



BFA Press Release 12th September 2008

Less inputs, more legumes in the far North - growers learn how at the BFA Cairns Organic Roadshow - Friday 19th September

Producers interested in sustainable growing are invited to learn how to get more from their land and soil, naturally, next Friday, September the 19th, at the Biological Farmers of Australia's North Queensland Organic Roadshow event.

With Northern farmers as the nation's primary organic banana producers added to new research finding Queensland has the second highest financial return from organic vegetable, herb and nursery production in Australia, the time is ripe for tropical growers to know more about sustainable techniques.

Successful organic business owners and experts in their fields will discuss the advantages and obstacles of synthetic chemical-free and biological farming, and outline the approaches that work best in the far North.

"Essentially, there's going to be more and more interest in how we do what we do as the cost of inputs continue to rise" says Robert Watson, guest speaker and Managing Director of Mungalli organic dairy farm and processing operations in the Atherton tablelands.

After swapping to natural farming techniques in 1987, and gaining organic certification in 2000, Mr. Watson now supplies premium organic milk and yoghurt to 250 major and independent retail outlets in Australia.

He says despite the extra challenges of forfeiting chemical inputs support in a temperate climate, going organic came with advantages.

"In the long term, the benefits are evident – we have very healthy land, productive soils and healthy animals without having to rely on heavy inputs - however it does take commitment" he says.

Terry Mather, guest speaker, and agronomist with Cocoa Australia will look at how Northern farmers can change to traditional biological techniques to suit their environment.

"Providing options that aim for balanced environmental control of pests, insects, weeds, bacteria, wilt and foliage diseases," he says.

"There are some fundamental differences in how to approach these issues in the north – things move faster in the tropics and farmers need to be able to pre-empt and intervene under a focused management approach."

He says Northern soils – "which often show some damage from previous land use" - typically respond well to organic and eco-orientated farming techniques.

Mr. Watson says he is confident in the future of the organic market.

"We've found our products have been very well accepted – at the moment we can't keep up with demand for our primary lines.

"People are learning to pay more for a high quality product for a number of reasons – not only because it's organic, but because it's local, it's healthy and it's environmentally focused."

Other topics up for discussion on the day include organic and biodynamic fruit and vegetable production, organic retail and supply chains, the organic consumer and marketing, and regulation of fraud in the market.



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An all-organic lunch and morning tea will be provided.

Learn more at the BFA Cairns Organic Roadshow!

- **When?** Friday 19th September 8:30am – 3:30pm
- **Where?** Quality Hotel Sheridan Plaza, 295 Sheridan Street, Cairns, Qld.
- **Cost?** \$35 BFA Member pre-payment (\$40 on the day); \$45 Non-Member pre-payment (\$50 on day)
- **RSVP:** Ph. 07 3350 5716 ext 221 Fax. 07 3350 5996 Email info@bfa.com.au
- **More information** www.bfa.com.au (See *Events – Roadshows*)

For media enquiries, interviews or images contact the BFA media department on (07) 3350 5716 ext. 222

The BFA has a vision for organic industry growth and education in Australia. Order your copy of the Organic Industry Market Report 2008 to see how the industry is achieving its goals! More information is available at http://www.bfa.com.au/index.asp?Sec_ID=260.



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