

Biological Farmers of Australia Media Release, 9 October 2009

## **NEW ORGANIC STANDARDS: Clarifying the claims**

The introduction of a new Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Produce released today by Standards Australia has been welcomed by some as the final resolution of organic regulation.

This is despite the fact that the standard still remains voluntary, similar to existing standards in Australia.

Dr Andrew Monk, Standards Convenor for Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA) and representative on the Standards Australia organic committee, says the new standard will complement - not replace - existing standards and certification arrangements currently.

“The new national standard will assist in plugging the now fairly small gaps in the marketplace where uncertified product, or product with questionable organic integrity claims, have eluded industry and the courts to date.

“However, consumers will not see any changes in the marketplace. Under current Law they can be assured if they purchase certified organic product they will be protected - as they have been for many years”

Despite reports, Dr. Monk says the new national Standard will not replace all existing standards in Australia.

“This new Standard will simply complement existing industry standards and certification arrangements, including the existing National Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Produce. It is this standard on which the Standards Australia standard has been based and which has very effectively regulated certified organic products in Australia for over two decades.

Dr Monk adds that the Standard will assist current industry efforts to protect consumers’ interests.

**“Significantly, while the new Standard will remain voluntary, it will be, in concert with other relevant standards, a benchmark against which the ACCC (Australian Competition and Consumer Commission) can investigate fraud and mislabeling in the marketplace, and this is to be welcomed,” Dr Monk says. “It will therefore add to the existing arsenal of industry self regulation in place in Australia currently, which has over a 20-year history of successful growth and development.**

“Discerning consumers will need to continue to read labels and marketing claims, and only buy a product if it is clearly labeled with a certification mark for example the Australian Certified Organic Bud logo. Such consumers are then protected under Law currently, with precedents already established for large fines for companies found to be labeling in a misleading manner.



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“The organic industry is arguably more effectively self-resourced and self-regulated than any other food sector,” he says. Standards are set based on broad stakeholder involvement including consumers, retailers, value-adders and farmers.”

“The BFA recognises that the road of industry self-regulation, either with or without legislative backup, is a never-ending journey, requiring ongoing resourcing by industry and vigilance by informed consumers. The recent BFA Organic Crusader initiative, which will empower consumers and buyers of organic produce, is helping ensure the veracity of organic claims. “It will be this ongoing industry-funded work, and the independent organic certification programs that accompany it, which will remain the bedrock for ensuring justified ongoing consumer confidence in organics,” says Dr Monk.

**Ends**

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For information on the Organic Crusader, visit [www.bfa.com.au](http://www.bfa.com.au) or contact the BFA Head Office on 07 3350 5716 ext 233.

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