



# Organic Insights

## NASAA



## Editorial

Welcome to the revived *Organic Insights*. As the new financial year begins, NASAA has reinvigorated this well-respected organic magazine. *Insights* will be distributed as a brief electronic version each month and an extended colour hard copy version will be posted twice a year.

The magazine aims to include information on NASAA events and details on NASAA Certified Organic (NCO) and certification news.

This electronic newsletter also aims to create an ongoing and dynamic network between all members and hopes to assist everyone in keeping informed about activities and events within NASAA and the organic industry.

In this edition we include details of our JAS training last February, Women in Business Development, an update on our standards review and a summary of the exhibitions and trade shows NASAA has attended in the past two months. There is also a focus on overseas operations in this edition.

We encourage all members to contribute and would love to hear from you. If you have any interesting news and photographs forward them to us and we will include them in the next edition.

Email any suggestions, photographs, news stories to: [companysecretary@nasaa.com.au](mailto:companysecretary@nasaa.com.au).

## Chairman's report

### Remembering our roots!

As organic farming becomes recognised as a mainstream farming technique and organic food and fibre become an integral part of the marketplace for green and sustainable products, how can we best defend and promote the further growth that is necessary to really shape sustainability?

The pathway is one littered with challenges. We are not only confronted with the juggernaut of genetic engineering - with the huge machinery of advocacy brought to bear by the multi-national seed and chemical giants, a scientific community hard placed to find their next research dollar and a less than critical government willing to embrace big business with big bucks.

We have another challenge - the one from the various green and sustainable claims and some of the very laudable eco-labelling organisations themselves. Fairtrade, bird-friendly and humane choice are some of the latter that we respect and applaud but let's not forget that we effectively incorporate these claims in the organic standards, at least those of that are IFOAM accredited.

GM free, eco-friendly, "sustainable", preservative free, and "green" are subject to a great deal of abuse when it comes to confirmation, so much so that the Australian Association for National Advertisers have recently enacted a code to help curb the growing exuberance of "green claims" in the food sector.

We are at risk as consumers demand an increasingly detailed pedigree of their food purchases, that they will forget the over-arching nature of organic agriculture. Let's refresh ourselves with our foundation principles.

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1) Non-GM and non-synthetic chemical production methods. This means fertilisers which are frequently forgotten by other proponents. We now know that synthetic Nitrogen is one of the most significant contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture. 2) Biodiversity values lie at the heart of the organic production system, whether it be at a genetic, species or ecosystem level as spelt out in the new Australian Organic Standards. “Green” is more than skin deep and cannot be measured by some simple “pesticide-free claims”. 3) Animal welfare is part of the triple bottom-line and no amount of natural grass or “free range breeding” can equal the strict organic standards for free range, non caged and organically fed animals.

Human rights and fair trade are expected in Australia but in many parts of the world where NASAA operate, these are more precarious. Consumers can read our standards in this area and be sure that there is a fair return and safe working conditions for workers and no mandatory child labour.

Finally traceability and identity preservation, now developed extremely well by some non-organic systems are also a hallmark of the organic production and processing systems. NASAA’s commitment to this matter, enhanced through its electronic certification system and adherence to its IFOAM requirements, help to eliminate the fraud that is so easily found in any marketplace that rewards producers with a premium for products that are essentially visually identical to any other.

So as we welcome genuine methods for product differentiation and efforts that supply consumers with genuine verification that their choices are real and meaningful, let us not forget that we have embraced them and that we can offer some of the most authentic green products that are available.

**Rod May**  
NASAA board chairman

## JAS Training



**Participants during the Inspector and Staff Training Workshop**

On 10 and 11 February NCO held an Inspector and Staff Training Workshop in South Australia. There were 19 inspectors and seven staff attending the two-day event, which was also recorded as a future DVD resource to train future staff.

The workshop covered:

### **New JAS**

Introduction and transition planning; Structural Basis: JAS Law, Standards, Technical Criteria

### **New Canada Program (Canada Organic Regime COR)**

Introduction, Organic Productions Systems, General Principles and Management Standards, Permitted Substances List

### **AQIS Update**

NASAA AQIS Program and Product Acceptance

The JAS training session aimed to educate attendees on the requirements of new JAS laws, standards and technical criteria for all roles within an operation. It also looked at what JAS qualifies people to do, such as JAS accreditations which allows NCO to offer JAS Certification to operators who are compliant with the Japanese Agricultural Standard Organic Law.

Those who attended the workshop and successfully completed the JAS Evaluation Test received a certificate completion.



## NCO-NASAA split

Since the announcement of the NCO and NASAA split on 28 January 2009 the two organisations have been operating independently.

In summary, NASAA has transferred its Certification Business to NCO, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of NASAA, and has established NCO to independently carry on the business of “Certification Services”, that is inspecting and certifying organic and other approved agricultural, food and fibre businesses in accordance with the requirements of all relevant accreditation schemes.

NCO may trade as NCO P/L or as NASAA Certified Organic or as NASAA Certified or under any other names as NASAA sees fit.

NASAA will continue to provide Membership Services and conduct other activities which are consistent with the objects for which NASAA is established.

NASAA transferred its Certification Business including all tangible assets and operating budget to NCO on 1 February 2009, while NASAA retained its intangible assets, including all intellectual property and cash reserves.

NCO must ensure that its Certification Services are provided in accordance with the requirements of its existing national and international accreditors including: Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (**AQIS**); International Organic Accreditation Service (**IOAS**) on behalf of International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (**IFOAM**); Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan (**MAFF**); and United States Department of Agriculture (**USDA**) along with any other accreditation as agreed by NCO and NASAA.

NASAA is responsible for promoting the NASAA brand including the Certification Services provided by NCO;

NASAA is also responsible for the management and maintenance of the NASAA Organic Standard such that it complies with the requirements of all Relevant Accreditation Schemes.

Any amendments or revisions made by NASAA to the NASAA Organic Standard must at least be implemented in accordance with the implementation periods set by the Relevant Accreditation Schemes.

NASAA will give NCO the opportunity to make submissions with respect to any proposed changes to the NASAA Organic Standard.

## Organic Standards

The Australian Standard for organic products covers a range of areas to ensure sustainable farming, these areas include horticulture and livestock.

Standards Australia publishing a new Australian Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Products in December 2008 and it's expected that this draft Australian Standard will become the basis for the first Australian domestic regulations for organic food and products and will be soon called up into Australian food legislation.

The Standard covers production from plants, animals and fungi and processed food, cosmetics and skincare products that are labelled 'organic'.

This document will apply to the Australian marketplace, which has not been realised previously. Prior to the release of this draft document, AQIS Standard has applied only to export, and has operated as a default domestic standard because there was a lack of a legal and enforceable control in the Australian marketplace.

The draft Australian Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Products is available for public comment.

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The OFA has released a position paper on the new standards which have been voted on in a ballot that closed on 9 July. The results of this ballot are not known at the time of this printing. The OFA position paper is available on their website at:  
[www.ofa.org.au](http://www.ofa.org.au)

## NASAA Standards

NASAA is calling for comment, from members and other stakeholders, on the current NASAA Organic and Biodynamic Standard (NASAA Standard) over the next two months. This is the first step in a review of the NASAA Standard.

A Standards Committee was formed to undertake a complete review of all sections of the NASAA Standard including the following:

- Providing advice to NASAA and IRC on technical matters, including interpretation of the Standards where required
- Revising the NASAA Standard referencing such changes to the National Standard and the IFOAM Basic Standard
- Draft Standard for a new commodities
- Recommending standards policy and changes to the NASAA board

This Standard Committee, shall make recommendations to the NASAA Board in relation to revision and the creation of a revised NASAA Standard.

NASAA will undertake a review of the NASAA Standard at timely intervals, reviewing all relevant input, acknowledging relevant national and international standards and legal requirements, seeking comment from stakeholders and technical experts. The main purpose is to maintain a robust, relevant standard.

The procedure will include:

- Call for pre-review comment (2 month period) via this newsletter
- Recruitment and appointment of a Standards Committee by end of the pre-review comment period
- Identification of technical experts prepared to undertake a support role to the Standards Committee

- Review period. The Standards Committee will then review all relevant information and prepare a draft standard for comment over a six month period.

There will be a comment period on a draft standard over two months followed by a second review by the Standards Committee preparing a final draft over a following two month period.

There will then be a final comment period of two months which will be reviewed and a document prepared within a three month period. There will then be a formal release of the updated NASAA Standard.

Members in the Standards Committee have some experience in standards development, experience in organic production or processing and are efficient at time management and proficient in the English language.

The Standards Committee members must encompass all key stakeholder groups and be prepared to consult a list of technical experts for all key areas of the standards.

Each member must also dedicate personal time to achieve set goals within tight deadlines.

In summary:

1. During the first Review period the Standards Committee will meet face-to-face three times, at commencement, mid-term and one month before the end of the period with interspersed teleconference and regular email communication for the duration of the review period
2. For the second Review period the Standards Committee will meet face-to-face (or teleconference) once and communicate regularly by email to complete the final draft of the standard.

The Standards Committee will then report monthly to the NASAA board on progress and issues arising from the process.



# WOMEN IN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

## Highlighting NASAA Certified Overseas Operators

Women in Business Development Inc (WIBDI) is a small Samoan, not-for-profit, non-government organisation. Their focus is on providing opportunities for rural and vulnerable people and families to earn an income within their own community and with the resources they have at their disposal.

WIBDI identify opportunities for income generation and provides rural families with on-going training, supervision and support, also providing access to microfinance, assistance with organic certification to international standards, and facilitating links between rural communities and global markets.

**“We firmly believe that sustainable development cannot happen without due consideration to culture, tradition and context, and so our programmes very much reflect the cultural context in which they were developed”.**  
- WIBDI policy

WIBDI achieved organic certification with NASAA several years ago. This certification covers produce grown for the local markets and produce grown and processed for export.

Export so far is for nonu, coconut oil and bananas. The expanding local market takes up fresh fruit and vegetables, cocoa, coffee, and coconut products via weekly produce baskets and a monthly organic market.

The certification requirements are managed by WIBDI staff as a grower group overseen by an Internal Control System Management.

The dedicated staff provide support and guidance for growers on soil and plant health, production methods and crop types. They organise local markets and produce baskets, gradually handing over control of each new development to the farmers.

WIBDI staff also work with local processors who are included in the NASAA certification, to meet requirements for quality and volume. WIBDI management provide direction and oversight to the project and seek out appropriate international markets for the export crops.

Women in Business Development Inc provides the opportunity for Samoan families to farm and sell produce within their own community or to access world markets should they choose to develop their primary production for this stream.



Inspector Kathe Purvis visits growers with WIBDI staff on a recent inspection round in Samoa.



# Out and About NASAA's event attendance

NASAA has been attending national and international exhibitions promoting the organisation and its certified members.

Many of our members took this opportunity to their advantage and, for a small fee, had their business cards and brochures displayed in the NASAA booth at the international organic community.



Rod May at NASAA's exhibition stand at BioFach China, held between May 27 and 29 at the INTEX Shanghai exhibition building in Shanghai.



Rod May and NCO Executive Officer Stephanie Goldfinch attended the All Things Organic Trade Show. The event was held on June 17 and 18 at the Lakeside Center, McCormick Place, Chicago, Illinois.



NCO board member Jan Denham and NASAA board member Gaye Lamb attended the Pooncarie Field Day On May 2 in Mildura.

The Pooncarie Field Day is a bi-annual event alternating between Mildura and Broken Hill. This event continues to grow each year and this year there were around 100 sites.

## Coming Up...



NASAA will also be attending the 5th Annual Organic Expo between July 24 and 26 at the Royal Exhibition Building, Carlton Gardens, Melbourne. The event will also feature the Green Show.

### Visit NASAA at STAND 27

Opening times are:  
Friday July 24 (Trade Only) (10am – 6pm),  
Saturday July 25 (10am – 6pm),  
Sunday July 26 (10am – 5pm)

We look forward to seeing you there.



# Organic experience in the US

I attended a lecture held by the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Kathleen Merrigan, which attracted a crowd of several hundred people in Chicago on June 17. Ms Merrigan outlined the services available to the US organic industry in the area of research and extension.

There was also mention of the 2009 Farm Bill, which has been welcomed by the US organic sector. It is expected to see massive increases in funding and support for organic farming.

“Reward the best and motivate the rest” was the thrust of the speech which summarised the many support programs and initiatives.

The first initiative explored organic equivalence with trading partners. In support of this Ms Merrigan signed the equivalence agreement between the US and Canada. This, first of its kind, historic moment brings hope that the trend will continue and as many Australian producers agree, an AQIS initiative to explore a similar Australian relationship would be welcome.

Strengthening enforcement through increased audits and reviews were enthusiastically appealed by the crowd after a stream of reports of fraud had been expressed in recent years. Ms Merrigan said: “There’s a whole lot more enforcement coming down the pipeline, which is encouraging after years of hiatus during the Bush administration”.

Other initiatives include the broadening of the integration of organic into other programs and the development of online training for certification bodies.

Close to an extra \$US100 million has been provided to the organic program, mostly aimed at research at how they might position their industry to make the most of opportunities when they come.

There has also been assistance and expansion for organic farmers and operators. Some clarity needs to be given on the issue of support for transition, which on the

surface appears to be that, but in fact, it relates to support for a variety of soil conservation activities that might be put in place by farmers during the transition period.

Despite a series of questions regarding the balance of support activities with respect to the family farm Vs the agribusiness sector, there appears to be a very appreciative mood amongst the organic sector for the initiatives and support given by the government. If only our own federal government was so supportive!

Perhaps if our colleagues within the Australian organic certification sector could see the value of a more cohesive approach, they would look more closely at how they might position their industry to make the most of such opportunities - should they become available.

**Rod May**  
NASAA Board Chairman

## KidSnak award finalist



The Organic Fine Food Company, NASAA certified growers based in Bridgetown Western Australia, are finalists in two categories of the 2009 Food Challenge Awards for their KidSnak certified organic fruit snacks.

KidSnak has been popular since its launch in July 2008. It was also finalist in the 2008 WA Food Industry Awards for Best Retail Product. The Organic Fine Food Company Managing Director Errol Seymour said: “It is pleasing to be selected as a finalist in both the Health and Wellness and Snack Foods categories, especially when we are competing with the corporate giants.”

The winners of each category will be announced in Sydney on 29 July.

NASAA congratulates Errol and his company on their achievements.





## Exporting to Canada?

Exports of organic products to Canada from now on must be compliant with the new Canadian Organic Products Regulations as well as other applicable legislation. The organic requirements apply to food and drink for human consumption derived from plant and animal products, and livestock feeds.

All labels must be written in both French and English (ie bilingual) with Quebec having additional French language requirements. A new Canadian organic logo was recently released, but its use is not mandatory. Only certified operators may use the logo however. Labels must state "imported" or "Product of Australia". The name of the certifying body must be stated.

The Canadian Organic Standards are very similar to the NASAA Standards and operators should not have any difficulty complying.

You can download the Information Pack and Certification Application Form from the NSAAA website <http://nasaa.com.au/steps3.html>. Inspection for Canadian Certification can be conducted at the same time as your NASAA, NOP and/or JAS inspection.

In support of a smooth transition, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has developed a "Stream of Commerce Enforcement and Compliance Policy", under which a temporary compliance and enforcement approach would be in place for 24 months for both domestic and imported products. It is therefore the producer/processor/importer/exporters' responsibility for compliance.

Any non-compliance detected by CFIA will be notified to the relevant certifier and the certifier will be required to ensure that the operator makes good any non-compliances according to a plan. We trust that this will not be necessary!

## JAS certification

NASAA Certified Organic welcomes Ms Haruyo Sakai as our JAS Liaison Officer. Haruyo is an Australian resident based near the NASAA office and has excellent bilingual capacity and provides excellent translation services.

Any organic JAS certificates received prior to February 28, 2009 have now expired. One of the requirements of JAS certification by MAFF Japan is that the relevant staff working with product that will be JAS labelled undertake a JAS Training Seminar. A number of clients have recently had their JAS staff training sessions prior to their inspections.

Why does NCO require that businesses applying for JAS certification ensure that relevant staff undertake a JAS training seminar? The aim of these seminars is to train staff to understand fully the context of organic production, record keeping, grading and labelling of organic product, such as the JAS Law, JAS Standards and Technical Criteria and the objectives and structures of the inspection and certification system as required by Japan. Operators must be able to show records of training for these staff as documented in the JAS Technical Criteria.

Does this training course create a conflict of interest for the personnel that will also conduct the inspection? This is a common question and concern. Please be assured that it is a requirement of the JAS Law that relevant staff in charge of organic production, labelling or re-packing undertake such a training seminar and that the accredited certifier may conduct this. Indeed, operators must be able to show records of training for these staff as documented in the JAS Technical Criteria.

Recent shipments to Japan have included the following products: wine, noodles, olive oil, wool, honey, tea, coffee, spices, coconut.

## Inputs Notices-USDA NOP certifications

The USDA requires its Accredited Certifying Agents to notify operators of the notices it periodically issues. Recent issues all operators certified to the USDA National Organic Program must be aware of the following issues.

## Nitrogen fertilisers

By October 1, 2009, approval of all high nitrogen liquid fertilizers (nitrogen analysis greater than 3 per cent) must be accompanied by documentation that





# PROFILE NASAA Board Members

## Rod May

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Rod is an organic farmer from Central Victoria 's upper Captains Creek. He has farmed there with his family for 30 years.

Rod has a past involvement with revegetation and salinity management and has chaired a variety of standards groups whilst conducting several international organic certification projects.

He has sat on the NASAA board for 20 years and recently oversaw the internal restructure of the NASAA company.

Rod is engaged in a variety of local food, environment and energy organisations in his home town and participates in local government . He is an advocate of organic agriculture as an integral part of a shift to sustainable agriculture and a strong proponent of organic agriculture in rural affairs. He has worked within the organic community and within a variety of Australian and International groups to promote organic agriculture.

## Kathe Purvis

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20 years organic farming experience, particularly with orchards and horticulture, 10 years inspector for organic certification, national and international, 5 years environmental management system facilitation, trainee Fairtrade auditor, qualified trainer and workplace assessor, second time on NASAA board, active member of NASAANA

*"I value my history and experience with NASAA and look forward to being a part of the future growth and development of the organisation"*

## Oliver Holmgren

Oliver Holmgren

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Oliver's diverse skills, experience and youth make him a very useful and different member of the NASAA team.

His 23 years growing up on a Permaculture farm give him a hands-on understanding of plant and animal systems. His work with his father and colleagues gives him a strong conceptual understanding of sustainability issues.

Oliver also has significant skills and experience in: IT Support, Web design and Photography, Maths and Science, Community organizations, Spanish, International solo travel and WWOOFing.

*"Since being appointed to the NASAA board in February 2009, I have learnt much of the way NASAA functions, connected with key people, attended events and meetings representing NASAA and helped NASAA and NCO move through and beyond the recent separation. I am passionate about NASAA's wider role in sustainability, developing an education program for farmers entering Organics and the wider public, expanding our member base of certified operators by making membership a valuable and rewarding investment and bringing more passionate young people into NASAA and NCO to learn from our experienced team members before they retire."*

## Gaye Lamb

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Certified NASAA producer of irrigated horticulture for 20 years, developed on farm Natural Resource Management Plan, Chair of OFA Consumer Council, Foundation member of local organic food co-op, established home delivery service for certified organic produce, TAFE teacher on organic production practices, member of CMA Reference group- Wallpolla and Lindsay Island Wetlands, initiated local organic community garden program and nutrition program, Cert III in Horticulture Production, Cert IV in Training and Assessment, Graduate Diploma in Nutrition Education, Masters of Public Health

*"I use the knowledge learnt in my nursing studies as a life long learning process for community development, health maintenance and disease prevention. I have a strong personal commitment to improving the environment and limiting my footprint; including living in a solar powered house."*