



MEDIA RELEASE

29 October 2015

Going organic to build farm and business diversity

In 2010 third-generation orchardist and owner of the Mt Alexander Fruit Gardens Katie Finlay was ready to walk away from it all.

Ten years of drought followed by two years of flood had devastated her Central Victorian orchards, reducing the farm's income by 40 percent and leaving her staring 'into a black hole'.

But the decision to convert from conventional to organic farming not only built diversity and resilience for her farm, it also had parallel benefits for her business.

Katie will detail her journey when she presents at a full day Organic Seminar organised by Australia's leading organic certifier, the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia (NASAA) to be held in Canberra on **Friday 13 November**.

"After the flood wiped us out we met with an advisor about turning the business around," she said.

"One of the first questions she asked was 'what happens if there's another natural disaster?'"

"It got us thinking about how we could leverage what we knew about growing organic fruit into an online business."

Katie and her husband Hugh launched the Grow Great Fruit Program in 2013 to help people grow fruit at home and provide the business with additional income.

"We created the Grow Great Fruit Program to stop the pain of watching people make the same simple mistakes, just because they didn't have the right information at the right time, when we knew we could help.

"The program starts with basic principles, and then provides more detail, step-by-step, season by season. It covers apples, cherries, peaches, apricots, nectarines, pears, and plums.

"That's what we know, so that's what we teach."

With 2015 the International Year of Soils, NASAA has put together a diverse range of speakers to showcase the connection between soils, sustainability and human health and happiness.

These include Bellamy's Organic CEO and 2013 Private Sector Telstra Business Woman of the Year, Laura McBain, 2015 RIRDC Victorian Rural Women's Award winner Katie Finlay and Inverell farmer and General Manager of Figtrees Organic Glenn Morris.

NASAA General Manager Ben Copeman said the event was designed to highlight to the whole community, from farmers to mothers, the connection between how food is produced and health.

"Healthy farms and healthy people start with healthy soils," he said. "That's why we have soil experts, farmers and an organic baby food producer speaking to really tell the sustainability story from the soil through to the consumer."

[NASAA's Organic Seminar 2015](#) will be held at the Mercure Hotel, Canberra on **Friday 13 November from 9:30am to 5pm**, followed by the NASAA AGM at 5:30pm and dinner at 7pm. Tickets are \$40 for NASAA members and \$50 for non-members. For further details contact Lee Mastus at the NASAA Office, 08 8370 8455 or Lee.Mastus@nasaa.com.au Tickets are available at: www.eventbrite.com.au/e/nasaa-industry-seminar-andagm-2015-tickets-18899416664

– ENDS

Further information: Peter Hastie (NASAA): 0402069354 or Peter.Hastie@nasaa.com.au



About NASAA:

The National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia (NASAA) was formed in 1986 and supports the education of industry and consumers on organic, biodynamic and sustainable agricultural practices.

NASAA was Australia's first organic certifier.

Today, its certification arm, NASAA Certified Organic (NCO), provides certification and inspection services to assist Certified Organic operators access every organic market in the World.

NCO is the largest certifier of agricultural land in the world. NCO certifies more than 1,000 operations in 13 countries, certifying some 12m ha of agricultural land worldwide.

In early 2014 NASAA became the first foreign certifier approved to inspect Australian based operations for certification to Chinese Organic Regulations for direct export to China.

In August 2015 Ben Copeman, General Manager of NASAA was named the Australia China Business Council (ACBC) 2015 Industry Leader of the Year at the South Australia, China and Hong Kong Business Awards.