

NEWS BITES

- Amongst the 'hot' market trends uncovered in the latest "What's Hot Chef's Survey" as reported by the National Restaurant Association was Organically Grown, coming in 3rd place. The top four results were:

1. Locally grown produce 89%
2. Bite-size/mini desserts 83%
3. Organic produce 82% and
4. Nutritionally balanced children's dishes 81%.

- In a recent Choice survey, supermarket cakes were brought to the table for comparing additives on labels. Out of 97 labels just one cake was found to contain no additives other than baking powder. At the other end of the scale, the highest score was 27 additives while overall brands averaged close to 10 additives per product.

- Why more and more people choose organic for a sound sleep!: Conventionally-made sheets may be a health hazard using materials such as Ethylene (linked to nervous system health problems) and toxic dyes and dye carriers (some demonstrating carcinogenic tendencies). Bleaching and other special treatments often have a high environmental cost, as do chemicals used in farming of cotton.

- If you don't like sprouts, it could be safer to stay at home in years ahead - US scientists are currently experimenting with growing vegetables like Brussels sprouts on the Moon to explore the capacity of future colonies to produce food.

- Cattle aren't the only producers of methane on farms. Rice produces large amounts of methane which gives it a climate impact three times that of potatoes or cereals.

R.M. Williams steps out in sustainable agriculture

THE ICONIC 'brand of the bush' – **R.M. Williams** – has joined Sydney based **Primary Holdings** and branched into agriculture. The new private company **R.M. Williams Agricultural Holdings (RMWAH)** is already showing a serious interest in sustainability, with reports it will have a heavy – but not sole – focus on producing organic food.

"RMWAH (overseen by owner and current Chairman Ken Cowley) aims to supply a full range of premium branded organic and protein-based commodities, for both local and international markets" reported an official statement released late May.

"RMWAH business focuses on food production that involves alternative energy solutions... and organic land management with best environmental and biodiversity practise."

The new company has already acquired the large-scale predominantly organic poultry business **Inglewood Farms** in South East Queensland.

Clive Wylie, founder and former owner of Inglewood Farms will remain involved in operations in an advisory capacity.

Mr Wylie says in line with a 'best practise' approach to sustainable production, management of the farm's resources will focus on improving land quality.

"Management... will have a strong focus on carbon management; building carbon levels, fertility and biological activity in our soils; and efficient water use," he says.

David Pearse, Managing Director of RMWAH says while the Inglewood acquisition will involve a review of operations, the farm will begin to generate value in the near future.

"RMWAH looks forward to reinvigorating this truly unique organic poultry operation... (We) have no doubt that this company, which contributes so significantly to the prosperity of the Inglewood district, will within a few months return to a viable and prosperous position, supplying organic produce to the Australian domestic market. (Inglewood has) the capability of substantially increasing its production in the course of the next 18 – 34 months," he says.

RMWAH have additionally bought into a network of non-organic meat and grain properties in Northern Australia and three stations owned by Primary Holdings are set to become seed properties (**Labelle** and **Welltree** stations in the Northern Territory and **Mirage Plains** on the Warrego River south of Cunnamulla, Qld).

Prime agricultural land is reportedly being selected for acquisition on the basis it has no or little history of chemical farming, to enable the company to develop for meeting the growing domestic and international demand for organic food stuffs.

"The organic food operation is one of the most exciting endeavours of the RMWAH business and we look forward to its challenges and accomplishments. We are committed to fostering



Inglewood Farms poultry production recently acquired by R.M. Williams Agricultural Holdings. The new owners believe the business has the capability of increasing its production substantially within the next 18 – 34 months.

this initiative to assist in the future development of organic farming in Australia," says Hamish Turner RMWAH Executive Director and CEO of R.M. Williams.

As an example, he points to the acquisition of Mirage Plains, a property currently in the first stages of organic operations.

RMWAH states the Mirage investment (incorporating over six properties and over one third of the irrigation water allocated on the Warrego) will place it in a prime position to add to its organic endeavours.

"Mirage Plains has never been intensively farmed and is an aggregation of properties, operating as an irrigated and dry land farming and grazing business. Mirage Plains has the capacity to supply both the domestic and export grain markets," reports RMWAH.

RMWAH will also be aligned with the carbon value adding and trading company C-Quest Capital (CQC).

RMWAH will invest in forestry and bio-fuel plantations in a bid to generate carbon credits, tradeable under the proposed Australian Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. The company has reportedly entered into discussions with some of Australia's largest emitters to offset their emissions on an exclusive basis and will identify voluntary carbon markets to develop and commercialise agricultural and forestry carbon asset values.

Holly Vyner, General Manager of BFA says the organic community is continuing to see increasing interest from large scale investors.

"This latest news is proof the organic industry has stream-lined its operating and supply systems to a point where the value of the industry is being recognised by forward thinking companies who are seeking to expand their interests in sustainable agribusiness. We look forward to organic farms playing a wider role in future in the commercial application of sustainable land strategies," she says. <<<◆