



12 January 2018

AUSTRALIAN ORGANIC GMO POSITION STATEMENT

Just over three years ago, Australian Organic (not the independent certifier ACO) supported two proposals to update the National Standard in relation to GMOs. One recently has been out for public comment via Organic Industry Standards and Certification Council (OISCC). It relates to changing an outdated and “non-science based” reference (which no other organic standard in the world has) pertaining to the period of time before an organic farmer can sell produce from an area that may have in the past used GMOs.

Australian Organic (AO) has always been a proud supporter of our organic farmers and will continue to fight to protect and keep organic GMO-free. **AO's anti-GMO position cannot be overstated.**

Claims that we are “watering down” standards are at best misinformed, as we are doing everything in our power to ensure certified organic products are better protected under the Law while remaining non-GMO. We believe it is vital that the organic movement remain science based in its approach to standard setting. Organic farming is already difficult, international standards call for a three year ‘in conversion’ (IC) period, and science supports the appropriateness of a three year IC period. Updating the Australian standard so that it is in line with all other international standards will significantly assist our producers and with zero impact on the protections enjoyed by our organic consumers.

In short, Australian Organic made the request to update the standard based on these key points –

- **Australia's current 'five-year' conversion period is not required anywhere else in the world.** Three years is the standard in every other country. We are not seeking to remove this conversion period altogether, rather bring Australia into line with the rest of the world's organic standards. Based on an individual risk analysis, certifiers have the right to impose additional years in conversion. The current minimum 'five-year' conversion time imposes an extra unnecessary barrier without a scientific basis for this position. We want to encourage and support more conventional and GMO farmers to convert. Ultimately the result will be more certified organic farmers which is good for everyone - consumers, health, and the environment.
- In reference to the concerns around glyphosate - the standard addresses both GMO and glyphosate. Both are tested for, and both have counter measures and procedures in the standard outlining how they should be dealt with if contamination occurs. Don't forget that a farm using glyphosate can convert to organic in three years.

Australian Organic have a very staunch position in regard to organic being GMO-free, this has always been our position and has not changed. We are also of the view that a three year IC period is entirely appropriate. It is in keeping with international standards, science supports it, it does not expose the consumer to risk, and it removes a significant barrier bringing Australia into line with world standards.

Our mandate is to “Promote and Protect” Australian Certified Organic. We are championing the change to the standard because it protects in the short term, promotes accessibility and drives organic values into the future.