

From the editor

HOLLY VYNER

The organic industry may have finally won the battle to prove that organic food is in fact good for your health. This is largely due to the European Union's \$27 million injection of funds into a four-year research project on the issue. One of its most significant findings was that organic fruit and vegetables contained 20 to 40 per cent more antioxidants. This, scientists believe, can cut the risk of Australia's greatest killers – cancer and heart disease. They also found organics to contain higher levels of vitamin C and beneficial minerals such as iron and zinc. The difference was so striking that moving to organic food has been described as “the equivalent of eating an extra portion of fruit and vegetables every day”.

The research will be peer-reviewed and published over the next 12 months. More about this brilliant news for the industry can be read in the pursuing pages.

Allowed inputs

Allowed inputs is a key theme for this edition. There are pertinent issues facing this important sector currently.

Allowed input manufacturers have in recent years enjoyed growth from several angles at once. They are firstly impacted by the growing market for organics and number of farmers converting to organic, secondly the fact conventional growers are looking for alternatives to conventional products, which are becoming increasingly ineffective and causing more problems than they're worth. And thirdly, home gardeners are more aware of the potential harm caused by conventional gardening products and are looking for natural alternatives.

The potential of this sector was recognized many years ago by the BFA, which brought in a domestic accreditation system for input products. This raised its profile and brought wide recognition of its importance. This sector has successfully demystified itself, dispelling the myth that using biological farming inputs is 'dabbling in snake oil' by consistently proving to provide real solutions to modern problems.



Allowed inputs in organics not only consists of farm inputs but cleaning and pest control products and natural food additives for use by the food processing sector as well as by consumers concerned about the welfare of their families and the environment.

Smaller producers

Smaller production is our other main focus for this magazine, following on from some of the recent successes of smaller growers. The proverbial 'does size matter?' has been an oft-debated issue throughout the evolution of the organic industry everywhere.

The topic of small versus big finds itself at the centre of many ongoing debates from inside and outside of the organic circle. Hot topics include Can organics feed the world?, How to keep the families on the land, Get big or get out, Big business is against the principles of organic, How to decrease food miles, How to bridge the urban rural divide and so on.

Certainly many smaller growers are proving smaller can be better, and providing

a range of solutions to many of the debated topics above.

Their recent success is perhaps due to growing consumer interest into how food is grown and handled. While sometimes unable to compete with larger growers in terms of quantities and prices for wholesale, smaller growers are able to pick up a larger premium for produce by cutting out one or more links in the supply chain and selling direct to the end consumer. Also, their hands-on, close relationship with the farm and often greater diversity of the farming enterprise arguably makes them resilient to changes in both market and climate conditions.

We hope you enjoy this edition as much as we've enjoyed putting it together. A special thanks goes to the editorial support team – communications officer Adam Birkby and marketing officer Jaime Newborn have not only contributed several excellent articles to this edition but have made it a breeze and a pleasure to work on.

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