

Media Release: Biological Farmers of Australia, 25 February 2011

Buyer Beware: Insist on ‘certified’ when buying organic

“Only buy ‘certified organic’” is the key lesson that can be gleaned from Today Tonight’s food scandal story this week according to peak organic body Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA).

BFA Director Dr Andrew Monk welcomes the findings, calling on consumers to always demand certified organic from retailers, market stalls or outlets to be sure of the integrity of organic claims.

“If produce does not display a certification logo, your retailer should be able to produce a certificate which provides you with details of the certifier and producer. This is a standard requirement of organic retailers,” said Dr Monk.

The BFA Group, as a not for profit member owned organisation, is involved on a daily basis in protecting the integrity of the organic marketplace. BFA owns and maintains the Australian Certified Organic Standard, which is the backbone behind the integrity of certified organic produce available in the Australian marketplace.

“BFA’s subsidiary company is Australian Certified Organic, recognised for the distinguishable ‘Bud’ logo that has been adopted nationally by Australia’s major brands and retailers.

“The ‘Bud’ program audits, tests and reviews the majority of Australian facilities and products claiming organic status and last year won the CHOICE Award for Best Food Endorsement Program. This award is an endorsement of the transparency and integrity of organic certification programs in Australia.

“Organic logos like the ‘Bud’ are crucial for consumers to be assured that they are getting what they are paying for, and they are protected under existing Laws in Australia when they do so,” said Dr Monk.

A consumer research study commissioned by BFA shows that consumers are still learning the difference between ‘organic’ and ‘certified organic’.

“The difference is that ‘certified organic’ provides third-party inspections all the way from the organic farm through to processing, packaging and retail. Verifiable audit trails assure consumers that food and other goods are produced without use of synthetic chemicals, GMOs and food additives, and with a focus on soil health, animal welfare and best environmental practices, as required by the Australian Certified Organic Standard (freely available via www.bfa.com.au).

“Every working hour on average sees an organic audit occurring on a certified organic facility somewhere in the country, be that a farm, a processor, a retailer. Soils and end food products are also tested – both at farm level through the entire production chain to retail. To their credit the larger retailers also co-operate quite actively with BFA Group in their own internal testing programs, while insisting that all products sold in their stores are certified organic and clearly labeled as such.



The BFA has been in formal communication with Channel Seven, welcoming scrutiny of non-certified organic claims and Channel Seven are investigating the matter further, as is the BFA Group.

“The simple message is that if it is not certified and not bearing marks such as the ‘Bud’ and clear reference to certification, consumers should steer well clear of such products,” said Dr Monk.

ENDS

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Media contacts:

Madeline Cooper

Public Relations Officer

Ph: 07 3350 5716 ext 225

Andrew Monk

BFA Director

0429 960 044

