NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

# Organic Insights

Volume 2 No 2

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## UK STUDY POINTS TO ORGANIC FOOD BEING MORE NUTRITIOUS

*….”The $27million four-year European project will end years of debate and is likely to overturn official advice that eating organic food is no more than a lifestyle choice”.*

Traditionally, the link between nutrition and organics has not been as clearcut as that between organics and ecology. A recent study in the UK, reported in The Australian 28/10/07, is likely to make that relationship far stronger and more definite and is likely to have far-reaching impacts:

***“The biggest study into organic food has found it is more nutritious than ordinary produce and may help lengthen people's lives.***

*The evidence from the $27million four-year European project will end years of debate and is likely to overturn official advice that eating organic food - 10 per cent or 20 per cent more expensive than regular produce - is no more than a lifestyle choice.*
*The study found that organic fruit and vegetables contained as much as 40 per cent more antioxidants, which scientists believe can cut the risk of cancer and heart disease, Australia's biggest killers. They also had higher levels of beneficial minerals such as iron and zinc.*
*Carlo Leifert, co-ordinator of the EU-funded project, said the differences were so marked that organic produce would help to increase the nutrient intake of people not eating the recommended five portions a day of fruit and vegetables.*
*"If you have just 20 per cent more antioxidants and you can't get your kids to do five a day, then you might just be OK with four a day," he said.*
*The British Food Standards Agency yesterday confirmed it was reviewing the evidence before changing its advice. British ministers and the agency have said there are no significant differences between organic and ordinary produce.*
*Researchers grew fruit and vegetables and reared cattle on adjacent organic and non-organic sites on a 293ha farm at Newcastle University, and at other sites in Europe.*
*They found that levels of antioxidants in milk from organic herds were up to 90 per cent higher than in conventional milk.*
*According to Professor Leifert, the compounds found in greater quantities in organic produce include vitamin C, iron, copper and zinc, and secondary metabolites, thought to help to combat cancer and heart disease.*
*The Sunday Times”*

## END TO LIVE STOCK EXPORTS

There is no durable reason for live exports. All but a few are net losers in this market, not to mention the welfare of those animals that perish in this long and risky journey to foreign lands.
Recent coverage has focused on this but as Roger Fletcher said on Background Briefing recently (14 October), local communities are the losers with the whole value chain being denied to local abattoirs, handlers and processors.
No one seems to have done the homework on the massive energy costs associated with the transport of live animals, sure, there no freezers to run, but the transport, handling, feeding, watering and delivery of live animals is grossly energy intensive.
The loss of jobs in processing industries is also a major issue. The program referred to the loss of an estimated 20,000 abattoir jobs in the last two decades, and the live animal trade having some responsibility for some of this. With these direct losses go indirect ones for the processing of animal byproducts, all lost to our local rural industry.

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## OPINION FROM THE NASAA CHAIR

SUSTAINING OUR LONGTERM FUTURES

DICTIONARY DEFINITION OF

"Sustaining":

1. *To keep in existence, maintain;*
2. *To supply with necessities or nourishment;, provide for;*
3. *To support from below, keep from falling or sinking, prop*

With 21 years under our belt at NASAA this year, being the oldest organic certifier and with a member ship that includes both licensees and people committed to sustainable agriculture, we think it's time to express ourselves as the mature and experienced commentators and actors that we are on the stage of sustainability.

Certainly, sustainability has always been our focus, and we have seen organic agriculture as the "pinnacle" of sustainable practices.

Our 2005 international conference organized for the global organic sector and made available to over 500 Australian participants was titled "Shaping Sustainable Systems" and brought together people from all walks of life with various interests in sustainability.

Our keynote speakers included amongst others David Holmgren and Tim Flannery, both of whom have brought to us ideas and support from outside the organic sector.

Taking up these interlinking themes of permaculture and carbon sequestration put forward by these two eminent Australians NASAA will explore and develop their connection to organic agriculture and rural living and thereby address the big picture of sustainability.

With our progressive but thoroughly practical focus we aim to bring to the forefront the many issues that need to be critically addressed by the Australian community to help provide our children with some semblance of a chance for co-existing with the many changes and challenges of the 21st century.

We can no longer be content with the omnidirectional journey of the current commercial and political agenda, and no longer can we remain a viable rural sector if the surrounding landscape, water systems, climate and community collapse under the pressure of the unregulated consumption of resources and a directionless marketplace.

Our views will be challenging and aimed at not always the organic operator but beyond. The imperative of climate change - a well established fact despite the disinformation and denial from governments and elements of the press as well as the professional sceptics - is one that is both currently associated with the diabolical drought and the prospects of even greater climatic perturbations and the associated prospect of sea level rises and shifts in populations and resource demands.

Not only are we facing a future challenge of undreamt-of proportions through climate change and the current challenge of drought, but we face an unparalleled and only partly unveiled shift in the fabric of our rural community.

Political "solutions" to these shifts must not go unchallenged and we will do our best to analyse, understand and respond to the many policies we can glimpse that may be moving us further from the possibilities of a sane approach to a sustainable community.

Not all is doom and gloom and many of us have sensed. Our capacity to act for durable solutions has been demonstrated with our approach to farming. This capacity flows into the manufacturing, processing and distribution processes that organic food and fibre enjoy in a discerning marketplace. But we will have to act on the policies that shape our future through the dual focus of acting at home and through the greater rural and agricultural and political landscape to help us to shape the futures that we have imagined and shared as visions of how the land could be.

As I muse about what might be, I am only too conscious of how many of our operators are doing it very tough as the drought bites ever deeper. NASAA is committed to working with its operators to sort out acceptable arrangements where they can't source fodder—info on how to get a feed derogation is set out elsewhere in this issue as well as a piece on the Humane Choice option. Our certification staff are ready, willing and able to assist operators in working through their best options.

ROD MAY

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## PRAISE WHERE PRAISE IS DUE…..

### 1. ELEMENTAL SKINCARE 6272P

Certified by NASAA in 2004, Elemental Skincare was awarded funding to undertake a marketing plan through the WA Regional Industry Assistance Scheme. This has led to re-branding the range to coincide with the new formulae and entry in to a number of East Coast markets.

### 2. CENTRAL ORGANICS R9089

Stephen Oulianoff, from Central Organics has recently won South Australian Small Business Champion Award (Fresh Food Section), and is in the running for the National title to be decided in early November. Stephen has had his stall at Adelaide's Central Market since November 1982 and stocks 100% certified organic produce.

### 3. SKALA BAKERY #5281P

Skala Bakery recently won Second Prize at the First National Baking Competition for their Sour Dough loaf. Jan Huis in't Veld, pictured here with the prize winning loaf (as found on the shelves of the Skala shop), says that the key to great organic bread is wheat grown on re-mineralized soils. Although Jan has owned the business since 1990, he started moving into organics 5 or 6 years ago in response to client demands. He believes strongly that we should be heading toward legal enforcement for organic as is provided in the USA.

### 4. JEAN-PAUL'S VINEYARD #3465P

NASAA certifies Will de Castella for the production of BD certified winegrapes. At the recent Visy Great Australian Shiraz Challenge he achieved a Gold Medal 2007 Great Australian Shiraz Challenge, came 4th out of 416 Shiraz wines from all over Australia, was awarded Best 2005 Shiraz of the Show and the trophy for the Best Shiraz under $25.00.
His Cabernet of the same vintage received a Silver medal at the Australian small winemakers show in QLD the next week.

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## FARMING CARBON FOR THE FUTURE

There is keen interest being shown in the organic carbon industry and by this we mean organic in the broader sense pertaining to the sequestration of $CO_2$ in the form of organic or biological structures.
The two chief structures are soil and vegetation, with vegetation coming first as a soil additive or a structure in its own right in the form of trees and shrubs and grasses.
The debate on sequestration has been overtaken by the results shown by many authors from Jan Skjemstad to Alan Yeomans. They say we can "lock up" carbon through what we grow and how we manage our soils.
Indeed, as we move into the carbon economy that will need to prevail if we are to curb our unsustainable emissions, there is promise of good returns from farming carbon.
Organic farmers are well situated to sequester carbon and as we have seen in CSIRO studies the two factors that most dramatically increase carbon sequestration are the absence of stubble burning and the use of a pasture phases (as long as possible) in the rotation. The fact that both of these are intrinsic to organic farming give us the lead.
We do these things for the benefits of soil and production, but there is a more acute and deliberate range of options available as we explore deeper levels of carbon capture.
Many organic farmers use compost, and it is this miraculous material that not only provides the biological activity, the nutrients and soil structure improvement necessary for organic farming, but is also the ideal carbon sequestration device. Any carbonaceous material can be ultimately incorporated into the compost and provided there is sufficient nitrogen to achieve a balanced ratio of nitrogen to carbon the compost digests those waste seed cleanings, straw, woodchips, spoilt hay, or food wastes.
If there is a supply of animal wastes available - provided they are composted - they do not need to be organic for certified organic farming. The days when we burn or dump organic wastes should be ended and all these used for ultimate incorporation into the soil provided that care is taken that they are not contaminated with heavy metals or persistent chemicals or genetically modified organisms.
Yeomans considers that a 1% increase in organic matter in the arable spoils of the world would basically reverse the atmospheric surplus of $CO_2$ and if this were so, then we would have a carbon challenge on a scale of its own. The question is: Could we do it?
NASAA is actively researching opportunities to extend its services into this area to benefit its operators and our ecology. NASAA is well-resourced with our eCert system to roll out additional services and we expect to have much more to say on this matter in our next issue.

## ORGANIC WOOL INFO SESSION, Dubbo

NASAA certified processor Fletcher International Exports held an Organic Wool Information Session at their Dubbo plant on17th August. Fletchers became certified for processing of wool to tops in 2006, with their abattoir coming under certification in September 2007.
Demand for organic wool will continue to grow as consumers begin to look not only at issues such as health, environment and animal rights, but also fashion magazines emphasizing organic chic. It is estimated that only about 1% of Australia's wool clip is organic so there is a large gap in the market waiting to be filled by Australian producers and processors.
NASAA can guide wool through certification from sheep's back to finished garment and assist operators to access markets across the world.

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# NASAA OPERATORS OUT AND ABOUT AT THE MELBOURNE ORGANIC EXPO


KADAC #3222P

ORGANICA #3679R


JOHN & VANESSA TRAIL #3485


ASHLEE OLDFIELD #5111


JOHN & ANDREA RUIZ, # R3628

JAMES NAGORCKA & FAMILY #3385

# Organic Insights

## VITAL QUESTIONS FOR ALL OUR POLITICIANS

*"It is time to get organic farming out there and central in the minds of our politicians of all persuasions".*

With the Federal Election looming and climate change increasingly on all agendas it is time to get organic farming out there and central in the minds of our politicians of all persuasions.

Here's some questions NASAA has posed to our politicians:

1. *When will the ecological impact of different agricultural practices become central to your party's decision-making?*
2. *How will your party support entrants to organic agriculture through incentives?*
3. *What action does your party support to assist farmers to be aware of and to minimise the carbon impact of their system?*
4. *How will your party manage the process of integrating sustainability throughout every portfolio?*
5. *How will your party assist farmers to invest in sustainable land and water management?*
6. *What will your party do about "organic" having no current definition in Australian law?*
7. *How will your party respond to the looming peak oil crisis (with associated current dependency on petroleum-based fertiliser products) and make policies to maintain food security in the future?*
8. *How can your party ensure that a farmer choosing to produce organically (and therefore non-GMO) can be sure that their produce will not be contaminated by GMOs?*
9. *When will your party acknowledge the role of organic farming in regional development.?*
10. *When will your party acknowledge the scientifically proven benefits of organic farming in land use and food quality?*
11. *When will your party provide research and development funds for organic farming that approach those given to biotechnology?*
12. *What actions do you intend to take to promote the organic industry and increase market access for Australian organic produce?*

In short it is high time that organic farming was factored in to all deliberations about climate change, drought management and sustainability. If NASAA receives some useful responses they will be featured in our next issue.

## CHANGES TO THE NASAA ORGANIC STANDARD

Further amendments have been made to the NASAA Organic Standard to reflect changes to Edition 3.3 of the National Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Produce, and to incorporate the new NASAA Health and Beauty Care Product Standard. This latest version is available on NASAA's website for free download and a hard copy is available from NASAA on request. As well as some minor editing changes, major amendments have been made to the clauses numbered overleaf:

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## STANDARDS CHANGES cont'd

**2.21 Calculation of Ingredient % *NEW* *(National Standard 3.3)***
For **Processors** – This outlines procedures to be used to determine the percentage of certified organic ingredients in a product and NASAA to determine whether a product can be certified as organic.

**6.3.5 Livestock housing densities *(National Standard 3.3)***
Table 3. Housing Density for Housed Animals now outlines the number of birds (poultry, squab, ducks, geese, turkeys) permitted under one roof, as well as kilograms per square metre for poultry and squab.

**6.5.4 Livestock feed derogation *(National Standard + IFOAM Norms don't specify percentage)***
This has been amended in the revised version of the NASAA Standard, however as the drought continues will be a MAJOR change for livestock operations, and hence needs to be brought to operators' attention. From now, and in accordance with the National Standard (Derogation under 3.14.9), and IFOAM Norms (derogation under 5.6.1) *a DEROGATION (written permission) CAN BE OBTAINED FOR THE USE OF 100% NON ORGANIC FEED DUE TO DROUGHT AND OTHER EXCEPTIONAL CLIMACTIC CONDITIONS.* Operators need obtain NASAA's approval prior to using the non organic feed. Feeds in priority order are Organic, In-Conversion and, thirdly, untreated conventional feed, free from chemical residues. (GM feed is always prohibited).

**6.5.8 Colostrum for calves *(IFOAM requirement)***
Colostrum must be provided to calves within 6 hours of birth with the mother rearing the offspring for at least the first 12 hours. A derogation is still available, but if multiple suckling or bucket rearing is to be used, this must be of organic whole milk *of the same species.* Non organic milk or milk replacers can only be used in emergencies.

**7.28 – 7.38 Aquaculture *(IFOAM requirement)***
This section has been given more detail, with more attention given to base aquatic systems, and health and welfare.

**7.23.1 Tooth cutting – removal of word "routine" *(IFOAM requirement)***
This was a requirement from IFOAM.

**9.4.4 – 9.4.7 GMOs *(National Standard 3.3)***
For **Processors** – Reinforcement of the existing Standards prohibiting GMOs, + risk management measures to be implemented – especially cogent given the current calls to lift the moratorium on GM crops such as canola.

**9.4.9 Nanotechnology *NEW* *(National Standard 3.3)***For **Processors** - Not previously included in the Standards, now a clause prohibiting the use of nanotechnology

**10.12.2 Ammonium phosphate + ammonium sulphate removed from wine *(National Standard 3.3)***
NASAA has disagreed with the removal of ammonium phosphate (DAP) from the National Standard, and supports moves to have it reinstated for wine.

**12 Health and Beauty Care Products *NEW***
New Standards for all manufacturers of health and beauty care products. As a new venture for NASAA, and organic certification generally, it is anticipated this section will continue to develop.

**Annex 2 Sodium hydroxide permitted for soap manufacturing**

**Annex 2 Restriction on pine oil use as a herbicide removed**

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## OPTIONS FOR OPERATORS

"This new service offered by NASAA has been developed by NASAA and the Australian branch of Humane Society International to offer animal welfare-conscious consumers the choice to purchase certified, humanely-produced livestock products at retail outlets".

Owing to continuing drought many people may be having difficulty sourcing certified organic feed for their livestock. Compliance problems associated with the use of conventional feed can be overcome somewhat by applying for a derogation to feed either 5% of the total diet in 'normal' situations or up to 100% of the total diet in exceptional situations as conventional feed where certified organic feed is unavailable (NASAA Organic Standard 6.5.7).

'Normal' situations may include those such as the temporary inability of an individual regular supplier to supply certified organic feed due to, for example, business constraints.

Exceptional situations exist in the event that 95% or more of certified organic feed sources are unavailable due to drought or other natural disaster, resulting in certified organic feed being unavailable or exceptionally cost-prohibitive.

Many producers raising certified organic livestock are now faced with a drought situation and can apply for an exceptional situation derogation. In this case, producers can apply to NASAA to feed up to 100% conventional feed, provided that it does not contain any prohibited substances. The affected animals lose their applicable certification status for the period of feeding, but when the situation improves the certification status of the affected animals can be reinstated six months after resuming 100% organic feeding, according to the certification status of the feed.

In periods when an exceptional situation derogation is in place livestock producers can retain some market differentiation of their product by applying for Humane Choice certification. This new service offered by NASAA has been developed by NASAA and the Australian branch of Humane Society International to offer animal welfare-conscious consumers the choice to purchase certified, humanely-produced livestock products at retail outlets.

The Humane Choice certification is identified by a distinctive branding and may offer certified organic producers further ability to differentiate and niche their products.

Existing certified livestock producers can obtain Humane Choice certification without inspection—subject to satisfying any additional Humane Choice requirements—based on their previous NASAA inspection – there is no need for a separate inspection before being certified!

Livestock producers in application for organic certification can be inspected at their first inspection and all livestock producers can add Humane Choice certification at their next inspection.

The current application fee for Humane Choice Certification for existing producers is $330 and the estimated time to certification is approximately 4 weeks.

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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!