

## From the editor

HOLLY VYNER



There has been some speculation that the organic industry will be among the first to suffer in the worsening economic crisis, as people put price before other

factors when food shopping.

So far, evidence is to the contrary in Australia. According to wholesalers, fruit and vegetable sales remain similar while organic meat (lamb and beef) sales have increased significantly.

On a health research note, economic studies from the US suggest that in harder times people prioritise their spending in other ways before sacrificing a healthy diet, such as giving up smoking, drinking, indulging in restaurant eating etc. In many cases people actually become healthier. Past records of death rates have been found to back these claims with falls in deaths during economic downturns and rises during booms.

From past trends and evidence already available it appears organic foods may not suffer the downfall that was immediately assumed.

Aside from the world economic crisis, Prof Julian Cribb in this edition of ACOM sums up what he sees as the most urgent issue of the early 21st century – security of the world's supply of food and fibre. He describes what is most important in meeting the challenge ahead, notably, farmers who are at the forefront of producing food using less energy, fewer inputs and healthy, biological soils which will raise yields.

With food security an issue, it is my own belief that, with education, consumers will increasingly want to support a food production system such as organic which assists in solutions to the farm crisis and many other varied health, social and environmental problems.

The BFA looks forward to educating consumers this year in what will be the first intensive awareness campaign in Australia for organic foods. Lack of understanding about organic is one of the greatest barriers to sales, and education is therefore essential in ensuring ongoing growth. Please see information in this edition or contact the BFA office if you would like further details about becoming involved.



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- 12 Local and Organic – are they overlapping trends or an industry divide?

Momentum from consumers and farmers for food grown closer to home is gathering steam, pushing movements like 'locavore' (eating locally produced food) forward, alongside growing demand for organic. Now it seems confused shoppers are taking one of two roads in a 'local vs. organic' showdown; or are unwittingly blending the two terms together. Jaime Newborn reports.

- 14 Tacking the Global Farm Crisis



World food security, as Australian consumers and others are fast discovering, is at its lowest in half a century. The chart of grain stocks reveals that, year on year,

humanity now consumes more food than it produces. Professor Julian Cribb, agricultural journalist and science communicator, presents on tackling the farm crisis at the 2008 National Agrifood Conference.

- 22 Finding the source of the matter – depression & mental health



Depression is increasing in developed countries, affecting about one in ten Australian adults in a given year. For some people the problem may be triggered by naturally occurring or added food chemicals. This article by Sue Dengate examines common symptoms, culprit chemicals and several case studies.

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