

Going Australian organic in Japan

- A BIOFACH UPDATE WITH BFA/ACO

» It was a 'world first' experience for one Australian Certified Organic (ACO) meat producer at the BFA/ACO stand at this year's BioFach Organic Exhibition in Tokyo, from the 24th – 26th September 2008.

Matt O'Leary, beef producer from Australian Organic Meats in NSW out-stripped Japan's own farmers to become the first meat supplier ever to match the stringent criteria of the recently developed Japanese Agriculture Standard (JAS) for livestock at the event.

"We were pretty pleased – and a bit surprised," says Mr. O'Leary.

"We had no idea we were the first in the world until we arrived in Japan and everyone got excited about it."

Regulators anticipate high demand for JAS certified organic meat in the next few years, as the JAS logo becomes more widely recognised by Japanese consumers.

She says there was further evidence from this year's BioFach event that interest in Japan in Australian organic products is developing.

"Australian product is popular because it is perceived by Japanese consumers as safe, free from any contamination risk from other countries, and GM free.

"There is a high level of interest in the Japanese market in natural and organic personal care products, and in products which are new and innovative.

"Unique flavours that were associated with outback Australia and native Australian plants were popular – for example lemon myrtle.

"And there was almost non-stop interest in the raw chocolate bars we had on display (from Living Earth Pty Ltd). There are very few products like this available – the Japanese trade visitors liked the fact that these items were healthy – gluten



Julie & Matt O'Leary, Australian Organic Meats at BioFach Japan 2008.

and sugar free, and loved the taste. Bars were also a good size for Japan, which is an important consideration as Japanese shoppers don't like items or packages that are over-size."

Ms. Nicholls says it was important to note Japanese consumers remain selective on presentation.

"High standards of presentation and product display are assumed in Japan, and packaging that is different or eye-catching attracts attention.

"We had hand-painted glass wine bottles on display this year which people

were very interested in."

She says there was an increased level of traffic towards Australian products at the BFA/ACO stand, with many people now recognising 'Australian Certified Organic' after five years consistent presence at the event.

The show attracted a total of 242 exhibitors from 24 countries and 14,519 visitors this year, with organisers reporting a particularly strong presence from exhibitors from Germany, Austria, Australia, Mexico and Thailand. Organisers pin-pointed natural personal care and natural textiles as two trend themes this year in the Japanese markets.

Australian Certified Organic the only certifier recognised by Japan (JAS) from February 2009

From February 2009, ACO will officially be the only certification body who can provide JAS accredited certification in Australia.

"Since 2006, new JAS regulations for organic have meant ACO has been the only JAS accredited certification body in Australia, however JAS clients serviced by other certification organisations were given a three year transition period in which they could still operate," says ACO Certification Director, Ms. Akiko Nicholls.

"This transition period will end on the 28th February 2009. At this point in time ACO continues to remain the only certifier with accreditation and therefore from 28th February, if an operator is not JAS certified under ACO they will be unable to continue producing JAS certified product; and product will not be accepted by Japanese importers."

"Effectively, at it stands, operators who are currently JAS certified under another certification body will automatically lose their JAS status unless they are able to achieve certification and training under ACO – a process which generally takes around 8 weeks."

For more information contact the ACO certification team at: email: info@aco.net.au or ph: 07 3350 5706.

Looking for European markets? Join us at BioFach Germany

Join the BFA/ ACO Group stand at BioFach Germany – the best-known international organic trade fair worldwide

The BFA stand benefits from combined resources and shared market knowledge and marketing efforts under the one banner of the highly renowned Bud logo. Enjoy the support of state trade development and Austrade representatives on the stand plus many years experience of the BFA, its developed networks and a reputation for presenting quality products meeting high certification standards.

For information contact ph 07 3350 5706 ext 233, email events@bfa.com.au.