

Media Release

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Seeking views of all organic producers An organic industry roadmap

A coalition of organic industry leaders has released today a roadmap that would establish a new peak body for the organic industry.

Developed after five months of consultation, the Australian Organic Industry Working Group (AOIWG) is seeking more broad-based industry participation in assessing the two most promising options.

The independent chair of the AOIWG is Greg McNamara. He said "It's important that all organic operators have a say on the industry's future representation."

"The initial consultations have revealed a desire for the organic industry to overcome its past fragmentation and form a new peak body to help the industry capitalize on the growing global demand for organic products," Mr McNamara said.

"The proposed implementation by 30 June 2018 is ambitious, but achievable. However, to get there, the whole industry needs to be involved and support the process", Mr McNamara said.

The roadmap identifies two options as being the most promising for moving forward. But either option would need to be governed by a diverse member council, that would be more representative of the industry than simply a Board.

The project was initiated by organic industry leaders from across Australia who are collaborating with a view to establishing a harmonised national voice for all organic producers, certifiers and the supply chain.

Organic operators can comment on the roadmap on the project website at onevoice.organicindustries.com.au or send an email submission to enquiries@organicindustries.com.au. The AOIWG will also be considering convening further regional consultations on the roadmap.

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[Policy Partners](#) has been appointed by the AOIWG to manage the project.

Roadmap summary

Consultations revealed a **desire for a new peak body** that can effectively represent the interests of the broader industry and overcome the leadership divisions and absence of vision which has characterised the industry.

The highest policy priority of grassroots operators was **improved domestic market integrity**. There are clear failings in current regulatory arrangements, leading to **poor outcomes for many organic producers and consumers**.

The **industry needs to act strategically** and with single purpose, choose its battles clearly, and develop alliances across supply chains and with likeminded organisations to pursue its interests.

It is imperative to get three things right:

- **value creation**—the structure and objectives of the peak body must create value for the industry, by focusing on the industry’s future and the interests of organic growers, processors and traders
- **effective regulation**—the industry’s regulation arrangements must be reformed in the best interests of organic growers, processors and traders, and to promote domestic market integrity and market access abroad
- **building trust**—to “bring the whole industry along”, organisational processes must embed strongly democratic mechanisms

Industry unity will require a **strongly representative member council** to play the preeminent role in enforcing accountability, setting strategic direction, developing policy platforms and resolving disputes.

In respect of developing preferred options for a peak body, the AOIWG should progress further consultations based on the development of the two most promising possibilities:

- consultations revealed strong support for a clean start through the establishment of **an entirely new peak body** and broad satisfaction with the key features of the seafood industry’s new peak body
- establishment risks would be significantly reduced if **Australian Organic** was to emerge as the legal structure for the peak body, as it has built up strong financial reserves—however, this option also risks further divisiveness in the industry unless the appropriate democratic structures are incorporated