

Coffee worth a (double) shot

By Jaime Newborn

PHILIPP KREUTZER SAYS HE and his wife Lynne “were aware there was a huge market for organic coffee overseas, that was developing slowly in Australia” when they made the decision to purchase farming acreage in Alstonville (near Byron Bay, NSW) 10 years ago.

But, he says, beyond recognising a niche for locally grown organic coffee – “with most coffee available at that time imported” – the pair (both former lawyers) were working from a clean slate.

The results have been startling. Now cultivating 10,000 certified organic coffee trees on farmland rich with red volcanic topsoil (measured to a depth of 100 metres), Philipp says demand for Hightrees Estate Coffee is currently beyond what he is physically capable of producing. “We are roasting all we grow, and selling all we roast.”

His organic dream-run, however, was made possible by a careful combination of markets, location, and learning.

“We originally looked into macadamias but were unimpressed by the amount of spraying, the dependence on export and the heavy volume of product you seemed to need for success in that sector,” he says.

“While looking, we stumbled on a few coffee crops. They are a hardy plant, suited to the area. We realised we could manage coffee with minimal spraying and attention while helping to satisfy growing domestic coffee demand.”

He says the decision to ‘go organic’ was assumed from the start and Hightrees became formally certified with Australian Certified Organic (ACO) in 2006.

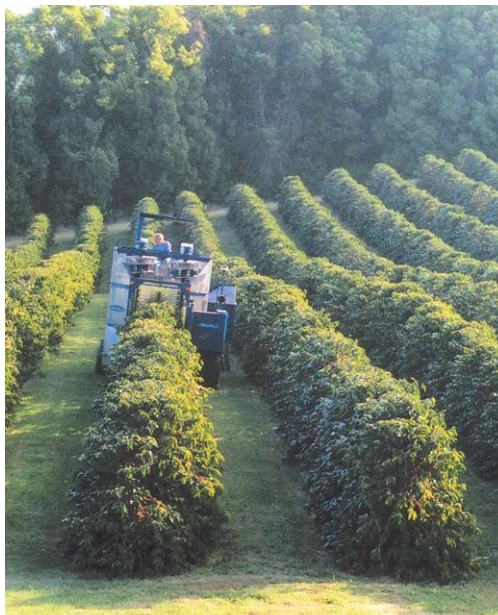
“As a result, we have not found it difficult – simply a learning process. Lynne attended a permaculture and sustainable farming

“We didn’t want to use chemicals, and with no agricultural background we had no mind-set towards conventional growing,” says Philipp.

course and we talked to best-practice farmers in the area.”

Following plantation set-up, the business moved towards roasting and processing in 2002 because of the price difference between a green and roasted bean. Philipp says green beans from Australia can fetch around \$8-\$10/kg while roasted beans can be sold for anywhere in the \$25-\$35/kg range.

While their first small harvest was difficult



logistically – “we had not got our head around contractors and that sort of thing” – things have improved vastly since.

“The industry revived at the advent of a high quality mechanical harvester, which made small commercial plantations viable. We formed an informal co-op with two other farms and together invested in a harvester.”

He says shared machinery works in coffee because the harvest isn’t urgent – not having the narrow harvest timeframe of some other crops – and the process can be spread over several weeks.

A major benefit of organic production has been the health of Hightrees’ plantation.

“We realised fairly soon that we were growing very healthy, robust trees. Coffee trees here have virtually no local enemies in terms of pest and disease, but when producers in the area unexpectedly lost most of their crop to a fungal outbreak a few years back, ours were hardly affected. For us, it was proof we were on the right track.”

Hightrees processes beans using a traditional drying (as opposed to machine drying) method, which Philipp says has a large say in the resulting flavour. “Once you’ve harvested a coffee cherry, there is on-going activity within the bean that machine drying terminates abruptly. Sun drying can improve quality – as long as it doesn’t rain.”

They then use the pulp by-product of processed beans as compost for crops. “We also have a little mower that throws the grass sideways so every time we mow, trees are mulched. We’ve found simple operational changes can make significant differences,” says Philipp.

He says while Hightrees is considering expansion, he and Lynne are pleased with the scope and quality of the business. “Expanding would mean investing heavily in sales and marketing.”

Regardless, their coffee is making inroads with café connoisseurs – Hightrees has won regular awards at the Sydney Fine Food Show (including espresso show champion in 2007), and Philipp says many people enjoy sampling local beans. “We’re proud to be able to offer a coffee with a flavour unique to the terroir of our part of Australia.”



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Fast with
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Australia's leading PBO
Free Pyrethrum Spray for
organic farming stems

***I was sceptical at first, but when I saw the results!**

- Brix levels were up overnight with 1 application of PhosSiCal
- Organica's Liquid N made all the difference to yields
- Nitrogen infused with N fixing microbes (Humaboost-N) lets nature put nitrogen back into my soils for free
- I have developed great confidence in Organica's products over the years
- What a great product Fish'n'Kelp is. My finished quality has improved substantially

Growers Comments

Liquid N12:0:3

Liquid 12% Nitrogen, 3% Potassium + Trace

Phos-S- Si-Cal

Liquid - Phosphorous 18% , Sulphur 3%, Silica 2% Calcium 20% + Trace

New Product

HUMABOOST-N

3% Nitrogen infused Humates + Silica + Amino's + Omega's + Micronutrients + N Fixing Biology.

Growers tell their own story

Field and greenhouse growers in Holland must change to sustainable practices or be forced out of business. For 10 years my brother and I have been using Organica's products with great success growing field grown crops, glasshouse roses and tomatoes (see image below). We no longer have to rely on nitrate based fertilizers for crop nutrition. Instead we use 5 products from Organica to supply a full spectrum of nutrition and microbiology. Ten years ago we could see organic production as our future. Ten years ago we started with Organica's products. Today we are paid a premium for organically produced product. We now provide many other growers with the benefit of our experience, as growers move towards a sustainable future in horticulture. We now know how to improve our nutrition, growing media and soil biology. The Dutch government is banning some chemical fertilizers and pesticides and will continue to do so. We use a range of Barrier Leafcoat products for pest and disease control as they work well with our IPM programs. This year we are moving some winter production to Morocco where we will maintain our growing programme using Organica's products.

Jos vanWyk, Netherlands

Organica Australia Pty. Ltd.

This season we picked the best watermelons we have ever grown. Sweet, good colour, heavier and best of all we doubled production. I owe this great result to the 6 X Greenfert programme developed by Organica. A base preplant with pre digested Liquid Lime, Phos-S- Si- Cal, Humaboost, Liquid N12, and Hi K Fish n Kelp set the soil up for planting. The pre plant Microfine Calcium and Phos-S-Si-Cal provided enough P, Ca, S, and Si up until flower set. This was followed up with weekly trickle applications Greenfert N-12 and Humaboost for Nitrogen Carbon, amino's and microbes to fix N. It sounded complicated at first, however we soon got into a routine of weekly trickle feeding and foliar spraying of N12, Hi K, and Fish'n'Kelp.



Growers inspecting a rose crop for Mites after an Organica Barrier Leafcoat spray.

We found the products contained enough nutrition to adequately supply the crop and fill the melons. We had no disease and few pests. The pests we had we managed with Pyganic. When we cut open our first melon the taste was worth the effort. Our clients were very happy and we received a premium price because of the quality and flavour. Production costs were no more than last season. The bonus was we picked longer, doubling our production per acre thanks to Organica's products.

Cattle Coat

"Cattlecoat back rubber oil has saved my animals from the torment of flying annoyances for 4 years. Cattlecoat deodorizes the cattle, completely changing their odour. They settle down immediately after they are sprayed or after they use the backrubbers. Even the horses use the rubbers for relief. I can now see a great improvement in my grass and pastures using Liquid N12+Si from Organica"

Ian Shadbolt, Trickle Creek 4 Organics Qld.



1 week after spraying Hort Vinegar

Australian Owned for 3 Generations

Organica Sunblok Crop screen has reduced fruit temp. and sunburn on my mangos and field crops. It extended my season by over a month, and midday fruit temperature was 14 deg C Cooler. It's removed easily and I could see an overnight improvement in the crop.

Mr. R Hogan N.Q.



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Weeds were a major problem on my vineyard especially grasses (see image above). Organica's Horticultural Vinegar has helped cut down the weeding and the cost. Even large weeds are less of a problem - simply spray to the base of the weeds. Pumping a knapsack sure beats chipping.

Joseph Warner NSW.