

A summary of alternative technologies is presented in Table 1. Other technologies were also investigated, including induced and genetic resistance, cultural control and IPM, which are seen as highly relevant to reducing disease in organic horticulture, and are discussed in the report.

The study highlights several technologies into which there has been insufficient research conducted, and will help organic crop protection product manufacturers and

scientists doing research in the organics industry. Although various products and technologies claim to reduce plant diseases, very little independent scientific evaluation of these products is being undertaken in Australia. The authors of the report strongly urge that further scientific evaluation of promising products be carried out. Importantly, they suggest the organic industry should investigate pathways for bringing these products to commercial availability.

A brief summary of the report is available at <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/ORG/07-110sum.html> and there is also a link to the full report on that web page. ◀◀

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## New publication about the impact of organic agriculture on socio-economics in Africa

**KRISTEN LYONS AND** David Burch from Griffith University in Brisbane were commissioned last year by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) to investigate the developing organic sector in Africa. Their report, titled 'Socio-economic Effects of Organic Agriculture in Africa', has just been published by IFOAM. The following summary was printed in the latest *IFOAM In Action* (No. 94, p.8):

'Contemporary agriculture and food systems are associated with a range of social and environmental problems, such as food insecurity, land degradation, water pollution and health hazards. These problems are particularly acute in African nations, where food insecurity and malnutrition is widespread, and where many

farmers have experienced declining crop yields due to drought, desertification and salinity.

The expansion of Organic Agriculture represents one strategy to address these challenges. The results of this study indicate conversion to Organic Agriculture has the capacity to establish sustainable livelihoods for African farm families and their communities and concludes with a series of recommendations to support ongoing expansion of Organic Agriculture in Africa.'

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# Reducing copper use in disease control

**THE NEW REPORT** by Melissa Van Zwieten, Gordon Stovold and Lukas Van Zwieten, based at NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) at Wollongbar and Alstonville, is timely given the findings in Tony Hassall's report on crop protection in organic viticulture. Alternatives to Copper for Disease Control in the Australian Organic Industry investigates the availability and

effectiveness of organically acceptable alternatives to copper-based disease control products both internationally and within Australia. The report targets organic farmers interested in alternative pest and disease control products, as well as product manufacturers, to encourage research into relevant technologies.

Organic standards have recently limited the use of copper for disease control, and alternative products and technologies are required to maintain productivity and profitability. The key limitation of alternative products is that their effectiveness is often

lower, especially compared to registered chemical fungicides. Commercialisation and registration of alternative products is difficult and expensive, and the organic market may be seen as too small to support them.

The study consisted of a comprehensive review of data and literature available on alternatives, as well as a review of the potential effectiveness of these alternative products and their possible use in the Australian organic industry. Finally, recommendations were made regarding making these products more available to organic farmers in Australia. Alternative disease control technologies were ranked according to the number of refereed publications and confidence/significance of the data presented, and classified into three categories for potential development.

### The R&D pages are collated by The Organic Research Group (ORG)

ORG is a network of researchers, teachers, students, farmers, retailers and consumers involved with organic agriculture. Based at the University of New England, participants in the ORG are:

- investigating a wide range of production, soil health and marketing issues
- collaborating on industry development projects with producers, businesses and government
- providing professional, organic-specific training for students and
- offering research support, technical expertise and policy advice to the organic industry.



Table 1

HIGHLY RELEVANT TECHNOLOGIES	TECHNOLOGIES SHOWING PROMISE	TECHNOLOGIES NEEDING MORE INFORMATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selected bio-control agents</li> <li>• compost</li> <li>• inoculated compost</li> <li>• surfactants and biosurfactants</li> <li>• antifungal compounds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compost tea</li> <li>• pH modifiers and bicarbonates</li> <li>• foliar calcium and silicone</li> <li>• milk products, other organic amendments (e.g. molasses)</li> <li>• essential oils (e.g. tea tree)</li> <li>• polymer coatings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vermiculture products</li> <li>• plant extracts excluding essential oils (e.g. rhubarb)</li> <li>• seaweed extracts</li> <li>• colloidal silver</li> <li>• potassium permanganate</li> <li>• vinegar</li> <li>• household antiseptics</li> </ul>

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