

Biological Farmers of Australia Media Release Tuesday 07th July 2009

Asian market confirms: Australian Certified Organic is no false beauty

In a beauty and cosmetic industry fraught with confusing claims of 'natural' and 'pure', there is a growing interest in Australian Certified Organic beauty products in Asian countries where consumers are asking 'where do my cosmetics come from?'

Akiko Nicholls, Managing Director, Australian Certified Organic (ACO), says the international organic beauty and cosmetic market remains a case of 'buyers beware' but that Asian consumers are ahead in learning what to look for.

"Consumers must know which logo indicates a truly organic beauty product. They cannot be content with just any organic logo, because all logos have different criteria when it comes to cosmetics – more so than food," she says.

She says Asian markets recognise Australian Certified Organic is now one of the world's most stringent certifiers when it comes to organic cosmetics, requiring 95% – 100% of ingredients to be certified organic.

"This is compared to as little as 20% required under some overseas standards" says Ms. Nicholls.

She says ACO products are also popular because they cannot be tested on animals; contain no GM ingredients; and require a natural extraction process for all ingredients.

Denise Eaton, Senior Export Advisor, Health, Biotech & Wellbeing with Austrade agrees consumers in Asian markets have higher-than-average natural beauty expectations.

"Asian consumers understand organic certification and actively look for product branding which can guarantee organic credibility," she says.

"ACO in particular is developing brand recognition among Asian consumers, building on the ever-popular 'Brand Australia'" (the clean and green image Asian consumers' associate with Australian products).

Opportunity for Australian cosmetics is also extending to less mature Asian markets.

Kirsty Reynolds, Business Development Manager for Austrade in Seoul (Korea), says opportunities for organic skincare in Korea are just beginning to get underway.

"Interest in 'natural' and 'healthy' cosmetic alternatives is now extending to an awareness of organic and what organic certification means in relation to skincare and cosmetics. We expect to see increased awareness of and appreciation for organically certified cosmetics in the future".

She says Korean parents are particularly interested in natural skincare for their children.



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Ms, Nicholls notes there are some natural cosmetic products that will never be able to be called 'organic'.

"These are mineral based products. They contain natural ingredients and prohibit harmful chemicals and preservatives, but because the volume of mineral content is over 5% they cannot be certified 'organic'" (minerals are not cultivated in soil and so cannot be classified as organically grown).

But she says consumers looking for Australian mineral-based cosmetic products like foundations or blushes that were naturally derived could still look for accreditation marks, like BFA Approved Product (AP).

She says both ACO Organic and BFA Approved Products are well positioned in a global market for organic and natural cosmetics which reportedly sees sales increasing by over US \$1 billion a year (1).

"Some of our ACO cosmetic brands are now international success stories including Miessence and the Sydney Essential Oil Company. Trade and government agencies are supportive of certified organic products because they understand certification is an important factor for the end consumer".

Ms. Eaton says opportunities for Australian organic cosmetics in Asia will grow in the immediate future, as long as the industry can maintain credibility.

"That is where the importance of certification comes in, as the Asian market does not recover well from damaged trust."

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Data:

(1) Organic Monitor online: 2009 Predictions: <http://www.organicmonitor.com/r3001.htm>

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The BFA Organic Roadshow - a line-up of fascinating speakers on many aspects of organic production and marketing –will be coming to centres across NSW, Qld and WA between August and November this year.

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