

10

Market Grower Fact Sheet Organic Farming

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE is a way of farming that uses natural inputs and methods that reduce environmental impacts. Organic agriculture also aims to increase soil humus so that crops are provided with naturally occurring nutrients.

It is a proven system of farming as there are over 1500 commercial organic farms in Australia. It is also the world's fastest growing food sector and demand in Australia is growing at 10-20% per year.



NSW DPI, Virginia Bourton



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What is humus?

Humus is a brown or black organic matter which has decayed until it has become stable. It provides good water holding capacity in the soil and can hold onto and release nutrients over a long period.

What benefits does it have for me?

Organic farming can have many benefits for farmers:

Better prices: Farmers often receive higher prices for organic produce. In Sydney (2003-4) the following price premiums were received for organic produce: pumpkins 41%, potatoes 38%, tomatoes 46%, onions 61%, zucchini 90%, oranges 23%, apples 22% and carrots 69%.

Increased demand: Wholesalers and retailers are currently looking for more producers of organic food and there are only a small number of producers in Sydney.

Access to new markets: Specialty wholesalers (eg. EcoFarms) and retailers (eg. Macro Wholefoods), farmers markets and some restaurants are eagerly seeking organic produce.

Continued supply to existing markets: Coles and Woolworths are rapidly expanding their already significant range of organic food lines.

Better health: Artificial fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides are not used.

Environmental: Improved soil management and reduced chemical usage lead to improvements in water and soil quality.

Better soil: Organic farming practises result in increased humus levels in the soil. This leads to improved water-holding capacity, more stable pH and increased long-term soil fertility.

What do I do differently?

To sell organic food you will need to be certified by one of seven organisations which are licensed by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS). They will be able to tell you what practises you will need to change to qualify.

Further information can be found at <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/farm/organic>

Who do I contact if I am interested?

NSW Department of Primary Industries Organic Farming Liaison Officer: Ph 02 6951 2735

This **Market Grower Fact Sheet** is part of a series designed to support growers from a non-English speaking background. For more information please contact your local Council. If you require an interpreter call TIS on 131 450.

This project has been assisted by the New South Wales Government through its Environmental Trust.

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (November 2007). 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 NSW Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

