

**Biological Farmers of Australia Media Release, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2009**

## **BFA response to Choice: Caveat Emptor when buying organic**

In response to Choice claims of butchers possibly selling products as organic that may in some instances not be, the organic industry's largest organic member group the Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA), reminds consumers to beware and always look for independent certification logos such as the 'Bud' with the words 'Australian Certified Organic'.

*"Educated organic consumers understand and appreciate the often premium prices they pay for organic products. The price of Australian Certified Organic (ACO) products reflects the value behind one of the world's most stringent agricultural and food standards: the Australian Organic Standard (AOS),"* says Dr. Andrew Monk, BFA Director and Chair of the Standards Advisory Group.

The AOS mandates certification being independent third party auditing, for use of such organic logos as the organic 'Bud' logo bearing the words 'Australian Certified Organic', Australia's most recognised organic logo.

Unless either products or retailers, including butchers, who sell bulk (non-packaged) items are certified, and bear clear certification reference, consumers should steer well clear.

The BFA has a 'dobber line' connected with their website which enables information to be fed to the industry regulator to follow up dubious or unsubstantiated claims in the marketplace, as well as potential fraud. The BFA welcomes consumer and industry feedback on such matters.

*"Without legislation, which governments are not interested in enacting due to claims of cost, as well as the precedent this would set for other food standards and regulatory systems, consumers will always need to be informed to buy only certified products marked clearly with the recognised certification logo,"* says Dr. Monk.

This is similar to the Heart Tick for health claims, notes Monk, where such a logo is also voluntary and not backed by legislation.

*"Many years of consumer education has ensured that consumers know what to look for. Our research suggests that organic consumers are both discerning and know they need to look for an organic logo. There will always be less scrupulous operators out there, hence the need for consumers to buy only certified product. The BFA is now investing significantly in getting this message out to the public.*



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*“The good news for consumers is that the organic industry in Australia has a proud history stretching over two decades, of voluntary self regulation through independent third party auditing and certification to industry owned organic standards, which mandate such certification in order to make claims as to a product’s organic status.*

*“At the end of the day, even in larger overseas markets such as the US and EU, where governments have stepped in and have legislated the term organic, consumers still use independent certification marks as their means of identifying compliant product,” says Dr. Monk.*

As with any claim in the food marketplace, the old adage ‘caveat emptor’: buyer beware, remains the guiding principle consumers need to be guided by. Add to that, Monk notes, ‘look for the logo’ to ensure that the product is what it claims to be. Consumers then also are backed by common law which has seen prosecution of operators who have attempted to run the gauntlet of a well qualified and professional organic certified industry.

Anyone buying cheap, unmarked products or products from non-certified facilities is ultimately only kidding themselves, while also missing out on the whole point about organics: foods and fibres with integrity.

## Ends

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### **STOP PRESS!**

**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.

For more information on Organic Expo or Organic Roadshows;

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