, Villa Maria Owner & Founder*



Sir George Fistonich with daughter Karen Fistonich.

## Sustainability at Villa Maria

What sustainability means to us, is finding ways to minimise the impacts of our business on our environment. There is no end point, it's a continuous journey of improvement, and we're committed to trying harder.

Being environmentally responsible is a core objective for Villa Maria's owner and founder Sir George Fistonich: "As a family company, the desire to leave something for the next generation is an ever-present and overriding business objective."

# Our wine regions



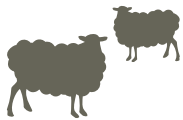
# In the vineyard



We have a network of worm farms at our vineyard and winery sites across the country. Fed with scraps from our restaurant kitchens, staff lunchrooms and organic wastes, these thousands of worms are hard at work creating nutrient rich material for fertilising our vineyards.



Wildflowers planted between the rows of organically managed vineyards add diversity, help the soil structure and attract beneficial insects to ward off pests that would otherwise need to be sprayed with synthetic pesticides.



When there are no grapes for them to snaffle, we use flocks of sheep to graze vineyards. They provide natural fertilizer and in summer can help with leaf plucking.

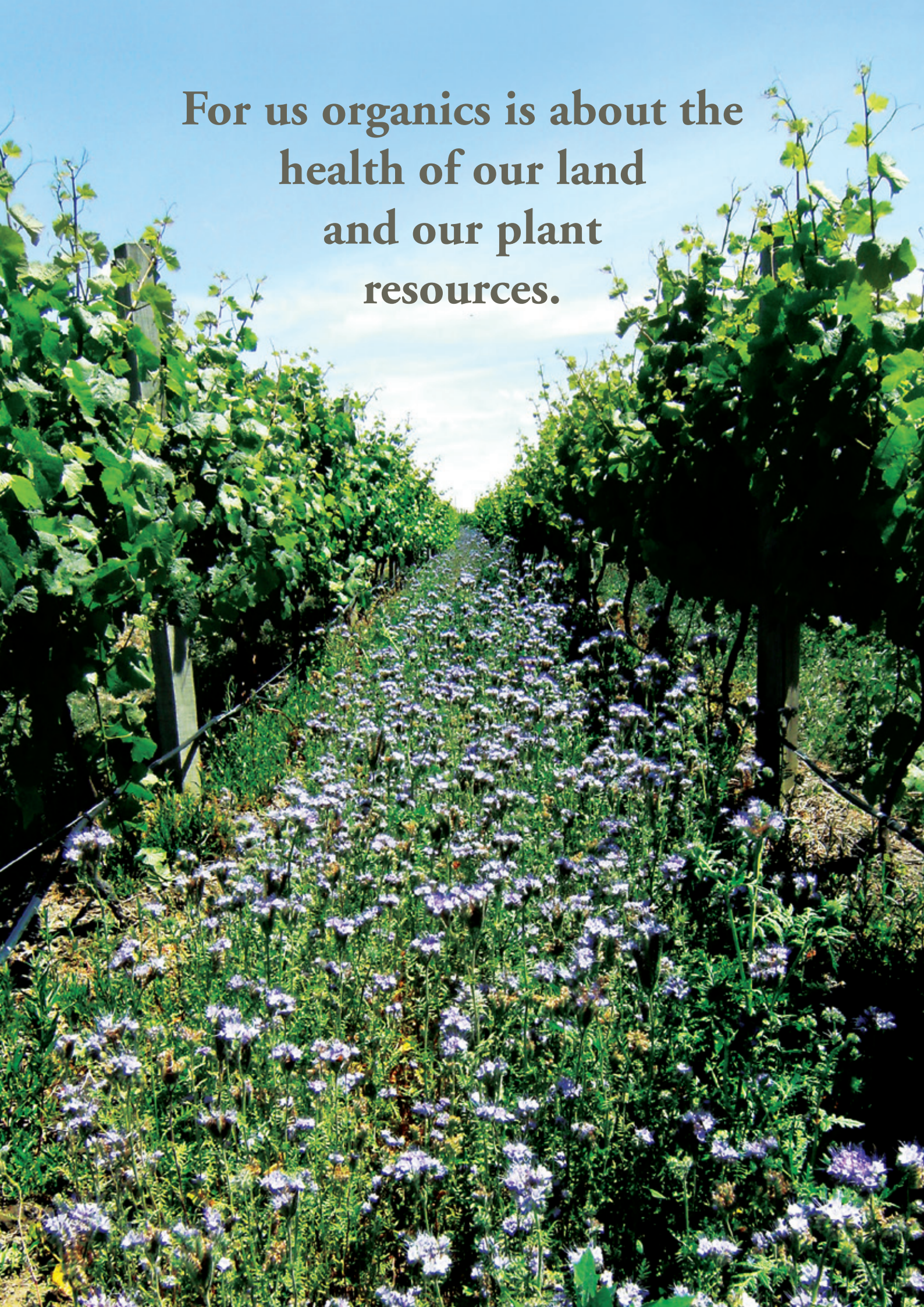


All Villa Maria vineyards are certified to Sustainable Wine Growing New Zealand environmental management standards. Progressively we are transitioning vineyards to organic management practices with a number certified under the BioGro Organic accreditation.





**For us organics is about the  
health of our land  
and our plant  
resources.**





# Organic wine

Great wine starts from an intimate relationship with the land. For us organics is about the health of our land and our plant resources. It is about people in the vineyards who understand the soils, the grapevines and the weather. They keep in touch with the vines and fruit through the growing season, using both age old and modern technology to get the best from our vineyards. This care and attention transitions to the winery after the grapes are harvested, where the organic wines are managed separately and minimally, letting nature do its job.

You reap what you sow as they say, and our wines from organic grapes are a wonderful expression of the geography, the soil and climate of the vineyard from where they were harvested.

We introduced organic principles to our vineyards in 1999 with an ambitious plan to convert a 200 acre vineyard in Hawkes Bay. At the time, it was a little too ambitious and we did not have the natural tools to tackle the pests, weeds and disease on such a large scale. It would have been

easy to abandon the project at that point, but lead by Villa Maria founder Sir George Fistonich we started again breaking it down to more manageable chunks. After a lot of hard work and some questions from our accountant, in 2007 we were thrilled to achieve the internationally recognised BioGro Organic Certification for a 21 hectare block. Following that, in 2009 we became the first major New Zealand winery to become fully BioGro certified from the grape to the bottle and everything in between.



Villa Maria now has organically certified vineyards in Auckland, Hawkes Bay and Marlborough.



The first organically grown and Biogro certified wine we made was the **2009 Villa Maria Cellar Selection Merlot** which won a gold medal at the New Zealand International Wine Show just one month after release.

# Keeping it real

Being true to our sustainability objectives means constantly keeping check of everything we do and finding ways to do them better. We work with several independent organisations for auditing, best practice sharing and industry leadership.

## SWNZ

*(Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand)*



Villa Maria has been a member of SWNZ since its inception in 1995. It is an initiative of the national body, New Zealand Winegrowers. It provides a best practice model for managing vineyards and wineries, involving the sustainable management of land and resources to meet the needs of today without adversely impacting the needs of tomorrow. What it covers:

- Codes of practice are provided and are specific for vineyards and wineries.
- Vineyards and wineries are required to complete an annual self-assessment scorecard which is then subjected to regular external audit.
- Vineyards and wineries are required to report on resource use including chemical, water and energy. This is compiled and benchmark data made available to members.

## CEMARS

*(Certified Emissions Measurement and Reduction Scheme)*



CEMARS is an internationally recognised carbon reduction programme developed in New Zealand and focuses solely on measuring and managing a carbon footprint or greenhouse gas emissions profile. Villa Maria has been measuring and finding ways to reduce our carbon emissions since 2010. Significantly the scope of what we include in our measurement spans production of our products from the vineyard right through to the point where the wine reaches our customers.

- In 2010 Villa Maria became the first major New Zealand winery to achieve the internationally recognised CEMARS (Certified Emissions Measurement and Reduction Scheme) certification.
- Since Villa Maria introduced CEMARS we have reduced the emissions from fuel and electricity per litre of wine made by 25%.



## BIOGRO



In 2009, Villa Maria was the first major New Zealand winery to achieve BioGro organic certification from the vineyard to the winery, bottling facility and warehouse. BioGro is a not-for-profit organic producer and consumer organisation, actively working to foster organics in New Zealand. Wine grown under strict organic conditions at Villa Maria certified vineyards is made separately in a controlled environment at the winery, then bottled with a rigorous audit trail throughout the process.

## ISO 14001



An international accreditation which sets out a specification for an environmental management plan. It requires us to set targets and manage the way we do business. We take corrective measures when necessary and continuously look for areas we can improve.

All Villa Maria wineries are certified with the environmental management system ISO14001. The overall idea of this ISO accreditation is to establish an organised approach to systematically reduce the environmental impact of Villa Maria's wine production.



Villa Maria Executive Director Fabian Yukich and Owner Sir George Fistonich.

# Reducing our impact

Around 70 per cent of our wine is exported and this has always posed us with a big challenge in keeping our carbon footprint in check. We work hard to ensure that the transport methods we use are the most efficient solution for delivery of our products without loss of quality.

When we built our wineries we had an eye on the future and we incorporated sustainable thinking in our architecture and the way we equipped our buildings. Using the natural environment has been key; we also took a long term view on some of the big purchases, and financial paybacks haven't necessarily been in the short term. Planning for the next 50 years has often worked to our advantage as our business continues to grow.



## HEAT RECOVERY

Winemaking can be an energy intensive exercise, so when we built our wineries, we made sure we could squeeze every last bit out of the electricity we use. Both Villa Maria wineries are installed with heat recovery systems, which take waste heat from the refrigeration plant and store it for use in the winemaking process. The recovered heat is used to warm grape juice prior to and during fermentation, and to warm the wine before it is bottled.



## NIGHT AIR COOLING

Just as New Zealand's diurnal temperature variation is great for making wine, we also harness the cool nights for temperature control in our warehouse. The 'night air cooling' system imports night air into the warehouse where the wine acts as a giant "chilly pack" to maintain optimum temperatures, even during the summer heat.



## NATURAL LIGHTING

Villa Maria's wineries are designed to use natural light as a source of daytime illumination. This provides a healthier environment for staff and significant energy savings.





## RECYCLING

Villa Maria encourages recycling in its wineries. Grape pressings are either recycled as cattle feed or composted as nutrient for the vineyards. The company has an ongoing commitment to separating all plastic, glass and metals waste. Villa Maria's recycling efforts extend to weighing all the waste we send to landfill from our Auckland site. This enables us to set reduction targets and find new ways to reduce waste.



## HYBRID VEHICLES

Since 2007 Villa Maria has been progressively changing its sales team fleet to low emission hybrid vehicles.

## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

In 2010 Villa Maria introduced continuous improvement (or lean) management principles to the business. A company-wide programme of training started in 2010 with over 80 per cent of staff now trained and actively finding ways to eliminate waste within the business and working environment.







# Our community

An important part of the virtuous circle of sustainability for us is how we interact with the people and environment around us. From our philanthropic support of the arts to our work with local community around our winery sites, to our involvement in heritage and habitat preservation – we are firm believers in making a difference where we can.

For many years Villa Maria has run cadetships to provide local youth with work experience and further education, helping to set them up with very bright career prospects. Notable successes have been in the Villa Maria Vineyard Café kitchen where one cadet who started washing dishes, went on to win a culinary competition and now works for one of Auckland's top restaurants. Many young people have started off working in the vineyard at harvest and gone on to build successful careers in the viticulture industry.

- Villa Maria's Marlborough winery is an active participant in the Tui to Town project where we have planted thousands of native trees on our land to promote the return of native birds to the local area.
- In Auckland we work with the local Makaurau Marae, the local council and other neighbours to promote the natural and cultural heritage assets of the surrounding area.
- We've been proud sponsor of the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra for over 29 years.
- Villa Maria have been sponsors of the Auckland Theatre Company and local sports clubs for many years.
- Owner Sir George Fistonich has been the Vice Patron for Variety the Children's Charity since 2010.







# Gold for going green

We don't just talk the talk; we actively seek out opportunities to benchmark ourselves – not just against our wine industry counterparts, but other industries too. As New Zealand's most awarded winery we know that awards provide excellent assurance that what we're delivering also meets the highest standards of critique.



## *Supreme Winner*

### **SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK AWARDS 2012**

Villa Maria took out the Supreme Winner trophy at this event, being named overall champion. This nationwide accolade came after being named the Northern Sustainable Business of the Year. The Supreme Winner trophy recognised Villa Maria's long-standing commitment to sustainable practices and environmental responsibility.



## *Supreme Winner*

### **GREEN RIBBON AWARD WINNER 2012**

An award from the New Zealand Government, recognising the company's outstanding and on-going contributions to protecting New Zealand's environment. Our family owned and operated company also secured the Large Business Leadership category, which recognises large organisations who demonstrate an on-going commitment to environmental best practices.



## *Sustainability Champion*

### **SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS NETWORK AWARDS 2010**

Villa Maria's Executive Director Fabian Yukich won the Sustainability Champion Award at the 2010 New Zealand Sustainable Business Network Awards recognising his efforts in embedding sustainable business principles at Villa Maria over the last 12 years.

“ As a family company, the desire to leave something  
for the next generation is an ever-present and  
overriding business objective.”

*Sir George Fistonich, Villa Maria Owner & Founder*

*New Zealand's Most Awarded Winery*

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