

## Welcome to the second edition of the revitalised Organic Insights.

Our aim is to provide information relevant to NASAA, NCO, organic certification and the organic industry at large. We will feature different topics per edition both on national and international issues and we invite suggestions for improvement and ideas for content. This edition introduces a new staff member to NASAA, a new board member to NCO, notification of upcoming events and reviews of events attended as well as providing updates on NASAA Standard and the National Organic Standard. We also include articles of interest and we hope you enjoy the read!

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## NASAA AGM

The AGM will be held in Adelaide along side the OFA's TRUST ORGANIC and the OFA AGM on the Wednesday the 14th of October between 5 & 6pm. The venue is yet to be confirmed. Details will be provided.

## OFA AGM

The OFA AGM will be held in Adelaide at 5:30pm Friday 16th October 2009, University of Adelaide, Waite Campus.

## NASAA welcomes David Roper as a new NCO director.

Six months after the implementation of the new corporate plan, the NASAA Certified Organic (NCO) certification body will enjoy the board services of the highly regarded South Australian IT executive, Mr David Roper.



*New NCO Director - David Roper*

The organic certification body is the most recognised and accredited in Australia, now providing organic farmers with certification services that permit entry to almost all countries and markets in the world. "With the growing complexity and sophistication of the world of organic trade and regulations, David, brings expertise in strategic information technology and planning and promises to augment and grow NCO's existing IT business platform" said Rod May, Chairman of NASAA.

Mr Roper, managing partner of CIO Partners, has spent many years working in the not-for-profit and business world as a director and executive in the Adelaide region and will begin his tenure Immediately.

## **NASAA welcomes David Silkstone**

as its new Company Secretary and Communications officer. David comes from project management and publicity co-ordination within the wine industry and has worked with a wide range of organisations both here and in the UK. He can be contacted on the NASAA phone number and directly on email ([companysecretary@nasaa.com.au](mailto:companysecretary@nasaa.com.au))



*Company Secretary & Promotions Officer - David Silkstone*

## **NEW National standards and new logo**

In an address to the organic expo in Melbourne late last month, NASAA chair Rod May urged immediate release of the new Australian Organic Standards called for by the OFA and recently completed by Standards Australia. He said that organic certification had become more diverse and unpredictable in recent years than it was almost twenty years ago when the Australian National Standards were used by all.

“The deterioration in a single cohesive and universal standard has seen growing differentiation in the marketplace often confused by labels that fail to identify deviations for common practices” he said, referring to labelling of poultry products in particular.

“There is no doubt in our continuing support for the OFA and the new Australian Standards that it instigated two years ago. Neither is there any doubt in our support for a new national logo used with any private certification labels such as our own” he said.

This is not a surprising development since NASAA has heard from consumers and marketers and producers for many years that one universal “organic identifier” was critical. Whilst the NASAA certified organic logo is the most recognised in the market, there are still large sectors of the public without a coherent understanding of the differences in logos and NASAA has long understood this.

“We don’t see any material on-ground changes necessary under the new Australian Standards” said the NASAA chair, “but we do anticipate an uptake and adoption by various agencies that would put some teeth into conformity. Nor do we see a single logo impinging on our own well respected logo. We use a variety of logos for different markets, and this one would be designed for an Australian market in particular” he added.



*Rod May - NASAA Chair*



*Tim Marshall - OFA Deputy Chair*



*Andre Leu - OFA Chair*

## Standards changes

### Water use

For those who have been observing the national debates surrounding the use of recycled water in agriculture, it should be brought to the attention of organic operators that, as of last year, some significant changes took place in the standards relating to recycled water.

The issue has been a contentious one for some time, and as water for irrigation becomes more scarce, the National standards committee of the Organic Industry Consultative Committee (OIECC) resolved that organic operators should be able to use certain recycled waters. The change applies to water that is approved for unrestricted use in conventional agriculture. Waters in this category can now be used, on a green manure crop or in ways that preclude the direct contact of that water with edible portions of the crop.

As many will be aware, NASAA made changes to its standards that reflect this position and note that this position has been included within the new Australian Standards.

Therefore, operators who have access to high quality recycled water that can be used without restriction for any conventional agricultural purpose, can now irrigate organic crops, usually via trickle or some sub surface method. So for tree crops, vines and many vegetable species, operators can now enjoy use of water that was previously prohibited. For details and an explanation of which system would qualify, please call NCO on 0883708455.

### Wine making and organic yeast nutrients

There has been a level of ambiguity that has surrounded the issue of wine making. Especially the use of ammonium phosphate as a nutrient for yeast. This product is a little like copper and sulphur in that it is not organic in its own right and in fact is a synthesised product. We have heard in a previous issue of Insights some of the details of alternatives to this yeast improver and how they may satisfy standards in future. The new, yet to be released



Australian Standards makes provision for ammonium phosphate for a period of three years to permit development of alternatives. Operators should note, *the NASAA Standard will allow ammonium phosphate for use in wine making for a period of two years.* Alternatives should be studied and trialed in anticipation of a time when it will no longer be allowed. A review will be made at the end of the two year period.

## Trust Organic

A Fortnight of Awareness featuring Organic Standards and Climate Change  
Friday October 02 to Sunday October 18, 2009.

Trust Organic has two main aims.

- It will be used as an awareness campaign to help consumers identify genuine organic products.
- It will also be used to launch the OFA's Australian Government climate change project that will see workshops in every state and territory from 2009 to 2011.

There will be media launches in every state and territory as well as a wide range of media and other events to promote Trust Organic.

The fortnight will generate a lot of media on certified organic products and the benefits of organic farming systems in mitigating climate change.

Trust Organic will be finished with a celebration.

There will be an OFA conference and Climate Change Workshop with particular interest in providing the latest scientific research suited for organic growing, composts and the effect on climate change.

- OFA Climate Change Workshop Oct 14th
- OFA and Compost Conference Oct 15-16th
- Conference Dinner Thursday Oct 15th
- Conference Field trip Saturday Oct 17th

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## Chinese Organic market taking shape

Recent exposure of the NASAA brand in the growing organic market in China has met with strong approval. In meetings between NASAA and organic certification groups in China held last month, collaboration between NASAA and those organisations is seen as the way to enhance Australia's organic export business with China.

“The current marketplace is characterised by imported organic commodities and local fresh produce, leaving good opportunities for processed livestock and other products from Australian sources” said Rod May, NASAA chairman.

There are currently relatively complex requirements for organic goods imported into China, and NASAA is working in collaboration with a number of Chinese agencies to ensure a smooth and rapid entry of NASAA certified products into the Chinese market.

There is a well developed IFOAM presence in China with the OFDC having been accredited for many years, and now OFCC have indicated that they too will be joining the IFOAM accredited scheme.

“This is a most welcome move in our opinion,” said Mr May, whose involvement in the IFOAM accreditation of NASAA goes back over 10 years. “We have a firm belief in the strength and integrity of the IFOAM system of accreditation, and believe that there is a level playing field established in terms of standards and operating systems for certifiers anywhere in the world.”

“With the two most influential certifiers in China under the IFOAM umbrella, our confidence in their products and systems can be ensured” he said.

The Biofach recently held in China featured predominantly local product displays, but it was clear from the product range from overseas that despite the complexity of market entry, organic imports were flourishing.



## Genethics Network sponsorship

NASAA has once again financially supported the Genethics Network in the organisation's ongoing efforts to promote awareness and understanding of the many important issues on the GM front.



## Free job ads for NASAA members

*EthicalJobs.com.au* is a new website which promotes “work for a better world” - we connect people looking for an ethical job or career with employers who see their organisations as contributing to a more just, more sustainable or more organic world.

If you're looking for a great job, please visit us at [www.EthicalJobs.com.au](http://www.EthicalJobs.com.au) and subscribe to our free weekly e-newsletter, access a how-to guide for finding an ethical job, and check out our Ethical Jobs Blog.

We're also really keen to work with organisations around Australia that contribute to a more organic and sustainable world, and help them find employees who are truly committed to their values and organisations.

So as a special offer to NASAA member organisations, we're offering to post any and all of your job ads free until the 1st of December! This includes full-time, part-time, casual, intern and volunteering opportunities!

Please call us on (03) 9419 7322 or email us at [info@ethicaljobs.com.au](mailto:info@ethicaljobs.com.au) if you'd like us to post some job ads for you.

## Benefits of Organic Farming are under attack

The enormous world wide growth of organic farming through a process of osmosis is not clearly explained by the classic models of agricultural development and food security. It is now clearly experiencing pressures from the models of vertically and horizontally integrated production systems with reliance on biotechnology and fossil fuel use.

The recent study by the London school of tropical medicine which focuses on and attempts to dismantle one of the perceived and probably actual expectation of consumers, ie that the nutritional value is greater, is an example of a carefully constructed and targeted campaign.

With a benefit paradigm so narrowly defined, it is necessary to restate the integrated benefits of organic farming, and these are well known to those of us in the sector, along with a couple of layers of consumers with more sophisticated understanding of the role of organic agriculture in the inevitable process of energy descent and localisation.

We should begin to better recognise the dimensions of the changes we will need to realise in agriculture in coming decades. As a society we should be better informed of the limits to growth of the existing models of agriculture which are becoming more dependent on external energetic, corporate and political factors.

Our role within organic farming should be to show and tell, but it should go beyond this to articulate, lobby and ultimately demand that organic farming is accepted by the community and policy makers as a structured, legitimate and integrated land use and food security strategy. The economic and ecological models of organic farming performance need to be better studied and measured to achieve this. Something of a model akin to the James Lovelock inspired Systems Dynamics would be a useful start for us in Australia.

The paradigms of benefit need to be better understood, promoted and exploited. They will be inter-related, complex and dynamic. They will also belong in the context of the future, where the models

of agriculture and food security that we have seen developed in the past 50 years will face collapse.

Our OFA is the best chance that we have had to press these and related agenda items for the past 20 years and we urge them to further cultivate the broad agendas and call for more integrated research and articulation of that which we already know.

## Organic Prepared Foods

The BBC daily podcast, 'Farming Today' which serves a broad range of agricultural perspective in the UK, spent an intriguing 20 minutes discussing the factors relating to pre-prepared foods including the role of organic farmers in the same. The presenter was told by numerous observers and commentators that the market lay waiting for some innovation from the organic producer. The typical issues of local content are important for many UK consumers, but it would appear that the profits are being made at the expense of cheap inputs of often unknown origin (on the label) and that the trend to pre-made foods is not going away. It was reported that elderly people in particular, many of whom cannot stand for long periods of food preparation, are a strong market sector along with newlyweds! We see some fantastic pre-prepared food in the market and many at farmers markets but perhaps



the Australian market is looking for a new and nutritious (low salt, sugar, fat and fillers with only the best meats and other ingredients) range of organic pre-prepared foods? Why not in the wholesale sector such as meals on wheels? Our elderly need the best, and organic pre-prepared foods would be just that!

## How to certify, recertify or extend certification

For information on how to become certified, please contact the NASAA office or our website and obtain a copy of the free Into Organics booklet. If you are already certified and would like to add additional land, facilities or new products, please contact the office regarding your circumstances for advice on how to proceed. Such changes must be notified in advance and this should give you plenty of lead time to ensure that any paperwork or site checks needed are done on time. This includes adding land, extra glasshouses, additional products or new production sites, storages etc. The addition of a new leaf vegetable crop to a range of vegetable crops already certified is unlikely to require a new inspection unless grown on new land. Addition of a totally different crop such as vines to a vegetable operation will require inspection. For processors, addition of a new product will require the recipe and source of raw materials to be assessed. Inspection will not be necessary unless produced in a new facility or production type quite different to that already certified. A new storage silo on land already certified can just be notified with the annual Organic Plan Update. If you are not certain, please contact our friendly Certification Staff. Significant change is not effective until approved by NASAA Certified Organic and a revised certificate issued.

## Sale of Certified Operations

When an operation is put up for sale, the organic status is in most cases a selling advantage, although the actual certification cannot be transferred to the new owner. New owners must make an application and be assessed in their own right, but with the co-operation of the former owner, the previous history will be considered in the new application review. There is no guarantee that the former status will be attained by the new owner – this depends on the assessment of organic management capacity of the new owner/managers. Often the former owner will agree to mentor the new owners in organic requirements and this is usually a positive input to the certification decision.

## Transfer to NASAA Certified Organic from another certifier

NASAA Certified Organic will work with you personally to ensure as seamless a transition as possible. Each case must be assessed on its own merits. Please contact the office if you would like more information.

NCO Office: 08 8370 8455

## Strong enquiry at NASAA pavilion in Melbourne expo

The depth of enquiry from the organic trade and the general public at the recent Melbourne organic expo allowed NASAA personnel little time away from the NASAA pavilion to attend the expo speakers forum and other associated meetings.



*NASAA pavilion*

Good news but fortunately a tag team also allowed us all to hear a little from the excellent arrangement of speakers on all matters related to organic.

Enquiry came from many already in the organic marketplace and as certified producers, the strong message drawing attention to customer service and consistency was heard from a wide range of enquirers. Interest in costs and charges and competitive certification was forthcoming from many new enquirers and we were able to offer some very real and up-to-date info on costs, documents, standards,

applications and a complete operator list with products on our memory stick handouts which were appreciated by all.

The new cohort of entrants into the organic certification arena includes more value adding and innovative sectors including the burgeoning home delivery sector.



*Miss Organic, new Melbourne based veg box service*

However, grain, livestock, horticulture and processing still formed the mainstay of the interest.



*NASAA operator: Stoney Creek Oils*



*NASAA operator: Organic Times*

Good support from many certified operators at the NASAA pavilion added cards and brochures which were dispatched in their entirety during the three day event at the royal exhibition buildings in Melbourne.



*Promotional material at the NASAA pavilion*

NASAA wishes to thank our certified operators who shared the stand with us at the Melbourne Organic Expo 09. Promotional material from Natocare, Munns, Titi Eco Farm and others saw excellent exposure to the thousands of people who visited the expo.

To share the stand with NASAA at future events contact NCO.

## **Congratulations to Errol Seymour** of Drovers Rest Organic Berry Farm.

Errol's NASAA certified product KidSnak, a pureed blend of apple and strawberries was recognised in two categories in the 2009 Australasian Food Challenge Awards, winning the Snackfood category ahead of products submitted by Woolworths and John West.

## PGEP

NASAA director and NCO inspector, Kathe Purvis, presented NASAA's services and excellent track record in the Pacific region to the The Pacific Growers Export Partnership (PGEP) alongside other major certification bodies. This unusual forum in which certification bodies presented alongside each other offered PGEP a concise and comparable run down of the services on offer. "Purvis' presentation placed NASAA ahead of the pack in the Pacific region" said Oliver Holmgren, NASAA director.



*Kathe Purvis  
NASAA director & NCO inspector*

NASAA also met with buyers and traders in addition to trade delegations. In these cases the information available on growers and their products were made available. It does illustrate how important it is for operators to have up to date products lists when they are registered.

## BCOZ: NASAA Certified dining

NASAA directors travelled down the food web last month and found themselves within the popular and quite exclusive NASAA certified "BCOZ" restaurant in Hawthorn owned and operated by Rod Barbey.



Rod May(left) & Rodney Barbey(right)

All commented on how much the food resembled the raw freshness of back on the farm, even if its presentation bore all the hallmarks of excellence. Rod May and Barbey both discussed their elderly fathers roles in their prospective businesses and compared a few notes from each end of the food web. Both agreed that the assurances given to consumers of restaurant meals that their food choice is organic is one that is growing, and judging from Rod Barbeys experience on a Saturday night, there is no shortage of those discerning consumers.

## Malaysian organic farmer suffers from false test results

One of NASAA's early certified organic vegetable farmers on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, Mr Loh Fook was recently subjected to the "Agri Stick" test. A test process developed and sold by the Japanese company AR Brown Co Ltd.

The tests, allegedly taken from a sample of his product acquired in the retail marketplace, tested positive for a trace of prohibited pesticide. Loh was incensed by this result and it's reporting in the press, and with NASAA advice proceeded to have independent tests carried out on products collected directly from his farm and under the supervision of one of Malaysia's organic bodies.

These test results which NASAA has seen, demonstrate no detectable quantities of any of the alleged contaminants, proving that only a properly conducted test can be relied upon for an objective assessment. Whilst the manufacturers of the Agri-Stick are said to hold no definitive claims as to the ultimate accuracy of the device, the public and press are quick to pick up on any contaminated food claims. This is a good thing that such scrutiny from the public is forthcoming and NASAA invites the media to report any contamination or substitution, which can easily lay at the basis for misleading results.

However, when uncorroborated results are put to press without objective assessment the consumers and farmers are owed an equally public apology when the results are shown to be wrong as they were in this case.

## How can organic agriculture play a broader role in land use, settlement patterns and economic activity?

With much focus on the marketplace, the supply chain and regulatory requirements, be they organic certification or other, the organic sector displays all the characteristics of an industry and behaves in a way that responds to advertising, consumer perceptions and demands, investment, management, traceability, labelling and ultimately agronomy, husbandry and stewardship.

The studies carried out have tried to grapple with these issues and some have succeeded in providing useful analyses of the market opportunities and the financial rewards of this farming technique.

Frequently, however, the grass roots operations in the local communities where organic farming takes place are lost in this analysis. One clear and often obvious off-shoot is the supply of local produce, and frequently local employment opportunities. Further, however, where the organic farming community is more heavily represented, the existence of a cohort of organic producers can fuel real consumer choice and importantly, a perception of reconnection between the community and the farmers who sell at local markets, supply local families and service local restaurants.

This reconnection is one that promises to change the food chain, as the major retailers call it, to something more of a food web. A more fitting description of a process that has interdependence as in nature, than a single tunnel for a single commodity. That local or regional food web can be as large or small as necessary but it represents an economic structure that supports a pattern of settlement that reflects ecological rather than industrial values.

Elements of this reconnection can be seen in parts of rural Australia, where there is great scepticism about growth and consumerism, the role of agri-business in financial viability and of governments leadership in sustainability. In many cases those disenfranchised by shifting patterns of imports and competitiveness are creating their own alternatives.

The emergence of organic farming as a method of maintaining land in agricultural use, of providing diversity and mix to nature and the local market, is one that should be welcomed by policy makers and planners. With the capacity to demonstrate much greater resilience, or in other words, more capable of withstanding fluctuations in external factors such as weather, energy, fertiliser prices etc, organic farming can become and be maintained as a mainstay of a region. Food security, an issue that no one can ignore in a world where food and drink are dependent on large energy inputs is one that can be factored into the support for Land Management Units being provided for to encourage and develop organic production.

Local Government has an important role to play in recognising and supporting certified organic farming as a model of land use. It can gain enormously from the clean soil and water, the increased retention of nature and biodiversity, and the capacity to operate most organic farms well within the zone that might be precluded on the edge of residential areas. U-pick, shed sales, local work, on-selling,



*Mixed organic urban agriculture*

preparing and using these products in the local community quickly becomes an expected norm after a period.

NASAA supports the recognition of certified organic farming as a distinctly different land use from conventional farming and its treatment as such for purposes of planning and rating.

# Agriculture Outlook

Australia 2009

24 – 25 November 2009, Sofitel Wentworth, Sydney, Australia



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