Newsletter for the National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia

# NASAA Newsletter

Issue 15 - April 2016

## Chair's Report

***Welcome to our first newsletter for 2016...***

With the first quarter of the financial year already passed, NASAA is once again planning a year filled with activities and events to continue the promotion of organic production and processing systems to new and existing members.

NASAA activities are providing education and training opportunities for those entering organic farming and processing, as well as furthering the skills and knowledge of our existing NASAA members and NCO certified operators.

NASAA will also continue to advocate for the issues related to our industry through collaboration with our sector partners.

### Organic Growth Worldwide

In February the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FIBL) and IFOAM – Organics International released the latest data on organic farming worldwide.

This data supports the continuing demand for organic products in the market place.

• Consumer demand is increasing with market growth of 11% in the US

• Global value of the organic market has reached 80 billion US dollars

• The US is the leading organic market followed by Germany, France and China

• The highest per capita spending was in Switzerland followed by Luxembourg

• 43.7 million hectares of organic agricultural land worldwide with Australia the country with the largest organic agricultural area – 17.2 million hectares, followed by Argentina (3.1 million hectares) and the US (2.2 million hectares)

• There are now more than 2 million organic producers worldwide

These figures endorse other reports stating that the Australian Organic industry is the strongest growing agricultural sector.

### National Organic Mark

Some years ago the OFA attempted to get industry support for a single National Organic Mark for all certified operators which would signify and reassure that their products are certified and meet the National Standard and AS 6000.

The importance of this mark cannot be underestimated because one National Organic Mark removes much of the confusion for consumers, media and those outside the industry, which is currently associated with the six individual certification labels.

Late last year the Department of Agriculture commenced equivalency negotiations with the Korean government. Among other issues the Koreans

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raised the issue of a Australian National Organic Mark, which could be used by Korean companies exporting to Australia to denote that their products were recognised as being equivalent to Australian organic standards. The Koreans have a national mark, which, if the negotiations for equivalency are successful, Australian exports that included the mark on the product labeling would be recognized as certified organic in Korean markets.

OISCC (Certifiers Council), with the support of the OFA, have developed a National Organic Mark which is currently with IP Australia and the ACCC for final approval.

Certifiers will be approved to license their operators to use the national mark.

The mark will be voluntary, used in conjunction with the certifiers own certification labels. It is envisaged that there will be no costs to use the mark.

Maintaining and operating such a National Organic Mark will require resourcing for promotion, management and verification. OISCC has applied to the Federal Government for a grant through their current round of grants to build industry trade and market access.

## Steve Marsh loses challenge on Court Costs

Last year the WA Court allowed Steve leave to appeal against the court costs of $804,000 awarded against him.

In September 2015 Steve lost his appeal for damages of $85,000 after GM canola contaminated his farm in 2011.

We were all extremely disappointed and saddened to hear that Steve lost his challenge to the court costs awarded against him. Steve will now have to pay the court costs of $804,000.


For all in the organic and conventional farming food producing sectors who do not wish to use GM product, this is an extremely disappointing outcome and potentially has far reaching implications for protecting and maintaining the integrity of non-GM products.

NASAA has always maintained that procedures and protocols need to be in place to protect a farmer's choice to farm in the way they choose. NASAA will continue to support any actions that protect individual farmers choice.

## General Manager, NASAA

Following Ben's departure from NASAA the Board has advertised for a new General Manager. There has been a very strong response to the position and highly qualified people with the management and ethical values NASAA requires.

The Board had hoped to be able to announce the new General Manager in this newsletter but due to the strong response the selection process has taken longer that first expected. We will announce the new appointment as soon as the decision is made in the coming weeks.

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## Certified Organic Wine of the Year

Over 100 entries to the "Certified Organic Wine of the Year 2016" were received, with the judging occurring on Wednesday 23rd March.

We thank all those who submitted wines and look forward the announcement of the winners at the Awards night to be held at the National Wine Centre on Thursday 30th June. Join us and taste some of the best organic wines, cheeses and chocolates in Australia!


**Thursday June 30th 2016**

NASAA/Winestate Organic Wine of the Year Awards National Wine Centre, Adelaide - 6pm

For tickets call 08 8370 8455 or visit:

www.eventbrite.com.au/e/certified-organic-wine-of-the-year-award-evening-2016-tickets-22511744233

## Refurbished NASAA/NCO Offices

From all members of the Board, I would like to thank both the NASAA and NCO staff for their perseverance in working in the very confined office rented space during the last three months due to the renovations of the existing NASAA/NCO office.

Despite this difficult time for staff, they have continued to ensure that everything went on as normal.

The positive outcome is that NASAA now has a bright new and modern workspace that provides the working environment and resources to meet the future needs of NASAA and NCO.

On this our 30th Anniversary year, we are looking forward to a positive and successful 2016.

**Jan Denham**
*Chair, NASAA Ltd*

# What's on in 2016?

Here's a roundup of some of the events happening in Australia in 2016....

## Naturally Good Expo

1 - 2 May 2016 - Royal Hall of Industries - Moore Park Sydney
naturallygood.com.au/

## BIOFACH China

26 - 28 May 2016 - Shanghai World Expo Exhibition And Convention Center
www.biofachchina.com/en/home.php

## BIOFACH South America

8 - 11 June 2016 - Sao Paolo, Brazil
www.biofach-americalatina.com.br/en/

## Certified Organic Wine of the Year Awards

30th June 2016 - National Wine Centre, Adelaide

## National Organic Week

17 – 25 September 2016
www.organicweek.net.au/core/

## Cross Pollinate

TBC, August 2016 - Hobart, Tasmania
www.crosspollinate.org.au/

## BIOFACH America

22 - 24 September 2016 - Baltimore, USA
www.biofach-america.com/

## BIOFACH India

10 - 12 November 2016 - Delhi, India
biofach-india.com/

## NASAA Organic Industry Seminar 2016

**November 2016**

This year the NASAA Organic Industry Seminar and AGM will be combined with a celebration of NASAA's 30th Anniversary, with details to be announced soon.

# Research Shows Benefits of Organic

***Ground-breaking new study finds clear nutritional differences between organic and non-organic milk and meat***

Source:
*www.soilassociation.org/news/newsstory/articleid/8770/ground-breaking-new-study-finds-clear-nutritional-differences-between-organic-and-non-organic-milk-a*

**16th February 2016**

A new study published in the British Journal of Nutrition shows organic milk and meat contain around 50% more beneficial omega-3 fatty acids than non-organic. In addition to organic milk and meat, the nutritional differences also apply to organic dairy like butter, cream, cheese and yoghurt. The study is the largest systematic review of its kind and led by Newcastle University and an international team of experts.

**Key Findings:**

• Both organic milk (dairy) and meat contain around 50% more beneficial omega-3 fatty acids than conventionally produced products


• Organic meat has slightly lower concentrations of two saturated fats linked to heart disease

• Organic milk and dairy contains 40% more conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) - CLA has been linked to a range of health benefits including reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, certain cancers and obesity, but evidence is mainly from animal studies

• Organic milk and dairy contains slightly higher concentrations of iron, Vitamin E and some carotenoids

• Organic milk contains less iodine than non-organic milk

Speaking about the research, Helen Browning, chief executive of the Soil Association said,:

"This research confirms what many people have always thought was true -what you feed farm animals and how you treat them affects the quality of the food - whether it's milk, cheese or a cut of meat. These scientists have shown that all the hard work organic farmers put into caring for their animals pays off in the quality of the food they produce - giving

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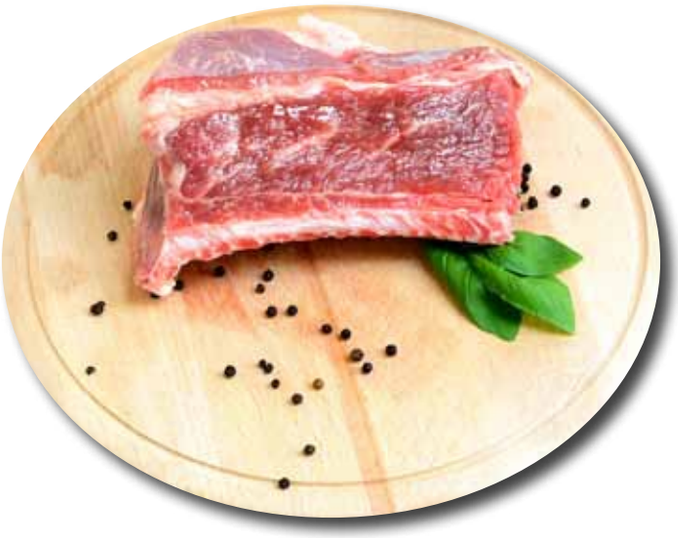


real value for money.

"Organic farming methods require all organic farmers to adopt techniques that guarantee nutritionally different foods. Following research in 2014 confirming nutritional differences between organic and non-organic crops like fruit and vegetables – we can now say for certain that organic farming makes organic food different."

The difference in Omega 3 is because organic animals have to eat a more natural grass-based diet containing high levels of clover. Clover is used in organic farming to fix nitrogen so that crops and grass grow (instead of manufactured/chemical fertilisers), and this research has found that clover also increases the Omega 3 concentrations in meat and milk. Under organic standards, organic cows must eat a 60% fresh grass based diet or hay/silage (conserved grass).

Historic research highlighted that organic milk contained less iodine. However, the industry has taken steps to address this. OMSCo (the Organic Milk Suppliers Cooperative) representing over 65% of the UK's organic milk supply, announced that in 2015 organic milk had achieved comparable levels of iodine to conventional and in 2016, following recent testing of bottled milk, they announced these levels of iodine have been maintained. Richard Hampton, managing director at OMSCo, said; "We initiated projects to boost iodine levels and applied these to our farmer members' enterprises, and by early 2015 we announced that we'd achieved comparable levels with those in the conventional market. Our latest results have shown that one year on from the initial milestone we're maintaining those levels."

Richard Smith, senior farms manager from organic meat producers Daylesford Organic, said; "We farm organic red meat on a grass-based, home-grown forage diet which delivers a superb quality. In addition to other benefits of producing food in an organic system, this land-mark paper now also confirms what we've always known; there is also a significant nutritional difference between organic and non-organic."

# New Approach to Tackling Giant Parramatta Grass

Source:

*www.winghamchronicle.com.au/story/3716798/a-new-approach-to-tackle-giant-parramatta-grass/?cs=1047*

Many landholders in the Manning Valley are well aware of the problems with the invasive, introduced weed, Giant Parramatta Grass (Sporobolus fertilis).

The tall seed heads can be seen in many paddocks and this year's warm, moist conditions have seen an explosion in the number of plants in many paddocks.

"GPG is high in silica, wearing animal's teeth and farm machinery. It seeds prolifically, seeds are spread by animals, people and traffic, and are viable in the ground for many years," said Lyn Booth of Manning Landcare.

"There is little feed value in the grass. In short there is nothing to like about this plant."

To counter the problem, Manning Landcare are now stocking Parra-trooper a spray on version of Nigrospora oryzae, a naturally occurring soil fungus that causes crown rot in GPG. The product has been developed by Beechwood farmer, Jeremy Bradley.

"Jeremy could see a real need for a farmer friendly version of the fungus, a product that landholders could easily apply rather than just relocating infected plants," said Lyn.

"He and partner Cath were so committed to the cause they spent two years developing the spray and over $100,000 setting up a laboratory at home."

Parra-trooper is available from Manning Landcare, Isabella Street, Wingham on Monday and Wednesdays. For more information go to:

**https://parra-trooper.com.au/**

# Certified Organic Wine of the Year 2016

www.facebook.com/organicwineoftheyear

## Proudly Sponsored by NASAA and Organic Times

***The Organic Wine of the Year Award is now into its third year, the 30th anniversary of NASAA...***

Now in its third year, the Organic Wine of the Year Awards is really taking off, and we have had more than 100 wines submitted for judging. With the 2014 Winner, Pig in the House, and the 2015 Winner Macaw Creek (certified by NASAA) - we are hoping to continue to encourage some great competition across the organic wine sector.

We want to make sure that the 2016 competition is the biggest one to date, and gives a huge boost to the organic wine sector in Australia. Through our partnership with Winestate Magazine, there are a number of benefits to entering your wines:

- Winestate Magazine Advertising (100,000 readers)
- Winestate Magazine Review of your wine
- Tasting Event Exposure throughout the year
- Social Media Coverage

### Dates for your Diary

**Friday May 27th 2016**

Winestate Shiraz Challenge
National Wine Centre, Adelaide - 6pm

**Thursday June 30th 2016**

NASAA/Winestate Organic Wine of the Year Awards
National Wine Centre, Adelaide - 6pm

### JOIN US

NASAA welcomes the sponsorship of **Organic Times** for the Organic Wine of the Year 2016. The Organic Wine of the Year Award also presents significant opportunities for promoting other organic products throughout the year. We would love for more of our operators to take part in sponsoring the event, so that we can present organic wines alongside organic cheeses, olives, chocolates, nuts, crackers and more. Please contact us if you would like to co-sponsor the event, or if you would like to purchase tickets to any of the events.


### Get your tickets NOW

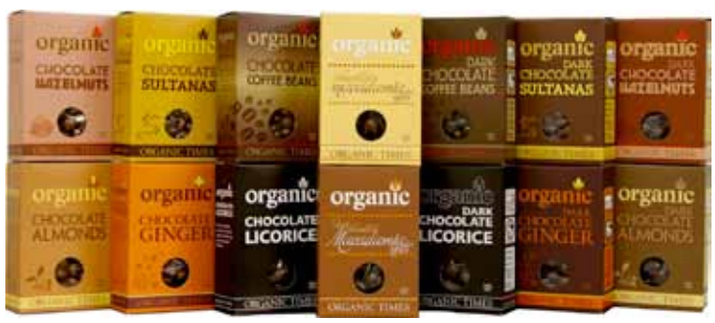
**Thursday June 30th 2016**

NASAA/Winestate Organic Wine of the Year Awards National Wine Centre, Adelaide - 6pm

For tickets call 08 8370 8455 or visit:

www.eventbrite.com.au/e/certified-organic-wine-of-the-year-award-evening-2016-tickets-22511744233

**We thank all Certified Organic wineries who submitted their wines in 2016**




ORGANIC TIMES

**organictimes.com.au**

# Organic Farming Practices

## - a farmer's perspective

*Adapted from:*
*Alan Druce's memoirs- Organic Farming 2011*

### About the Author

I have a property of 2,696 acres in the Riverina district of New South Wales. We sow about 500 acres to cereal crops each year and run about 600 sheep and 45 head of cattle. These numbers vary according to how many lambs and calves are at foot.

In early 1962 I started reading books about organic farming, written by such men as Sir Albert Howard, Friend Sykes, and Newman Turner. The principles they explained made so much sense to me I immediately started making changes. Even today, 49 years down the line, we are still experimenting and learning.

I might mention that we are Certified Organic.

First, let's ask some questions. What is nutritious food? Is it important? If conventional farming grows higher yielding and better looking crops, why would one want to farm organically? But then again, if the crop is bigger and better looking, does it follow that it is more nutritious?

A number of people have suggested that I should write down some of the things I have learnt over the last five decades. So, here goes:

### Going Organic

First, I should caution any farmer who desires to turn from conventional to organic farming, there is a time gap until the soil biology builds up and therefore it is likely that production will initially fall away, consequently there will be a risk of a down-turn in income.

Some agronomists have suggested that the Government should subsidise those farmers turning to organics, while they battle through the interim. But this is not the case yet!

### It Starts with the Soil

If it helps, here is what we do. I'm sure there are other ways that will work equally well or better. We take soil samples and send them to be analysed for both mineral deficiencies and the soil biology/activity. The results vary from area to area but are fairly consistent on farms all around this district. In our case we were advised that we had serious deficiencies in the following and that we needed to apply, at the rate (suitably advised for the farm) of 110 kg per acre, a mixture of:

| | |
|---|---|
| 300 kg | of reactive phosphate rock or RPR |
| 200 kg | of lime sulphate, for the sulphur |
| 300 kg | of dried blood, for nitrogen and to stimulate the biology |
| 100 kg | of Magnesite, for magnesium |
| 100 kg | of Biohumate, for the carbon |

Plus trace elements of:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mo | or molybdenum |
| Bo | or boron |
| Fe | or iron |
| Cu | or copper |
| Zn | or zinc |

We used to purchase this mixture from Emfert, Portland, Victoria and we applied it prior to sowing our cereal crops. We were extremely pleased with the response but noticed that the best results were achieved three to four years later in our pastures because it took that time for the soil biology to work on these deficient minerals.

Emfert is no longer supplying this fertilizer to NSW and Victoria but a similar mixture can be bought from; BIOAG, of Narrandera, or Elders, Wagga. I should mention that one can put too much fertilizer on in one go and thus cause a temporary, detrimental effect on the soil ecology.

The last three years we have switched to using certified organic, composted cow manure, because it is a little richer in minerals per dollar or per acre than the Emfert mixture and is about 50 times richer in carbon. We all know there is something of a furore about carbon in the air but there is also a serious deficiency of it in our soils.

It is my belief that the best possible fertilizer for growing a crop is a green manure crop. I do not believe it is a good idea to plough up the ground and sow a crop of oats, or similar, but rather I prefer to encourage the growth of grasses, graze it and then

plough in the mixture of grass, plus urine and dung from the grazing animals.

## Organic Weed Control

If one doesn't use 'weedicides', what then can one do to control the weeds? First, let me explain that there are two sorts of weeds.

(1) Grasses are called weeds by farmers when they want to grow a crop because they compete with the crop. Our approach, given the necessary rain, is to plough the ground in September thus killing these good grasses before they set seed. We then cultivate during the summer and early autumn to kill both grasses and genuine weeds and to prepare a nice, fine, compact seed bed.

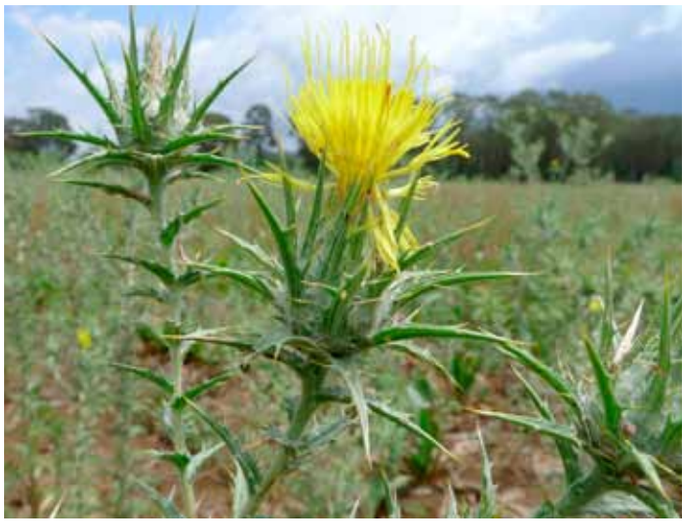
(2) The other type consists of genuine weeds like Cape weed, Skeleton weed, Patterson's Curse, Saffron Thistle, Bathurst Burr and Spiney Emex or Cat's Eye.

Skeleton Weed and Saffron Thistle are low nitrogen type weeds and will dramatically diminish once the nitrogen deficiency is corrected. We introduced subterranean clover and Lucerne in order to "fix" nitrogen.

Cape Weed is a low calcium weed and is controlled by top dressing with lime. I have read that, given enough time, the Cape Weed will ameliorate the calcium deficiency but I believe it is wiser and more economical in the long term to correct the calcium deficiency by top dressing with lime.

Patterson Curse is a magnesium deficient weed and so we top dress it with Dolomite.

I don't know what to do about Spiney Emex but I have been advised that it can't stand competition from other grasses and especially from subterranean clover.



Diligent work with a hoe seems to be the only way to control Bathurst Burr.

## Stock Health

We now know that nutrients are essential for the good health in humans. In like manner good nutrition is essential for good health in grasses and stock. Disease in our sheep and cattle is no longer a problem. Decades ago, when it was customary to dip the sheep for lice every year as a preventive measure, we had a lot of cancer, especially on the ears and face. Today we do not dip unless the sheep come in contact with lousy sheep and become infected. Then we use a non-poisonous dip called, "Flockmaster".

We do not drench the sheep for worms and have little or no trouble. But we consider it important to rotate the sheep through the paddocks in order to break the worm cycle.

We used to run pure merinos and selected for health and hardiness rather than for heavier wool cutters. So the need to mules was avoided. Any sheep that showed a predisposition to becoming fly struck we culled. They did not cut as much wool as previously but their lambing percentages shot way up and so we made up the economic difference with more sale numbers and a better price for sheep that had a better conformation. I could not see organic wool commanding as big a premium as organic meat. The wool is scoured, therefore poisons would not be of much concern. But poison in one's food is another matter! And so about a decade ago we switched from merinos to a Suffolk-Dorper cross. Both these breeds are famous for their meat qualities and currently I cannot keep up with the demand for my organic lambs, despite charging about 60% above conventional prices.

Suffolk sheep are a very big framed breed but give birth to little lambs so there are minimal lambing problems. But these lambs grow out quickly. The bigger the lamb at slaughter time the better the

percentage of meat to bone and so there is less waste. The Dorper is a smaller breed but they shed the little wool they do grow and so there is next to no fly strike, and no shearing or crutching costs. Perhaps the other point I should make is that because the grass the stock are eating is more nutritious they are naturally healthier. Weeds can make stock sick and even kill. Cape weed kills sheep and cattle with bloat and pulpy kidney and can make sheep scour and so they become fly-struck.

## Should young meat animals be castrated?

Years ago I used to act as a steward on the fat lamb section at the Ardlethan Agricultural Show and it bugged my male chauvinistic ego that it was always, without fail, a pen of three ewe lambs that took out the first prize each year for the best pen of fat lambs. Never a pen of wether lambs! So I pondered the question of castration.

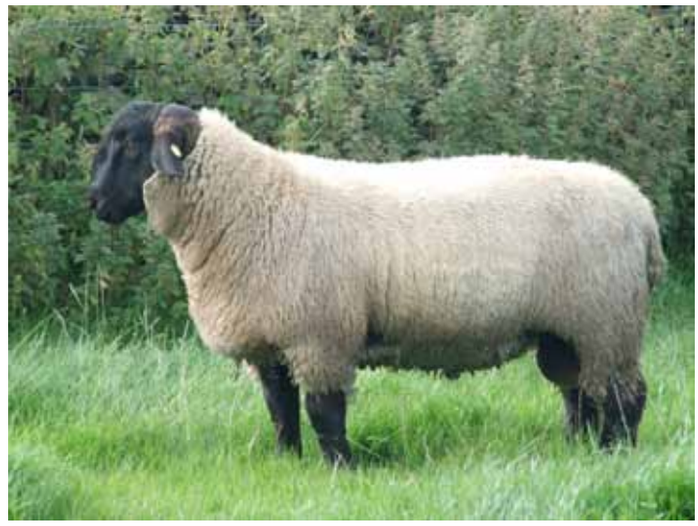
Castrating lambs or bull calves (without rings) is tedious, messy, cruel, and it gives the animal a major set-back. So we stopped castrating - despite the prejudice in the meat trade against entire animals. Today that prejudice is disappearing, mainly because of research work, carried out in Europe and also carried out by Professor Johnson and Professor Yeates at the New England University.

They found that at twelve months old, bull calves and ram lambs have 18 - 20% more meat and 18 - 20% less fat than their twin castrates. And, of course our scientists and doctors are telling us that we are dying before our time because we are eating too much fat.

Bull calves and ram lambs are more efficient at turning grass into meat (or wool) than their twin castrates or twin sisters. Their stomachs are more efficient than the female except when she is pregnant, at which time her blood is rich with the female sex hormone, oestrogen.

To my way of thinking, it's crazy to cut off the natural and then turn around and inject the artificial hormones! Hormones are naturally produced and used by animals as required. I am concerned that by injecting castrated animals with hormones as we see fit, and not as nature requires, residues may be left in the meat, or milk, that were not required by the animal. These residues are then consumed by the consumer when eaten.

As we are aware, imbalances in hormones can result in behavioural as well as physiological changes with humans. By leaving an animal entire, the animals natural biology is permitted to produce no more and no less than the ideal amount of hormones, the animal is saved of a cruel event and the end product



is a healthier, happier, better tasting product, and consequently, a healthier, happier consumer.

Between ten and fifteen months of age bull calves and ram lambs make tremendous growth. They eat 1% more than their twin castrates but their daily weight gain is 21% greater. Should anyone consider not castrating, then perhaps I should warn that a greater level of management is required. Half- grown heifers and their mothers need to be segregated so that the half grown bull calves won't get the heifers into calf. If this happens then one can be pretty sure that both the young heifer and its calf will die because the heifer simply isn't big enough to give birth. To a lesser degree the same thing can be said for sheep.

# What *is* CERTIFIED ORGANIC

***Many products claim to be natural, organic, or additive and pesticide free. What does it all really mean?***

**The only way to be 100% sure that products are organic, is to look for *Certified Organic* by an approved certifier like NCO.**

**Certified Organic** products are independently audited and verified by a third party certifier, and comply with relevant organic standards

**Certified Organic** producers undergo a conversion process to ensure that non-organic, industrialised farming methods and inputs are phased out

**Certified Organic** operations are managed in compliance with the standards on an ongoing basis

**Certified Organic** products *do not* contain GMOs, hormonal growth promotants, synthetic additives, chemical herbicides, fungicides or insecticides or synthetic fertilisers

**Certified Organic** production considers social justice, animal welfare, biodiversity and the revegetation of land for long-term sustainability

**Certified Organic** products carry a certification logo and number to demonstrate organic integrity

NASAA CERTIFIED ORGANIC

**1234P**

Products carrying the NASAA label are confusion free

Know where your food comes from - **ALWAYS READ THE LABEL CAREFULLY**

***Brought to you by NASAA in the interest of transparency, integrity and truth in labelling***

**Australia's FIRST Organic Organisation**

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