

Biological Farmers of Australia Media Release, 9 November 2009

**THE CREAM OF THE ORGANIC CROP –
*Hear from WA's best biological and organic producers
this Saturday at the BFA/ Seasol WA Organic
Roadshow***

Organic wines, organic beef, organic coffee and a cornucopia of organic vegetables – the menu of practiced producers offering their advice and knowledge on organic production at the Organic Roadshow reads like an epicurean wish list.

Bringing the best of biological farming and organic market knowledge to regional centres, BFA's Organic Roadshow will arrive at Swan Hill, WA on **Saturday 14th of November**. The day will serve up a one-day overview of biological and organic farming practices and market knowledge – beneficial for all food producers – and anyone with an interest.

Biological and organic production techniques focus on maximising the sustainable use of ecological resources, decreasing reliance on outsourced inputs and increasing the overall resilience of pastures and crops among many other benefits.

The day will provide a rare opportunity to hear the advice of successful commercially-focused organic and biological producers from the region as well as advice from marketers, soil health specialists and others.

A highlight of the day will be a tour of the Roadshow venue, Harris Organic Wines, currently the only certified organic winery in the Swan Valley, the first established wine region in WA.

Duncan Harris of Harris Organic Wines, has been using traditional methods to produce quality organic wines for more than a decade,

Duncan says his operation is proof that a financially and environmentally sustainable viticulture business can be created without irrigation and synthetic chemical inputs. The winery produces a wide range of wines from 8 different grape varieties – from rich Shiraz to dessert wine – with a sparkling chardonnay to be launched in December and an organic brandy in 2010.

“We achieved organic certification in 2006 through wanting to assure our customers that their wine is made naturally. The emphasis is on traditional production methods for best quality vintages and just about everything is carried out by hand – leaf plucking, crop thinning, pruning and grape picking.

There are a growing number of intelligent, switched-on people who are interested in where their food comes from – and our customers keep coming back!” says Duncan.

David Cook, owner of **Dandaragan Organic Beef**, had been a conventional sheep, cattle and crop farmer for most of his life. He converted to organic beef farming a decade ago, mainly because of health concerns raised in managing conventional systems.



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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

SOUTHERN DIVISION OFFICE

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

info@bfa.com.au

www.bfa.com.au



“My wife Joan and I were concerned about the poor quality of some land and also the contaminants that were being poured into our food. I researched the overuse of chemicals and their possible side-effects and found the results quiet worrying,” he says.

David attended many courses, through which he met organic farmers and a soil health advisor. A course in holistic management enabled him to take the final step into organic farming. He took a conscious step to focus on the local domestic market and says that it is rewarding to know that the community is being provided with local, high quality organic beef.

“As organic farmers our aim is to always keep improving the health of our soil, to continually try and increase the soil micro-organisms, the humus and carbon content – all components linked to healthy soil. I believe that healthy soil results in improved livestock and improved nutritional value of our beef. Our soil is healthier, animals are happier and we are not exposed to the health hazards of a conventional system.”

The origin of **Biobean Coffee** is the stuff that novels are made of; an airline company collapse leading to changed holiday plans, a chance meeting in a remote gorge, a shared cup of coffee, a biochemistry degree, an ethical stance on industry practices – out of these an organic, Fairtrade business was born.

Biobean’s **Ben Ipkendanz** will share his family’s experiences in setting up Biobean, a business based firmly on his family’s healthy, slow food ethics. Ben says the entry into organics was made easier by the fact that the company was already Fairtrade certified, with a scrupulous tracking system already in place.

Initially there were barriers to be broken down, pushing through a hard market where the bottom line carried more weight than the offer of a quality organic product.

“A lot of people didn’t want to know us at first,” Ben says; “but while the organic market is still small it’s growing steadily and we’re happy with that. Organics isn’t a five minute pathway to riches but we’re prepared to stay the distance.”

Ben says he it would be more difficult to run an organic operation if it was in parallel with a conventional one, or for someone with a non-organic approach to life.

“Having an organic business isn’t formidable if you’re passionate and approach your life that way,” he says.

Wayne Brock has a quarter-century biodynamic certification to his credit. His farm at Muchea produces a veritable bounty of quality food – broccoli, broad beans, kale, capsicum, garlic, avocado, leeks, chard, silver beet, lettuce, melons, globe artichokes, oaten hay, orchard fruit, bananas, beef, olives, olive oil, pigs ... the list goes on. Wayne and Margaret have created an incredibly diversified food basket, all managed on biodynamic principles.

Their move into biodynamic farming was triggered by seeing “A Winter’s Tale”, a film production about biodynamic practitioner Alex Podolinsky. Wayne contacted Alex and the die was cast.



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"We entered into biodynamics because we saw the amount of poisons used (*in conventional farming*) and we wanted our family to grow up as healthy as possible," says Margaret.

"We had always had our own little vegie patch but once Wayne left his job as a bank manager we saw the demand – and it just got bigger!"

Wayne will share his wealth of experience and knowledge at the Roadshow.

Steven David from Organic Farming Systems is a provider of consultancy services focused on organic farming practices in WA, providing advice on organic farming methods and large-scale compost operations, and the supply of organic fertilisers including compost, fish emulsions and humic acids. Services include: organic farm plans and certification advice, crop and soil health monitoring and testing, natural fertiliser recommendations, advice on organic weed, pest and disease management and seminar presentations.

Attendees will also hear from **Doug Haas**, (Chairman, BFA), **Holly Vyner** (General Manager, BFA) among others.

A full program can be downloaded from www.bfa.com.au or contact the organisers on the details below for further information.

Event details:

BFA WA ORGANIC ROADSHOW

When: 8:30am – 4:00pm, Saturday 14th November 2009

Where: Harris Organic Wines, 179 Memorial Ave, Baskerville, Swan Valley, WA

Cost: Catering cost only: BFA Members: \$35 Members pre-payment (\$40 on the day); Non Members: \$45 Non-Members prepayment (\$50 on the day)

RSVP/ More information: Ph: 07 3350 5716 ext 232 Fax: 07 3350 5996 Email: events@bfa.com.au

Sponsors providing trade displays on the day: Seasol (major sponsor), Castle Mountain Zeolites, Vital Organics, Best Australia, Citrox, Weedtechnics and EcoGrowth

ENDS

Media Contacts:

Jan Nary, Senior Publicity Officer, BFA. Ph: 07 3350 5716 ext 275 E: jan.nary@bfa.com.au
Holly Vyner, General Manager, BFA. Mob 0431 623 809

This is a free event for media. Simply contact us on the details provided above to register.

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