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Vermicompost application improves the productivity and quality of Nagpur mandarin (*Citrus reticulata* Blanco)

The following article was kindly supplied by Dr V. Ramamurthy, Senior Scientist (Agronomy) at the National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning Nagpur, India. The experiment was conducted as a part of the Bureau's Institute-Village Linkage Program.

Citrus reticulata (locally referred to as “Orange”) is one of the most promising fruit crops of India. It is claimed to be one of the most remunerative and potential foreign exchange earning fruit crop of Central India but recently drying of orange trees, irregular flowering due to varied abiotic and biotic factors resulted in significant decrease in productivity of orange. In central India, it is predominantly grown on black soils (Vertisols), rich in smectite group of minerals. It was observed that due to consistent depletion of organic matter and higher availability of potassium in Vertisols induced high acidity in the fruits, which take comparatively longer time for ripening that result in poor fruit yield and quality.

Increased realization of ill effects due to exclusive use of chemical fertilizers, unsustainable productivity of orange and growing demand from consumers for fruit quality have fostered experimentation with some alternative cultural practices. Organic culture is claimed to be the most benign alternative. Use of organic materials such as farmyard manure, cakes of plant origin and vermicompost, are important components of the bio-organic concept of orange cultivation.

The vermicompost application is one of the effective methods to rejuvenate the depleted soil fertility and enrich the available pool of nutrients and conserve more water, maintain soil quality and conserve more biological resources.

With this background on-farm studies (located at 21° 20' N Latitude and 78° 51' E longitude on an altitude ranging from 340m to 360m above MSL) were carried out to study the effect of vermicompost application on productivity and quality of orange in typical expansive clay soils of central India (Fine, smectitic, hyperthermic (calcareous) *Vertic Haplustepts*), involving ~10 year old orchards under Institute-Village Linkage Program implemented by the National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning. The soil had pH 8.3, CaCO₃ 84 g kg⁻¹, organic carbon 7 g kg⁻¹ and Olsen-P 16.8 kg P₂O₅ha⁻¹. There were three treatments namely farmer's practice (PF) *i.e.* application of 20 kg FYM/tree of orange (T₁), recommended management practice (application of 50 kg FYM + 600:200:100 g NPK/tree) designated as T₂ and application of 5 kg vermicompost and 20 kg FYM (T₃) in the month of November and May (during basin preparation) replicated in ten farmers field with plot size of 1000 m². Necessary agro- managements were carried as and when required. The design

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Inside this Issue:

Vermicompost application improves the productivity & quality of Nagpur mandarin (*Citrus reticulata* Blanco)

News, Publications, Commentaries & Events



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Organic News.

adapted for statistical data analysis is Randomized Block Design (RBD).

Vermicompost had relatively higher concentration of different nutrients barring Ca than FYM (Table 1), which might have met the nutrient requirement of crop reasonably better and suitably modified the physical and biological properties of soil. Similar views are also reported by Srivastava and Shyam Singh (2004).

Table 1. Nutrient content of FYM and Vermicompost used

	N	P	K	Ca	Mg	Fe	Mn	Cu	Zn
	%					mg ha ⁻¹			
FYM	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.9	0.2	146	69.0	2.8	14.5
Vermicompost	1.6	0.7	0.8	0.5	0.2	175	96.5	5.0	24.5

Application of 5 kg vermicompost per plant along with 20 kg FYM in the month of November and May (during basin preparation) (T₃) recorded significantly higher number of fruits, fruit weight and yield as compared to 20 Kg FYM/tree of orange (T₁) and T₂. The per cent increase in fruit number per tree, fruit weight and yield was 7, 18 and 46 due to vermicompost application over farmers practice (Table 2), whereas it was 4, 15 and 41 per cent over T₂. Vermicompost application improves the porosity and internal drainage of soils, nutrient content of soil and conservation of water led to low fruit drop and higher fruit number and fruit weight and yield of orange.

Table 2. Yield and yield attributes of *citrus reticulata* as influenced by different treatments

Treatments	No. of fruits /tree			Weight of fruit (gm)			Fruit yield /ha (Tonnes)		
	2003	2004	Mean	2003	2004	Mean	2003	2004	Mean
T ₁	790.0	800	795.0	126.0	122.5	124.2	29.0	27.0	28.0
T ₂	819.5	829.5	824.5	135.0	132.5	128.7	31.0	30.5	30.7
T ₃	850.5	867.0	858.7	150.0	154.5	152.2	34.0	37.1	52.5
CD at 5%	24.3	24.6		8.7	9.0		2.2	2.1	

Application of vermicompost improved the TSS and Juice content of fruits significantly over T₂ except TSS content in 2004 whereas T₃ recorded significantly higher TSS and Juice contents over T₁ and T₂ in both the years (Table 3). Increased TSS and juice content indicate the regulated nutrient supply to plants in vermicomposte applied plants as compared to other treatments.

Table 3. Quality of oranges as influenced by vermicompost

Treatments	TSS (%)			Juice (%)		
	2003	2004	Mean	2003	2004	Mean
T ₁	9.71	9.52	9.62	37.4	40.1	38.7
T ₂	10.20	10.84	10.52	39.9	42.5	41.2
T ₃	10.45	11.22	10.83	42.9	43.8	43.3
CD at 5%	0.19	0.48		1.27	0.79	

Organic News.

Conclusion

The perennial nature of Nagpur mandarin favors more requirement of organic matter to maintain and regulate the supply of nutrients to plants. Application of 5 kg vermicompost and 20 kg FYM in the month of November and May (during basin preparation) significantly increased the fruit number, fruit weight and fruit yield of orange by 7, 18 and 46 per cent respectively over farmer's management (20 Kg FYM/tree). The juice and TSS contents of fruits were significantly higher in vermicompost applied trees than RDF and farmer's practice.

References

Srivastava, A.K. and Shyam Singh. 2004. Nutrient Diagnostics and management in citrus. Tech. Bulletin-8, published by NRC for Citrus, Nagpur. Pp-130.

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Vermicompost applied orange tree



Heap of vermicompost



Woman farmer involved in vermicomposting

Organic News.

News, Publications, Commentaries & Events

News:

Organic Farming Reduces Nitrogen Pollution of Groundwater as Well as Greenhouse Gas Pollution

STANFORD, California, March 8, 2006 (ENS) - Organic farming has been promoted as an environmentally friendly alternative to conventional agriculture, and new research provides evidence to support that claim. Writing in the March 6 online edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS), Stanford University graduate student Sasha Kramer and her colleagues found that fertilizing apple trees with synthetic chemicals produced more adverse environmental effects than feeding them with organic manure or alfalfa.

“The intensification of agricultural production over the past 60 years and the subsequent increase in global nitrogen inputs have resulted in substantial nitrogen pollution and ecological damage,” Kramer and her colleagues write. “The primary source of nitrogen pollution comes from nitrogen-based agricultural fertilizers, whose use is forecasted to double or almost triple by 2050.”

Nitrogen compounds from fertilizer can enter the atmosphere and contribute to global warming, adds Harold Mooney, the Paul S. Achilles Professor of Environmental Biology at Stanford and co-author of the study.

“Nitrogen compounds also enter our watersheds and have effects quite distant from the fields in which they are applied, as for example in contaminating water tables and causing biological dead zones at the mouths of major rivers,” Mooney says. “This study shows that the use of organic versus chemical fertilizers can play a role in reducing these adverse effects.”

The PNAS study was conducted in an established apple orchard on a four acre site in the Yakima Valley of central Washington, one of the premiere apple growing regions in the United States. Some trees used in the experiment were raised with conventional synthetic fertilizers. Others were grown organically without pesticides, herbicides or artificial fertilization. A third group was raised by a method called integrated farming, which combines organic and conventional agricultural techniques.

During the year long experiment, organically grown trees were fed either composted chicken manure or alfalfa meal, while conventionally raised plants were given calcium nitrate, a synthetic fertilizer widely used by commercial apple growers. Trees raised using the integrated system were given a blend of equal parts chicken manure and calcium nitrate.

To measure nitrate levels during the experiment, water was collected in resin bags buried about 40 inches below the trees and then analysed in the laboratory.

“We measured nitrate leaching over an entire year and found that it was 4.4 to 5.6 times higher in the conventional treatment than in the two organic treatments, with the integrated treatment in between,” says John Reganold, Regents Professor of Soil Science at Washington State University and co-author of the study.

“This study is an important contribution to the debate surrounding the sustainability of organic agriculture, one of the most contentious topics in agricultural science worldwide,” Reganold says. “Our findings not only score another beneficial point for organic agriculture but give credibility to the middle-ground approach of integrated farming, which uses both organic and conventional nitrogen fertilizers and other

Organic News.

practices. It is this middle-ground approach that we may see more farmers adopting than even the rapidly growing organic approach.”

Washington State produces more than half of the nation’s apples. In 2004, the state crop was worth about \$963 million, with organically grown apples representing between five and 10 percent of the total value.

From: Environment News Service <http://www.ens-newswire.com/> (read the full study here)

Worldwide organic agriculture tops 31 million hectares

IFOAM, the Swiss Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), and the Foundation Ecology & Farming (SOEL) of Germany presented the latest global data on organic farming at the BioFach 2006 exhibition. According to the survey, more than 31 million hectares of farmland are currently under organic management worldwide, again of around five million hectares in a single year. A major increase of organic land has taken place in China, where nearly three million hectares of pastoral land were certified recently. In terms of organic land area, excluding wild collection, Australia leads with 12.1 million hectares, followed by China (3.5 million hectares) and Argentina (2.8 million hectares). Most of the world’s organic land is in Australia/Oceania (39%), followed by Europe (21 %), Latin America (20 %), Asia (13 %), North America (4 %) and Africa (3 %).

According to Amarjit Sahota from Organic Monitor (London), the global market for organic food and drink was worth USD 27.8 billion in 2004 and is projected to have surpassed the USD 30 billion mark in 2005. The market is expanding by 8-9 % a year with North America and Western Europe the engines of growth. www.soel.de

Urgent Notification to certified organic operators of Piperonyl Butoxide (PB) and Pyrethrum Inputs

The use of Piperonyl Butoxide (PB), a synergist, which is sometimes used in Pyrethrum products, is no longer allowed under organic standards. This is due to a change in the IFOAM standards, which directly affects the AQIS National Standard for Organic and Bio-dynamic production. This requirement came into effect on the 1st January 2006 and is applicable to both producers and processors. PB is also prohibited under the US NOP standards and JAS standards. To ensure your certification status is not jeopardized ensure that if using Pyrethrum it does not contain PB. Only naturally occurring and naturally derived forms of Pyrethrum are allowed. Synthetic pyrethroids are therefore prohibited.

Sugar for weeds?

Sugar has the potential to control annual weeds and help restore understorey species according to recent research at Charles Sturt University (CSU). Researchers spread 500g of refined white sugar to each square metre of soil every three months and found it inhibited the growth of most annual weeds. For further information contact Margrit Beemster, communications coordinator, Institute for Land, Water and Society, on 02 60519653 or email on mbeemster@csu.edu.au. See more at: <http://news.csu.edu.au/director/latestnews.cfm?itemID=0DA9F8A1E2155D394B1FB58C9B633E5F>

Publication reviews:

New Organic Journal for Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific

The editors of the newly created Journal of Organic Systems are calling for articles for publication in its first issue. This new journal is devoted to the publication of current research on developments and issues of organic farming systems in Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific, and also Asia in the near future. It is to be launched in June 2006.

Organic News.

The Journal of Organic Systems will publish peer-reviewed papers that focus on production, processing and marketing developments, land-use methodologies in organic systems, regulatory and certification criteria in the regions, and review articles of current international activities with interpretations of their significance. The intended deadline for authors to make a submission for the first issue is early March, 2006.

It is intended that the first few issues of the Journal of Organic Systems will be in electronic format, at least until such time as there is a demonstrated need for hard-copy publication. Authors preparing to submit a paper should first contact the editors to signal their plans and to clarify submission details. Authors will be promptly notified of the receipt of each manuscript they submit and also final acceptance or rejection for publication. Guidelines about tables, literature references, figures, footnotes and pagination etc. are now being prepared and will be electronically available on request to intending authors.

Manuscripts submitted to the Journal of Organic Systems will be anonymously peer-reviewed by reviewers selected by the Editorial Board, and with an anticipated turn-around time not longer than 2 months. Each reviewer will be asked to provide a definite recommendation to publish, revise, or reject manuscripts using accepted norms of publication standards met by most international journals. Active consideration is being given to include both student-research and book-review sections in later issues.

Editorial responsibilities for the Journal of Organic Systems in Australia are being undertaken by Dr Stuart Hill, University of Western Sydney, s.hill@uws.edu.au and in New Zealand by Dr A. Neil Macgregor, formerly of Massey University anpjm@xtra.co.nz.

Latest financial data on organic farming published

The University of Wales, Aberystwyth Institute of Rural Science's latest annual survey of organic farm incomes in England and Wales (2003/4) shows that organic farms of different types succeeded in maintaining their incomes. In doing so, they continued to achieve similar or better incomes than comparable conventional farms during a period which was acknowledged to be challenging from a marketing perspective, particularly for the organic dairy sector.

The report contains a detailed breakdown of outputs, production costs and returns to capital and labour, as well as production structures, prices achieved and yields on organic farms of different types. Gross margins for organic livestock, arable and horticulture are provided, as are benchmarking costs of production for milk, beef and lamb.

The 2003/4 report is the latest annual survey of organic farms in a series dating back to 1995/6, which have now all been published on the Defra website (organic farming statistics page http://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/index/list.asp?i_id=130). The survey is conducted on the same basis as the Farm Business Survey and also integrates data from farms that are part of the FBS. It is funded as part of Defra's organic farming research programme.

The results are used as a basis for the *Organic Farm Management Handbook*, published every two years by the Institute of Rural Sciences and the Organic Advisory Service at Elm Farm Research Centre. The 2006/7 edition is scheduled for publication in April 2006.

Organic News.

Organic diets significantly lower children's dietary exposure to organophosphorus pesticides

Authors

Lu CS. Toepel K. Irish R. Fenske RA. Barr DB. Bravo R. Author e-mail: clu2@sph.emory.edu

Source

Environmental Health Perspectives. 114(2):260-263, 2006 Feb.

Abstract

The authors use a novel study design to measure dietary organophosphorus pesticide exposure in a group of 23 elementary school-age children through urinary biomonitoring. They substituted most of children's conventional diets with organic food items for 5 consecutive days and collected two spot daily urine samples, first-morning and before-bedtime voids, throughout the 15-day study period. They found that the median urinary concentrations of the specific metabolites for malathion and chlorpyrifos decreased to the non-detect levels immediately after the introduction of organic diets and remained nondetectable until the conventional diets were reintroduced. The median concentrations for other organophosphorus pesticide metabolites were also lower in the organic diet consumption days; however, the detection of those metabolites was not frequent enough to show any statistical significance. In conclusion, they were able to demonstrate that an organic diet provides a dramatic and immediate protective effect against exposures to organophosphorus pesticides that are commonly used in agricultural production. The authors concluded that these children were most likely exposed to these organophosphorus pesticides exclusively through their diet. To the author's knowledge, this is the first study to employ a longitudinal design with a dietary intervention to assess children's exposure to pesticides. It provides new and persuasive evidence of the effectiveness of this intervention. <http://gateway.ovid.com/ovidweb.cgi?T=JS&MODE=ovid&PAGE=fulltext&NEWS=n&D=cclap%2cclin%2ctech%2cbeha&AUTOALERT=202783760%7c5>

The Pros and Cons of Going organic

Author:

Steve Davidson

Source

ECOS 2005 Issue 127, pages 8-12,

Description

Why is the organic food industry on the rise worldwide? Can it be both economically and environmentally viable, and feed the exploding world population, or is conventional broad scale agriculture, with its high farm inputs, the only way to meet the rising challenge? There are proponents of organic farming, passionate in their belief of its overwhelming advantages, but the approach also has its critics. Find out more at:

<http://www.publish.csiro.au/ecos/index.cfm?paper=EC127p8&sid=11>

Organic News.

Organic farming in Central Alberta: Current trends, production constraints and research needs

Authors

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Source

Journal of Sustainable Agriculture. 27(2):153-173, 2005.

Abstract

An estimated one-third of organic farmers in Alberta are located within a 150 km radius of Edmonton, a commercial center with a Population of close to one million. A random sample of these producers were administered an in-depth Survey in 2002 to obtain knowledge of their crop and commodity selection practices, land usage, fertility management, perceived research needs and recognized constraints to sector viability. The study area contained a 4-fold greater proportion of land cropped to cereals (40%) and double the proportion of farms raising organic cattle (45%), but had less than half the amount of Pasture and forage land (35%) than the province as a whole. Albertan organic farmers felt they were constrained by markets, soil fertility, weeds, and production costs. They would like to see more research focused on improving and protecting soil productivity, developing profitable and sustainable crop rotations, identifying alternative livestock vaccines and feed supplements, and comparing organic and conventional farming systems. Overcoming challenges facing this emerging sector will require the combined assistance of government, industry and research sectors.

The Australian Organic Consumer Report 2005

The Australian Organic Consumer Report 2005 provides numerous insights, including:

Only 20% of organic consumers regularly buy their organic products at supermarkets. Other channels are organic food stores (42%), farmers markets (10%) and online (6%). Over 90% of consumers believe organic food is better for their health.

There appears to be little evidence to support a typical organic shopper, although they are more likely to be married and highly educated.

Organic consumers believe current prices are too high, but are prepared to pay a premium for them (although not as much as the industry may think). Most organic consumers can recall organic brand names but no brand dominates. Key reasons why consumers buy organic products are for better health, environmental benefits and taste.

The 250-page Report is a detailed study and analysis of organic consumers attitudes, behaviour and consumption patterns. The Report also covers key demographic and segmentation profiles, product purchase intentions, retail channel preferences, brand awareness, purchase motivations and decision criteria, pricing perceptions, information sources used by consumers, and incentives to encourage more purchasing.

The BFA has already published some of the key research findings in the Summer edition of the Australian Organic Journal, and more results will be available in the upcoming Autumn edition. The Australian Organic Consumer Report 2005 is available from http://www.nourish.net.au/survey_page.htm For a limited time, Nourish is offering a special discount for BFA members and Organic Advantage subscribers. Please contact James Meldrum on (03) 9421 6880 or james@nourish.net.au for further information.

Organic News.

Organics - Solutions to Climate Change'

The Third OFA National Organic Conference July 22-23 2006

The OFA is hosting the Third National Organic Conference at Darling Harbour, Sydney, Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd July 2006 in conjunction with the Organic Expo.

The theme of the conference is **Organics - Solutions to Climate Change**. The conference will look at ways of reducing the 25% of Australia's greenhouse gases created by Agriculture.

Best practice organic agriculture is an example of an industry that can help to lower greenhouse gases while positively contributing to the economy with jobs, products and services.

Published peer review scientific studies in North America and Europe show that best practice organic agriculture, not only emits less greenhouse gases than conventional agriculture, the carbon sequestration from increasing soil organic matter leads to a net reduction in greenhouse gases. Further studies show that organic farming systems are more resilient to the predicted weather extremes. These organic agricultural systems are examples of how we can start to reverse climate change and have excellent production and economic results.

The Conference will feature keynote speakers who will show how best practice organic systems reduce greenhouse gases and can reverse some of the causes of climate change. It will focus on two main areas:

1. Organic Soil Carbon

How to sequester greenhouse gases to increase humus and other soil organic compounds, soil health, organic soil nutrition, water retention, disease suppression and the quality and quantity of farm yields.

2. Efficient and low input farming systems

How to reduce greenhouse gas outputs through efficient and low input farming systems. This is a critical section as these systems and techniques will also result in substantial savings in farmers' production costs.

3. Surviving Climate Change

Research showing how organic farming systems are more resilient to the predicted weather extremes.

Best Practice Soil Health Workshops

A significant feature will be **workshops on Day 2** facilitated by experts in organic and biodynamic farming systems on the best methods to **increase soil organic matter** to achieve better soil structure, steady nutrient release, better water retention, superior soil drainage, aeration and reverse soil loss.

These soils have high levels of beneficial micro organisms that suppress diseases, 'unlocking' the insoluble forms of phosphorous, nitrogen and other nutrients making them available to crop on an ongoing basis.

This conference will help farmers and gardeners reduce their production costs, increase their profitability and yields as well as ensure a positive contribution to one of the worlds major problems. The conference will be essential to consumers, farmers, researchers, scientists and policy makers concerned about climate change.

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Early Bird Registration

Registration Fees - Early Bird and discounts for OFA members

- I. Full Conference Fee \$400
- II. OFA members \$350
- III. Early Bird \$300 – before May 30 2006
- IV. Early Bird OFA Members \$250 – before May 30 2006

Call for Papers

The conference organising committee is looking for papers in three areas:

1. Organic Soil Carbon

The papers should look at how to sequester greenhouse gases to increase humus and other soil organic compounds, soil health, organic soil nutrition, water retention, disease suppression and the quality and quantity of farm yields

2. Efficient and low input farming systems

The papers should look at how to reduce greenhouse gas outputs and generate cost savings to farmers through efficient and low input farming systems.

3. Surviving Climate Change

The papers should present research showing how organic farming systems are more resilient to the predicted weather extremes.

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Organic Expo 21 - 23 July, 2006

Following the huge success of the inaugural Organic Expo, **Organic Expo 2006** is shaping up to be even bigger and better - cementing its place as *'Australia's leading organic & environmental lifestyle show'* for consumers and trade.

More than 8,000 visitors and 120 exhibitors are expected to attend this year's show, held from 21 - 23 July, at the premier location of Sydney Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour.

Renowned chef *Kylie Kwong* is back by popular demand to demonstrate and share her passion for cooking with fresh organic food. Other celebrities and key players, from the environmental and organic industries, will present a great program of topical and entertaining feature talks and demonstrations to interest everyone.

Organic Expo 2006 promises some favourite as well as new exciting features:

- Trade Only day on Friday (2 - 6pm) - *new*
- Main Celebrity Stage
- Organic Vineyard
- Farmers Market display area - *new*

Organic News.

- Organic Garden - *new*
- Speakers Corner - *new*

Demand for stands is high, with 50% already sold so book now to secure your space. Booking is easy either download the Quote Request Form or call the sales team on 02 9451 4747. Check out the website at www.organicexpo.com.au for all the show information.

Organic & Biological Dairy/Beef Bus Trip 2006

Wednesday 17 to Friday 19 May 2006

Introduction

Currently Victoria has a number of dairy and beef producers who are amongst the highest producers of certified organic milk and beef. There is a need to highlight these best practices and lead the world in quality organic milk and beef production. Australian Certified Organic (ACO), supports and endorses Soil Systems Australia (SSA) in expanding the number of organic and biological dairy and beef producers.

The bus trip

SSA plans to arrange a bus trip to these SE Victoria farms between Wednesday 17th and Friday 19th May 2006. *The bus trip will focus on the Foster region (Mardan, Fish Creek, Middle Tarwin, Tarwin Lower and Pound Creek).* The purpose of the 3 day bus trip is to:

- Compare biological, organic and conventional dairying practices in one dairying area (dryland and irrigated)
- Look at a biological beef production operation
- Visit a keyline designed farm
- Analyse the steps involved in running a profitable business
- Introduced to the basic concepts of an organic dairy co-operative
- Observe the benefits of focussing on building stable soil humus

Key issues to be discussed include:

- History of the farm and district
- Steps involved in converting the farm
- Animal health issues
- Measures of production
- Grain supplementation
- Current farm Issues
- Quality of pasture, stock and milk

Costs

Producers will make their own way to Melbourne's Tullamarine airport where they will be picked up by a coach. Accommodation, breakfast, evening meals, coach hire, farm visits and lunches are included in the cost: **3 Day bus tour \$395/head (GST incl)**

RSVP 5pm Friday 7th April, 2006

Contact Adam Willson

Director

Soil Systems Australia

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Organic News.

“EcoV - The Global Organics & Sustainability Show”. Bendigo Exhibition Centre, 5 – 7 May 2006

EcoV will be the largest ever eco-living show to be held in regional Victoria. As well, it will be the most comprehensive Organic and Bio-dynamic promotion in the state. It also will be the biggest sustainable farming expo in Victoria.

The exchange of ideas in the seminar program will be directed at organic and biodynamic producers and the wider farming community in general. Department of Primary Industry Victoria will present the latest finding on their continuing research program into organic cereal and oil seed crops, perennial pastures, lamb production, viticulture, citrus and vegetable growing.

At least three machinery manufacturers have also expressed an interest in exhibiting at EcoV.

David Holmgren, the co-originator of Permaculture, will be on hand to explain his belief that Permaculture could reinvigorate Organic farming. In another challenging presentation Peter Kramer from Cairns will argue there is a better way to do agriculture rather than just replacing chemical input with certified organic ones.

Other seminars will focus on climate change and farming, biodiversity on farms, irrigation and river health, a health check to sustain the sustainable farmer, and the Gippsland experience with the national Environment Management System (EMS.) There's bound to be something among all the ideas that will circulate at EcoV that can be adopted or adapted to any farming situation.

Two major certifiers, the National Association of Sustainable Agriculture Australia (NASAA,) and Australian Certified Organic (ACO) along with the Organic Federation of Australia are Gold Sponsors of EcoV.

UNESCO has recognised EcoV role as an educator and given permission for EcoV to use the UN logo for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

EcoV hopes to see you in Bendigo in May. Further details on EcoV can be found on the website www.ecov.net.au

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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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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