

BFA Media Release, Friday 4th September 2009

Healthy, profitable, sustainable –

BIOLOGICAL & ORGANIC PRODUCTION ONE-DAY WORKSHOP IN TOOWOOMBA

Bringing the best of biological farming and organic market knowledge to regional centres, BFA's Organic Roadshow is travelling nationally and arrives at **Toowoomba on the 17th September**. The Roadshows are one-day overviews of biological and organic farming practices and market knowledge – beneficial for all food producers.

Biological and organic production techniques are continuing to increase in popularity as they focus on maximising the sustainable use of ecological resources, decreasing reliance on outsourced inputs and increasing the overall resilience of pastures and crops.

Toowoomba keynote speaker, Dr Maarten Stapper, is an iconic soil and agriculture scientist whose vast expertise has been built over more than forty years in science and agriculture.

A former CSIRO scientist and now Director of Biologic Agfood, Dr Stapper is passionate about sharing his knowledge of the advantages of biological agriculture and maintaining soil health by reducing chemical use and inputs.

"The real key to our life on planet earth is the soil. The soil is the skin of planet earth, and that skin, that soil, provides us with the living plants that give us the food," he says.

"The past two years have seen an increase in interest from people on soil health, with many of my talks filled with conventional farmers looking for an alternative way of maintaining their soil.

"I am dedicating the next 10 years of my life to keep teaching and talking about these issues to stimulate people, also in the cities. In 2000 we had a ripple - biological farming was a ripple, that ripple is now a wave, and that wave will be a flood, and that flood is coming."*

BFA's General Manager Holly Vyner says that roadshow presenters provide practical, down-to-earth talks, with speakers being able to pass on first-hand knowledge having owned or managed successful commercially-focused organic farming and other businesses in the region.

"The BFA Roadshow for years has received great feedback on its practical and regionally relevant advice for producers and others in the industry. The day is also a good chance to network with others who are growing biologically or working in the organic industry, as well as to gather information on biological farm inputs and other trade display products



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and services. In addition, Doug Haas is an excellent facilitator making these days most enjoyable to attend for anyone with an interest," says Holly.

Holly says that at a time of economic downturn organic produce is holding its own and even increasing its market share. An independent survey from March this year has found that there is growing consumer awareness about organics, with over half of Australians now choosing organic at least occasionally.

"Our research shows that consumers are recognising the benefits of purchasing organic foods – in particular the health advantages, including no synthetic chemicals, no harmful food additives and antioxidant/ nutritional benefits – but also environmental, animal welfare, sustainable farming, and biodiversity benefits."

The Toowoomba Roadshow will feature presentations from successful farmers and others on broadacre, cattle and vegetable farming, sheep and wool production, organic regulation, standards and marketing, market entry, processing and value adding and export and local markets. Trade displays will be available with information on products and services including farming inputs, consultants' advice and more.

In attendance at the Roadshow will be BFA Chairman Doug Haas, BFA General Manager Holly Vyner, BFA Director Quentin Kennedy, and Managing Director of Australian Certified Organic Akiko Nicholls.

TOOWOOMBA ROADSHOW DETAILS

Location: Burke & Wills Hotel, 554 Ruthven St. Toowoomba QLD

Time: 8:30am – 3:30pm

Cost: PREPAID: \$35 BFA members / \$45 non-members or ON THE DAY: \$40 members / \$50 non-members. Price includes full organic catering for the day.

For more details about the day visit www.bfa.com.au or contact the BFA office on ph 07 3350 5716 ext 221; email info@bfa.com.au.

ENDS

A selection of Toowoomba Roadshow speakers:

Dr Maarten Stapper - former senior CSIRO scientist and recent debut on ABC TV's *Australian Story*

Dr Maarten Stapper, Director of Biologic AgFood, has been working in the field of science and agriculture for more than 40 years. The former senior CSIRO scientist has a passion for biological agriculture and the science which supports it, and now dedicates much of his time to consulting farmers on the benefits and practicalities of biological farming.

Dr Stapper travels Australia providing workshops for groups of producers on-farm, and providing practical advice for achieving and maintaining soil health profitably, by lowering inputs, chemical use, and associated costs.



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Dr Stapper will present at the BFA's Organic Roadshow providing something from which both experienced and inexperienced producers in biological farming can learn from.

Robert Bauer, owner, Bauer's Organic Farm, Lockyer Valley

An organic farmer for the past 27 years, Rob Bauer is the driving force behind Bauer's Organic Farm (Lockyer Valley, Qld), one of Australia's largest providers of fresh organic vegetables.

Rob's personal belief in the value of organic food for better health, the environment and the community has remained strong since he pioneered organic methods back in the 1980's on his family's once-conventionally run farm - established by his grandfather in 1885. He made the decision to 'go organic' after watching his parents struggle with damaged land and declining personal health. His organic operations now span over 363ha and employ up to 50 people.

Rob has been instrumental in the establishment of the 'Organic Farm Gate' – a marketing network for farms in the wider Gatton, Brisbane and Sunshine Coast hinterlands region. The network currently allows four large organic farms and other medium-size farms in the area to co-ordinate supply, pool resources, combine marketing efforts; and offer advice to smaller growers.

Bauer's organic products can be found everywhere from major to specialist retail outlets, and farmers markets. Carrots and potatoes are a speciality, with celery, tomatoes, sweet corn, pumpkin, watermelon and rockmelons also among the diverse range produced.

Bauer's Organic Farm was recently a finalist in the 2009 Vogue Entertaining & Travel Produce Awards for Bauer's Sweet Corn, and Bauer's potatoes received a Silver Medal in the category of Best Organic Food Product at last year's Organic Expo.

Rob is also committed to educating consumers on organic. Busloads of curious foodies and tourists, and whole classes from local schools are not an uncommon sight on Bauer's Organic farm tours.

Quentin Kennedy, BFA Board Director; owner, Kialla Pure Foods and Aus Organic Feeds

Quentin holds a degree in Agribusiness and was previously Business Manager of BFA and ACO for a number of years. This period of time has given him an intricate understanding of the operational side of the business, as well as the certification process and the organic industry as a whole.

Quentin is owner of Kialla Pure Foods, one of Australia's leading organic cereal grain processors. With a background primarily in broad acre grazing production, he also has extensive experience in the entire agribusiness value chain and understands the roles played by all operators within the industry, both at a national and international level.

Clive Wylie, Co-convenor, BFA Monogastric Advisory Group

Clive studied at Emerald Pastoral College and has worked in cattle husbandry, managing and developing enterprises in Australia, the Philippines, Sabah and Thailand.



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Clive founded and managed a major organic poultry and livestock business with efficient irrigation infrastructure and broad acre cropping facilities, priding itself on its integrity, reliability and quality underpinned by a "closed-loop" production system which is based on vertical integration, self-sufficiency and recycling.

Clive now lives at Cunnamulla developing a 110,000 acre organic grazing, irrigation and dryland farming enterprise.

**Dr Stapper's quotes sourced from Australian Organic Producer magazine and ABC Australian Story*

ORGANIC ROADSHOW DATES SEPT – DEC 2009*

Qld

17 Sept. 09 Roadshow Toowoomba, Qld

17 Sept. 09 Organic Networking Dinner, Brisbane, Qld

19 Sept. 09 Roadshow Cairns, Qld

WA

14 Nov 09 Roadshow Perth, WA

(*dates/ locations are subject to change)

Media images and interviews are available on request – to arrange a specific interview in advance contact BFA media officer Jan Nary ph: (07) 3350 5716 ext. 275; email jan.nary@bfa.com.au

The BFA has a vision for organic industry growth and education in Australia. Ask about your copy of the Australian Organic Market Report 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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