



## **Media release**

13 June 2012

# **BFA reduces costs to study organic farming**

Producers wanting to learn about organic farming can now do so for a fraction of the cost.

Organic industry representative body Biological Farmers of Australia, BFA, has secured funding to subsidise the cost of an organic farming course for 55 students.

The Diploma in Agriculture (Organic Production) is available to anyone wanting to make a living from the land or is already doing so.

The curriculum takes 18 months to complete and is focused on developing plans to change or develop systems towards organic.

Two hundred students have graduated from the Diploma, which is offered through TAFE NSW Riverina Institute via correspondence. Students are linked with a mentor in their region to help them.

A \$400,000 grant from the National Workforce Development Fund means students only pay a third of course costs.

New South Wales certified-organic garlic grower Simone Stewart completed the Diploma in 2010 and says it helped her develop a more economically viable farm.

She says, "The Diploma confirmed many of the practices that we had already been doing. It also added new ideas that we turned into a workable farm plan.

"The result is that we can now make a comfortable living from our farm."

Riverina Institute's organic specialist Rob Fenton says, "There are people who have used the Diploma to develop an organic system while others have been organic farmers for years and used it to refine what they are doing.

"When someone joins the course we link them with teachers in their area and industry to work with. The teachers are farmers and agricultural consultants."

Students vary from backyard herb and vegetable growers interested in retail and markets to broadacre graziers.

BFA director Holly Vyner says, "The Riverina Institute course is structured in a way that is highly supportive and practical. BFA is pleased to have secured this opportunity which will assist to grow the capacity of organic growers, and introduce the benefits of organic production to non-organic growers".

For more information about the Diploma in Agriculture (Organic Production) contact Rob Fenton on 0408 227 624 or [Rob.fenton@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:Rob.fenton@det.nsw.edu.au).

The National Workforce Development Fund is an Australian Government initiative to support training and workforce development in areas of current and future skills need.

### **Media Contacts:**

Rob Fenton, TAFE NSW Riverina Institute, 0408 227 624.

Kathy Cogo BFA media liaison [kathy.cogo@bfa.com.au](mailto:kathy.cogo@bfa.com.au) 07 4771 3714 / 0466 015 183.