

**BFA Media Release, Wednesday 1st April 2009**

# **APPEAL FOR GOVERNMENT TO CLEAN UP ITS ORGANIC EXPORT ACT**

**Does our government really understand the importance of a strong export industry? The Federal Government's intended elimination of financial support for organic and other exporters has drawn a sharp response from the Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA), the nation's premier organic representative body.**

From July 1 the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) will recover all costs for the management of their activities pertaining to the export of organic products. BFA's view is that without a concurrent overhaul of the Export Orders Act the government's move will double charges and red tape while simultaneously dampening opportunities for export.

The proposed changes will see the AQIS export program for organic products (along with other commodity export programs) being stripped of the 40% government co-contribution. In addition, expected rises in costs for management will be factored into the charges, which will result in a rise of more than 50% in program costs, to be charged directly to the commercial exporters.

According to Dr Andrew Monk, BFA Director and Organic Standards Convenor, the only way to offset the negative impact of the proposed changes and to prevent bureaucratic doubling-up is to institute simultaneous changes to the Export Orders Act for organic produce.

Dr Monk cites Australian Certified Organic's (ACO's) successful history of achieving direct overseas market access for clients.

"Given AQIS's limited jurisdiction, it has been up to ACO and other certification agencies to manage the integrity of certified organic claims as the consumers' best means of ensuring they get what they pay for," he says.

"ACO has led Australia in achieving export accreditation in the US, Japan, and other countries and in cutting through red tape to ensure that there are choices in world marketplaces for small and large operators alike.

"With direct accreditation achieved with such countries as Japan and the US, the need for AQIS jurisdiction on export orders to these destinations should be eliminated.



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**BIOLOGICAL FARMERS OF  
AUSTRALIA CO-OP LTD**  
ABN 75 699 664 781

HEAD OFFICE · BRISBANE

PO Box 530 766 Gympie Rd  
CHERMESIDE QLD 4032  
Ph: +61 (0)7 3350 5716  
Fax: +61 (0)7 3350 5996

[info@bfa.com.au](mailto:info@bfa.com.au)

SOUTHERN DIVISION OFFICE

PO Box 503  
NURIOOTPA SA 5355  
Ph: + 61 (0)8 8562 2769  
Fax: + 61 (0)8 8562 3034

[info@bfa.com.au](mailto:info@bfa.com.au)

[www.bfa.com.au](http://www.bfa.com.au)



“BFA will be working with AQIS and the Government to achieve a positive outcome for the organic industry. However, in the absence of an overhaul of the Act and with the elimination of any residual support for export activity, export growth will be hampered at a critical juncture in our country’s economic cycle.”

Some observers say that a move to full cost recovery could threaten thousands of Australian rural jobs, particularly given this will be applied to all commodity groups.

“It’s ironic that that this should happen at a time when many other governments are protecting domestic markets while enhancing and supporting export activities,” says Dr Monk.

“Not only will new Government regulations load more costs onto exporters, they are also giving a green light to the import of Philippine bananas into Australia in a move that could put the whole industry, organic and conventional, at risk. It seems we’re getting the worst of both worlds.”

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**Media contacts:**

Dr Andrew Monk, Mobile: 0429 960 044

Jan Nary, BFA Media Department, Ph: (07) 3350 5716 ext 275, E: [jan.nary@bfa.com.au](mailto:jan.nary@bfa.com.au)

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NURIOOTPA SA 5355  
Ph: + 61 (0)8 8562 2769  
Fax: + 61 (0)8 8562 3034

[info@bfa.com.au](mailto:info@bfa.com.au)

[www.bfa.com.au](http://www.bfa.com.au)