

Allowed inputters gain the spotlight

Allowed input manufacturers (commonly named allowed inputters) from all over Australia were invited to attend a meeting in October to discuss important issues relating to their sector.

Held in Brisbane, the meeting was attended by over 40 industry members who actively participated in discussions as well as listened to presentations from government and industry representative groups.

APVMA

The difficulty of registration of allowed inputs (AIs) with Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has meant that a very small number of AIs are registered with the authority. Registration can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in independent product trials and registration costs as well as a great amount of time in paperwork and red tape.

Most AIs are therefore unable to make claims of their effectiveness for pest control and/ or disease control. As many allowed inputters are unable to afford registration, products are often seen marketed as "boosters of soil health" rather than fungal control or "livestock deodorant" instead of fly repellent, etc.

The BFA is working with the regulatory authority for a more friendly approach to the approval of biological or naturally occurring products, which is aligned with many international approaches.

Organic advisors and trainers

Organic Consultant and Trainer for the BFA Greg Paynter spoke of a new program for accreditation of organic advisors and consultants to the organic industry. For the first time in Australia there will be an endorsement program for agronomists, consultants and advisors to the organic industry. The first training course for advisors will be held in November, with more courses to follow in 2008. A list will be printed in coming issues of ACOM.

The BFA Bio Inputs Subcommittee

The Bio Inputs (formerly Bionutrients) Subcommittee of the BFA was set up two years ago to represent allowed inputters and

Gardeners go organic

In line with a more conscientious variety of home gardeners, retail nursery outlets have by necessity stepped up their commitment to Organic inputs. "The old breed of backyard warriors with allegiance to chemical brands is dying out, and younger home gardeners have a better understanding of the implications," says Gary Leeson, owner of Organic Crop Protectants.

But he says the boost to small business has a long way to go. "Ultimately, what gets prime shelf space in big warehouses is what turns over fastest and what consumers can get at a low cost –that's still your recognised brands," he says. He says because Organic is a system and not a 'quick fix,' it requires buyers to be educated on the shop floor. "We're pushing for a separate and identifiable eco-friendly section, ideally with trained staff who are passionate and equipped to explain the benefits," he says.



promote soil health. This committee underwent a future roadmapping with the input of all meeting participants. Of particular note, new subcommittee chair David Hardwick is leading a project to produce a guide book for the use of allowed inputs. The committee can be contacted at bioinputs@bfa.com.au

Labelling

Suggestions were made for the improvement of labeling BFA-registered AIs in order to make the most of the marketing advantage of registration.

There was a unanimous vote for the following choice of three labels to replace the current wording "BFA Registered Product": "Certified Product for Organic – Farms"

"Certified Product For Organic – Gardens"
"Certified Product For Organic – Production"

The new labeling will begin to appear on BFA AI products country-wide in the coming year, though a grace period will be provided to inputters for phase out of old labeling.

Marketing

Suggestions were made to the BFA for assisting with marketing of BFA-registered products in outlets where they are sold. As more products are being sold in the mainstream, education is needed for stores as well as their customers.

A number of initiatives are in the pipeline for better education, in conjunction with members of the sector. ◆