

BFA-registered 'soft inputs' popular with growers

MANY YEARS AGO BFA began a program which has continued to provide reassurance to organic farmers and to those conventional producers who have chosen to use softer options. These farming inputs have always displayed the BFA's mark of approval, indicating that while being safe to use, their use will not jeopardise your organic certification. These products are simply known as BFA-registered Allowed Inputs, of which there are now some 600 available in today's marketplace in a wide range of retail and commercial outlets.

BFA Allowed Inputs make a highly competitive and scrutinised industry while being overseen for achieving organic integrity by BFA. It is clear that while based upon a long tradition of farming with nature, organic is not an industry which is clinging to the past. The industry continues to show its innovation through means of improving the biology of the soil for achieving sustainable and exceptional yields of healthy, high-quality produce.

While organic production is one market for Allowed Inputs, it is conventional producers wishing to incorporate biological practices which, according to many product manufacturers, is by far the largest and fastest-growing market for their range of BFA products.

Reacting to an ever-increasing demand from conventional farmers and others always wishing to improve their methods, Elders, in partnership with Season, is clearly demonstrating its endorsement of BFA-registered products by supporting the BFA Organic Roadshows this year across Australia. Seasol is officially the gold sponsor of BFA's entire Organic Roadshow program, visiting nine locations in 2010.

One would have to imagine that Elders partnering with a major input manufacturer would continue to raise the profile of all organic products throughout Australia.

The market for BFA inputs has not stopped at the farm gate. What has been known to many primary producers for a

long time in the years of BFA inputs has now evolved into a huge range of smaller quantities being available in a wide range of stores across Australia being sought by even the most avid gardeners after being continually referenced in many gardening television productions and a wide range of print media.

There are many highly innovative products available in a large list of registered fertilisers, activators, pest and disease prevention, animal health products and seeds/seedlings. A full list may be found on the BFA website www.bfa.com.au (see Industry Resources > Farming Inputs).

OGA certification days

This year will see the BFA host certification days for the first time in five locations along the east coast (see dates on Events p26). The major focus of the days will be assisting smaller growers in regions which are renowned for market gardening, including Maleny in Queensland, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Byron Bay in NSW and the Gippsland region of Victoria. The BFA owns two companies providing accredited organic certification programs: Australian Certified Organic (ACO) for larger-scale production and the Organic Growers of Australia Small Producer Program.

Small growers in these regions may be eligible to apply for the Organic Growers of Australia scheme. While based on world-renowned organic standards and accredited to IOAS ISO65, the program is simplified to the needs of the smaller grower, allowing reduced administration and cost, including no levy on sales.

With the popularity of farmers' markets, home delivery and sales direct from the farm gate, the program is proving valuable for



Doug Haas, BFA Group chairman

growers making their first step into the organic industry while providing consumers with a guarantee of the organic integrity of produce.

In an attempt to quench the thirst of interest for processed certified product, ACO once again leads by hosting workshops across Australia for processors and marketers in major capital cities. Processed and packaged organic foods is the fastest-growing sector

of the Australian organic industry and these workshops will cover topics including food and skincare processing, marketing, export, certification and standards. Producers will be pleased with this ACO strategy, as by increasing demand in these areas it will allow for further demand of their produce, which on some occasions is over-supplied.

Choice Awards

As chairman, I am very proud to announce that BFA Group subsidiary Australian Certified Organic has been short-listed for the Choice Awards in the 'best food endorsement program' category. This is a fantastic achievement, especially considering a company cannot put itself forward for a Choice Award. An announcement will be made on the evening of March 15 regarding the winning program. This further demonstrates and reinforces that the BFA's strategy of continued excellence permeates both through the BFA and its subsidiaries.

At the time of writing this, my property has received more than 700mm of rain simply for the first three weeks of February. While the wet is difficult for some of us, when it clears and sun once again crosses our skies I'm sure that overall we will be looking at a great season. I wish you all the best in your organic business.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Doug Haas', written in a cursive style.

Ki-Carma - Organically Certified



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