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## From the Editor

Dear Helvetia Readers

It has been a wonderful sunny summer this year, especially for those who enjoy the outdoors and swimming. However, it has been more difficult for farmers among you who have faced a serious drought in parts of the country. With autumn approaching, we hope for decent rain to soak your pastures.

The last two months have been a busy time for the Swiss clubs around New Zealand, with lots of different events taking place. Have a look at the club news starting on page 14 and see what everyone has been up to. One thing is certain: A lot of cervelats and bratwursts have been devoured!

The next two months will bring some special days, the first being of course April Fool's Day. Easter and Mother's Day will follow, and I wish you enjoyable celebrations.

The first ballots of the year took place in Switzerland in early March (page 23). These were open to Swiss expatriates via e-voting, and I wonder whether any of you took an active part.

Switzerland's direct democratic system is truly unique in the world. It allows Swiss citizens to shape legislation and constitutional changes directly through initiatives and referenda. What a difference from the representative democracy here in New Zealand, where elected representatives make decisions on our behalf - some good, and some not so good. Having been an active voter in Switzerland during younger years, I do wish on occasions I could have my say here!

Some critics argue that the direct democracy in Switzerland curtails decisive action by the government and produces washed-down versions of the original proposals. On the other hand, collaborative decision-making can produce much more stable and longer-lasting policies and laws.

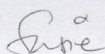
Biometric passports: Are you still wondering what the fuss is all about? The Embassy has provided more information about them and also about alternative options for obtaining them

(page 7). Some of you will have taken advantage of the mobile passport unit which has recently travelled the country and it would be great to hear more about your experience.

Good news: Two of our members have come forward to offer their services as ASO delegates for New Zealand. They will stand for election at the forthcoming AGM (page 3). We look forward to meeting you in Hamilton on Queen's Birthday weekend!

Last but not least, I would like to thank David Latham who has offered his support with publishing the Helvetia - you are a saviour! Big thanks also go to Peter Deutsche for his professional advice on layout.

Wishing you a mellow autumn



### Munchable Helvetia Mooted

As another way of improving the environmental friendliness of the Helvetia, the Helvetia Team is considering its publication in edible form. Of course, we know that we have to be very careful about the toxicity of ingredients. The newly available process includes ingredients such as corn starch, vegetable oil, gum arabic, water and citric acid cooked into a stodgy paste. The paste is poured on to thin sheets under silk meshes containing the impressions of the different headlines, pictures and articles.

Printing takes a few hours overnight - several seconds to print each page and slightly longer to dry. The finished product even has a light vanilla scent. Cinnamon is another option. Printing costs remain the same because of the cheapness of the materials used. Keep your eyes peeled and taste buds ready!

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