

## Media Release: Biological Farmers of Australia, 18 April 2011

Organic vs conventional agriculture: 20 year trial reveals major benefits of organic production

In America's longest running trials comparing organic farming methods against conventional, the results are in; organic agriculture methods are the most environmentally sustainable and resilient. Organic production was found to have less net carbon emissions, was more water saving, and at least as financially profitable for farmers as conventional farming methods – in many cases more so.

In 1981, the Farming Systems Trial (FST) was founded by the Rodale Institute. The research focused on corn and soybean crops and looked at three core farming systems: a manure-based organic system, a legume-based organic system, and a synthetic inputs-based conventional system.

The results of its comparison findings showed:

- Organic systems produced 31% higher corn yields than the conventional system during moderate droughts;
- Weed competition in organic production methods were tolerated better than in conventional farming methods;
- Carbon sequestration is highest in manure-based organic production, followed by legume-based organic production;
- Groundwater appears to increase in organic systems with 15-20% higher volume of percolating water and reduced runoff;
- Herbicides were detected in the conventional system, with atrazine levels reaching a level known to produce deformities in frogs;
- Energy use in the conventional system was higher than in the organic systems;
- Initial costs to set up organic systems were 10% higher than conventional, but organic premiums ranged from 65-140%.

Dr Andrew Monk, BFA Director, says the FST has shown what organic growers have been claiming for many years now;

“Organic systems can have a significant benefit to producers, particularly in times of climate extremes, and are therefore going to be important for increasing the resilience of our agricultural sector in the coming years,” Dr Monk said.

“This long-term study disproves the myth that organic cannot yield more than conventional systems – as yields are always one dimensional. With an increasing need for resilience in the face of climate realities, demand on our water resources increasing by the day, and biodiversity being stretched and threatened by current agricultural systems, there has never been a better or more important time for farmers to consider organic and biological agricultural methods, for their own health and the health of the earth.”

End.



For a full report, visit [www.rodaleinstitute.org/fst](http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/fst).

To read the BFA's response to the CPRS green paper, visit  
<http://www.bfa.com.au/AbouttheBFA/BFAPositionStatements.aspx>

**Media contacts:**

Dr Andrew Monk  
Standards Convenor & Director  
Biological Farmers of Australia  
Ph: 0429 960 044

Alison J Beaty  
Media Officer  
Biological Farmers of Australia  
Ph: 07 3350 5716 (ext 222)  
[alison.beaty@bfa.com.au](mailto:alison.beaty@bfa.com.au)

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