

# Organic Insights



## NASAA LABEL MOST RECOGNISED !

Volume 2 No 5  
23 December 2008

### Awareness of organic certification symbols

A recent market survey, carried out between 16th till 19th October 2008, has shown that from all logo's that are used by Australian Organic Certifiers the NASAA logo is by far the most recognized one. The survey was carried out by Newspoll, an organization specialised in Market Research and was commissioned by the Organic Federation of Australia ([OFA](#)).

Around 30% of grocery buyers claim to have seen at least one of the above nine certification symbols on food packaging. Among regular organic food buyers (i.e. those who buy at least once a month), 50% recognise at least one of the Organic certification symbols.

By far, the most widely known is the **National Association for Sustainable Agriculture (NASAA) symbol** – recognised by 21% of grocery buyers and 36% of regular organic food buyers.

This is followed by: the **National Certifying Mark for Australian Organic Goods**, recognised by 11% of grocery buyers and 19% of regular organic food buyers; and the **Australian Certified Organic (ACO)** and **AUS-QUAL** symbols, recognised by 8%, 7% of grocery buyers and 15%, 11% of regular organic food buyers, respectively.

Read more on page 2!

The NASAA  
Board of Directors & Office  
Staff would like to wish all our  
operators in all regions and in  
all sectors

a merry  
Christmas  
and a healthy,  
fruitful,  
prosperous and  
Organic 2009





## Organic Insights

### SURVEY SHOWS NEED FOR ONE ORGANIC SYMBOL

The NASAA logo was best recognised in all categories, a.o. differentiated by age, sex, occupation, level of education and region. The NASAA label was recognised by 21.6% of consumers in total, followed at a distance by the Australian Government Certified label with 11% and then by the ACO bud logo with a mere 7.9%.



The survey also showed that 61% of Australian consumers buy Organic produce regularly. A previous survey, conducted in 2003 by the University of Central Queensland, showed that 43% of consumers purchased organic products. "This is a 50% increase in buyers in 5 years and confirms the other data that 'organic' is the fastest growing food category in the world." Andre Leu, Chairman of the Organic Federation of Australia stated.

"The organic industry is emerging from a small niche to a significant part of the Australian food industry. A recent report showed that it is worth over \$600 million. When we add flow on industries such as the compost industry that is worth over \$400 million it is easy to see that the organic industry is worth over a billion dollars to the Australian economy.

Another very important outcome of the survey was one that has been supported by NASAA for a long time. The survey has shown that no less than 72% of consumers would like to see ONE organic symbol. The research found that changing to one, new certification symbol is generally viewed as easier, clearer and less confusing. Having one symbol is also viewed as being easier to recognise and remember, and as having a clearer and stronger meaning. Some also saw it as providing confirmation of uniformity in certification procedures by certification organisations.

'The experience from around the world shows that having one symbol to identify organic products generates a huge increase in sales.' Andre Leu said.

NASAA recognises the benefits that one Organic symbol would have for the Organic Industry as well as for consumers. NASAA therefore strongly supports the adoption of one Organic symbol, which could be used alongside certifiers own labels.

### CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR OFFICE ARRANGEMENTS

As it is our belief that Service and Quality should never take a holiday, the NASAA office will be opened as usual over the Christmas and New Year period, closing only on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. Most staff members will take their annual leave during this holiday period but this has been arranged in such a way that it will not influence on the day-to-day operations nor on the level of service provision to our operators.

So, whenever you need our assistance, we're there for you!





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### ORGANIC FARMING, NEW YEAR — NEW CHANCES

Dear members, dear Organic operators,

The year 2008 has proven to be a demanding year for most of us and with a global ecological crisis characterised by climate change scenarios that go from bad to worse, a growing global food shortage that has puzzlingly little benefit for many farmers, a collapse of the economic system as we have begun to know it and the erratic approach of peak oil.

Organic farming has enjoyed good times in stark contrast to the decline in global functions. Our precipitous lack of water though, has claimed more and more production and seen some of our best operators "on the bench" for yet another season. As we head past 350ppm of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, it seems inevitable that longer and deeper dry spells will descend on us. A deep rooted perennial agriculture will probably be the only way we can address some of the shifts we are seeing.

Our organic food prices for only a year ago are being matched by the conventional sector now as the costs of production escalate, especially those energy rich N fertilisers and chemical inputs. As carbon trading and atmospheric management become part of agriculture's balance sheet, we can expect to see a greater uptake of organic farming as one of the "net gain" agricultural pursuits available.

Organic farming resilience may be another product in demand by those casualties of the economic collapse that is engulfing the world. There is no doubt that elements of the collapse are a good thing and whilst it may bring some pain, it opens the door for opportunity and sustainable growth, including growth in organic farming. I think we should become more prepared to talk with our city cousins, whether they decide to move onto the land themselves or establish durable partnerships and connectivity with the rural food producers, about how we can meet their needs and how we can rekindle within them and ourselves some of the agrarian values that have been lost in the blight of food industrialisation and financial corruption

Organic farmers have not been spared the impact of escalating oil prices and more recently their collapse, but we have seen some interesting changes in the shape of the organic market through the distribution system as fuel costs bit into the transport budget. We shouldn't relax on the fuel issue as we now see panic in the oil industry as money for exploration and development dries up. Our low input, locally distributed products could be expected to see a renaissance as the oil bubble deflates and the cost of food is founded on factors other than cheap oil.

What can we expect in 2009? Big government appears to remain a captive of the coal industry and appears to resemble more and more the shape of its predecessor. Despite some modest commitments to a national organic standard, we don't see any great shifts in agricultural policy so we might expect to remain one of Australia's "quite achievers" for another year as we attend to the environment, conserve water, reduce pollution, contribute to carbon sequestration, provide a livelihood for farmers and supply exactly what the consumer wants, healthy environmental food and fibre. Merry Xmas Mr Rudd!

**Rod May, NASAA Chair**



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### NEWS FROM NASAA's AGM

On November 28th NASAA's 22nd Annual General Meeting was held at Stirling RSL HALL. The Chair and the Treasurer presented their reports of which the following is a summary.

#### CHAIR'S REPORT

Rod May (RM) prefaced the Chair's report to the AGM by referring to a recent report by CSIRO which in its turn acknowledged the now thirty year old document produced by the Club of Rome entitled "Limits to Growth" which presaged in the late seventies the climate change issues with which communities in this country and throughout the world are grappling.

He was especially appreciative of the foresight of NASAA's founders Lionel Pollard, Sandy Fritz, Tim Marshall and Els Wynen and emphasized the importance of agriculture practiced organically being a very significant part of the way forward into a lower carbon economy. It is his view that organic agriculture overcomes the unsustainability inherent within conventional agriculture.

NASAA has worked hard in this year to contribute in the political and regulatory field in a tumultuous environment. He applauded the evolution of the Standards Australia (SA) process and looked forward to the launch of a new National Standard under SA aegis in 2009. NASAA had worked closely on this matter with the Organic Federation of Australia and had jointly met with the Federal Minister for Agriculture in recent times.

NASAA has always had a strong international focus and is now the longest-standing certifier accredited by IFOAM. NASAA has always seen IFOAM as a strong technical standards-setting body and had worked hard during the year in question to ensure that IFOAM retained that focus.

RM affirmed the continuing importance in NASAA on maintaining accreditations which enable operators to offer their product in a variety of markets. He listed those currently being AQIS, USNOP, IFOAM, EU, JAS and that NASAA was currently obtaining accreditation for operators into the new Canadian Organic Regime. He also referred to new regulations in China and Korea where NASAA was busy working to facilitate market access. With regard to promotion NASAA's perspective has been to focus on key target areas where effort and exposure yield substantial results for operators – various organic expos in Australia and overseas, specific organic events and specialist field days. Additional funds had been allocated by the Board within the current year to ratchet up promotional activities.

RM introduced NASAA's intention to differentiate into two separate entities functions which are currently all located within NASAA. This would mean that NASAA would focus on its Standards, its trademarked labels, promotion and membership services whilst its subsidiary (NASAA Certified Organic) would provide certification services within compliance to accreditor programs. NASAA would therefore be the public face of NASAA with its label(s) and Standards being the product(s) delivered in good service by NCO which would maintain accreditations, certifications and compliance.

RM recommended this model as being an example of good governance providing structural separation enabling NASAA to concentrate on services for members and NCO to concentrate on licensee clients. He affirmed that NASAA was able to resource the split which would be effected in the early months of 2009.

RM concluded his presentation by thanking his fellow Directors and to staff for their work and input in contributing to NASAA's success.

#### FINANCE REPORT

Jim Rossiter (JR) talked to the Financial Statements for the year ending June 30<sup>th</sup> 2008. He noted the ongoing effects of the drought especially at the commencement of the financial year and drew attention to NASAA's consequent decision to focus on its core business in order to accommodate affects on NASAA financials. He noted that some internal staffing changes within the year had occurred but that nevertheless staff had continued to work well under pressure.

JR was pleased to report that NASAA had built up a healthy surplus which enabled it to build up its reserves as a buffer and from which also the organization could be developed further in order to meet operator needs. As far as the ongoing business was concerned JR said that the financial auditor had found no breaches of practice and no threats of insolvency. He was therefore pleased to report that NASAA ended the financial year in a sound position and that this was reflected in the results.

Rod May thanked JR for his contribution and input to the financial management of NASAA which was much appreciated. He also thanked finance staff for their work during the year.



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### NASAA OPERATORS GIVE THEIR OPINION

As part of our continuous strive to further improve our services, NASAA has recently conducted a rather comprehensive Customer Satisfaction Survey amongst its operators.

An overwhelmingly high response was received for which we are genuinely grateful. It shows you, our operators, care about NASAA and are willing to assist us in our aims.

One part of the Questionnaire was designed to receive feedback on the relevance of the Questions asked. An overall relevance of 8.6 was given to the Questions in this survey, proving the used format was appropriate and the information derived from it does give us a true insight in the level of customer satisfaction.

"NASAA considers that an immediate priority for the organic industry in Australia is the protection of consumers and certified producers and processors through the establishment of an enforceable regulatory process to ensure compliance with a single organic standard"..

In the section that allowed operators to make suggestions for further improvements, the main suggestions were:

- Assist operators in promotion of organic produce in various ways but mainly through advertising options on website.
- Upgrade website functionalities
- NASAA should promote itself better and become more visible
- Reduce unnecessary paperwork
- Improve punctuality for inspections and renewal of certificates

Now for the figures:

- Overall performance of office staff was rated at 8.3 on a 1(very poor) to 10 (Excellent) scale.
- the preparation of and during the actual inspection was rated at 8.9
- our Finance related services achieved a score of 8.6.
- the way NASAA deals with complaints received a score of 7.2
- and our website functionalities were rated at 7.3.

These figures clearly show a high level of customer satisfaction, but it also indicates that there is room for further improvement in some specific areas, mainly being the way NASAA deals with complaints and the way we communicate and inform operators about the status of their complaint. The second area for improvement is the functionality of our website. In these modern times, more and more people rely on a website for certain functionalities and the provision of information and the figures indicate that NASAA needs to have a close look at that. Initiatives to that affect have already started.

We would like to thank all operators that participated in this survey!!

A special thank you to our Inspectors is appropriate and well deserved, often under difficult circumstances they manage to do their job in a way that is very much appreciated by both our operators as well as NASAA staff!



## Organic Insights

### ORGANIC FARMS & LOCUST CONTROL

We would like to bring to your attention the following press release regarding the locust emergency now occurring in parts of NSW and Victoria. We encourage you to give your full cooperation with authorities on this matter to ensure protection of organic farms and effective management of the locust control situation. Every effort is being undertaken by authorities to ensure correct protocols are adhered to in regard to the organic certification status of organic farms, however identification of these areas is critical for this to occur. It would greatly assist locust control authorities if certified operators would contact their local RLPB (<http://www.rlpb.org.au/>).

#### Identifying organic farms a locust control priority

NSW Plague Locust Commissioner, Graeme Eggleston, has urged organic farmers to contact their [Rural Lands Protection Board](#) so their properties' organic status can be taken into account during planning for the spraying of locust swarms.

"If large swarms of flying locusts develop that could be treated from the air we want to do everything we can to avoid spraying near organic farms and other properties where landholders have concerns about spraying," he said.

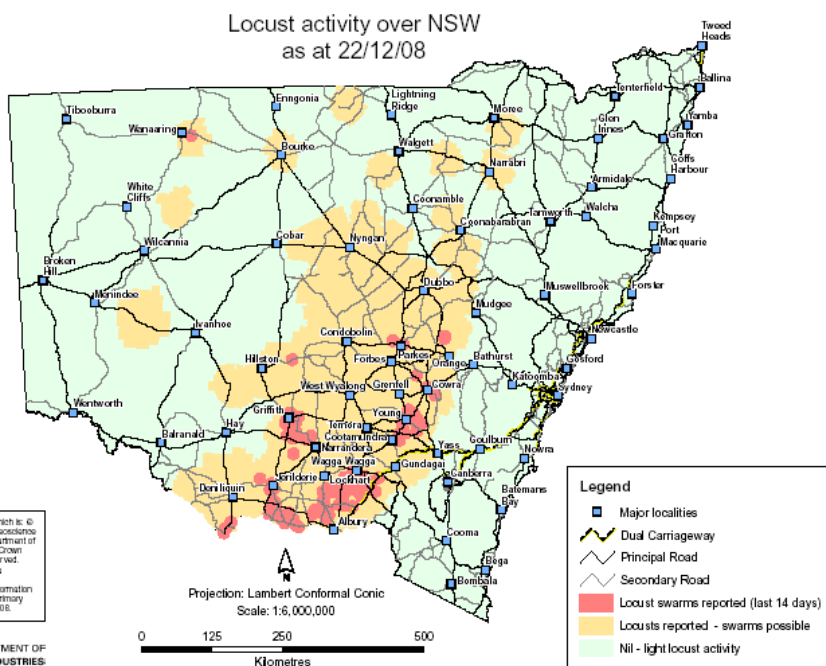
"Locust swarms can develop quickly and are highly mobile, so if opportunities arise to safely and efficiently control them we must act quickly. We need to know beforehand where organic properties are in inland NSW, especially in the southern and central parts of the State where immature locusts are already present.

"Most likely we will not be able to spray the majority of swarms because there needs to be a 1.5 kilometre buffer around sensitive areas. Aerial spraying is a last resort due to its high cost, limited effectiveness

and safety concerns. Ground treatment of nymph locusts is the best method of control." Mr Eggleston said contingencies were already in place to spray up to 26,000 hectares of locust swarms in locations where control would be practical and safe.

"We don't know if enough locusts survived our spring ground control offensive to cause significant damage, but we are prepared just in case."

Mr Eggleston said land managers should continue reporting locusts of any age found on the ground or mature locusts in the air.





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**Locust**

"Over the next week immature locusts found in densities too low to treat and those in rough terrain are expected to start swarming, although more cold weather could further delay this," he said. "There have already been some reports of small swarms at Ungarie and Wagga. "We don't know if enough locusts survived our spring ground control offensive to cause significant damage, but we are prepared just in case." Mr Eggleston said land managers should continue reporting locusts of any age found on the ground or mature locusts in the air.

For more information visit:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/insects/general/locusts>

## NASAA SHAPES UP FOR THE FUTURE

To improve the level of service provision to our members and operators and to accommodate for certain requirements of our accreditors, the NASAA Board has decided it is time to reshape and transform NASAA into a more streamlined organization. As a result, NASAA CERTIFIED ORGANIC, a company already fully owned by NASAA (but inactive until now) is now scheduled to take over NASAA's certification activities early next year.

That transfer itself will hardly be noticeable to certified operators and those in the process of becoming certified. As certification activities amount to at least 90% of NASAA's activities and this all flows into NASAA CERTIFIED ORGANIC (NCO), for operators it will be no more than a change of name in the name of their certification body. The NASAA Organic Standard, the entire certification process, office contacts, phone numbers and the NASAA logo will not be affected by this organizational restructure.

On the other hand however, it is expected that the creation of two separate legal entities will allow both of them to focus fully on their assigned responsibilities and tasks. NASAA will remain responsible for the NASAA organic standard and will be actively promoting Organic Certification, whenever and wherever it can. It so hopes to address one of the areas for improvement that came out of the customer satisfaction survey, being that NASAA needs to be more visible and pay more attention to promoting itself, its certified operators and the Organic Industry. NASAA also plans to improve its service provision to its members, by developing and creating additional benefits for its members.

NCO will become the certification entity, responsible for the entire certification chain, from first application to full organic certification. NCO will operate within the increasingly complex framework of various accreditation requirements and will have its full focus on continuous improvement of internal processes, ultimately increasing the level of customer satisfaction and delivering what NASAA claims to stand for:

INTEGRITY, QUALITY & SERVICE.



## Volume 2 No 5

### INTERESTING CHRISTMAS READING

Two book reviews by Rosalind Sharpe

#### **Hungry City: How Food Shapes Our Lives**

by Carolyn Steel

400pp, Chatto & Windus, £12.99

#### **The End of Food: The Coming Crisis in the World Food Industry**

by Paul Roberts

416pp, Bloomsbury, £12.99

By the third century BC, the hungry young city of Rome needed more grain than the surrounding countryside could provide, and relied on imports from Sicily and Sardinia. As the city grew, more productive land was needed. The options were trade and conquest. The subjugation of Carthage and then Egypt secured access to the (then) fertile plains of north Africa, which were colonised not just by soldiers and officials but with 6,000 farmers to grow grain for the capital. Rome's port, Ostia, was too small to accommodate the great Alexandrian grain ships, so their cargoes were transferred to smaller vessels at Puteoli in the Bay of Naples. Even when the grain reached Ostia (where it was joined by wine and oil from Tunisia, pork from Gaul, honey from Greece, and Spanish liquamen, the fishy sauce indispensable to Roman cooks), it had to be loaded on to barges and pulled 20 miles up the Tiber, a job that took teams of men and oxen three days. The infrastructure this gave rise to - the far-flung fields and herds, the roads and wharves (Ostia's huge, hexagonal dock and 350-metre quays can still be seen), the farmers and sailors, ham-curers and vintners, merchants and shopkeepers, decision-makers and administrators, working in many countries and languages - prefigured the international trade and logistics system that feeds our cities today.

As Carolyn Steel's book *Hungry City* illustrates, cities have always relied on the countryside to feed them, and until relatively recently this intimate link was an accepted and visible feature of city life. Steel is an architect who finds evidence in maps and street plans of food's shaping role in urban development. Cities grew up near productive countryside that could supply perishable foods, and main thoroughfares mark the routes by which food came in from the country to central markets. City streets were filled with the reassuring sight, smells and sounds of the citizens' food supply - cattle and sheep being herded through the streets to be milked or slaughtered, carts carrying milk and fresh produce into the city, and fertiliser, in the form of dung and night soil, back out. British street names still testify to these activities: Cowcross, Cornhill, Haymarket.

Gradually, though, feeding cities became less of a struggle. Railways, refrigeration and motorways made it easy to transport large quantities of even perishable foods over long distances (the purity of "railway milk" astonished Londoners when it first appeared). Animals and abattoirs were banished from town centres, and foods were funnelled through warehouses at rail or road junctions, rather than through city markets. Town houses lost their pigsties, vegetable patches and eventually, in some cases, their dining rooms; suburbs sprawled over what had once been market gardens; and cities sprang up in such inhospitable places as the Dubai desert. To an extent that would have been unthinkable to our pre-industrial forebears, the inhabitants of modern cities can take their food for granted.

For most of us in the developed world, this has brought a welcome liberation from hunger, anxiety and labour. Amid the plethora of books and articles describing what is wrong with the contemporary food system, it is easy to overlook its great achievement: a dependable supply of safe, cheap food, in unprecedented variety and abundance. This is exactly what food planners have been aiming for since the Sumerians established the first city at Uruk in Mesopotamia. As we are all learning, however, the efficiencies of modern food supply come at a cost. For Steel, the gap between "the feeders and the fed" has now become too wide. In 2006, for the first time, more than half of the world's population lived in cities. The strain of feeding this growing urban population is in danger of destroying the resources it depends on: "Unless we find a new urban model, we are soon going to run out of planet."

This is also the theme of *The End of Food*, though the two authors approach the subject in very different ways. Paul Roberts's aim in examining the global food economy is to show how seemingly disparate problems - obesity, the prevalence of food-borne disease, the persistence of hunger, the transformation of Third World wilderness into export-oriented farms - are interdependent. No single aspect of the system is at fault, but rather the way the system as a whole has come to operate.





## Organic Insights

Roberts writes lucidly and dispassionately about human needs, natural resources and the economics and politics that bind them (his last book was called *The End of Oil*). He argues that although food shaped many of our economic systems (among them specialisation and management, accounting, trade and speculation), food itself has proved unsuited to the high-volume, low-cost industrial model that we now impose on it. We have had to standardise, de-nature and re-engineer our plants and livestock to fit the technologies we use to harvest, process, package, preserve and transport them. The externalities of this system are now so enormous - from greenhouse gases to the iniquities of cheap labour - that they threaten the population the system is supposed to serve.

Roberts and Steel work hard not to sound too pessimistic. They find (a few, far-flung) examples of how things are being done differently. Roberts reviews the potential of organic farming and GM technology to feed the world's burgeoning population. Steel postulates a place - Sitopia, from the ancient Greek word for food, sitos - where food would be sustainably produced, as far as possible locally sourced, fairly traded, equitably distributed, and thoughtfully bought, eaten and disposed of. What is needed, they agree, is what Roberts describes as a "fundamental re-imagining" of our relationship with food.

The trouble is that the global food system is now so vast, complex and entrenched that there are no entities, public or private, that can bring about change on the scale needed. Both authors conclude that it is therefore down to the individuals who grow, buy, cook and eat food to take control. The transformation of the food system has been driven, writes Roberts, by "one of the most powerful and brutally efficient of all human forces - the market. But that system is still a work in progress, a product of billions of human decisions." How we make those decisions, he implies, can change the system again, for the better. The unanswered question, for those of us still enjoying the abundance and convenience that the exploitative and polluting modern food system brings us, is how much comfort and indulgence we are prepared to give up.

• Rosalind Sharpe researches food and sustainability at the Centre for Food Policy, City University, London.

## NASAA AT THE MELBOURNE ORGANIC EXPO 2009



### Royal Exhibition Building, Carlton VIC Australia

Friday 24th July 2009 - 10.00am – 6.00pm (Trade Only)

Saturday 25th July 2009 - 10.00am – 6.00pm

Sunday 26th July 2009 - 10.00am – 5.00pm

Our stand number is 27

NASAA will be promoting its core values of Integrity, Quality and Service. Further details will be announced as we get closer to the event.

For more information on the Organic Expo 2009 please visit:  
<http://www.organicexpo.com.au>

## ADMIN MATTERS

### ADDING ADDITIONAL ACREAGE AT REINSPECTION TIME

Producer operators are reminded that requests to add additional acreage to certification need to be applied for and receive in principle prior approval before inspection time.

Please remember to factor in sufficient time for this process well in advance of reinspection.

### WELCOME TO NEW NASAA STAFF

We take this opportunity of welcoming to NASAA two new staff members:

STEPHANIE GOLDFINCH as Technical Manager

SUE SHELTON as Certification Officer



## Volume 2 No 5



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
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### TEN GOOD REASONS FOR CHOOSING NASAA AS YOUR CERTIFICATION PARTNER:

#### 1. AUSTRALIA'S FIRST 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!