

BFA Press Release 30 January 2012

Australian organic chickens benefit from among world's highest standards

Organic is free range as consumers assume it to be, 'plus', notes organic farming and consumer organisation the Biological Farmers of Australia Ltd (BFA), with standards being among the world's highest.

The recent controversy with the ACCC case against claims of 'free to roam' with birds in barns permitted no more than an A4 page size area each, as well as the questioning of proposals to allow up to 20,000 birds per hectare to be classified as 'free range', has brought into question the validity of some free range claims. Such questions are supported by the BFA noting that there are legitimate labels and standards for 'free range' that consumers should actively look for, but like with organic, if it is not **certified**, consumers may not get what they pay for.

Dr Andrew Monk, BFA Standards Convenor says, "Consumers who want truly free range in addition to artificial additive, antibiotic and synthetic agrichemical-free, should look for the recognised and respected Organic Bud logo with the words 'Australian Certified Organic' to be assured they are buying what the label claims. The organic standards include the most stringent stocking arrangements, and dietary and livestock management requirements, as part of the overall holistic ethos that is organic."

Organic allows a maximum average of 2500 birds per hectare over the farm unit and has clear specifications of stocking rates within shed structures, along with a real requirement to roam – not just in a barn but on the range. Organic chickens are required to be managed on an organic diet, with only a small allowance for feed supplements that cannot be obtained organically (minerals, vitamins, etc). At least 95% of their farm sourced diet must come from certified organic sources.

"There is a legitimate price difference for certified organic products for which the consumer is getting far more than just a bird that lives its life outside of a cage," Dr Monk says.

The BFA has recently weighed into the debate over labeling via its submission to the Blewett Review, specifically requesting free range claims to require the same sort of standards and industry code rigour that the organic sector has been used to for some years, along with calls for increased scrutiny and resourcing by the ACCC and now Consumer Affairs in each State under the new Consumer laws which have replaced parts of the Trade Practices Act.

Australia has arguably set the highest organic standards in the world for livestock, agricultural and food. Consumers however should only ever buy **certified** products with a recognised industry logo such as the Organic Bud logo.

By buying organic livestock products you are:

- Helping in the animal welfare movement, ensuring animals live cage free and in more natural conditions – truly free to roam on a range, not just a barn;

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- Helping farmers look after the environment, avoiding synthetic pesticides and herbicides as well as antibiotics and other drugs and growth promoting products;
- Buying some of the best foods on the Australian marketplace for your health, your family's health, and that of the planet: and by doing so, doing something positive and real for our climate, for our soils and for our precious and delicate Australian environment.

Media Contacts:

Dr Andrew Monk, BFA Standards Convenor; BFA Director: Mob 0429 960 044

Holly Vyner, BFA General Manager: Ph 07 3350 5716 ext 233; Mob 0431 623 809

Media References:

Refer BFA Submission Blewett Review: <http://www.bfa.com.au/IndustryResources/PapersSubmissions.aspx>

Refer BFA Submission National Food Plan: <http://www.bfa.com.au/IndustryResources/PapersSubmissions.aspx>

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