



STANDARDS AUSTRALIA PROGRESS

NASAA is represented by Rod May on Standards Australia's (SA) FT-032 Committee, which has met once since it began its work in May this year with two working groups meeting to address issues.

A subcommittee for standards development comprising representatives from industry and government is preparing a draft for consideration by the full committee in September.

The issue of mandating an inspection and certification function within the Organic Standard is one that NASAA has brought to the attention of the full committee. Methods of guaranteeing these requirements throughout what is a technical standard were urged by NASAA and others in May.

The organic movement shares a strong concern that a standard for organic and biodynamic production must contain these vital clauses so that there will be a responsible third party involved in the full application of the standards.

NASAA has expressed the view that there are overwhelming precedents for the inclusion of this language in the Codex guidelines for organic production, processing and labelling of organic food, along with our own AQIS organic standards and those of many importing countries. This view has been at variance with some opinions within SA, but we remain confident that with such a strong precedent and with some form of conformity assessment language not being alien to SA that we can ensure that the new national standard can have an integrity guarantee built into it.

It has been proposed that a labelling provision is the key element that would mandate inspection and certification. The full committee which will likely be expanded to include some new government players will deliberate on the nature and content of the new standard in September and has received what is reported to be an in-principle agreement to use the existing National Standard for Organic & Biodynamic Produce as its basis.

As things currently stand it is anticipated that there should be a draft new standard out for consultation during 2008 next year.



Special points of interest:

- Existing National Standard likely basis for new Standard
- Overwhelming consensus for inspection and certification to be mandated in new Organic Standard

VISIT NASAA'S STAND 144 AT THE ORGANIC EXPO!

A warm welcome is extended to all to visit the NASAA stand Number 144 at the Melbourne Organic Expo either on the Trade Day (Friday 7 September) or on the public days (Saturday and Sunday 8-9 September). See inside for more info.



Organic Insights

FROM THE CHAIR

As we move into the new financial year, we prepare for the Organic Expo and are busily involved in developing the NASAA business, we received news that our longstanding Director George Devrell has resigned from the Board on medical grounds.

On behalf of the Board, our NASAA licensees and the broader organic industry I salute the contribution made by George Devrell since he first joined the Board in 1999 through his period as Treasurer to that as Chair and CEO from 2002 to 2007. George has freely given of his skills, knowledge and not least his business acumen and bent for diplomacy in our complex organic industry. He has made a very substantial contribution to our industry and I know I speak for very many when I thank him warmly for his input which has been well over and above the call of duty. As Deputy Chair I have assumed the Chair/CEO role until later this year when Directors will meet to elect a Chair and other position-holders from within their ranks. Day-to-day operations at the NASAA office are managed by Operations Manager Brad Nott assisted by Company Secretary Lyn Austin.

As readers will note, NASAA has decided to go electronic with its communications, so this issue of Organic Insights in ezine format will be followed by more on a much more regular basis than the previously printed version.

NASAA celebrates its 21st birthday in 2007. In so doing, it's worth pointing out that NASAA is the oldest organic certifier in Australia. We have been here for the long haul, we have recently invested in the "eCert" data system to manage our business and provide the best possible service for our clients and our recently-audited financials for 2006/7 have turned in a modest but respectable surplus. In 2007/8 we plan to build further on our foundations of Integrity and Service – indeed, you could say that NASAA is the quiet achiever in organic certification, getting the work done, servicing our clients and maintaining cordial relations with stakeholders.

NASAA has strongly supported the continuing and growing role of the Organic Federation of Australia as our industry's peak body – indeed, we are noticing now that work previously undertaken by NASAA on behalf of the overall industry is now able to be undertaken by the OFA, thus releasing NASAA to get on with its core certification business.

Readers will be aware of the recent GO Drew egg case, in which NASAA was awarded \$54K compensation for fraudulent mis-use of our NASAA and Label. These funds (orchestrated by the ACCC) will be utilized in 2007/8 to strengthen our certification process by extending eCert in a number of ways – for the benefit of the consumer, traders, wholesalers and our industry generally. I look forward to seeing as many NASAA operators as possible at the Organic Expo in Melbourne this September.

ROD MAY

NEW NASAA HEALTH & BEAUTY STANDARD

NASAA has revised its existing Standard to incorporate Health & Beauty Standards and also to reflect 1 July 2007 changes made in the National Standard.

The revised NASAA Organic Standard and a Submission Form are available at www.nasaa.com.au.

In addition, NASAA has now embarked on a major complete review of its Standard and invites written input from all stakeholders in line with the timetable set out below:

1/9/07 – 30/10/07: Initial Submissions invited

1/11/07 – 31/1/08: Submissions sifted and first revised draft drawn up

1/2/07 – 31/3/08: Submissions received on first draft



**NASAA
celebrates its 21st
birthday in 2007**





Volume 2 No 1

ORGANIC EXPO ABOUT TO ROLL INTO MELBOURNE

Now in its 3rd successful year, the Organic Expo is Australia's foremost organic and environmental show.

September 2007 sees some exciting changes with the Organic Expo making its Melbourne debut. The event will be a wholly certified organic show that will incorporate the brand new *Natural & Ethical Show* for environmentally based products. It is anticipated that around 200 exhibitors from across Australia and overseas will be taking part.

The Expo will include an exciting program of practical demonstrations, seminars and panel discussions from celebrities, industry and professional speakers including renowned chef Kylie Kwong and host of *Gardening Australia*, Jerry Colbey-Williams. Other features include a Demonstration Stage, Speakers Corner (featuring the Organic Garden), Organic Vineyard, Organic Farmers Market Display and Organic Awards

The Expo is supported with the presence of Organic Federation of Australia and various organic certifying bodies and government sectors. For more information visit the website at

www.organicexpo.com.au.



*Organic Expo
Royal Exhibition Building
Carlton
Melbourne
7-9 September*

A warm welcome is extended to all to visit the NASAA stand Number 144 at the Melbourne Organic Expo either on the Trade Day (Friday 7 September) or on the public days (Saturday and Sunday 8-9 September).

NASAA's Rod May will be presenting three talks on the Friday:

"Certification" at the Demonstration Stage 11.00am-11.45

"Nurturing Supply Lines" at Speakers' Corner 2.00-2.45pm

"Box Schemes – a response to climate change?" at Speakers' Corner 4.00-4.45pm

Brad Nott, NASAA's Operations Manager, together with NASAA Inspector Doune Coultie will be at Stand 144 throughout the Expo to meet existing NASAA operators and to offer NASAA's certification services to newcomers. He will have online access to the entire NASAA system through state-of-the-art eCert.

ORGANIC WINE IN FOCUS

Organic wine production has come under the spotlight in recent weeks leading to the major wine exhibition at the Organic Expo in September in Melbourne. At the heart of it is the issue of sulphur and not the question of whether or not it is retained. This is because sulphur remains permitted input in organic wine (unlike di-ammonium phosphate which has been removed at a national level only this year). The matter at issue concerns what levels of sulphur should be allowed.

NASAA has been consulting on this matter with domestic and international organic wine makers and organic wine consumers and has been considering the arguments for increasing the total and free sulphur levels. There appears to be a very mixed reaction (literally) to sulphur levels in wine and NASAA will take seriously the technical and consumer issues that are raised.



Organic Insights

RECENT ARTICLE ON ORGANIC IN CHOICE MAGAZINE

NEW BUY & SELL FUNCTION at www.nasaa.com.au
There's a new Buy and Sell feature on NASAA's website for operators to advertise specific products on a weekly basis. Certified operators may Buy and Sell. Non-certified operators are restricted to the Buy function until they become certified.

The publication by Choice (7 July 2007) of a study into the relative costs and benefits of organic food has raised some issues for the organic sector. Whilst the Choice article itself was a relatively well balanced, if not slightly under-informed, look at key aspects of organic food it was unfortunate that the questions and issues that it raised were taken out of context by elements of the open media and presented to readers without the full context of the study.

At issue and conspicuously inconclusive within the study was nutrition! It is NASAA's view that whilst nutrition is important, as is taste and smell for that matter, there are more serious dimensions of the properties of organic food. These include the sustainability of production, the dramatically reduced pesticide load in organic food and issues of animal welfare.

None of these are directly related to nutrition. In fact the concept of nutrition in organic food needs some sober examination. The agricultural environment is frequently awash with nutrients in general. Horticulture in particular is generally deluged with nutrients arriving in the form of high analysis fertilizers, multiple applications of fertilisers and trace elements in particular. Consumers of food from the supermarket shelves are accessing a spectrum of nutrients that dwarf the sometimes meagre nutritional status of foods from days gone by when the local food was dependent on the fertility of that region and other than crushed rocks and animal manures there was no guarantee of a complete nutritional spectrum.

The concept of the nutrient superiority of a food therefore involves a much more complex dynamic than a simple test for gross availability of minerals and vitamins. The studies which are needed will therefore challenge conventional thinking and introduce the concepts of wholesomeness and balance within the composition of the food. It is probable that easily designed tests and conclusive results will be elusive. The message from this examination should be that the consumption of a good range of fruit and vegetables within the diet is critically important for health.

The choice of organic foods for reason of pesticide load alone should leave the consumer in no doubt in their decisions based on food quality. A similar study in Australia by Ruth McGowan for the Victorian Department of Primary Industries conducted 14000 tests on 300 hundred samples of certified organic produce. The study concluded that: "*The results demonstrate that Victorian organic produce is virtually 'chemical free.'*" McGowan Ruth, (2003) (published in the proceedings of the Organic Futures for Australia, 2nd National Organic Conference, Adelaide 2003. OFA 2003



ACCREDITATION

NASAA awaits a full on-site audit by the US Department of Agriculture a little later this year. Meanwhile the JAS certification of existing JAS operators continues to be valid under current arrangements. NASAA has arranged a partnership agreement with a fellow certifier to offer JAS certification to new JAS applicants. For more details please contact Brad Nott at NASAA.



Volume 2 No 1

GM: NASAA LAYS DOWN THE CHALLENGE

Dr Judy Carmen of the Adelaide University once more brought to our attention in the Adelaide Advertiser last week the unknown quantity of GM foods. As an epidemiologist Judy has been pointing out for years that we know nothing of the long term consequences of GM food. Indeed, she states that we have “no idea” and she goes on to point out that consumers are not protected by labelling laws when it comes to selecting foods that may be derived from GM crops.

The close involvement of the Howard government in overseeing food labelling laws and the attempts to foster GM production in Australia demands the same scrutiny and scepticism associated with so many other policy failures and deceptions associated with its 12 years of betrayal of Australia’s national interests. Decisions on climate change, defence expenditure, cultural and arts promotion and the relaxation of quarantine to favour importers over domestic producers are a long litany of abrogation.

NASAA is not a partisan organization but it’s time to speak up on areas of environmental, health and trade risks because of the irrational push for GM in both agriculture and the supermarket shelf (by stealth). The current moratoriums in the States on GM cropping are supported by NASAA and attempts to push through GM production an ill-conceived and are a no-win situation for the Australian producer and consumer.

Organic operators are well aware of the shortcomings of GM and operate a multimillion dollar industry without pesticides, without GM and without any significant technical assistance. It works, and even the most difficult crops have been successfully produced organically. (the very first certified organic cotton crop grown in Australia in the 1990s yielded two thirds of the average crop).

NASAA calls on the Federal Government to act in Australia’s true national interests and instigate an unbiased and open study into the full spectrum of affects of GM in the food chain. We challenge the government and GM industry spin doctors to stand by any objective assessment of GM in agriculture and make the claims that they currently do and not lie!

(Organic)works, and even the most difficult crops have been successfully produced organically”.



HUMANE CHOICE CERTIFICATION UP AND RUNNING

In association with Humane Society International NASAA is pleased to announce formally that we are open for business offering certification to HUMANCE CHOICE STANDARDS both for our existing organic operators and for others who simply want to put the Humane Choice label on their product.



The animal welfare provisions of the Humane Choice Standard are similar to those for organic. The key differences relate to the ‘whole of farm’ management requirements in organic which are not required for the Humane Choice label.

NASAA offers a special add-on Humane Choice Fee for NASAA organic operators. Contact Certification Officer Ashley Martin (ashley.martin@nasaa.com.au) at NASAA for further information.



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TEN GOOD REASONS TO CHOOSE NASAA AS YOUR CERTIFICATION PROVIDER



1. AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST CERTIFIER OF ORGANIC

NASAA celebrates its 21st birthday in 2007—not only Australia's oldest organic certifier, it is seen as a leader in the world of organics (being the first along with KRAV to ever receive global IFOAM accreditation).

2. WORLDWIDE RECOGNITION — YOUR EXPORT PASSPORT TO THE ORGANIC MARKET

NASAA's Labels are well known throughout the world to regulators, the marketplace and, importantly, the consumer.

3. WHERE INTEGRITY COUNTS: ONE LABEL—ONE MEANING

Certification is offered on the basis of published standards applicable for export and the domestic market. All NASAA's input, production and processing certification is accredited — not just selected items.

4. SERVICING CLIENTS EQUALLY WHATEVER THEIR SIZE

NASAA values its clients whether they are small, medium or large. Our family of operators come from all walks of life and are serviced equally.

5. SUPPORTED BY STATE-OF-THE-ART eCERT SYSTEM

eCert underpins all NASAA's operations providing efficiency, accountability and traceability.

6. SMALL PRODUCER CERTIFICATION COMPLIANT WITH THE NATIONAL STANDARD

All NASAA producers must be inspected annually in line with market and consumer expectations both here and abroad.

7. THE QUIET ACHIEVER

NASAA quietly goes about its certification work without spending its members' money on chest beating. We recognise that the effort needs to be put into securing technical and quality recognition.

8. SUPPORTING THE ROLE OF THE OFA

NASAA has no desire to dominate the organic industry. It supports the OFA's role as the peak industry body to represent our industry publicly and in government circles allowing us to focus on our core job —certification.

9. SUPPORTING THE STANDARDS AUSTRALIA PROCESS

A new National Standard under Standards Australia will apply to all operators whether they are selling domestically or exporting. One standard — one level playing field and no qualifications.

10. AN INSTITUTION WITH INTEGRITY

NASAA has a proven not for profit structure. Its values are competence, independence and transparency with equal access to all and the same rules for all. That's why your buyers trust us!

