

# Hemp on Whenua Māori

Growing hemp organically: a practical guide for whānau, hapū and trustees in Te Tai Tokerau

- Why grow organic, and what it gives your whenua, whānau and buyers
- What the law allows, and how organic certification works
- A plan that starts nine months ahead, with a winter crop before the hemp
- Weed and soil care without sprays, the numbers, and a starter checklist

**Taitokerau Hemp Ltd**

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General information only, not legal or financial advice.

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# About this guide

This guide is for whānau, hapū and trustees who want to grow hemp on whenua Māori without synthetic sprays or fertilisers, and who are willing to plan ahead to do it well.

Organic hemp is very achievable, but it works differently from conventional growing. Planning starts the autumn before, the first area is smaller, and a winter crop goes in ahead of the hemp to clean up the paddock and feed the soil. This guide sets out how.

Taitokerau Hemp is running a growing and processing pilot this season on three trial sites, about 1.6 ha in total across the Whāngārei district, including one on Māori land. After feedback from the community I dropped glyphosate: all three sites were flail mowed and power harrowed instead, soil tested, and fertilised only where the results called for it. The crop, Kompolti, a European fibre variety, was sown on 14 November 2026, and harvest is planned for around the end of February 2027. I am trialling a chaff cutter to turn the stalk into hurd here in Northland. Larger processing equipment, such as decorticators to separate hurd from fibre and seed cleaning and dehulling lines, is the goal once the industry is established.

This season's pilot is spray-free rather than certified organic, and it is a first crop in new ground. Yield, weeds and the market are still unknowns, and some numbers in this guide are planning figures marked as such. I will share the real results after harvest, good or bad, and update this guide.

**Please read**

This is general information to help you start a kōrero. It is not legal, financial or agricultural advice. Every whenua block, trust order and set of owners is different. Before signing any agreement, talk to the Māori Land Court, your trustees and, where needed, a lawyer. Before making any organic claim, talk to a certifier.

# 1. Why grow organic

Growing organically means caring for the whenua first and letting the crop follow. For hemp, it brings real benefits for the land, for whānau and for the value of what you grow.



Spray-free hemp seedlings coming up through flail-mown pasture, November 2026

1

### Kaitiakitanga of whenua and wai

No synthetic sprays or fertilisers means nothing harmful washing into streams, springs and the harbour, and nothing harming soil life, bees or the people working the land.

2

### Healthier soil every season

Winter crops, compost and careful mineral balancing build organic matter. The soil holds more water and nutrients, and each crop leaves the paddock in better shape than before.

### 3 Healthier homes

Hempcrete buyers want chemical-free hurd, for the health of the people living in the home and of the farm workers, processors and builders who handle it (Marosszeky, 2020). Organic hurd means a cleaner material inside whānau homes.

### 4 A stronger story and better prices

Organic or Hua Parakore hemp grown on named whenua, by whānau, stands out. Certified organic seed foods sell at a premium, and the story helps open doors with buyers, funders and supporters.

### 5 Fits tikanga and mātauranga

Organic growing sits well with Māori values about mauri and the health of the land. Hua Parakore is a kaupapa Māori verification system for food grown this way, and the new national organic standard formally acknowledges the tikanga of Māori food systems.

### 6 Less reliance on bought-in inputs

Lime, compost, sheep pellets, seaweed and cover crops replace most chemical inputs, and many can be sourced locally. You are less exposed to rising chemical and fertiliser prices.

7

### Hemp is well suited to it

A dense hemp crop shades out weeds once its canopy closes, has few serious pests, and needs no sprays once established. It is a good crop to lead a paddock into organic growing.

### The trade-offs

Organic takes more planning and more hands. Weeds are the main challenge, so the ground work starts months before sowing. Yields can be lower in the first seasons while the soil improves. Full certification takes about three years. Starting small keeps all of this manageable.

## 2. Why hemp on whenua Māori

Hemp grows fast, needs few inputs, and gives two products from one crop: stalk for building and seed for food. Grown well, one hectare can supply the wall material for a family home.



Young hemp seedlings coming up through hurd mulch

**100–120 days**

**A short season**

Sown in early November, harvested from February. A winter cover crop can follow straight after harvest.

**2 products**

**Stalk and seed**

The woody core (hurd) makes hempcrete and the outer fibre has industrial uses. The seed makes hemp hearts, oil and protein.

## ~1 ha

### Walls for a home

The walls of a 120 m² three-bedroom hempcrete home need about 2.9–3.2 tonnes of hurd. At pilot planning yields, one hectare grows about that much hurd, and the bast fibre (the strong outer fibre of the stalk) comes on top of that, for other uses or sale.

## No licence

### Lighter rules

Since 28 May 2026 you only need to notify Police and MPI before planting. The crop must stay under 1% THC.

## Why it fits whenua Māori

- **Underused land can earn again.** Hemp suits small blocks and can be grown on short agreements, so owners keep control.
- **Kāinga and papakāinga.** Whānau with land but little money can grow part of their own building materials.
- **Carbon stays put.** Carbon taken up by the plant stays locked in hempcrete walls for the life of the home.
- **Provenance.** Organic hemp grown on named whenua, by whānau, carries a story buyers value (see below).

## Provenance: the story behind the crop

Provenance means being able to show where a product came from, who grew it and how. For hemp grown on whenua Māori it is one of the

strongest advantages you have, because it is something larger, cheaper overseas growers cannot copy.

- **Place:** the named whenua, maunga, awa or rohe the crop came from, and the hapū or whānau it belongs to.
- **People:** the growers, workers and builders, and the local jobs the crop supports.
- **Practice:** how it was grown, for example without sprays, with soil testing before inputs, or certified organic or Hua Parakore.
- **Proof:** records that back the story up, such as a site diary, lot numbers on every bale and bag, test results, and photos from paddock to wall or shelf.
- **Distance:** grown and processed in Te Tai Tokerau, rather than freighted from the South Island or overseas, with less freight carbon.

**Who values it:** eco-builders and architects who want a local, low-carbon story for their clients; families who want chemical-free materials in their homes; and food buyers who pay more for hemp seed with a known place and grower. **How to protect it:** keep honest records, make only claims you can prove, use consistent quality so the name means something, and agree as a trust how the whenua's name, kōrero and imagery may be used on products.

## More from the whole plant

- **Building:** hurd for hempcrete is the first market, and most of New Zealand's supply currently comes from the South Island, so local supply has a cost and freight advantage.
- **Textiles, seed and food:** hemp is also used for clothing and textiles, seed for sowing, and hemp seed oil and food. Most of these need larger processing equipment than a small pilot has. Regional or iwi

investment in that equipment would open them up for many more growers.

- **Medicinal cannabis and CBD:** these sit under separate rules. They are not the focus of this guide, but trusts should know they exist.
- **Skills and jobs:** growing, processing and building all need people, and they can be local.

> **An honest word**
>
> Hemp is not a get-rich crop. Overseas, growers who simply sell raw crop under someone else's contract usually just break even. The value comes from using the crop yourself (building homes) or from processing and selling it under your own name. Start small, line up a use or buyer before you plant, and grow from there.

# 3. Hemp at a glance

These are the basics for an organic Te Tai Tokerau stalk crop. A seed crop is managed differently (see the notes).



Hemp seedlings



Hemp seed ready for sowing

| Topic | What to know |
|---|---|
| **What hemp is** | Cannabis sativa bred for fibre and seed, with under 1% THC. It has no value as a drug crop. |
| **Permission** | No licence. Notify NZ Police (with the address, a map if needed, and the scale of growing) and MPI before you plant. Each notification lasts one year. |
| **Climate** | Hemp grows best at latitudes in the 40s, but it has been grown as far north as Kaitaia. Northland's warmth suits it if there is rain while it establishes. |
| **The crop before** | A winter cover crop, such as oats with peas or tares, sown in autumn and ended before it flowers in late winter or early spring. |

| Topic | What to know |
|---|---|
| **Sowing time** | Early to mid November, once the soil is 12–15°C. Aim for plants to be up before the longest day, 21 December. |
| **Seed** | Use organic seed if you can get it, and never seed coated with synthetic treatments. Ask your certifier what they accept. |
| **Seed rate (stalk crop)** | About 50 kg/ha or more, in rows about 15 cm apart, about 2 cm deep. In organic crops, err on the dense side so the canopy closes faster and shades out weeds. |
| **Seed rate (seed crop)** | Far fewer plants, with wide spacing and good feeding, to grow big branching seed heads. Wide rows leave more room for weeds, so plan for more weeding. |
| **Soil** | Free-draining, fertile soil with a pH of about 6 to 7. Correct acidity with lime first, then balance the other minerals. Hemp does not like waterlogging or heavy wet clay. |
| **Feeding** | Hemp is a heavy feeder, especially of nitrogen and potassium. Use compost, sheep pellets, a legume cover crop and certifier-approved fertilisers, matched to a soil test. |
| **Water** | Rain or irrigation in the first 30 days is critical. After that the plant is hardy. |
| **Weeds** | The main organic challenge. Control them before sowing and for the first four to five weeks, until the canopy closes at about 30 cm. |

| Topic | What to know |
|---|---|
| **Pests** | Mostly birds on seed crops, plus slugs and mice at sowing. Passion vine hopper occurs in the North Island. |
| **Harvest** | Stalk crops from February, then dried and baled. Seed when it ripens from the bottom of the head; seed must be dried quickly or it spoils. |
| **Planning yields** | Stalk: about 5 t/ha of raw baled hemp (Taitokerau Hemp pilot assumption, to be confirmed in 2027). Plan for less in the first organic seasons. |

### Test your seed before sowing

Put 100 seeds on a damp cloth in a bag somewhere warm and count how many sprout over three to seven days. That is your germination rate. If it is low, sow more. Many growers skip this simple step (McIntosh, 2026).

# 4. What the law allows

On 28 May 2026 the Misuse of Drugs (Industrial Hemp) Regulations 2006 were revoked. Almost everything made from hemp stalk and seed is now legal without a licence.

| Activity | Allowed? | Conditions |
|---|---|---|
| **Growing hemp** | Yes | Under 1% THC. Notify Police and MPI first. THC testing is optional. |
| **Any cultivar, including New Zealand-bred lines** | Yes | The approved cultivar list was abolished. |
| **Buying, selling and saving seed within NZ** | Yes | Seed from compliant plants counts as hemp. |
| **Hurd, fibre, hempcrete and building products** | Yes | Normal building consent rules apply. |
| **Hemp seed food (hearts, oil, protein, flour)** | Yes | Register under the Food Act 2014 and meet the food code's THC limits. No leaf images or health claims about cannabinoids on labels. |
| **Leaf and flower** | Limited | Only for supply to licensed medicinal cannabis operators, or export with a licence. Not in food or teas. |
| **Extraction, and using roots** | No | Needs a licence. |

| Activity | Allowed? | Conditions |
|---|---|---|
| **Feeding hemp to animals or grazing it** | No | Every hemp animal feed must be registered under the ACVM Act, and none is. Keep stock off hemp crops and residues. |
| **Importing or exporting whole seed** | Licence | A licence and criminal record check are still needed. Hulled seed, stalk and finished products do not need one. |

## Calling your hemp "organic"

The Organic Products and Production Act 2023 sets up a single national system for organic claims. Its process regulations have applied since 3 October 2025, and the national organic standard comes into force on 31 March 2028. From then, products sold as organic must meet that standard and come from an approved operator. MPI consulted in 2026 on how small producers will be treated, so check the latest rules before you label anything.

- **Certification takes time.** With BioGro, growers spend at least three years in conversion (a registration year, then two conversion years) before full organic status. Start your records and your certification early.
- **Hua Parakore** is a separate, kaupapa Māori verification for food grown on whenua using Māori values, run by Te Waka Kai Ora.
- **Be truthful in the meantime.** Until you are certified, describe what you actually do, for example "grown without sprays". Do not call it organic.

Rules can change. NZHIA is asking the Government for further hemp changes, including allowing hemp seed meal in animal feed. Check the Ministry of Health hemp page and MPI's organics pages before you plant.

# 5. Your whenua, your decision

Who can agree to hemp on a block, and what paperwork is needed, depends on how the land is held and how long the agreement runs. For a first season, a licence or short lease keeps things simple and keeps control with the owners.



A pilot paddock after flail mowing and power harrowing, ready for sowing

| How the land is held | Who decides | What to watch |
|---|---|---|
| **Ahu whenua or whenua tōpū trust** | Trustees, within their trust order | Leases under 21 years: trustees decide. 21–52 years: the Māori Land Court Registrar must note the lease. Over 52 years: owners must approve and a judge must confirm. |
| **Māori incorporation** | Committee of management | Similar lease-term thresholds to trusts. Check the incorporation's constitution. |

| How the land is held | Who decides | What to watch |
|---|---|---|
| **Owners in common (no trust)** | All owners, or a meeting of assembled owners | A lease of more than three years is an "alienation". It needs owners' agreement and Registrar confirmation before it takes effect. Many blocks form an ahu whenua trust first, or ask the Court about appointing an agent such as Te Tumu Paeroa. |
| **General land owned by Māori** | The registered owner(s) | Ordinary property law applies. |

## Choosing the right agreement

- **Licence:** permission for someone to use the whenua for one activity, such as growing a crop, without creating a lease. Often the simplest option for a trial.
- **Lease:** exclusive use of a defined area for a set period. Taitokerau Hemp uses short, written peppercorn (no-rent) leases for its pilot sites, so each site has the exact legal description that the Police notification needs.
- **Occupation order:** from the Māori Land Court, giving an owner the right to build a home on part of a block. This is the usual pathway for papakāinga homes and needs the other owners' consent.

### Organic needs a longer commitment

Certification takes at least three years, so the agreement should cover the whole conversion, and commit everyone to no synthetic sprays or fertilisers on that area. On land held by owners in common, an agreement longer than three years needs the extra approvals above, so plan for this early or start under a trust.

### Tikanga first

Hold a hui, explain what hemp is (and is not), and record the decision. Agree who owns the crop, who pays for what, how decisions are made jointly, and what happens to the land after harvest. Owners who are not ahi kā will want reassurance that the whenua is being cared for.

# 6. Five ways to take part

You do not have to become a hemp farmer. Choose the level of involvement, cost and risk that suits your whenua and whānau.



Coastal whenua in Te Tai Tokerau

### 1. Host an organic grower

Licence or lease a paddock to a grower who commits to organic methods

| | |
|---|---|
| **Effort** | Low |
| **Money needed** | None |
| **What you get** | Rent or a share of the crop, a cleaner paddock with better soil, learning |

### 2. Grow under contract

Grow and bale organic or spray-free stalk for an agreed buyer or processor

| | |
|---|---|
| **Effort** | Medium to high |
| **Money needed** | Cover crop and hemp seed, ground preparation, weeding labour and harvest contractors |
| **What you get** | Income from raw bales, possibly at a premium for chemical-free hurd |

### 3. Grow for your own homes

Grow, chip and store organic hurd for papakāinga or whānau homes (the Seed-to-Home model)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Effort** | High |
| **Money needed** | Crop costs, then binder and building costs |
| **What you get** | Chemical-free walls, lower wall, insulation and cladding costs, and local jobs |

### 4. Organic seed food

Grow a seed crop and sell certified organic or Hua Parakore hemp hearts or oil under your own name

| | |
|---|---|
| **Effort** | High |
| **Money needed** | From about $5,000–15,000 using an existing processor (estimate), plus certification |
| **What you get** | A premium product with your whenua's story |

### 5. Share in processing

Own or co-own a regional processing plant with other growers

| | |
|---|---|
| **Effort** | Very high |
| **Money needed** | Significant, usually with co-funding |
| **What you get** | Long-term margin and control of the value chain |

#### An example from Canada

In Alberta, Frog Lake First Nations is an equity partner with Logistik Unicorp in Askiy Hemp LP, a planned plant to process 40,000 tonnes of hemp stalks a year. The plant received C$1.1 million from the Alberta Government in 2024. It shows how an Indigenous nation can own part of the processing, not just supply the crop.

You do not have to lease your land to anyone to take part. You could grow it yourselves with support, or work out an arrangement that suits your trust. Taitokerau Hemp's approach is option 3, with options 1 and 2 as the way most landowners start. I license the Seed-to-Home system to organisations such as hapū trusts and community housing providers, which then work with their own whānau and landowners.

### How I work

**Your land, your decisions:** where I lease land, the lease is there for legal reasons; what gets planted and who does the work is decided with you. **Care for the whenua:** spray-free growing, soil testing before inputs, and honest records. **Not chasing profit:** I crowdfunded rather than selling equity, because investors needing a return would push up the cost of a house; future profit-sharing is designed to go back to growers and the community. **Working alongside others:** I am aiming at an underserved need, remote, papakāinga and smaller homes, and I am a member of the NZ Hemp Industry Association executive. I also handle the Police and MPI notifications for any site I lease.

# 7. The organic season plan

Start about nine months before sowing, in late summer or autumn. A winter crop goes in first to smother weeds and feed the soil, and most of the work that decides success happens before the hemp seed goes in.



The seed drill arriving at a pilot site

> **Start small**
>
> For a first organic crop, 0.2–0.5 ha is plenty. Weeding is the biggest job, and a small area lets you keep on top of it, learn what works on your whenua, and grow from there.

### Thinking about next summer?

If you are seriously considering growing organic hemp in the 2027/28 season, get in touch before the end of February 2027. That leaves time to plan properly and to prepare the ground without sprays, which cannot be rushed.

## Autumn: get ready

1 **FEBRUARY–MARCH**

**Kōrero and hui.** Share this guide, agree to grow organically, discuss goals (income, homes, food, learning), choose a small area and agree who will lead.

2 **MARCH**

**Check the land and start a diary.** Get a soil test. Check drainage, slope and machinery access, and avoid paddocks with a history of long-lasting herbicides. Start a site diary of everything you do and use. If you want certification, contact BioGro, AsureQuality or Te Waka Kai Ora now.

3 **MARCH–APRIL**

**Break the pasture.** Mow short, then cultivate a few times, a week or two apart, to bring up grass and kikuyu runners to dry out. Apply lime first if the soil is acidic, then other minerals to the soil test.

4 **APRIL–MAY**

**Sow the winter crop.** Oats with peas or tares gave the best weed suppression in New Zealand organic trials. Lupins or mustard can also be used. The crop covers the ground over winter, adds organic matter, and legumes add nitrogen for the hemp.



Before: rough pasture



After: mown short, ready for ground preparation

## Winter: plan and prepare

5 **JUNE–AUGUST**

**Agreements and buyers.** Put a licence or lease in place that covers the organic commitment. Line up where the crop will go: your own build, a processor or a pre-sold order. Order organic or untreated seed early.

6 **AUGUST–SEPTEMBER**

**End the winter crop.** Before it flowers, mow, roll or mulch it, then work it into the soil. Allow four to six weeks for it to break down before sowing the hemp. Spread compost or sheep pellets to the soil test.

7 **SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER**

**Notify Police and MPI.** Keep copies, share them with the landowners, and put up a sign saying "industrial hemp" and "no spray". Let neighbours know so they can avoid spray drift.

## Spring and summer: grow

8 **OCTOBER**

**False seedbed.** Prepare a fine seedbed, let the first flush of weeds sprout, then kill them with a light, shallow cultivation. Repeat once or twice if time allows.

9 **EARLY–MID NOVEMBER**

**Test seed and sow.** Do the 100-seed germination test, then sow densely into warm, moist soil, straight after the last cultivation so the hemp gets a head start on the weeds.

10 **NOVEMBER–DECEMBER**

**Weed until the canopy closes.** Water in the first 30 days if it is dry. Hand weed or hoe weekly for the first four to five weeks. Keep birds off seed crops.

11 **FEBRUARY–MARCH**

**Harvest.** Cut, let the stalk dry, then bale and store it under cover, kept separate from any non-organic crop. Dry seed crops quickly and store them rodent-proof.

12 **MARCH–MAY**

**Sow the next winter crop,** process and use the crop, and record yields, costs and weeding hours for next season.

### Rest the paddock

Hemp then a winter crop, year after year, is a sound cycle. Every second or third year, give the paddock a summer off under a summer cover crop, or let the winter crop carry on, so the soil can recover.

# 8. Weeds and soil without sprays

Organic hemp is won or lost on weeds and soil. Each tool on its own is not enough, but used together they work.




A direct drill sowing straight into mown, harrowed ground



Hemp seedlings holding their own among the grass

## The weed toolkit

- **Winter cover crop:** smothers weeds over winter and stops them seeding.
- **Repeated cultivation:** drags out and dries kikuyu and grass runners. Do it in dry weather so the pieces die rather than re-root.
- **False seedbed:** sprouts weed seeds before sowing, so they can be killed before the hemp goes in.
- **Timing and density:** sow into warm, moist soil at a dense rate so the hemp races ahead and closes its canopy fast.
- **Early weeding:** hand weeding, hoeing or a tine weeder for the first four to five weeks. After the canopy closes, the crop does the work.
- **Mulch the edges:** mow or mulch around the paddock edges to stop weeds creeping in.

> **What the pilot did in 2026**
>
> With no winter crop in place this first season, the three pilot sites were flail mowed short and then power harrowed to break up the pasture and kikuyu, before direct drilling. Heavy rain arrived the day after sowing. Early seedlings are coming up among the regrowth, so the next weeks will show how well a dense crop can hold its own against kikuyu without sprays. The results will go into the next version of this guide.

## Feeding the soil

- **Test first.** Correct acidity with lime, then balance the other minerals. Labs report available nutrients rather than totals, so trace elements such as boron can run short during fast growth even if the test looks fine.
- **Organic matter:** cover crops, compost and well-rotted manure feed soil life and help the soil hold water and nutrients.
- **Allowed inputs:** lime, sheep pellets, seaweed products and certified organic fertilisers. Check every product with your certifier before you use it.
- **Little and often** on light soils that do not hold nutrients well.

## Protecting the organic area

- Keep a buffer strip between your crop and any land that is sprayed.
- Talk to neighbours and contractors, and clean contractors' machinery before it comes on site.
- Keep your site diary up to date. It is your evidence for certification and your best tool for improving next season.



A dense crop shades out weeds once its canopy closes

# 9. The numbers

The value of a hemp crop depends mostly on what you do with it after harvest. Processing it into hurd roughly triples its value compared with selling raw bales. Organic adds costs before sowing, and can add value after harvest.



Baled hemp stalk



Bagged hemp hurd and stalk, ready to move

| Item | Planning figure | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| **Raw stalk yield** | About 5 t/ha | Taitokerau Hemp pilot assumption, to be tested in 2027. Plan for less in the first organic seasons. |
| **Selling raw bales** | About $1/kg, so about $5,000/ha | Before growing costs |

| Item | Planning figure | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| **Selling chipped hurd** | About $3/kg, so about $15,000/ha | About 90% hurd and 10% fines after chipping. Comparable South Island hurd costs about $3.20/kg delivered to Northland. |
| **Growing and processing costs** | About $3,500/ha at 4 ha | From the Seed-to-Home model. Small first-year plots cost more per hectare. |
| **Extra organic costs** | Get quotes | Winter crop seed and sowing, extra cultivation, compost, weeding labour and certification fees |
| **Hurd for one home** | About 2.9–3.2 t | Walls of a 120 m² three-bedroom home, about 29 m³ of hempcrete |
| **Seed yield (seed crop)** | About 1 t/ha | Needs drying, cleaning and food-grade processing |
| **Hemp hearts retail** | About $40/kg | New Zealand-grown, 2025–26 shelf prices. Certified organic usually sells for more. |

### Treat these as a starting point

All figures are estimates in NZ dollars, excluding GST. Yields vary with soil, season and management. Prices depend on finding buyers. Record your weeding hours in particular, as labour is the cost most likely to surprise you. Use your own quotes and results, and update the numbers each season.

## The cost of a home

The Seed-to-Home blueprint estimates a 120 m² three-bedroom hempcrete home at about $294,000, against about $471,000 for a comparable conventional build. Profits from the crop reduce the net cost further. These are scaled estimates, not a builder's quote, and will be firmed up with a quantity surveyor.

# 10. From paddock to papakāinga

Hempcrete is a mix of hemp hurd, a binder and water, cast or packed around a timber frame. It insulates, regulates moisture and is fire-resistant, so it suits warm, dry, healthy homes.



Stalk being chipped into hurd in a processing trial



Hemp hurd, the raw material for hempcrete

### Materials

Hurd from your crop plus a binder: lime, or a New Zealand-made magnesium binder such as Geobind. Mix ratios come from the binder supplier.

### Healthy homes

Breathable hempcrete walls resist mould and give good indoor air. Organic hurd keeps chemicals out of the walls as well.

### Performance

Manufacturer data suggests about R1 per 100 mm, so a 300 mm wall is about R3, above the R2.0 minimum for Northland walls.

### Consent

Hempcrete is usually consented as an "alternative solution". Talk to the council early and use a designer and builder with hempcrete experience.

### Timing

With the winter crop, plan about two years: the first to prepare the ground, grow, process and store hurd, the second to build. Keep hurd dry and off the ground.

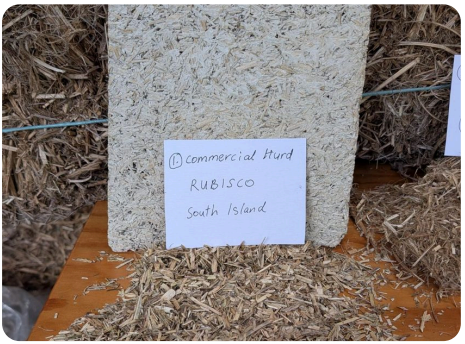
## Pathway for whānau homes on whenua Māori

1. **Agree the vision.** Who the homes are for, and where on the block they will go.
2. **Secure the right to build.** An occupation order, licence or lease from the Māori Land Court or trustees.
3. **Check feasibility.** Services, access, consents and finance. The Whenua Māori Fund can help with feasibility for Māori freehold land.
4. **Grow and process the hurd** one season ahead of the build.

5 **Build with trained local labour,** ideally through a trades training programme for rangatahi and whānau.



A hempcrete block: hemp hurd set with a binder




Hurd and hempcrete samples for comparison



Inside a finished hempcrete home

# 11. Support and funding

Several organisations help Māori landowners plan, fund and govern new land uses, and others support organic growers. Talk to them early, before you commit money.



Whenua and moana in Te Tai Tokerau

| Organisation | How it can help |
|---|---|
| **Te Waka Kai Ora** | Kaitiaki of Hua Parakore, the kaupapa Māori verification system for pure food, which began with Te Tai Tokerau organic producers. |
| **BioGro and AsureQuality** | Organic certifiers. They can explain the standards, conversion, approved inputs and fees. |
| **Organics Aotearoa New Zealand (OANZ)** | The organic sector body, with news on the new national organic rules. |

| Organisation | How it can help |
|---|---|
| **Te Puni Kōkiri: Whenua Māori Fund** | Funding for owners and trustees of Māori freehold land to explore land use: feasibility studies, business cases, and governance training. There are Te Puni Kōkiri offices in Whangārei and Kaitaia. |
| **Tupu.nz** | Free online tools for whenua planning, leases and funding. |
| **Te Kooti Whenua Māori (Māori Land Court)** | Ownership records, trusts, meetings of owners, occupation orders and lease confirmation. |
| **Te Tumu Paeroa** | Can act as trustee or agent, and can negotiate and manage leases. |
| **MPI: Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures** | Co-funding for larger projects. It contributed more than $245,000 to a hemp seed processing pilot in Levin. |
| **Northland NZ (Regional Business Partner)** | Business advice, and co-funding for training and capability building. |
| **NZ Hemp Industries Association (NZHIA)** | The industry body, which also leads advocacy for better hemp rules. |
| **Taitokerau Hemp Ltd** | Land suitability assessments, spray-free growing trials, hurd processing and the Seed-to-Home system. |

# 12. Risks and how to manage them

Most hemp failures overseas came from planting before there was a buyer, or from building big too soon. For organic growers, weeds are the other big risk. Start small, and grow with your results.




Sowing the pilot crop, November 2026

| Risk | How to manage it |
|---|---|
| **Weeds take over** | Start in autumn with cultivation and a winter crop, use a false seedbed, sow densely into warm soil, and weed weekly until the canopy closes. |
| **Not enough hands** | Keep the first area small. Plan weeding days with whānau and volunteers, and record the hours. |
| **Lower yields at first** | Plan with conservative yields. Soil and yields usually improve as organic matter builds. |
| **Spray drift or contamination** | Buffer strips, signs and a kōrero with neighbours and contractors. Clean machinery before it comes on site. |
| **Losing organic status** | Check every input with your certifier, keep the site diary up to date, and store organic crops separately. |
| **No buyer or use for the crop** | Agree the use or buyer before you plant. Match the area you plant to real demand. |
| **Poor establishment** | Test the seed, prepare a fine seedbed, sow into warm soil and water in the first month. |
| **Disagreement among owners** | Hold a hui, write the agreement down, report back after harvest, and make sure everyone understands the multi-year organic commitment. |
| **Misunderstanding about cannabis** | Notify Police and MPI, put up signage, and explain that hemp is under 1% THC and has no drug value. |
| **Breaking feed rules** | Keep stock away from hemp crops and residues. Do not feed hemp seed or meal to animals. |

| Risk | How to manage it |
| --- | --- |
| **Crop spoiling in storage** | Bale dry and store under cover. Dry seed quickly and keep it rodent-proof. |
| **Over-investing early** | Use contractors, shared machinery and toll processing first. Buy equipment only once the crop has a proven market. |

# 13. Starter checklist

Work through this list, starting in autumn, before the first hemp seed goes in.

- [ ] We have held a hui and agreed to grow hemp organically on this whenua.
- [ ] We know who has authority to decide (trustees, committee or owners) and have their agreement in writing, covering the organic commitment.
- [ ] We have chosen a small first area (0.2–0.5 ha) and a licence or lease, with the legal description and a map.
- [ ] We have a soil test, and the paddock drains well, has machinery access and no history of long-lasting herbicides.
- [ ] We have started a site diary, and contacted a certifier or Te Waka Kai Ora if we want certification.
- [ ] We have broken the pasture and sown a winter crop by May.
- [ ] We know where the crop will go: our own build, a buyer or a processor.
- [ ] We have organic or untreated seed, and have tested its germination.
- [ ] We have notified NZ Police and MPI, put up signage, and talked to neighbours about spray drift.
- [ ] We have a plan and people for weeding in the first five weeks after sowing.
- [ ] We have a plan for harvest, drying, storage and processing, and for the next winter crop.

- [ ] We have spoken to Te Puni Kōkiri, Tupu.nz or Northland NZ about support.
- [ ] We will record yields, costs, weeding hours and lessons to share and improve next season.



Dave Hovell, founder of Taitokerau Hemp

## What getting involved could look like

There is no commitment needed to have a kōrero. A first step might be:

1. **A conversation** about your land, your aspirations and any concerns.

2. **A visit** to a trial site, or to see the harvest and processing in early 2027.

3. **A small trial area** for the 2027/28 season, if it suits you, with soil testing first and trustee consent in place.

## Talk to Taitokerau Hemp

I am happy to kōrero with whānau, hapū and trustees about whether organic hemp suits your whenua, including land suitability assessments and growing trials. If you are thinking about next summer, please get in touch before the end of February 2027.

**Dave Hovell**, Founder, Taitokerau Hemp Ltd
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