

## Organic property up for grabs – the value of staying certified

WHEN IT COMES TO REAL ESTATE, ORGANIC is a relatively new concept – but a recent surge of organic properties up for sale has highlighted the importance of keeping land certified when it's passed on.

Reports from owners with properties up for sale have revealed that the organic market opportunity is being noticed by investors from outside the industry who are interested in entering into new and upcoming markets.

Marco Bobbert, from Wodonga Park biodynamic macadamia plantation in Mt Binga, South East Queensland, says the decision to sell (as the property's owner reaches retirement) has returned interest from a diverse range of buyers.

"Around half organic and half non-organic", he says.

"The growth in export markets for Australian biodynamic macadamia and avocado oils during the past few years has been phenomenal.

"People are recognising the value of niche markets, and there is inherent business opportunity in arranging a sale which enables the organic status of the property to be retained."

He says buyers willing to keep certification alive would also be preferred for personal reasons.

"We don't want to see 22 years of work undone!" he says.

Joe Hughes who has managed his cattle business Bundaleer Pastoral organically since 1999 (the property has been certified organic since 2004) says certified organic land is starting to attract interest. "Investors looking to put dollars into agriculture are going to look at emerging and

developing markets, with a high growth rate – and that's organic."

He says initial interest from buyers in his large-scale organic lamb aggregation operations and two certified properties (Belarabon Station and Koonaburra Station) between Cobar and Ivanhoe (Western NSW) has come mainly from conventional operators interested in diversifying to sustainable production; as well as from investors with no agricultural background.

"Buying into an established business in a premium market does come with many advantages – not least because operating systems are already in place," he says.

Sue Groat, from organic farming operation Dayspring near Beaudesert, Queensland, says she thinks it is essential the organic status of a property be retained – and valued.

"Added value from an organic property does not just come from established access to high-end markets – it is also inherent in established soil sustainability and balance."

She says certified organic is a relatively new property market, with the value of organic status often not recognised.

"The fact that buying certified land should enable the new owner quicker access into the organic market isn't realised," she says.

Tim Bartholomew, senior valuer with Taylor Byrne in Toowoomba says he has not seen a lot of transactions where the organic certification has been a factor.

"My bet is it will be some time before organic certification will be recognised as any kind of industry norm in the property market. This is also the case with other farming methods which are reasonably new to the scene like dry-land or zero till farming."

He says working organic certification into property values was also likely to differ on a 'by industry' basis.

"In some sectors, there might be a more acceptable or standard way to be able to quantify the premium involved than others."

Akiko Nicholls, managing director of Australian Certified Organic, says that recorded history of past organic management and/ or past organic status of land could shorten the conversion period



LEFT Bundaleer Pastoral property for sale between Cobar and Ivanhoe in western NSW.



A buckwheat crop at the Groat property now listed for sale at Beaudesert, Qld.



Sue Groat of Dayspring says certified organic is a relatively new property market.

for new applicants. In some cases full organic status could even be maintained upon transfer of the property.

“However, there are stringent management and mentorship requirements for this to occur.

“Anyone thinking of buying a certified organic property who intends to maintain

the certification should get in touch with the related certification body to find out what is required.”

To contact the Australian Certified Organic office for information on transferring organic land management, phone


(07) 3350 5706. To express interest in organic properties on the market phone Marco Bobbert (Wodonga Park), (02) 6775 1127; Sue Groat (Dayspring Albert River frontage), (07) 5544 9126; or Joe Hughes (Bundaleer Pastoral), 0427 820 654.

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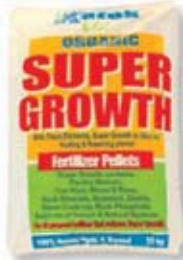
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