

Australia's first no oxygen mill un-aired in Queensland

ORGANIC INDUSTRY stakeholders are proving they can think ahead when it comes to incorporating cutting-edge food technology innovations into their systems.

Certified organic miller, Z-Mills, is just weeks away from the launch of Australia's first no-oxygen, zero light and low-heat mill.

And according to Arthur Coert, Managing Director of Alligator (the Queensland-based company responsible for the mill's design), the system has the potential to "revolutionise the niche markets of high-quality and organic food processing", creating a flour product better for both human and environmental health.

The mill requires no water to operate and uses up to thirty percent less energy than its high-heat counterparts.

Mr. Coert says its 'cool milling' process - which concentrates on production of a wholemeal wheat product in a low heat environment (roughly 4 degrees celcius) - does not result in high percentage nutrient losses which can occur in popular high heat milling systems, and retains important nutrients present in the original grain kernel, including vitamins, phytochemicals, enzymes, amino acids, minerals and essential oils.

"Under 'cool milling' the food remains alive and the whole material, wholesome - it creates a truly premium health product", he says.

Thomas Cunliffe, CEO of Z-Mills, says non-loss of grain roughage and fibre in the Alligator system could substantially increase the nutritional value of processed grain product staples like flour, eliminating the need for further synthetic nutrient fortification.



He says many of the Alligator mill's enhanced efficiencies come from the fact it operates with just one moving piece, producing a fine powder from grains that spend on average, one third of a second in the milling chamber.

"A large blade, similar to a lawnmower blade, spins the grain through the air at around 400 metres per second. Processing occurs as grain impacts with grain - effectively the grain mills itself", he says.

Mr. Coert says the technique will allow the processing of 'difficult' ingredients like brown rice, wheat bran and organic sugar as well as sticky, oily or fibrous materials which are not currently milled in conventional systems, without the problem of rancidity.

"Rancidity occurs when flour is exposed

to air - and the Alligator processing system is contained in one small sealed tower in an oxygen free, or nitrogen, processing environment".

Mr. Cunliffe says the shelf life of no-oxygen milled product could be as long as two years.

"When a consumer opens a packet of flour processed by Z Mills in an Alligator mill, it's the first time that the grain's been exposed to atmospheric conditions. Until that point there are few, if any enzymes activated".

He says the process could have significant implications for organic food manufacturers and processors seeking to develop more functional processed food lines.

For further information visit the website www.zmills.com.au.

ACO products outshine on innovation

FIVE SMALL to medium Australian Certified Organic (ACO) businesses have been recognised for their innovation and product quality on a large-scale national platform as three award winners and two finalists in this year's Food Challenge Awards.

Up against the likes of Nestle, Kraft and Heinz, the ACO certified companies propelled organic to the forefront of a number of categories, with certified organic products making up half the offerings from a total of ten final competitors.

High-convenience, health, nutrition, premium quality ingredients, and an insatiable appetite for innovation were trends evident among winners.

New Zealand based Pitango took the health and wellness category out with their 'Pitango Organic and Carbon Neutral Risotto Range and Fresh Curry Meals'.

The company's mission to deliver "high-quality, inspirational and nutritious food" has seen Pitango capture 38.5% of the fresh soup market in New Zealand, and - always with an eye on innovation - this year they became the world's first fresh meal manufacturer to become certified carbon neutral through carboNZero™.

Notable organic finalists in the same category included Ecofarms (Absolute Organic Chips), Organic Bubs (ready-to-serve children's meals) and Ladybird Organics (Wild Rocket, Baby

Spinach and Salad Mix), with Ozganics Certified Organic Balsamic and Caesar Dressings being awarded second place.

Ozganic's CEO Anni Brownjohn says the award is further evidence of the ingenuity driving organic product development.

"By focusing on high quality and nutrition using organic ingredients we naturally end up with innovative products that blend chemical free with so much more - gluten-free, vegan, allergy safe, and so on," said Ms. Brownjohn.

Further staking the organic industry's strong association with parents' concern for the wellbeing of their children, Organic Bubs range of pre-prepared children's meals was awarded second place in the much hyped 'Ready Meals' category, ahead of Bird's Eye, I&J and Cargrill.

Leisa Dailly, Director, says their products - meals for children from six months to six years - have struck a chord with a unique target market.

"We don't add preservatives, additives or sugars. Consequently parents know they can trust the brand. What we were consistently hearing from our market was that they needed something easy that wouldn't compromise on nutrition."

BFA sends a big congratulations to all Food Challenge Award participants.