

# Profile of Alex Podolinsky and the Beginnings of Bio-Dynamics in Australia

**T**he Bio-Dynamic Agricultural method was initiated by Dr Rudolf Steiner in 1924 at the request of German farmers disillusioned with the loss of product quality due to artificial fertilisers.

In Australia the first attempt at making Bio-Dynamic preparations eventuated in 1927 after Ernest Genoni had worked one year at the German Bio-Dynamic pioneer farm of Ernst Stegmann. In 1938 Robert Williams started to also make the Bio-Dynamic preparations and to distribute these to a few home gardens of his acquaintance.

In 1949 Alex and Kathrin Podolinsky arrived in Australia, after escaping the Russian communist "Repatriation Commission" with the aid of the French Surete. Alex had first come into contact with Bio-Dynamics in the 1930's. He leased and eventually purchased an eroded, hilly, small farm at Wonga Park with exposed shale soils. Employees of a wealthy land owner had unsuccessfully managed this farm "biodynamically" and the property had been advertised for sale.

On taking over Alex used Bio-Dynamic preparations from Robert Williams in the first year. Realising that these would have little chance of effectiveness he deep ripped the shale downhill (the only way a tractor could manage), immediately crossing with the original US/ Graham – Home chisel plough (later made by PA Yoemans and called Yoemans chisel plough). He furthermore reconsidered and implemented the entire range of farming principles and methodicity to suit Bio-Dynamics: rotational grazing, sheet composting, soil cultivation, fruit and vegetable production etc as described in his lectures to farmers. Likewise Bio-Dynamic equipment, stirring machines, spray outfits, storage for Bio-Dynamic preparations, soil cultivation equipment was and continues to be developed in Australia and overseas by farmers and full time Bio-Dynamic engineers.

In the Bio-Dynamic preparation making he strictly followed Steiner's two original co-workers, Lily Kolisko and Ehrenfried Pfeiffer as witnessed in the thirties and forties in Switzerland and England. After finding that in the early fifties nobody in Melbourne was interested in using Organic or Bio-Dynamic vegetables even when home delivered to consumers, Alex organized monthly lectures in the assembly hall in Melbourne inclusive

of practical demonstrations of Bio-Dynamic vegetables compared to conventional.

Due to the Bio-Dynamic results achieved, which were broadcast by Department of Agriculture Dairy supervisors, Herd testers and the Jersey Stud Association field officer Tom Kennedy, farmers began visiting and lecture invitations at farm field days emanated. One senior Victorian Department of Agriculture scientist stated "I don't know whether it is this Bio-Dynamic method or whether he is just such a damned good farmer."

Alex never 'promoted', he responded to requests, when people would listen. His lectures were addressed to the real experts and artists of farming, the farmers.

Steiner expressed the hope that Bio-Dynamic agriculture would enter mainstream agriculture. This happened in Australia through efforts of Alex and the farmers engaged in Australia and overseas.

The Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association of Australia was founded in the early fifties when 27 farmers had begun with Bio-Dynamics. To the present, this association, training farmers in a country where there was virtually no history of organic farming skills remains as the foremost activity. Membership of the Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association of Australia is restricted to professional commercial farmers. The Bio-Dynamic Research Institute was founded later and in 1964 additionally took on the registration of the Demeter Trademark. This was granted in 1967 on the basis of the dynamic food quality of Bio-Dynamic products – as demonstrated scientifically, practically and by tasting (as with wine, olive oil and then still, butter c/- Butter Tasters Association). "Demeter" certification and shop supervision commenced privately after 1967. Organic-Bio-Dynamic farming methodicity, "closed" farm units, with marginal inputs of prime importance, the "non-use" of fertilizers or chemicals a side issue. Later Alex was one of the major originators of the National Standards.

An Australia wide association (BDGA Inc) for gardeners and hobby farmers was formed in 1973. The Bio-Dynamic Marketing company followed in the eighties. This was developed by Peter and Judy Podolinsky. Alex's work also took in all other continents, supported by visits of Association members. And, in particular European Bio-Dynamic

farmers "using the Australian Bio-Dynamic method", in turn have proven fruitful to their Australian counterparts (see DVD Cosmo Earthly Ecology, inclusive of Agrilatina DVD's or Mark Guillemot wine producing method and innovative Bio-Dynamic equipment as per "Bio-Dynamic Agriculture of the Future" pictorials).

Alex's literature has appeared in many other languages. (Literature listed on [www.demeter.org.au](http://www.demeter.org.au)).

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*Original submission.*

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