

Press Release, Monday 7th May 2007

Standards Australia Asked to Hold Off on Developing an Organic Standard

Today the Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA) (and subsidiaries Australian Certified Organic & Organic Growers of Australia), called on Standards Australia to postpone the development of an organic standard at the first meeting of the Standards Australia organic technical committee in Sydney.

"The development of an organic standard with Standards Australia will be a retrograde step which will undermine the existing self regulatory system in Australia and one that will encourage uncertified organic produce", said Scott Kinnear spokesperson and representative to the technical committee. "This is because Standards Australia has said they will remove the sections in the existing National Organic Standard (administered by AQIS) that mandate certification and labelling requirements. They do not have the capacity to mandate these key areas.

"We believe that the path to regulation of organic foods is through the Food Standards Code administered by FSANZ. The precedents of labelling of GMO's and country of origin labelling are examples of similar labelling rules that allow consumers to make informed choices.

"We believe FSANZ should pass a labelling rule in the Food Standards Code to make it mandatory for organic foods to be certified organic by an approved certifying organisation overseen by a competent authority such as AQIS or JASANZ. Currently Australian exports are regulated in this manner as are most developed overseas organic markets. If it is good enough for the Australian Government to protect our overseas customers, then we ask them to do the same at home.

"Once we have this commitment, then we can address whether the existing National Organic Standard should move from AQIS and if so, how it is to be owned and managed. Developing an organic standard with Standards Australia really does put the cart before the horse. There are considerable ownership and management issues also with Standards Australia developing an organic standard.

"There is no simple test to determine whether a food has been produced organically and the simplest method to ensure authenticity is to require certification.

"A Standards Australia organic standard, even if it was called up into fair trading legislation, which is highly unlikely, will offer very little protection to consumers.

"In overseas markets such as the US, regulation requiring organic certification saw a large increase in consumer confidence that resulted in a large increase in growth of the organic food market.

"There are many environmental and health benefits from encouraging the organic food market in Australia and we ask for Federal and State Government support to require certification of organic foods for the domestic market."

ENDS.

More comment, Scott Kinnear 0419 881 729.

The Biological Farmers of Australia through its subsidiary organisations Australian Certified Organic and Organic Growers of Australia, certify more than 70% of the certified organic sector in Australia.



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