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LATEST NEWS

NEW ORGANIC STANDARD SHOULD SEE NEW NATIONAL LOGO

The National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA) has called for the renewal of the national logo for organic and biodynamic produce under new management to bring a single recognisable logo denoting organic in Australia.

The new logo, which would replace the old “Government Certified Organic” logo, would signify that any organic products produced and processed in Australia were in compliance with the National Standard for Organic & Biodynamic Produce and give consumers and investors in organic goods the certainty that their purchases or plans were clearly identified as compliant with a National Standard.

NASAA’s Chairman Rod May has urged the organic sector to support this move and argues that with the investment in the new National Standard - which is currently available for public comment under the aegis of Standards Australia (www.standards.org.au) - the organic sector should embrace a national logo in the next step to consolidating the role of organic farming in the agricultural and economic sector.

The completion of the new Standard will be a significant technical achievement but without a logo and the operational and administrative machinery that lies behind it there is still a strong risk of ambiguity in the marketplace. NASAA claims that an Australian certification group already operates outside the existing National Standard and is removed from oversight from any recognised accreditation bodies. Consumers clearly need to know where the bottom line is drawn and to know that the certification is in line with a recognised national program.

Despite recent claims of strong growth in the organic sector NASAA remains wary of the certainty of the investment environment for the next stages of growth in the organic industry without a clear, level and identifiable playing field. That certainty will emerge from the proper management of the standards, the certification and the labelling according to NASAA. “We do not see private certification logos being lost as there are several that denote additional requirements and practices on the farm and several that are specially crafted to also meet a variety of importing country requirements” said Mr May. “We do not want to see the complexity of meeting these requirements for exporters overshadow the pursuit of a recognised national organic logo for domestic as well as export use”.

The certification of organic farmers in Australia has been carried out for over 22 years by NASAA and the group is the most longstanding certifier in the country with the largest certified land area in the world under its scheme. NASAA is also the most longstanding certifier accredited by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) in the world and subjects all its producers to an inspection and certification scheme that is overseen by three independent agencies as well as meeting special requirements for countries such as the USA. These levels of oversight are characteristic

of the struggle that the organic certification sector has had to undertake to successfully bring Australia's organic products to the world and to create the frameworks that help cement consumer confidence in the industry.

“The investment that the certification sector makes is enormous,” according to May “and we cannot let the application of the new Standard be left to chance” he said. NASAA has called on the Organic Federation of Australia (OFA) to quickly draw up plans outlining the management of a new scheme including a new logo by the time the new National Standards is in place.

Contacts

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Formed in 1986, The National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA) is one of Australia's largest organic certifiers.

With operations both in Australia and Overseas, the company provides certification and inspection services, which assist in facilitating market access throughout the world for NASAA certified organic product.

NASAA is accredited with the following bodies and programs: AQIS (Australian Quarantine Inspection Service), IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements), ISO65, JAS (Japanese Agricultural Standard) and the United States National Organic Program (US NOP).

With a national office based in the Adelaide Hills in South Australia, NASAA is a non-profit company limited by guarantee comprising an association of members and certified operators (over 1000).

For further information visit the NASAA website at www.nasaa.com.au.