

BFA Media Release 9th July 2012

ATTENTION: CHIEF OF STAFF / NEWS EDITOR / RURAL EDITOR

FARMERS OFFERED VITAL TOOLS TO COMBAT RISING ENERGY COSTS FROM CARBON TAX AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE CARBON FARMING INITIATIVE

INTERNATIONALLY-RESPECTED 'FATHER OF BIOLOGICAL FARMING' GARY ZIMMER PRESENTS THE LATEST IN BIOLOGICAL TECHNIQUES TO ACHIEVE LONG-TERM INCREASES IN FARM PROFITABILITY

Farmers in Queensland and NSW will be offered vital tools from some of the world's most respected biological farming experts to help combat rising energy costs and position them to take advantage of potential additional income presented by the Government's carbon tax.

"There's no doubt about it, many farmers have been handed another challenge to combat rising costs of energy and water that will result from the carbon tax," according to Australia's leading organic industry representative body, Biological Farmers of Australia (BFA).

"On the other hand it presents what may be the greatest opportunity presented to growers increasing their soil carbon levels," explains BFA spokesperson and grower David Bruer.

"A key objective for biological farmers, or those converting to organic, is to increase soil carbon levels. The key benefit to these growers is that this increases the productivity and resilience of these soils often achieving a substantial increase in profitability. With the introduction of the price on carbon, an additional benefit which farmers have is the Government will pay for the increase in soil carbon, providing farmers with an additional income stream," he said.

The tool for calculation of soil carbon will be decided by the end of 2012 and growers participating in the Carbon Farming Initiative can expect payments as soon as the end of this financial year.

"We're not here to make a judgment on the tax but our aim is to help farmers negate issues from the rising input costs associated with it and instead position themselves to take up opportunities presented by it," said BFA representative and soil health consultant Greg Paynter.

"This includes sharing the most effective research and knowledge on biological farming that has the ability to significantly improve soil productivity, increase water use efficiency and decrease energy costs," he said.

To present growers with the latest in biological farming and means of increasing productivity, BFA will host Biological Roadshows in Queensland and NSW from next week with international soil health expert Gary Zimmer and researcher and ecologist Leilani Zimmer-Durand.

"Gary, known as the 'father of biological farming' is an incredibly valuable source of knowledge, while also presenting in an entertaining and straight forward manner. He's an internationally published author, researcher and consultant and also has the dirt under his fingernails through running his own organic dairy farm for some 25 years," said Greg.

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“Now more than ever techniques like biological farming are key to helping farmers save dollars. Whether it be through pasture cropping, holistic pasture management, compost, mineral balancing, green manure crops, bio products, biodiversity or other techniques to manage land using more natural systems.

“They all work towards lower energy needs and greater water efficiency and can make a sizeable difference to farming more efficiently and profitably within 12 months,” he said.

Gary Zimmer and his daughter Leilani Zimmer-Durand will tour Australia from 19-23 July as keynote speakers for BFA’s annual Roadshows, including a one-day event at Bundaberg QLD, Bungendore NSW and Albury NSW.

“There are three key things to consider when starting biological farming. Firstly, do the basics, starting with a soil test that looks at twelve to thirteen different minerals,” said Gary.

“Secondly, there are no miracle products, just ones that fit certain situations. Separate out the soil correctives and crop fertilisers, clarify and position the needed inputs.

“And thirdly, start those soil corrections with calcium and phosphorous and do the crop fertilisers following a three to five year plan,” he said.

As Director of Research at Midwestern Bio-Ag, a biological-based agricultural company that assists thousands of US farms to become more sustainable and productive, Leilani Zimmer-Durand reviews the latest biological farming products and systems.

“Our latest research on carbon-based liquid starters has shown they can stimulate early plant growth and improve overall crop health and yield, when included in a biological farming system along with compost, manure or dry fertilisers,” said Leilani.

“In the majority of our test plots, the treated plants have a larger root system with more fine root hairs, which should help crops be more resilient during drought and also help overall plant health and yield,” she said.

Tickets are now selling to the one-day Roadshows. Visit www.bfa.com.au for further details.

WHAT: BFA ROADSHOWS WITH GARY ZIMMER & LEILANI ZIMMER-DURAND
WHEN: Thu 19 July – Bundaberg Civic Centre, 190 Bourbon St, Bundaberg QLD
Sat 21 July – Mulloon Creek Natural Farms, 3585 Kings Highway, Bungendore NSW
Mon 23 July – National Environment Centre, Ettamogah Rd, Thurgoona (Albury) NSW
BOOKINGS: www.bfa.com.au or call 1300 331 309
COST: General admission tickets - \$75 BFA member, \$95 non-member

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