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Organic News.

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Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) Organic Farming Tour

Julian Lee, former NESB Rural Agricultural Education Officer based at Liverpool City Council was the instigator of a very successful Organic Bus Tour held in the Sydney region on Friday June 23, 2006. The Bus Tour was offered to the NESB (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Arabic & Chinese) growers in the Sydney Basin to provide them with information on an alternative farming opportunity to their traditional ideas.

Thirty participants took part (Chinese, Cambodian & Vietnamese) with interpreters. A visit was made to Charlie Galea's organic vegetable farm near Penrith. Charlie talked about the production and growing requirements for organic vegetables, the regulations to meet accreditation and certification and

showed the group around his farm. The group asked many questions and were impressed with the farm.

As part of the information group, David Tilley from Alfalfa House discussed the opportunities and challenges of working with retail outlets and that there was a demand for organically



Above: Participants at the recent NESB Organic Bus Tour

grown product, and that growers would be ideally located to supply major organic markets in the Sydney region. Robyn Neeson, NSW DPI provided an overview of organic production principles and told participants that the Department was fully supportive of the initiative to encourage more organic farming in the Sydney Basin and that some courses and backup could be provided if farmers wished to progress into organic production.

The group then traveled to certified organic wholesalers EcoFarms at Homebush and met with Matthew Fensom (General Manager) who provided a presentation and tour of their premises. Matthew re-enforced to the group the need for more locally grown organic product as demand was far greater than supply.

A presentation from George Devrell, Chairman and CEO of organic certification organisation, NASAA, provided detailed information on the organic accreditation system, and offered follow-up support for those who wished to develop their own farms along organic principles.

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Right: NASAA Chair and CEO George Devreil explains the finer points of Organic Certification to NESB farmers.



The day was a great success. Already one property has applied to start organic farming and a number of the tour participants are looking forward to attending some courses to learn more about organic farming and if it is for them.

For more details contact: *Maryke Archbold-Hession, Marketing Officer-Education NSW DPI. Email: maryke.archbold-hession@dpi.nsw.gov.au*

Sydney's Organic Expo gets bigger and better!

In less than 10 years, organic product exhibitions in Sydney have grown from a 3 x 3 metre display at Sydney's Royal Easter Show to 168 exhibitors occupying an entire exhibition hall at Sydney Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour. Held from 21 to 23 July, this year's Organic Expo was Australia's largest ever organic and environmental lifestyle show attracting 7, 447 visitors.

This year's Expo theme was 'nourishing our children in the 21st century'. Seminars and panel discussions focused on creating a sustainable future for our children through our food, homes and gardens.



Left: Visitors to Sydney's 2006 Organic Expo listen to one of the informative seminars.

Day one of the Expo was Trade Day, and brisk trade it was! Exhibitors were literally 'run off their feet' with enquiries for their products and services. Days two and three were open to the general public who were entertained with cooking displays, informative speaker sessions

on organic production, nutrition and health, and loads of product testing and tasting. Fresh, frozen, processed - everything from organic wine, only OBE Beef's fully pre-cooked grilled meat balls, yum! were available in Australia - apparently all are being exported to the US), vegetables, herbs, dairy products (my favorite - Gigi's ginger ice cream), pet food, clothing, cosmetics, and much, much more.

All in all, this year's Sydney Organic Expo radiated another very positive signal that the organic industry is coming of age.

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For more information about the Expo or to enquire about exhibiting at next year's event (book your site early as sites are already being reserved), contact the Expo organizers Smeaton Hackett Events on 02 9451 4747, Email: mary@shevents.com.au

Robyn Neeson Organic farming Liaison Officer NSW DPI. Email: robyn.neeson@dpi.nsw.gov.au

ROFO & BFA invite all interested in organics to a roadshow at Yanco

While every fast-growing industry offers many opportunities, it comes with its challenges.

The organic industry is facing its own challenges including lack of consistent supplies of produce and products, gaps in the supply chain, lack of information on where demand is heading, lack of information for growers on methods of production, on the certification process, and so on.

The Biological Farmers of Australia's (BFA) Organic Roadshows have been popular over the years designed to provide a much needed avenue for keeping regional and metropolitan areas informed and networked.

The Yanco Roadshow will be held next month on 4th September at Yanco Agricultural Institute in conjunction with Riverina Organic Farmers Organisation (ROFO) and NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

BFA and ROFO members are invited to voice areas of concern and provide input into problem solving in a members meeting the day prior to the workshop. There will be a BBQ open to all interested on Sunday night and then the Roadshow is open to the public on the Monday.

BFA General Manager Michael Blakeney says "the ROFO group is an example where growers recognise the need to work together to achieve positive results for all. Problems in the supply chain and in marketing have been overcome in numbers in the past. The BFA wishes to help facilitate growers to network and receive input into where it can provide greater support to its members."

Successful growers and business owners in industry will speak on the day providing first-hand knowledge. The workshop will cover such topics as production of rice and results of organic rice trials (certified organic rice farmer Geoff Hehir and NSW DPI's Robyn Neeson), organic beef (Shane Blundy certified beef producer, East Gippsland), organic lamb (Geoff Duddy, Sheep & Wool Livestock Officer, NSW DPI Yanco), plant nutrition and soil health (Jeffery Evan NSW DPI, Wagga Wagga and Bruce Armstrong, in-conversion farmer & Consulting Agronomist, Wagga Wagga); organic vegetables, oil seeds and green manures (Neil Wiseman, certified organic farmer, Coleambally); beverages including beer and wine (Marcus Nalder, certified organic farmer and brewer, Swan Hill, Vic); food processing and value adding (Neil Druce (Green Grove Organics, Junee, NSW) and organic certification (Chris Hurwood, BFA).

The day will close with an open forum and a farm tour of the EH Graham Centre (a collaborative alliance between NSW DPI and Charles Sturt University) and RIRDC newly funded organic spelt project located at Yanco's certified organic trial site.

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ROFO members David and Mary Booth have been instrumental in putting together the program for the day. "As growers going through the conversion process we found it difficult to find information on farm management, markets and what the consumer wants. Our main objective for the roadshow is to help with sharing of knowledge and information for certified growers and newcomers to this industry."

WHERE:

Murrumbidgee Rural Studies Centre (MRSC)

Yanco Agricultural Institute

PMB

YANCO NSW

Yanco is 10 minutes drive from downtown busy Leeton, and 20 minutes drive from the gracious Narrandera, junction of the Sturt and Newell Highways.

WHEN:

Sunday 3rd – Monday 4th September, 2006

Sunday, 3rd September:

4.30 - 6.00 BFA & ROFO member's meeting (member's only)

6.00 - 9.00 Social BBQ, Organic food, beer & wine. **Open to all interested.**

Monday 4th September:

8:30am to 4:30pm **Yanco Organic Roadshow.**

ACCOMMODATION:

Motel and bunk style accommodation is available for Sun 3rd at MRSC. For accommodation costs and bookings contact Kelly Goring 02 6951 2775. Other motel accommodation is available in Leeton and Narrandera.

AIR TRAVEL

Regional Express Airways flies 7 days a week from Sydney and 6 days a week from Mildura (except Sunday) to Narrandera.

RSVP & ROADSHOW REGISTRATION:

Please RSVP now to secure a seat.

Closing date for RSVP's 28th August, 2006

Katie Billing ph. 02 69636996, wattleparkorganics@bigpond.com or to BFA ph. 07 3350 5716, info@bfa.com.au.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

The workshop is open to all interested parties across Australia from all sectors, and will be of particular interest to:

- Producers
- Processors
- Retailers
- Industry members

Neighbours and friends are welcome.

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Entry is free apart from a small cover charge of \$25 to cover catering costs for lunch. Organic of course!

ROADSHOW PROGRAM:

To obtain the Roadshow program go to the BFA website <http://www.bfa.com.au> or contact Holly Vyner on ph. 07 3350 5716 or email media@bfa.com.au.

News, Publications, Commentaries & Events

Publication reviews:

New RIRDC Report Investigates Export Potential for Australia's Organic Sector

As part of an ongoing research program into Organic Systems, the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) commissioned a study to investigate the export potential for the Australian organic sector, particularly from the perspective of opportunities and barriers.

The study was primarily a desk study, but was also able to draw on findings from another in-market analysis that was in progress. The related analysis included field research in key markets in Asia, Europe and the United States of America (US). The resulting report concludes that for nearly all organic products, in virtually all the developed economies, demand outstrips supply. The key constraints to the growth of the Australian organic export industry are:- lack of consistent product supply and year-round availability; the price premium, poor eye appeal and shelf presence; inconsistency of product quality; short shelf life; distance to market; and lack of consumer confidence in the authenticity of labels.

The report concludes that the higher prospect markets for Australian organic exports are Japan, Continental Europe, the United Kingdom (UK), the US and Southeast Asia. In the longer term, China, Taiwan and South Korea will also emerge as growth markets. In terms of product categories, the best prospects for Australia are likely to be in beef and lamb, cereal based products, processed foods, juices, beverages, wine, jam, honey and condiments. Prospects for perishable products, such as fruit, vegetables and dairy products, are judged to be confined to closer markets, such as Southeast Asia.

The new knowledge generated from this study will be critical to anyone contemplating the export potential of Australian organic agriculture.

The full report can be found at: <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/ORG/06-061.pdf>

Interim Survey results highlight socio-economic factors influencing the conversion from conventional to organic farming

Interim results of a survey for a PhD research project by student Yuke Rahayu of the School of Natural and Rural Systems Management University of Queensland in Gatton, Qld. have just been released.

The project looks at socio-economic factors influencing the conversion from conventional to organic farming, in particular, the motivations and barriers behind the decision making of farmers to adopt organic farming and consumers to buy organic food.

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The interim results indicated the following policy interventions are likely to stimulate more entrants into the organic farming industry:

- Better provision of information on organic farming and best management practices for farmers,
- Streamlining the organic certification process to reduce costs and paper work,
- Development of the organic food market by increasing public awareness of organic products and assisting the organic food distribution system.

The results of these surveys are now available to download at the link:

<http://www.nrsm.uq.edu.au/survey/yuke/results> Questions and comments are welcome via the comments box online or by calling ph. 07 5460 1692 / 0421 669 063, or email: s4035642@student.uq.edu.au.

Interdisciplinary and multilevel approach to organic and sustainable agriculture education at North Carolina State University

Abstract:

There is an increasing demand for education in organic and sustainable agriculture from undergraduates, graduate students and extension agents.

In this paper, the authors discuss highlights and evaluations of a multilevel approach to education currently being developed at North Carolina State University (NCSU) that integrates interdisciplinary training in organic and sustainable agriculture and the related discipline of agroecology through a variety of programs for undergraduate students, graduate students, and extension agents. These educational programs are possible because of a committed interdisciplinary faculty team and the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, a facility dedicated to sustainable and organic agriculture research, education, and outreach. Undergraduate programs include an inquiry-based sustainable agriculture summer internship program, a sustainable agriculture apprenticeship program, and an interdisciplinary agroecology minor that includes two newly developed courses in agroecology and a web-based agroecology course. Research projects and a diversity of courses focusing on aspects of sustainable and organic agriculture are available at NCSU for graduate students and a PhD sustainable agriculture minor is under development. A series of workshops on organic systems training offered as a graduate-level course at NCSU for extension agents is also described. Connecting experiential training to a strong interdisciplinary academic curriculum in organic and sustainable agriculture was a primary objective and a common element across all programs. The authors believe the NCSU educational approach and programs described here may offer insights for other land grant universities considering developing multilevel sustainable agriculture educational programs.

Authors: Schroeder MS., Creamer NG., Linker HM., Mueller JP., Rzewnicki P.

Source: HortTechnology. 16(3):418-426, 2006 Jul-Sep.

Development of organic and sustainable agricultural education at the University of California, Davis: A closer look at practice and theory

Abstract:

In the mid-1970s, University of California, Davis, students concerned about the environmental and social consequences of modern agriculture were interested in exploring the practice and theory of "alternative" agriculture. These students organized to create new educational opportunities to address needs that were not being met by the existing curricula. These student-initiated opportunities emphasized interdisciplinary analyses of agriculture and field-based experiential learning; they included student-organized courses and the development of the Student Experimental Farm (SEF) as a site for student education, research,

demonstration, and extension projects. Over the next three decades, the SEF developed diverse experiential educational projects, classroom and field-based courses focusing on sustainable and organic agriculture, and several departments and programs offered additional, related courses and curricula. In 2004, an interdisciplinary curriculum committee within the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences began to develop an undergraduate major in sustainable agriculture. A team of faculty and students within the committee conducted a broad stakeholder survey of agricultural practitioners, academics, students, and alumni to help inform decisions regarding what content, skills, and experiences to include in the curriculum. The survey findings reinforced the original curricular and pedagogical themes articulated and acted upon by students 30 years prior. The proposed curriculum is aimed at integrating disciplinary and interdisciplinary coursework in natural and social sciences, significant on- and off-campus experiential learning, and an emphasis on professional and interpersonal problem-solving and communication skills. Educational theory supports these diverse educational approaches and is useful in helping design courses and curricula in organic and sustainable agriculture.

Authors: Parr D.M., Van Horn M.

Source: HortTechnology. 16(3):426-431, 2006 Jul-Sep.

Developing an interdisciplinary organic and sustainable agriculture curriculum at the University of Florida

Abstract:

With funding to increase support for organic farming research at land grant universities, organic growers have collaborated with faculty and administrators to develop an undergraduate, interdisciplinary minor at the University of Florida. Required introductory courses focus on general concepts of organic and sustainable farming, alternative cropping systems, production programs, handling, and marketing issues. An advanced horticulture course requires intensive examination of certification procedures, farm plans, soil fertility, and crop management, all of which are integrated into a required field project. Extension faculty have also fostered development of this new curriculum by coordinating regional workshops and field days in collaboration with organic growers and by developing educational materials on organic certification and related issues.

Authors: Ferguson J.J., Lamb E., Swisher M.

Source: HortTechnology. 16(3):436-438, 2006 Jul-Sep.

Incorporating organic and agroecological approaches into the university curricula: The Iowa State University graduate program in sustainable agriculture

Abstract:

Organic agriculture has expanded to a \$13 billion industry in the United States in 2005, continuing the nearly decade-long trend of 20% annual growth. Despite the growth in organic agriculture, our scientific knowledge of organic agriculture farming systems remains limited. Interest in sustainable and organic education at the university level has increased in recent years. To help address this need, the Iowa State University Graduate Program in Sustainable Agriculture (GPSA) was established in 2001 to meet three principal objectives: 1) provide students with the analytical and problem-solving skills required to meet the challenges confronting agriculture in the 21st century; 2) develop an innovative interdisciplinary and interdepartmental approach to graduate education; and 3) position Iowa State University at the forefront of institutions conducting research and extending knowledge about sustainable agricultural systems. As of 2004, more than 70 faculty from various departments and 29 students have participated in the program. Students have the opportunity to

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investigate organic issues within the context of the five new GPSA courses and to conduct organic agriculture farming systems research in thesis and dissertation studies. Producers and agricultural professionals are involved with GPSA students through the curriculum and on-farm research. Research questions involving optimizing crop or livestock production, plant protection, soil quality, and socioeconomic benefits of farming systems constitute typical theses.

Author: Delate K.

Source: HortTechnology. 16(3):445-448, 2006 Jul-Sep.

Curriculum development for organic horticulture: Introduction

Abstract:

As organic agriculture continues to grow, pressure from students and the public to develop novel curricula to address specific needs of this sector of agriculture also will increase. More students from the cities and with limited background in production agriculture are enrolling in agricultural programs with special interest in organic production. This new student population is demanding new curricula based on a better understanding of agroecology principles and more experiential training. Several universities throughout the nation have engaged in a profound curriculum transformation to satisfy the emerging need of students in organic production. This workshop was organized to bring together experts that are working on different organic and sustainable agriculture curricula throughout the country to share their experiences and lessons learned. Most of these curricula include a traditional classroom teaching component, a major experiential component, a student farm for hands-on experience and internships, and in some cases a marketing-typically a community supported agriculture (CSA)-component. Others programs are more extension oriented, providing applied training to growers outside of the university teaching curriculum.

Authors: Ngouajio M., Delate K., Carey E., Azarenko AN., Ferguson JJ., Sciarappa, WJ.

Source: HortTechnology. 16(3):414-417, 2006 Jul-Sep.

Events:

Organic Growers Association of Western Australia Presents 2 Workshops:

ORGANIC FOOD AND YOU what is it all about?

The Positive Future of Organic Food – Listen to people who have become organic farmers, why they did it and how they manage their organic lifestyles. Learn what Organics in the UK is all about. Listen to the steps being taken to protect consumers from misleading information on organic food and their processes. Hear what science is doing to protect the environment and question how WA is going to provide future food security for its growing population.

Saturday 5th of August 2006 at the Simmonds Lecture Theatre at the University of Western Australia, registration is at 8.30, \$25.00 members, \$35.00 non-members, 15.00 extra for lunch (advanced registration only). CALL: (09) 9375 8850 FOR INFORMATION AND TO BOOK A SPOT or email: enquiries@ogawa.org.au

CERTIFIED ORGANIC PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

The Positive Future of Organic Food – Understand what organic farming is all about. What impact is the development of the Domestic Australian Organic Standards going to have on you? How do you integrate certified organic production into an environmental management system? The retail sector and the importance of managing your supply chain.

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Sunday 6th of August 2006 at the Castle Hotel, Avon Terrace, York WA

\$45.00 members, \$55.00 non-members, lunch included. CALL: (09) 9375 8850 FOR INFORMATION AND TO BOOK A SPOT Or email : enquiries@ogawa.org.au

Climate Change Workshop: Bridging the gap between Climate Research and the Farmer

A climate workshop is to be held at the National Wine & Grape Industry Centre, Wagga Wagga Agricultural Institute 30th August 06 (8-30am-3-30pm).

This will be an interactive workshop for farmers, researchers & agribusiness people to present their views on current research, and where we should be heading for future research on climate change, risk management for agriculture & how we can deal with climate variability.

OBJECTIVES of WORKSHOP:

- Communicate to the farming community the results/outputs/outcomes of the Tools to Reduce the Impact of Climate Variability in South Eastern Australia project.
- Communicate with the farming community on the on-going work relating to agriculture on climate variability and climate change.
- Establish a 2-way dialogue with the farming community on climate change and global warming.

For more information & RSVP (by 25/8/06) for catering: Phil Bowden (NSW DPI) 0269 424 957 or Felicity Gummer (Farmlink) 0269 244 633

Organic Producers Association of Queensland 2nd State Organic Conference - Back to Basics: Breaking Free of Agri-chemicals. Beerwah Community Centre 1 & 2 September 2006

The Back to Basics conference will provide a vital state forum for organic and interested conventional farmers and producers, wholesalers and industry representatives to discuss the many issues faced by Queensland's organic and conventional farmers. Some of these issues include; meeting the increasing consumer demand, Biodiesel and other energy alternatives, national certification standards, food safety standards, marketing and productivity.

Day One: Delegates will be involved in a variety of workshops, plenary sessions and social events.

Day Two: Delegates can choose between two bus tours. North to Gympie visiting three organic farms or South to Brisbane visiting Queensland's only certified organic Farmers' Market and Rocklea market.

Local organic produce will be served at all social functions where delegates, sponsors and exhibitors can enjoy the best that Queensland's organic farmers have to offer.

\$ 165 Conference Registration

\$ 110 OPAQ Member

\$ 99 Social Functions

\$ 55 Farm Tours

For Delegate registrations: Email: piproductions@ozemail.com.au Website: <http://www.geocities.com/opaq2001> or phone: 1300 889 177

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ROFO & BFA Organic Roadshow heads for Yanco

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ROADSHOW PROGRAM: To obtain the Roadshow program go to the BFA website <http://www.bfa.com.au>. or contact Holly Vyner on ph. 07 3350 5716 or email media@bfa.com.au.

RSVP & ROADSHOW REGISTRATION: 28th August, 2006; Katie Billing ph. 02 69636996, wattleparkorga@bigpond.com or to BFA ph. 07 3350 5716, info@bfa.com.au.

Do you have any Organic News?

Do you have any research results, field day reports or other information that may be of relevance to organic agriculture? If so, let us hear about it! Send your contributions to:

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Yanco Agricultural Institute
YANCO NSW 2703

Email: robyn.neeson@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Note: Electronic format is preferred. Text - Times New Roman 11 point.

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The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of New South Wales Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

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