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PRESS RELEASE:

Organic industry rejects claims questioning its sustainability

Claims that organic production is less than optimal are regrettably **ill informed** says the Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA).

The recent claims by Dr Holger Kirchmann of the Swedish University of Agriculture that organic farming was potentially less sustainable and driven not by science but by “nature philosophy” have been **rebuffed and qualified** by the commercially focused organic industry group BFA.

“These views possibly arise from reaction to the anti GMO stance of organic consumers, as well as ignorance in large segments of the research community as to the potential and nature of scientifically based organic principles.” says Dr Andrew Monk, CEO of BFA and RIRDC* committee member for organic research.

“The opinions voiced focus on segments of the organic movement that are not commercial.”

In Australia there are no subsidies for organic agriculture, so farmers involved in the industry are doing so based on **sound market signals** combined with **progressive farming techniques**.

The BFA represents the interests of organic and biologically oriented farmers focused on income diversification, value adding in the rural sector, optimal levels of productivity and good environmental outcomes balanced by sustainable financial returns. According to this group, farmers, being able, scientifically minded business people, are crying out for more government support – but not in the form of subsidies.

“What the organic industry does lack is **support for scientific research** which assists in both dissociating myth from reality, as well as assisting producers to continue to ensure resilient agricultural practices, via **supportive policies and regulatory arrangements**. Australia has need of water conservation, of protecting organic carbon in the soil, and promoting soil life. Organic production is inherently about this,” says Dr Monk.

The BFA suggests that Dr Kirchmann’s comments are perhaps better suited to parts of Europe, given he relies on one Australian researcher who has focused on one sector only. Similarly Dr Monk says that the simple view that organic production relies solely on animal manures is an archaic view of organic production principles that does not apply to the Australian context, where viable biologically oriented agribusiness models are now in full effect.

“It is essential that there is good science informing sensible policy decisions,” says Dr Monk.

“What is lacking in this debate is informed good science and sufficient regulatory support for more appropriate forms of agriculture in Australia, organic being amongst these.” he said.

For comment and further detail on organic R&D initiatives, industry statistics and general comment and quotes:

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*RIRDC is the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation based in Canberra.



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