AUSTRALIAN ORGANIC GUIDE TO:
WHAT IS ORGANIC?
WHAT IS ORGANIC?

Winner of the CHOICE Award for Best Food Endorsement Program 2010

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“It is all about health management (not disease control) and preventative techniques. Like with the human body, if you treat your body firstly in terms of (disease) prevention and healthy practices, you are less likely to ever need interventionist medicine”

Organics is about health management and disease prevention – with no synthetic chemicals

Organic and biodynamic farming means farming in a way which cares for the environment, without relying upon synthetic chemicals and other unnatural interventionist approaches. Hence, organic food comes from organic farms utilising the best of both traditional agriculture and modern techniques, using nature and natural processes as its bedrock.

Rather than using synthetic pesticides to kill pests, farmers prevent pests by planting a diverse range of crops, by rotating crops, using natural biological and environmentally friendly inputs, and conserving natural ecosystems. This means no artificial pesticides, no synthetic herbicides, no hormones and no growth promotants which otherwise have a questionable place in our aim to maintain healthy bodies as well as healthy farms.

The same logic of natural and preventative health management (rather than reactive disease management) is applied to GMOs or Genetically Modified Organisms which the organic industry prohibits from use in production of organic foods. With many safe and proven forms of farming already available, the organic farmer believes it is important to allow Mother Nature to provide us food the way nature intended. Also the organic industry believes that not enough is understood about GMOs, and while there also is a sceptical marketplace of consumers regarding this technology in the food industry, the organic industry believes it is best to be precautionary in its approach to such new, untested, and at this point yet to be established as necessary, technologies.

So what is the fundamental difference between organic farm practices and “conventional” or non-organic? Organic farming has a total focus on soil health. By focusing on soil health first, the health of the plant follows. This in turn enables the plant to feed animals on a balanced and healthy diet. It is all about health management (not disease control) and preventative techniques. Like with the human body, if you treat your body firstly in terms of (disease) prevention and healthy practices, you are less likely to ever need interventionist medicine, let alone surgery. Organic farming aims to achieve the same outcome where prevention of disease and the focus on health ensures a productive farming environment.
Biodiversity in organic farms

Organic farms are required to set aside at least 5% of their farming environment to biodiversity areas where there is no intensive agricultural production. This can include wetlands, native pastures and tree “buffers”, which act as excellent harbours for native animals and other plants. This in turn assists in creating a more natural setting and helps protect the environment, while also assisting in farm management through use of “functional” biodiversity to manage pest and diseases.

Chemicals (and GMOs) in the environment

With its prohibition on synthetic pesticide and fungicide treatments, as well as prohibiting GMOs, organics assists in protecting the wider environment as well as farm land where our foods are produced.

Soils and water efficiency

Building healthy soils, increasing soil organic matter and soil life assists in the soil being able to retain more moisture. In a water scarce continent this is a very useful farming practice and enables organic farmers through time to be more efficient in their water use and therefore have less water needs. It also assists the farm in getting through periods of extended drought.

Agriculture and human health

It is increasingly being recognised that at a fundamental level the health of the soil is inextricably linked with the health of humans. Organic farming is about profoundly changing the way we look at and manage our health. Soils deficient in nutrients, unbalanced and with little life, are unlikely to produce the kinds of healthy plants and food that humans and animals need for optimum nutrition. Many disease and health problems of the modern world may well be prevented or reduced through a greater focus on healthy and health giving farming systems. Organics is part of a movement to profoundly change the way we do produce our foods and the way in which we view health management in our communities.

Productivity of organic farms?

The notion of productivity, i.e. a farm producing a certain amount of “goods” is an important issue to look at. Often we measure productivity of a farm one commodity or crop at a time only. This often distracts us from the overall productivity of the farm. For instance, instead of talking about a certain farm producing X tons of wheat in a year, or X tons of carrots, organic farming systems are more oriented to the multiple yields they might deliver – this might be livestock, a number of crops and most importantly the longer term sustainable farming system that can keep on being productive.

Many organic farms are just as productive, and sometimes more so, than conventional farms. How can this be? In conserving soil organic matter, this helps retain moisture, that can assist through a drought period in making the farm more resilient and in the long term more productive. Also a diversification of both cropping and livestock production (something less relied upon than traditionally many years ago) enables the farmer to trade in more than one commodity and hence furthers the resilience of their farming system.

Good organic farming is about creating the environment for a resilient, productive farming system.

There are certainly however some other “externalities” or external costs of farming that organic farming “internalises”. For instance there are no pesticide or herbicide residues found in our waterways from organic farming activities. Everyone in our society bears this cost, including contamination in fish stocks and polluted water that we consume – and it detracts from the true or real picture of productivity in its broader sense. So, organic farming can offer benefits to both the surrounding environment as well as the farmer by working with nature.
But what about when disease or pests do break out on an organic farm?

This can still happen, though it still often happens differently for two reasons. One is that if the plants are living in a well balanced soil and healthy, they are far less likely to be attacked so significantly by pests and diseases. Secondly, having a focus on biodiversity, often pests have many “enemies” or predators in the diverse flora and fauna of an organic farming system. This makes it harder for pests to get a foothold and become such a significant problem.

This is why you will often hear that some organic farmers don’t have the same pest or disease problems as might be expected in non organic farming systems. There are however a range of natural products available for use by organic farmers as a last resort. These things include natural oils, naturally occurring substances which have pesticidal properties and predatory organisms that can be released which attack a particular pest. The Australian Organic maintains a registration program for farm input products and prints this in the Australian Organic Producer magazine. See also www.austorganic.com for the Organic Product Search which lists both input products, certified organic farms and products generally.

So does it therefore cost more to farm organically?

It certainly can, and the major issue is one of labour. This is for two reasons. One is that in a preventative (disease and pest management) approach to farming this can simply take longer to inspect and monitor fields, or cost more to have the technologies available to monitor crops and pests. Also organics does not permit synthetic herbicides and to this end there are some sectors or crop types (eg carrots, onions and soy beans) that all in their own way require quite considerable weeding. This has to occur manually either by hand (some carrot farmers employ large groups of “chippers” through their season) or by tractor with a range of organic weeding tools.

Is organic farming therefore scientific?

You can see that to understand pests and their predator interactions and to rely on good timing of organic applications to build plant and soil health as well as manage pests and diseases, that only the more sophisticated of science and technology is needed. Sometimes simple traditional methods work, but increasingly it is being recognised that organics is about an involved understanding of nature. To have this understanding, very good science is needed.

There is simply a lot more work to do in the area of organic science. The industry is currently working on establishing a centre for organic systems research. The process of establishing this centre is certainly proving that successful organic farming systems are based on only the best science and are indeed part of a change in our scientific understanding of and interaction with the natural world.

What is the difference between organic and biodynamic?

Biodynamic farming is an enhanced or alternative method of organic farming. Biodynamic utilises traditional farming techniques and a prescribed list of biological or natural “preparations”, whilst acknowledging and working with universal or cosmic forces that are at play in the farming environment. Many organic farmers practice biodynamic methods and the Australian Organic’s certification program Australian Certified Organic covers both Biodynamic (or BD) certification as well as organic certification.

Biodynamic farming is regulated under the same standard in Australia as organic. Most countries have regulations for organic that cover both approaches and in this article when we talk organic we are also talking biodynamic.

“There are ... external costs of farming that organic farming “internalises”. For instance there are no pesticide or herbicide residues found in our waterways from organic farming activities. Everyone in our society bears this cost, including contamination in fish stocks and polluted water that we consume”
The Biodynamic movement is typified by Rudolph Steiner who is viewed as the Grandfather of Biodynamics. Steiner outlined an entire philosophy of life, which included prescriptions for the way in which agriculture needed to be performed to ensure that natural life forces were evident in all foods produced. He warned that a lack of focus on cosmic influences and the use of natural approaches to farming and food production would have dire consequences for human society.

The key issue with biodynamics is the proper application of “preparations” which include 500 and 501 as well as a range of compost preparations that assist in the composting process and enable biodynamic processes to work at the soil level within composts.

The “preps” as they are called include the following: 500 is produced using BD cow manure that is packed into cow horns and buried through the winter months (when natural forces are drawing energies into the ground). In Spring they are uncovered and to use this prep it is carefully and purposefully stirred with a machine that creates vortexes which further assists in energising the solution. This is then sprayed out on the farm at levels that are homeopathic in their application.

501 is a silica product aimed at assisting light entering the farming system. Some BD farms need more and some less of this depending on their own natural environment. The other preps are compost preps and include ingredients from natural sources to aid in the compost process and to further enhance the biodynamic processes on farm.

What about livestock in organic farms?

While not all organic farms have livestock, animals are a core component of recycling nutrients and assisting in the biodiversity on the farm at both a macro (large) as well as micro (small – all the way to soil microbes) level. Of course livestock is also used for meat production. So what makes an animal organic?

Animals must be fed certified organic feeds, cannot be fed or treated with growth promot-ants or antibiotics during their lifetime and must be able to roam and graze freely perform-ing their natural behaviours. Organic livestock producers must practice “best environmental management” ensuring biodiversity and land and wildlife conservation. Each animal sold must have a verified lifetime of organic management in accord with the standard and carry clear identification.

Animal welfare is also paramount. Consideration for the natural behaviours of animals is critical in the planning and management of organic livestock farms.

What about processed foods?

For organically processed foods, minimal processing is permitted only, with a limited number of non agricultural but natural or traditional ingredients only allowed. Hence no unnatural or synthesised dyes, colourings, flavourings or other additives are permitted. This means literally thousands of conventional processed food ingredients are simply not permitted in organic processed foods.

For a full list of the restricted items that can be used (other than certified organic ingredients) see the Organic Standard Annex III.
So what is certification?

The organic certification program was set up in the 1980s in Australia to ensure that what was claimed to be organic indeed was just that. It required an independent setting of standards and an independent team of assessors (known as auditors or inspectors) to ensure that farmers, processors and others in the production chain were complying with rules and regulations laid down by the organic community.

Australia does not have domestic legislation for the term and is unlikely to for some years yet, so the only way to ensure something is organic – unless you produce it yourself – is to seek and rely on a certification mark such as the “Bud” logo to confirm that it has been independently certified to truly national and international standards for organic production.

By reading the label it should say that the produce is certified organic or certified biodynamic. If it is not certified and carrying a logo you cannot be sure that the produce is organic. There should also be a unique certification number for each certified operation, along with a batch code or other traceable system such that each product can be traced back to its point of origin.

There are two levels or categories to certification:

Farmers require a minimum of three years of organic management before they can carry a certification stating “Organic”. There is a transitionary certificate called “In Conversion to Organic” which can be borne after the first 12 months of organic production until this three year period is complete. Food bearing either label is confirmation that those items are being produced organically on farm - it is just that the “In Conversion” product has arisen from a farm that has been in the organic certification program and been producing organically for less time.

International and domestically produced products and labels

You will occasionally notice products imported from overseas. Again because of a lack of domestic protection and legislation in Australia, it is essential you insist on there being a certification mark on the product. The most likely ones you will come across are from the US - being the USDA (US Department of Agriculture) logo, a European Union (EU) logo or reference to the Standard 2092/91 which refers to the European organic legislation, and lastly occasionally a JAS (or Japan Agriculture Standard) logo.

These independent logos and standards mean that the product and the producer have been assessed in accordance with international standards by a third party organisation.
So why purchase certified organic products?

What a great investment in Australia’s sustainable agricultural future – which you can play an active part in! Every time you purchase certified organic products you are investing in the future of our country, and its hard working and caring farmers and their families. This is a future we can ill afford not to invest in and we have the power in our own hands every single day of our lives to make this difference. If it is one thing we actively and positively do every day of our lives it can be this simple act of asking for and purchasing certified organic products.

Of course the personal health and wellbeing benefits of consuming organic products are there for the taking. No wonder this industry is growing now at the rate that it is. People around the world are awakening to a realisation of what they have been missing out on for decades.

Certification is maintained by organic producers and marketers by:

- Annual audits and spot (unannounced) checks are carried out to ensure full compliance with the strict Organic Standard
- All operators must maintain an OMP (Organic Management Plan) and report annually
- There must be a clearly auditable trail of all product sold by a certified operator to prevent fraud

‘Organic’ is legally protected

In Australia the term ‘organic’, in relation to food and fibre production, is defined in the Australian Standard for Organic and Biodynamic (AS6000) and supporting standards such as the Australian Certified Organic Standard (ACOS), which outlines requirements for use of the Organic Bud logo. In Australia consumers are protected from misleading organic claims under the Fair Trading Act, with precedents in Law in relation to “certified organic” claims made with use of a certification logo. Brands which choose to use an ‘organic’ claim without respecting recognised Australian standards, could face prosecution. However, consumers’ ultimate protection lies in purchasing only products which are “certified organic”, and labelled as such with recognised and trusted logos as the Australian Certified Organic “Bud” logo. The Bud is Australia’s main certification mark, appearing on the majority of organic food and other products in Australia. This symbol demonstrates that produce has met and, in some important areas, exceeded minimum government requirements.

“Every time you purchase certified organic products you are investing in the future of our country, and its hard working and caring farmers and their families. This is a future we can ill afford not to invest in and we have the power in our own hands every single day of our lives to make this difference.”
CONSUMER GUIDE TO THE AUSTRALIAN CERTIFIED ORGANIC STANDARD

The Australian Certified Organic Standards are the rules and guidelines all organic operators need to follow to be able to use the ‘Bud’ logo and say they are truly Australian Certified Organic.
ORGANIC PRINCIPLES

People and planet come first

QUALITY
Production of naturally safe, high quality, nutritionally vital foods;

SELF-SUFFICIENCY
Optimal production output, with rational and minimised use of inputs;

RECYCLING
Use of recycling and biological cycles within the farming system;

INCREASE BIODIVERSITY
Biodiversity protection and enhancement within the farm and surrounding areas;

REGENERATION
Regeneration of lands and soils and best environmental practice of farming activities.

Is it the real deal? Always look for the Australian Certified Organic Bud logo for your guarantee.
ORGANIC FARMING

General Requirements

• Farmers must follow these standards for three years before they can be certified as Organic. During the first year produce is sold as non-organic, and in the second and third years can be sold as “In Conversion Organic”.
• Traceability is an important part of organic certification. Operators must keep records of all activities, inputs, and sales to verify they meet these standards.
• Every site is audited at least once every 12 months in order to maintain their organic status. Auditors check inputs & production records, take samples of traceability and products, and also visually inspect the facility to see what is happening.

How are Certified Organic Plant Products Grown?

Inputs are selected based on necessity for use, biological basis, being naturally occurring and non-contaminating.

• Organic seeds and seedlings must be used wherever they are available. However, if they are not available, non-organic seeds & seedlings can be planted provided they are non-GM and not treated with any prohibited inputs (pesticides, fungicides, etc).
• Soil fertility, microbial activity and organic matter are promoted by using a range of physical, cultural and biological practices, including green manures, legumes, crop rotation, minimal tillage, animal manures, compost, worm castings, compost teas, and mined minerals.
• Pests, diseases and weeds are proactively managed by a range of physical, biological & cultural techniques, including species selection, biological control, rotational grazing, companion planting, flame or steam weeding, slashing, and mineral balance.

Seeds

• Parent plants must be grown organically, to the standards above, for at least one generation before their seeds can be sold as organic.
• Seeds cannot be treated with chemicals to prolong their storage life. Natural products such as carbon dioxide, silica or diatomaceous earth may be used.

Sprouts & Wheatgrass

• Only use organic seeds for sprouting.
• No plant hormones, artificial fungicides or other synthetic chemicals can be used.
• Pest and disease control is pro-actively & preventatively managed

Wild Harvest (incl. Seaweed)

• Wild Harvest products are gathered from non-farmed, naturally-occurring areas and are usually native/bush foods or marine products such as seaweed.
• Wild harvest operators must sustainably manage their harvest areas to maintain the natural ecosystem, and must respect local indigenous rights.
• Harvest sites must be located in areas which are free from contamination and have at least three years’ history of no prohibited (synthetic) inputs.
ORGANIC MEAT, DAIRY AND EGGS

Animal welfare is high priority on organic farms, with adequate shade, shelter, feed and clean, fresh drinking water available at all times.

- Organically-grown animals are free-range, with access to organic pasture for their entire lives.
- Any grains, hay or other feeds must be organic, with up to 5% chemical-free, non-organic feed allowed only where absolutely necessary.
- Feeds may also be supplemented with things such as seaweed, minerals, natural vitamins, etc., required for a balanced diet.
- Good nutrition, rotational grazing practices and natural treatments are used to help prevent & resist pests and diseases.
- Vaccines are allowed where a disease is endemic to the area and threatens animal welfare, but must be non-GM.
- The use of synthetic nitrogen supplements, growth promotants and hormones is prohibited.
- To be sold for organic meat, animals must be grown organically from the last trimester as a foetus onwards.
- Animal transport and handling is arranged in such a way as to minimise stress and prevent contamination.
- Meat must be processed at a certified organic abattoir and butcher that comply with these organic standards to be sold using the ‘Bud’ logo.

**Porks**
- General standards above, plus:
- Mothers cannot be confined to small farrowing crates when having piglets, and focus is placed upon allowing the animals to live in natural social groups.
- No tail docking, teeth clipping, teeth grinding, or permanent nose rings.
- Stocking rates for indoor and outdoor areas are set at rates which allow for natural behaviour and social interaction.
- Antibiotics cannot be used.

**Dairy**
- General standards above, plus:
- If antibiotics or other treatments are used in an emergency situation (for animal welfare reasons) the milk from that cow cannot be sold as organic for 6 months.

**Poultry & Eggs**
- General standards above, plus:
- Battery cages are not allowed and systematic de-beaking is prohibited.
- Antibiotics cannot be used.
- Set stocking rates for indoor and outdoor areas aim to allow for natural behaviour and social interaction.

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**DID YOU KNOW**
World Cancer Research (2007) findings favour Australian organic meat made without cancer-causing nitrates & other preservatives
### HONEY AND BEE PRODUCTS

Organic beehives must be located at least 5km from any possible contamination sources, with the land confirmed to have no chemical or synthetic inputs for at least 3 years.

- Maps are kept of all beehive locations and each hive is identified.
- Hives must be made from non-contaminating materials.
- Hygiene and hive management is a critical focus to ensure the health and welfare of the bees, and to aid disease and pest prevention.
- Organic honey cannot be heated above 45°C – to maintain its natural quality, nutritive value & consistency.

### BIODYNAMICS

- In addition to all other organic requirements, Biodynamics (BD) incorporates a greater philosophical element, based on a series of lectures given by Rudolf Steiner in the 1920’s.
- BD production focuses on use of a range of “preparations”– herbal-, mineral-, and manure-based, numbered 500 to 508 – to enhance the development of the soil, and in turn the total farm and ecological system.
- BD farmers also work in harmony with the cycles of the moon and planets to utilise the Earth’s natural energy flows; planting, harvesting and pruning on specified days of the cycle.

### DID YOU KNOW

**Organic honey is recommended as a remedy for its antibacterial, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.**

**Australian biodynamic vineyards produce some of the world’s most highly prized wines.**
PROCESSED FOOD AND DRINKS

• All ingredients are checked and approved by the organic certification body (ACO) before production.
• Must contain at least 95% certified organic ingredients, excluding water & salt, to claim to be certified organic.
• Other ingredients (< 5%) must be non-GM and non-irradiated, not available organically, and should only be a natural ingredient or an allowed minor non-organic ingredient (Refer to Annex III of the ACOS for the full list of allowed minor ingredients).
• All steps in the production chain – from growers to processors and packers – must be certified.
• Organic products are stored, handled and processed separately to non-organic products to prevent cross-contamination.
• Use of pest control and sanitation products is strictly monitored.
• Ingredients are processed in the most natural way possible – preferably by physical, enzymatic or biological methods – to maintain the natural quality and authenticity of the product.

Bread & Bakery Goods

• General standards above, plus:
  • Organic bread and bread flours are exempt from otherwise mandatory fortification with iodised salt, folic acid and thiamine.
  • Flour cannot be bleached
  • Yeast and other common minor ingredients such as lecithin, if used, must be verified to be non-GM.

Wine, Beer & Alcoholic Beverages

• Must be manufactured and bottled at a certified facility.
• Only non-GM yeast is allowed for fermentation. Some organic winemakers use indigenous yeasts naturally occurring in their vineyards.
• Only minimal levels of sulphur dioxide are permitted, usually less than 125 parts per million. Many organic winemakers choose to produce totally preservative-free wine.
• Natural processing aids such as oak chips, egg white and bentonite (clay) are allowed, along with a limited number of other low-toxicity products.

DID YOU KNOW
“Organic offers a haven for parents and children wishing to avoid the 50 additives linked to many adverse health and behavioural reactions” Food Intolerance Network
COSMETICS AND SKINCARE PRODUCTS

### DID YOU KNOW

By choosing organic skincare you can avoid numerous synthetic chemicals and neurotoxins entering the bloodstream which can lead to health problems.

### FOR ALL ACO & Australian Organic COSMETIC & SKINCARE PRODUCTS:

- Organic ingredients must be used wherever they are reasonably available.
- Cannot be tested on animals.
- For the non-organic ingredients:
  - Naturally-mined minerals, clays, chalks, pumice & salts are allowed.
  - Prohibited inputs include petrochemical ingredients, synthetic colours/fragrances parfums, and harsh chemical processes such as hydrogenation and sulfuration.
  - Harsh chemicals such as benzene and hexane are not allowed, even as solvents.
- Antioxidants and other minor ingredients which are allowed under this standard include such things as:
  - Natural vitamin E
  - Ascorbic acid (Vitamin C)
  - Vegetable oil-derived emulsifiers
  - Sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide for traditional style soap making.
  - Specified naturally-derived or low-toxicity emulsifiers, surfactants, antioxidants
- (Refer to Table 6a of the 2010 ACOS for the full list of allowed ingredients.)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organic Cosmetics</th>
<th>Made with X% Organic Cosmetics</th>
<th>Australian Organic Approved Product Cosmetics (non-organic)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Contain 95 - 100% certified organic ingredients and comply with the above allowances.</td>
<td>Contain 70 - 95% certified organic ingredients, and comply with the above allowances.</td>
<td>Contain less than 70% certified organic ingredients, because of the nature of the product, and comply with the above allowances. These are usually mineral-based products, such as powder foundations and blushers, etc.</td>
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TRADERS

**Wholesalers, Importers and Exporters**
- Have dedicated storage areas for organic products to prevent cross-contamination.
- Train their staff in the correct handling & distribution of organic products.
- Maintain a clearly traceable audit trail to track products from receipt through to dispatch.
- Use of pest control and sanitation products is strictly monitored and managed in a responsible way.
- Any imported products are checked to ensure they meet an international organic standard equivalent to the ACOS 2010.

**Retailers**
- Maintain a clearly traceable audit trail to track products from receipt through to dispatch.
- Organic and Organic In Conversion products are clearly separated and identified from non-organic products in store.
- Train their staff in the correct handling of organic products.
- Use of pest control and sanitation products is strictly monitored and managed in a responsible way.
- Are subject to one unscheduled (surprise) audit each year.

**Restaurants & Cafes**
- The menu must contain 3 or more organic dishes, including at least 1 full, two-course organic meal at any time.
- Organic meals contain a minimum of 95% certified organic ingredients.
- Organic is given preference when sourcing produce, including local and/or seasonal food, wherever reasonably available.
- Cannot use any GM foods or products in their kitchen.
- Maintain traceability and segregation of organic produce at all times, and focus placed upon utilising best management practice in selection of sanitisers & pest control products.

**Farmers Markets**
- All produce sold as organic must be certified organic.
- Organic certificates of the stallholders/suppliers must be displayed.
- Market organisers need to verify their stallholders’ certification and conduct regular internal checks.

**ANIMAL & PET FOODS**
- At least 95% of agricultural-origin ingredients must be from certified organic sources.
- Vitamins and minerals may be added to produce a balanced diet.

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**DID YOU KNOW?**
Unless a retailer or market stall holder is certified organic, there is no guarantee that loosely sold produce is certified organic. Always look for the retailer’s organic certificate displayed in the store/stall for organic you can trust!
FIBRES, FABRICS, GARMENTS
(INCL. WOOL & COTTON)

- The entire production & supply chain must be certified for the final product to display an organic logo – eg – growing, ginning, spinning, scouring, weaving, sewing, etc.
- Facilities which also process non-organic fibres must clean down all equipment prior to an organic production run to prevent cross-contamination.
- When processing, focus is placed on use of low-impact, biodegradable surfactants, enzymes & natural vegetable or plant acids, waxes & oils. Contaminating solvents and heavy metals are prohibited.
- Harsh acids, bleaching agents, synthetic surfactants and formaldehydes are not allowed.
- Some sodium-based bleachers may be permitted if they are removed by further processes.

AUSTRALIAN ORGANIC REGISTERED PRODUCTS

Australian Organic Registration is available for natural products which, because of their nature, are not able to be certified organic - such as salt, water and minerals. The Australian Organic Registration program also includes inputs for organic farming and gardening (eg – fertilisers and pest & disease control products) or inputs for organic processing (eg – cleaners and sanitisers).

Salt & Edible Minerals

- Includes sea salts, river or lake salts, etc.
- Source sites are assessed for ensuring no possible contamination, and must be harvested and processed in a sustainable way.
- Are not iodised and do not contain flocculants, dessicants or free-flowing agents.

Spring & Pure Water

- Spring water naturally flows to the surface from underground sources; Pure water comes from other sources, such as pristine rainwater.
- Source sites are assessed for possible contamination, and must be collected and processed in a sustainable way.
- Sites are monitored for levels of contaminants, heavy metals and bacteria.
- May be filtered or processed with UV, ozone, temperature or pressure to maintain product safety.

DID YOU KNOW?

Clothing made of conventional cotton often externalises costs, including environmental degradation and worker abuse. Benefits of organic cotton include clean production, fair treatment of workers, and no toxic chemicals used to produce your clothes!

DID YOU KNOW?

Many gardening products are labelled organic but that doesn’t mean they are suitable for organic gardening! Always look for a registration logo such as the Australian Organic “Bud” logo for gardening products you can trust.
Farm and Garden Inputs

- Are only supplements to pro-active organic management.
- Are assessed based on their allowance for use in organic farming and include fertilisers, pest, disease and weed control products.
- Are usually mined substances or from animal, vegetable or microbiological sources, and may be subject to mechanical, physical, microbiological, enzymatic or limited chemical processing.
- Should not be synthetically compounded.
- Cannot contain high levels of chemical or heavy metal residues, and may be randomly tested.
- Irradiation, GM and biosolids are prohibited.
- May contain low-toxicity minor ingredients such as wetting agents, emulsifiers or synergists.

Cleaners & Sanitisers for Industrial and Household Use

- Are assessed based on biodegradability, low toxicity and contamination potential (in both production and application).
- Often include naturally derived or low-toxicity active ingredients such as acetic acid, alcohols, natural & biodegradable detergents, hydrogen peroxide, peracetic acid, natural soaps, vegetable-based compounds.
- See also Australian Organic Approved Product Cosmetics above.

For additional information on these and other products, you can download a full copy of the 2010 Australian Certified Organic Standard for free from the Australian Organic website – www.austorganic.com or contact the Australian Organic office on 07 3350 5716
20 good reasons to buy organic

1. Reduce chemical runoff and residues in drinking water, waterways and coastal areas. Runoff is the main cause of diminishing marine life, animals and plants. Over 29,500 tonnes of herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and plant growth regulators are used each year in Australia (Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, 2006)*.

2. Restore soils for productive cropland and secure the future of Australian agriculture. Approximately 50 million hectares of Australia’s agricultural land (around half the total area) have topsoils that are marginally acidic or worse (Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, 2006)*. Organic farming systems are based on the principle of land and soil regeneration and best environmental practices.

3. Increase the resilience of farms during drought. In the wake of the 2002/2003 drought, the agricultural sector saw a loss of over 100,000 jobs over a period of five years, from 2002 to 2007, that have yet to be fully restored (AgriFood Skills Australia, 2008). Organic farms have a greater resilience in times of drought. A 21-year trial showed that organic crops saw a margin of 38-196 per cent greater yield than comparable conventional crops (Rodale Institute, 2011).

4. Increase biodiversity and save disappearing native animal habitats. For decades scientists worldwide have carried out studies with the clear conclusion that organic farming significantly supports biodiversity, with up to 50% more plant, insect and bird life found on organic farms (Soil Association, 2011).

5. Eliminate use of growth hormones, antibiotics and genetically engineered drugs and feeds in livestock. Resistant bacteria such as vancomycin-resistant Enterococci (VRE) are known to spread via the food chain from the use of hormone growth promotants (HGP). A recent ban on the use of HGP by the European Union resulted in a reduction of VRE in animals and its effects on the general public. (World Health Organization, 2011). In Australia around 40 percent of cattle are raised using HGP, with a total of 6.56 million HGP doses used on farms and in the feedlot industry in the period from 2006 to 2007 (Meat & Livestock Australia, 2008).

6. Ensure humane treatment of animals. Scientific evidence indicates that practices such as battery hen farming, and the use of sow stalls, inflict continuous intense suffering on animals throughout their confinement leading to acute physical and behavioural problems (RSPCA). Organic livestock is grown in a way that conforms to natural processes of growth and development.

7. Reduce landfill, which has greenhouse consequences. With waste generation increasing on an annual basis, approximately 1.6 tonnes of waste were generated for every Australian in 2002-03. Of the 32.4 million tonnes generated, almost half (47 per cent) were food and garden waste from the municipal stream (Productivity Commission, 2006). By recycling and choosing organic methods, Australians can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect precious ecosystems (Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW), 2006).

“Organic is not a luxury; it’s how food is supposed to be.”
Shane Heaton, nutritionist
8 Safeguard the integrity of food. Certified organic provides a guarantee that product has been grown, handled, packaged and distributed avoiding risk of contamination of the product to the point of sale. Full traceability is maintained along the chain. Help to ameliorate climate change. Agriculture is accused of being responsible for about 30 per cent of global warming due to CO2 emissions, however conversion to organic agriculture can:

9 Capture CO2 back into the soil in the form of humus. A 23-year research project shows that if only 1000 medium sized farms converted to organic production, the carbon stored in the soil would be equivalent to taking 117 440 cars off the road each year (The Rodale Institute®, 2003).

10 Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by eliminating synthetic nitrogen fertilisers. Agriculture in Australia is the second-highest contributor of greenhouse gases (15.2 per cent in 2008) and accounts for most of the country’s methane and nitrous oxide emissions, which are caused by fertilisers and crop residues (Department of Climate Change, 2010). Organic standards prohibit the use of nitrogen fertilisers, which lowers emissions and provides both economic and environmental benefits (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, 2011).

Research shows that consuming organic means that you can:

11 Eat produce that is better for you. A comparison of nearly 100 studies and development of research methods has concluded that the nutritional premium of organic food averages 25%. The differences documented in the study are sufficiently consistent and sizable to justify a new answer to the frequently asked question – “Yes, organic plant-based foods are, on average, more nutritious”.

12 Avoid eating up to two kilograms of food additives every year. Many food additives have been linked with symptoms such as allergic reactions, rashes, headaches, asthma, growth retardation and hyperactivity in children (Heaton, 2004).

13 Avoid GMOs. Independent testing of the long-term health effects of GMO foods on humans has not been carried out. The many exemptions from GE labelling laws in Australia make it impossible to know which grocery items use GMO-derived ingredients. Certified organic foods are a great way to avoid GMOs. (Australian Organic 2009)

14 Lower the incidence of neurodevelopmental problems in children which can be caused or made worse by prenatal and early life exposure to pesticides and chemicals that contaminate our food. Three separate United States university studies likened the effects of organophosphate (OP) insecticides exposure during pregnancy to that of high lead exposure, impacting the cognitive development of children (Engel et al., 2011).

15 Virtually eliminate dietary exposures to insecticides known to be developmental neurotoxins. Findings were reported in two University of Washington studies involving school-age children (Barr et al., 2006).

16 Reduce hormone disruptors caused by pesticides. The European Union says that hormones such as chemical insecticides and herbicides used commonly in food production can interfere with our body’s natural hormones and reproductive organs, which may cause low sperm counts and increase the risk of cancer (Orton et al, 2011) and may cause early onset of puberty among young girls (European Commission, 2007).

17 Give infants the nutrient building blocks they need for a healthy future. Ninety per cent of dairy and meat products from organic sources have been shown to increase levels of healthy fatty acids in breast milk (Rist et al., 2007).

18 Reduce the risk of infants’ exposure to pesticides. A 1995 Victorian study of breastmilk found that infants are regularly exposed to several pesticides at levels greater than the ‘acceptable daily intake’ (Ahokas et al., 1995).

19 Reduce the risk of cancer. On average organic foods contain about one-third more cancer-fighting antioxidants than comparable conventional produce (Benbrook, 2005).

20 Eat the best-tasting food. Many Australians who consume organic products every day do so because they believe that organic tastes best.

For a full list of references and links to peer reviewed research, visit www.whyorganic.com.au.
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