

SUMMER 2020



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ORGANIC INSIGHTS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AUSTRALIA

# TIRED OF HAND WEEDING?

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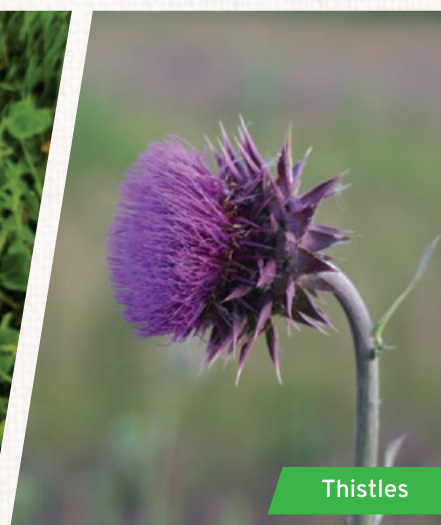
As Bioweed is a non-residual weed killer, an area can be planted out within 72hrs of controlling weeds within a cultivated area. Saving you precious time and lengthening the windows needed for planting.

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- Pigweed
- Plantain
- Paspalum
- Chickweed
- Dandelion
- Purslane
- Thistles



Dandelion



Thistles

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30 YEARS AND  
(STILL) COUNTING



MANDY HALL'S  
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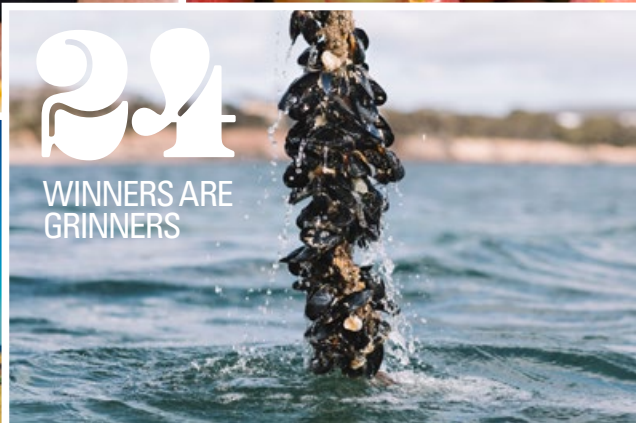
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WINNERS ARE  
GRINNERS



Glenn Schaub  
/ former NASAA Chair

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I would like to take this final opportunity to reflect on my 6 years as a NASAA Organic Director and Chair.

I leave NASAA Organic with a clear direction for the organisation, articulated in our *Gateways to Organic Strategy*, and sound financial management on which to build, despite a very challenging 2019-2020 year, with drought, fires and COVID-19.

The Gateways strategy identifies the critical role that NASAA can and should play in providing 'organic expertise', knowledge services and products to a wider stakeholder market, including consumers, conventional growers looking into conversion, international operator, and grower communities. It outlines how NASAA Organic can engage a broader audience, to broaden its services and revenue base, outside of certification, in order to fund their important role in industry education, advocacy, and promotion.

After only one year, this approach is yielding results. Creation of a dedicated education and training program, improving our communications (such as Organic Insights) to appeal to a broader stakeholder audience, the winning of a Federal grant program to deliver new products and services, as well as tenders to deliver international training packages in the US, Tonga and PNG.

I have seen four General Managers contribute to the development of NASAA, each with their own valuable contributions;

and a dedicated Board prepared to roll up their sleeves, and fill in the gaps when necessary with their own skills and experience. This Board culture and dedication is the reason NASAA Organic has continued in an increasingly competitive market. It sets a very high bar for the new Board and directors, whom I am sure will strive to do better.

I wish to acknowledge the contributions of my fellow NASAA Organic Directors of the past year, including Phil Rowe - Deputy Chair, Phil Sutherland and Liz Pitcher, with whom I have sought to foster a collegial approach in setting the strategic direction and making decisions for the benefit of the Association and its members. I also acknowledge NCO Directors Laurie Galpin, and Jan Denham for her long dedication and contribution to NASAA and the organic industry. I also thank the management and staff for their dedication and work towards realising the vision of the Board.

I leave behind a growing organisation with a clear direction and mandate for the future, with a healthy balance sheet, to ensure ongoing sustainability to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

I have enjoyed my time with NASAA Organic, believing that organics offers an important part of the solution to the many challenges we face today.

Best wishes to all.

Glenn Schaub  
Outgoing Chair



**Alex Mitchell**  
/ General Manager

## MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Hello!

It's not often that your personal values are wholly reflected in your day job, but I feel fortunate to take up the reins in an industry that I have been both personally, and professionally, invested in for over 25 years.

Many of you may already have had contact with me in various guises as a Government policy advisor in Tasmania, engaging with organic and biodynamic producers in policy and program reform at a Federal and State level, or in my role as former Deputy Chair of the Organic Federation of Australia.

In the different roles that I have had, it has been my pleasure to work with NASAA Organic and NCO staff, on and off, for over a decade – including engaging on issues and opportunities for industry development, Standards review and development, and in establishing biosecurity protocols for certified operators during emergency responses.

The professionalism and high quality of collaborative work during these times is what inspired me to join this innovative and progressive team.

COVID-19 consumed my last months in Government as part of the Tasmanian Government's response, and I can say with all honesty that myself and other Government employees worked exceptionally long hours to support outcomes for individual farmers, whether that was in helping to resolve supply chain issues, or lack of access to seasonal workers, or advising on problems with transport and distribution/export.

I was fortunate to see many examples of innovation, philanthropic gestures and 'helping out' others during this time, and I'm very happy to be able to share these experiences with others.

Restrictions and 'new normals' have forced many of us to reflect on what is important to us. Emerging research from the social sciences suggests that we may be looking at longer-term positive behavioural change when it comes to our food production and consumption, and all of this points to a greater acceleration of growth in sales of organic produce, as consumers continue to seek more natural, healthy, sustainably produced food, with traceable origins.

In my short time with NASAA Organic, I have really enjoyed meeting operators from around Australia. I'm particularly delighted by the stories of our members celebrating 30+ years of certification, which we share with you in this edition. To hold such loyal customers as part of our NCO client base is a testament to our team in NCO, and the professional service they provide in certification, domestically and internationally.

As a Tasmanian for 15 years, I would also like to acknowledge the significant contribution of Graeme Stevenson, Landcare advocate and organic veteran, who was recently (and very deservedly) awarded the honour of Tasmanian Senior Australian of the Year. Again, I hope you enjoy our feature on Graeme in this edition.

It's fair to say that it has been a whirlwind since I arrived at NASAA Organic, and I approach the role of GM with energy and enthusiasm to maintain forward momentum!

I look forward to hearing from as many of you as possible over the coming months.

I would also like to take this moment to acknowledge the hard work of our former NASAA Organic Board Chairperson Glenn Schaub, and welcome our incoming Chairperson Tim Marshall and new Director Mark Anderson, who join Liz Pitcher, Phil Rowe and Phillip Sutherland to form the 2020/21 line up of the NASAA Organic Board.

Alex Mitchell  
General Manager



# 30 years & (still) counting...

WE TALKED WITH SOME OF OUR LONG-STANDING ORGANIC PRODUCERS ABOUT THEIR 30-YEAR MILESTONE; ABOUT THEIR INSPIRATIONS AND CHALLENGES, THE BIGGEST CHANGES THAT THEY HAVE SEEN IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTION, AND HOW THEY SEE THE FUTURE.

Nadine / Unsplash



**WE FEATURED OUR VICTORIAN STALWARTS IN OUR LAST EDITION. NOW, WE CELEBRATE OTHER PIONEERS ACROSS AUSTRALIA CELEBRATING THIS MILESTONE. 30 YEARS IS A LONG TIME IN ANY BUSINESS, AND THEY MUST BE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT!**

## **GORDON & JOY BOLA PETERS ORGANICS**

**My father-in-law, Peter Watson, truly meets the definition of 'Pioneer' when it comes to organic farming.**

He bought the farm in 1969 and started growing bananas conventionally, though he did not like to use chemical sprays, being highly conscious of the negative effects, and he was always researching ways to get away from them.

Peter was a very progressive man. He was always looking for his own information. He subscribed to the journal 'Acres USA', which was instrumental in helping him to change over to organic farming and early in 1986, the farm was formally registered with the only

certifier in Australia at the time, ORGAV. At the end of 1986, Peter went to the US for an Acres conference and met several organic farmers there. This was a huge inspiration to Peter in setting up his organic practice.

There was no help back then from any organisation on how to control pests and diseases.

I began working on the farm in 1978-79 and returned in 1983 to continue working for my father-in-law. When we sought help from the State DPI to try to get information, we were basically told we were "nutcases." The guy said, No one can grow bananas organically."

So, we proved him wrong and started

/ Continued on page 4

growing bananas organically, then added small crops – cucumber, tomato, zucchini, eggplant; then sweet potatoes and mangos.

We also did free-range organic eggs for 7 years, with the chickens free-ranging amongst the bananas.

Finding a market for our produce was also challenging at first.

We went to an agent in Melbourne and asked if he could sell our produce and his first question was, “What is Organic?”

He agreed to put our product on the shop floor to see what would happen, and after the first consignment told us that, “only Hippies buy it.”

We told them so long as it is selling, we can keep supplying. That was in 1986/87 and there were no organic outlets at that time. It was in 1988 that the first dedicated stall for organic produce was established in the Melbourne wholesaler market, selling off the back of a truck. That business grew to be a big outlet and we stuck with them until the owner sold the business in 2000.

We are now with BD Marketing in Melbourne, and they have been very good in taking care of us.

Since organic has become a ‘thing’, it is much easier.

Now that more people are aware of growing organically it has become a huge industry that is growing, here and overseas.

As a family farm operation it has been a lot of hard work and very labour intensive, especially with weed and pest control.

We’ve been using WWOOFers to help since 1991, which has been a huge blessing, but I’ve found the attitudes of some in later years has been lacking when it comes to doing hard work, unfortunately!

The first 7-10 years were the hardest. We had to trial a lot of different things, particularly to control insect problems. It was a huge challenge.

Nowadays, it’s easier, as we have access to a number of natural input products to control things, and there are more specialised machines and processes.

It has been a blessing for us to have raised our 6 children on the farm with our in-laws with no nasties around. All of our children were able to help with the work on the farm, which was also very good to teach them to work hard, from helping with milking our house cows and collecting eggs, to packing bananas and field work.

We all worked hard at it and we definitely were pioneers at organic growing!



## JASON BLISSETT KABIUFA

**Organic fruit & vegetable, wheat grass / Diamond Valley, QLD Australia Sunshine Coast**

Jason Blissett is a second-generation organic farmer who has continued the family vision in promoting the benefits of an organic approach.

“Seeing the simple satisfaction the organic farming lifestyle has brought to my parents, John and Kay, is what has inspired me to continue on with their operation,” he says.

“They started their journey in organic fruit and vegetable farming over 30 years ago, with a passion to live a wholesome, health conscious and self-sustainable lifestyle,” he says.

The couple purchased a property in the beautiful, subtropical Sunshine Coast Hinterland, which had previously been used for cattle grazing and was in desperate need of rehabilitation. They set about planting plots of native trees to help rebuild the natural habitat, with a focus on supporting wildlife and adding a buffer zone to surrounding farmland. Custard apple, guava, and banana orchards, as well as market gardens, were then established.

“Fast forward, and the property is now teeming with native biodiversity, including a healthy population of native bees which are a great help with crop pollination,” says Jason.

“Challenges are common, whether it be extreme weather patterns, fluctuating pest issues or market instability, but focusing on the love of the lifestyle and maintaining a positive mental attitude always gets us through,” he says.

More frequent drought conditions over the last several years has been one of the biggest changes that the family has experienced.

“We are working on diversification, including experimenting with more drought tolerant crops,” says Jason.

“While there are definitely challenges, the future is promising with a greater communal appreciation for organically grown produce emerging.”

Jason believes that it is important for those starting out to keep the focus on the positive impact, in choosing to farm organically.

“Organic to us means producing food which is nourishing and free of chemicals, whilst minimising any impact to surrounding ecosystems,” he says.

[www.facebook.com/KabiufaOrganics](https://www.facebook.com/KabiufaOrganics)





## JAN DENHAM & ROBERT RIDGWELL KARRA ORGANIC FARM

### Organic Citrus & Vegetables

Jan Denham needs no introduction to those who have spent even the shortest amount of time in organics. The term 'Doyenne of

Australian organics' is one often used to describe the place she holds in our industry.

Jan has a long association with NASAA, as Board member and Chair from 1995 to 2002, and convenor of the 2005 IFOAM World Congress in Adelaide. She returned to the NASAA Board in 2010, retiring from the NASAA Board in 2018. Jan continues to serve in the role as Chair of NCO.

Jan and her partner Robert Ridgwell have been farming organically since 1989, with their Karra Organic Farm, located on the Darling River at Ellerslie in NSW, producing navel oranges, tangelos, mandarins and vegetables, distributed throughout Melbourne and Sydney.

As members of the Australian Conservation Council at the time, the couple brought strong environmental values to their farm vision, with a particular concern over water conservation issues in the Murray/Darling Basin. Also central to their philosophy, was an understanding of the "need to encourage good living soil as the basis for good fruit quality," according to Jan.

With few organic farmers in the area at the time, Jan names Glenn Chislett, a Boundary Bend farmer, who was already farming organically, and David Madge, a Primary Industries Liaison officer at Irymple, and later organic inspector, as early influences. Jan was also part of an early group (and later Chair) that formed the SMOGA (Sunraysia Mallee Organic Growers Association), who visited each other's farms and provided inspiration.

"Originally, when certification first came about, there was a NASAA in each State, and I was appointed to the Board of NASAA Vic in the early 90s," says Jan. She was involved at the start in rewriting the NASAA Constitution as a member-based organisation.

Jan has also been involved in conventional grower organisations, including Horticulture Australia's Citrus IAC, the Murray Valley Citrus Board (Vic/NSW) and Sunraysia Citrus Growers.

"At the end of the day, a lot of the issues we face are the same for both conventional and organic growers. Issues like pruning, pest and disease control, and continually improving fruit quality," says Jan.

Jan says that people have moved past the skepticism of organic in the early days, and "it's great to see how attitudes have changed."

"I get lots of questions about organic substitutes and replacements," she says.

"Many farmers are now adopting practices, composting and the like, even if they don't go fully organic."

"There is a better understanding and it's good to see others coming on board, a neighboring property for example, and other local growers."

Jan believes that domestic regulation is a huge issue for the industry, and one that can only be addressed through presenting a united front to Government.

"It is difficult, and something that won't be addressed overnight, as it requires consultation with all States to ensure adoption of the same standards and processes," she says.

"The introduction of new legislation or legislative amendments, public consultation processes... it is something that will take time and requires all of the industry to work together to represent both, at a State and Federal level."

Jan's advice to producers looking to get into organic is simple.

"Don't do what we did," she laughs.

"Don't do the whole lot at once. Put an area aside and manage that organically as a test. Build your system up first, before committing the whole farm."

"Developing strong relationships with wholesalers and distributors is also important," Jan says.

"There is no doubt that organic is growing, for some commodities, like meat, dairy and wine the growth is fantastic, for other commodities, it is a steady growth."

"Shelf life and phyto-sanitary requirements for certain produce, make accessing some markets impossible, whereas this is not the case for most processed product."

"Markets have ups and downs, and you have to work with it. Having a good reputation for supplying quality fruit that merchants want, goes a long way."

Jan points out that the average age for organic farmers is 52 years, below that of a conventional farmer at 58.

"It seems to be when people are ready to have children that they start to think about the lifestyle they want, and we see many returning to the family farm after careers elsewhere," she says.

"Clearly, a lot of younger people are attracted to organic and that's exciting!"



## ALAN DRUCE GREEN GROVE ORGANICS

### Organic wheat

If Jan Denham is considered the 'Doyenne' of Organic, then Alan Druce must certainly be the 'Godfather'.

The iconic image of Alan amongst his wheatfields at Ardletham, 100

kms northwest of Junee in the NSW Riverina, cemented his place early on as the poster boy for organic, and has been used since in many a publication to promote organic agriculture (including this one!).

The 2,696 acre "Green Grove" farm has been continually farmed by the Druce family since 1918, and is seen by many as a national treasure, being one of the only farms in the cropping zone that has not seen any chemical application since the early 1960s.

It was at this time that Alan became concerned about chemicals in the food chain and set out to convert the farm to organic management. Today, about 500 acres is sown to cereal crops, wheat and spelt, as well as running around 800 sheep and 45 head of cattle.

Religion further reinforced the path that brought Alan to organic, as he was on a search at the time for God and a church that better reflected his understanding of the Bible's teachings.

"I believe that it was the literal translation of the Bible that led me to books on organic farming, foundational books written by Sir Albert Howard, Friend Sykes, and Newman Turner....and journals, including Acres US," he says.

"It all made so much sense to me that I started to make changes straight away."

Early on, Alan says that people thought it was a "mad way of farming".

"They say that women gossip a lot, but believe me, if you want to find out anything, go to the local pub where the men are," he says.

"I certainly managed to take over the conversation, I was seen as the mad man and laughingstock at the time!"

"Now it's all changed, I've had groups of 30-40 people, from the Riverina Organic Farmers Organisation (ROFO), come to our place to learn and encourage each other."

At 91, Alan is still humble and self-deprecating, describing himself as 'extremely efficient at messing things up.'

"I made mistakes at first, of course."

"The biggest thing for anyone starting out, is that production yields will drop dramatically at first. When you take away the artificial chemicals, superphosphate, it takes time to rebuild soil health," he says.

"We made up for it in later years, though. Yields crept up and up over time and became almost comparable with conventional."

"And, then there is the price premium. I believe that the going rate for bread wheat is around \$150/tonne now. Compare that with organic at \$800/tonne!"

"Our beef and lambs are so much healthier also."

In the 90s, Alan and his family had the opportunity to vertically integrate their farming operation, with an initial failed partnership leading to the later outright purchase of the Junee historic flour mill in 1998.

Alan's spirit of entrepreneurship appears to have infected the next generation. Entrepreneurial son Neil, set about to successfully diversify the family farm production into value-added confectionery, using milled flour in the production of licorice, now marketed under the Junee Licorice & Chocolate brand. Currently, Green Grove Organics is the only manufacturer of organic licorice in the Southern Hemisphere.

Alan's grandson has also been producing organic whisky for several years at his own factory in Corowa.

Alan continues to be passionate in teaching people about the connection between soil health and human health, pointing to deficiencies in plant essential minerals, through poor soil, as connected to increasing cancers, diseases, and sicknesses.

He shares some of his wisdom here with us now...



# GROWING FOOD THAT IS NUTRITIOUS

## IMPORTANCE OF SOIL ECOLOGY

I don't like the term "organic" because most people have no idea what it means, or what it is all about. So, instead of calling it organic farming, let's talk about how to grow food that is nutritious.

First, let's ask some questions. What is nutritious food? Is it important?

In recent years, five Noble Prizes have been awarded to three or four doctors in Canada, because their research into 'The Eight Essential Glyconutrients' is thought to be so important it will supersede the importance of the discovery of penicillin. And that was big! Perhaps what is even more telling, some are claiming that this new understanding of the essential nutrients will revolutionise modern medicine, as we know it today!

The technical name for these essential sugars or nutrients are:-

- Glucose
- Galactose
- Fructose
- Mannose
- Xylose
- N-acetylneuraminic acid
- N-acetyl glucosamine
- N-acetylgalactosamine

Six of these eight essential glyconutrients or sugars are becoming increasingly deficient in our conventionally grown supermarket foods, and it is adversely impacting our health.

Let's go back to the main point. How then can we produce food that is rich in these nutrients?

Minerals are the basis of plant, animal and human health. Two-time Nobel laureate, Dr Linus Pauling is one of many researchers to recognise this simple fact. He has stated that, "In terms of human health, one could trace every sickness, every disease, every ailment to a mineral deficiency." But minerals in their natural state are useless to our health. They have to be transformed into a nutrient form that our digestive system can use. Imagine sitting down to a plate of dirt, or worse still, a plate of crushed rock phosphate, gypsum, and lime, well spiced with trace elements such as copper, zinc, boron, manganese and molybdenum! It just wouldn't work!

According to Dr Linus Pauling, a good, healthy soil is teeming with all sorts of life, all working together in a symbiotic relationship with each other and with the plant. In just one gram of good, productive soil there can be 15,000 different species of bacteria, 8,000 species of fungi, hundreds of species of algae, protozoa, and nematodes. The total number of this teeming work force living in that tiny

space (one fifth of a teaspoon of soil) may exceed 1,000 million.

This soil biology is able to transform the all-important minerals into a nutrient form that the plant, the animals and we humans need. But the soil biology also needs the help of the plant.

Photosynthesis is the process whereby the sun works on the green chlorophyll in the leaves of the plant, combining water, carbon dioxide and sunlight to miraculously form a simple sugar called glucose. Glucose is the energy source and building block for all plant growth, and travels down in the form of sap to feed the plant. But 30 to 50% of this glucose is exuded from the root hairs, in order to feed the soil biology. I don't know if the soil biology has other ways of obtaining glucose. Maybe the soil biology is totally dependent on the plant for this energy.

So, the soil biology feeds off the glucose the plant roots exude, and in return, feeds the needed nutrients into the plant roots. The nutrients then go up in the form of sap, into the leaves. Later, when the grain, seed, vegetables or fruit start to form, these nutrients travel back down to the stem and, from there, on up into the end product.

Grazing animals eating the grass or we humans eating vegetables, fruit or grain are then able to get the essential nutrients.

It should be obvious that the soil ecology or biology is essential in this incredible, symbiotic relationship.

The following story might well be of interest and certainly should help make the point that the soil ecology is vital. In the early winter of 2001, I received a phone call from Steve Wakelin, a CSIRO scientist based in Adelaide, who said that he and his colleagues had searched far and wide for penicillium fungi, but were unable to find any. However, he had heard that I had been farming organically since 1962 and wondered if he might have my permission to take soil samples. I welcome this sort of research and quickly acquiesced.

Below is a quote taken from his letter dated 12 November 2001 in which he thanked me for allowing him to take soil samples from my property.

*From your soil samples I was able to isolate over 170 Penicillium strains (many of them are probably the same species). Eight of these*

/ Continued from previous page

*were able to release phosphorus from a very insoluble form (tribasic calcium phosphate);  $\text{Ca}_5(\text{PO}_4)_3\text{OH}$ ). Each of the eight isolates will be further tested in the laboratory as a selection process prior to a glasshouse evaluation."*

This was very interesting information. If Steve Wakelin was able to find penicillium fungus on this farm, when he and his colleagues were unable to find it on other properties, then surely it would indicate that after decades of farming organically, the soil biology has built up into a healthy balance. Undoubtedly, this is the reason our produce is so rich in nutrients!

Let me tell you how nutrients in a food product may be measured. On the market today is a device called a Refractor Metre or Brix Meter, which is able to measure the amount of nutrients in the juice squeezed from a growing crop, an orange, or whatever. Conventionally grown wheat crops around Lockhart, also in the N.S.W. Riverina, tested in the winter of 2010, recorded readings of zero to six. A reading of zero means there were no nutrients in that crop! Six is said to be fairly good. By contrast, crops on my property, "Green Grove" returned readings of above 16, which was said to be "unbelievably high".

Another point; for the most part, conventionally grown hard wheat, has difficulty making the 11% protein level required by the domestic export markets, despite the use of nitrogenous fertilizers, but hard wheat grown organically on this farm reaches levels as high as 17, 18 and 19%.

To summarise. For vibrant health, one needs the essential nutrients, which means we need plants and the soil biology working together in perfect harmony.

## COVID DRIVES CONSUMER DEMAND FOR ORGANIC

**Hoarding, comfort eating, treating yourself, cooking up a storm at home, online shopping and...MORE organic food!**

It appears that COVID-19 has delivered for the sector as an acknowledged pandemic 'trend', with a positive impact on sales of organic food.

For some time, consumers have been driving a growing demand for fresh, healthy, additive-free food with traceable origins, that have been produced responsibly and minimises waste. The demand appears only to have accelerated, with the pandemic prompting positive changes of behaviour in regard to food production and consumption.

According to the US Organic Traders Association

[ota.com/news/press-releases/21328](https://ota.com/news/press-releases/21328), "all of the staples categories, from dairy and eggs, to breads, pastas, rice, grains and baking supplies, such as flour and baking yeast, are expected to see increased growth in 2020, provided supply can meet demand."

"Many solid-growth organic categories have seen demand exploding. Organic produce sales for one, after jumping by more than 50 percent in the early days of kitchen stocking, were up more than 20 percent in the spring of 2020. Other categories experiencing softer growth, have been seeing big boosts in demand: the run on groceries meant organic milk was in high demand, for example, and sales of organic eggs skyrocketed. Packaged and frozen organic foods saw double-digit growth as consumers upped at-home meal preparation."

Back on the home front, Farmonline [www.farmonline.com.au/story/6915240/organic-sector-makes-the-most-of-a-crisis-year-as-demand-spikes/](https://www.farmonline.com.au/story/6915240/organic-sector-makes-the-most-of-a-crisis-year-as-demand-spikes/) reports that domestic "sales of certified organic lines jumped more than 50 per cent above normal monthly trends, according to retailers and wholesalers, with Woolworths reporting 20% annual growth."

But, will we be seeing permanent changes in consumer behaviour?

Yes, according to Finn Cottle, trade consultant for the Soil Association in an interview with Food Navigator, [www.foodnavigator.com/Article/2020/05/06/Organic-food-gets-coronavirus-boost](https://www.foodnavigator.com/Article/2020/05/06/Organic-food-gets-coronavirus-boost) as it delivers the benefits that many shoppers are looking for 'post Covid' in terms of natural, healthy and tasty food that's been sourced and farmed with care."

### Further Information

[ota.com/news/press-releases/21328](https://ota.com/news/press-releases/21328)

[www.farmonline.com.au/story/6915240/organic-sector-makes-the-most-of-a-crisis-year-as-demand-spikes/](https://www.farmonline.com.au/story/6915240/organic-sector-makes-the-most-of-a-crisis-year-as-demand-spikes/)

[www.foodnavigator.com/Article/2020/05/06/Organic-food-gets-coronavirus-boost](https://www.foodnavigator.com/Article/2020/05/06/Organic-food-gets-coronavirus-boost)

**The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently released figures in October for sales of organic product. The 2019 Organic Survey estimates total sales of \$9.93 billion in organic products, 31% higher than the last date of survey in 2016.**

[www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide\\_to\\_NASS\\_Surveys/Organic\\_Production/pdf/2019\\_Organic\\_Executive\\_Briefing.pdf](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide_to_NASS_Surveys/Organic_Production/pdf/2019_Organic_Executive_Briefing.pdf)





/ Glenn Schaube, former NASAA Organic Chair

## REVIEW OF THE DRAFT AgVet CHEMICALS REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

### Working cooperatively for food security and diversity, producer, and consumer choice

I recently wrote NASAA Organic's submission, on behalf of the organic industry, to the Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment in response to independent panel recommendations (released in March 2020), forming part of the current review of Australia's agvet chemicals regulatory framework.

Our submission, titled 'Working cooperatively for food security and diversity, producer, and consumer choice', promoted cooperation, to ensure that organic producers were protected from any negative effects.

Our submission highlighted the needs and concerns of the Australian certified organic sector, and offered suggestions to encourage and support coexistence, improved sustainability, and protection for the environment. The organic sector is seeking principles that place a far greater emphasis on reduction, and that protect and improve choice, efficiency, transparency, and responsibility.

On 5 September 2019, Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie, Minister for Agriculture, appointed an independent panel of experts in regulation, agricultural production, veterinary medicines and human health to comprehensively review the regulatory framework for agvet chemicals. The Panel recommendations proposed sweeping change, and deregulation of some aspects in the process agvet chemicals are currently regulated in Australia.

The overuse, and potential abuse,

of agvet chemicals, can pose a direct threat to the integrity of organic farmland and industry.

Enshrining provisions, within agvet regulations, that ensure Australia's organic industry can continue to grow and coexist alongside conventional production, without fear of contamination and the degradation of the natural environment, is vitally important.

Our submission argued that poorly administered agvet chemical controls, regulation and on-farm practices pose a significant risk of cross contamination, and the potential loss of certification and organic market access for Australia's organic producers.

We pointed out that organic agriculture's focus on 'natural health', which is based on ecological processes, biodiversity and natural cycles, offers a significant contribution to improving the sustainability and community license of the agvet chemical agriculture sector.

As the fastest growing food category globally, the success and contribution of the organic sector to Australia's economy is now unequivocal, as is the need to support greater commercial security for organic producers.

While some in the agvet sector may dismiss the concerns raised, based on the premise that small amounts of agvet chemical residue pose no risk to health, biodiversity or the environment, the market for certified organic food exists, because many people around the world mistrust this view, and choose to avoid such residues in their food. The increased use of some agvet chemicals in past years contributes to this declining

social licence.

Whether you agree with these views or not, the Organic Industry is market driven and continues to grow rapidly, now making an unequivocal contribution to sustainable food production, based on the social licence afforded it by the community.

Our submission suggested that the technologies, knowledge and skills developed by the organic sector during the past 40 years can, therefore, make a significant contribution to Australian agriculture and a reductionist approach to the use of agvet chemicals.

We demonstrated that organic production systems have a lot to offer conventional producers, because they provide a solution to sustaining the health of soils.

We encouraged the Department to support the development of non or low toxic pest controls. We also demonstrated that the organic industry has spurred many new and innovative agricultural input businesses that supply effective pest and disease control solutions, crop fertilisers, soil amendments, sanitisers and cleaners that can advise and supply conventional producers.

The Review's public consultation period closed in August and the panel will now consider all responses, with a draft report to be released for further feedback. This will inform the final report to be delivered to the Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management in May 2021.

### Further Information

Download NASAA's full submission [here](#), also, [haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/agvet-chemicals-regulatory-reform](https://haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/agvet-chemicals-regulatory-reform)





# **BUILD THE BEST SOIL WITH PEATS INNOVATIVE SOIL CONDITIONERS.**

## **AT PEATS SOIL WE ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF SOILS FOR ALL.**

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## ORGANIC AGRICULTURE AS 'PREVENTATIVE LANDCARE'

**2020 Tasmanian Senior Australian of the Year, Dr Graeme Stevenson, counts his life's achievement, in developing a greater understanding of the importance of organic agriculture as 'Preventative Landcare.'**

Graeme was recognised for his significant contribution to natural resource management, the Landcare movement, and

organics in Australia over the last 30 years – as a Project Manager, Consultant, Volunteer, Mentor, and Author of numerous books, papers, conference posters and other publications.

"Landcare and organic go hand-in-hand in all respects," he says, "and getting people to recognise that, has been the focus of everything I have done in life."

The Australian of the Year Award adds to Graeme's nomination as a finalist in the 2018 Bob Hawke Landcare Awards, receipt of the 2019 Tasmanian Premier's Landcare Award and Organic Federation of Australia (OFA) lifetime achievement award in 2010.

Humbled by the experience, Graeme would still like to find the person responsible for his nomination, although he admits to being, "tickled pink!"

"What a massive honour," he says.

"And what a terrific team from Tassie, what a great company, and what a joy!"

It was a local dairy farmer, Doug Kershaw, who was an early mentor and first introduced Graeme in the 80's to the concept of organic agriculture and positive soil health. His wife, Janice, was another early influence in getting him to think about alternative food production, particularly with their young children in mind.

It was during this time also that Graeme was first introduced to the Tasmanian Organic Growers and Farmers Society (OGFS), known affectionately as the "Twinset and Pearls Brigade."

"It was bitter warfare at that time in Tassie!"

"There was a mentality that there was only one way to farm; and that was chemical farming."

"Those early founders, farmers and gardeners stood up post the 2nd World War, in the 50s and 60s, to say that there was an alternative way, largely following the influence of what was happening in South Australia at the time, with the Soil Association and organic champion and mentor, Peter Bennett."

It is these early pioneers that Graeme recognises in his recent book about the OGFS, titled 'Ahead of their Time.'

"What a great mob they were," Graeme

recalls fondly, remembering the "outrageously successful" festivals held by OGFS, that would attract up to 2,000 people, including his first attendance, where he 'went in disguise'.

In 'disguise', according to Graeme, as he was then working as a Senior Research Officer at the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries.

"I was a complete black sheep working in my role with the Department," he says.

"Colleagues completely dismissed organic, and I was the only one standing up for it."

"I was very frustrated by the attitudes of the time," he says.

"Luckily, things have changed so much in the last 10 years."

Graeme has added much to our agricultural knowledge base, contributing some 20 years of applied research into organic agriculture and sustainable farming, working with farmers as a soil assessor and agronomy consultant, and later as an organic inspector.

"There was a time when I knew every organic farmer in Tasmania!" he says.

On top of his project management, consultancy and volunteer work, Graeme is well-known for pushing the boundaries as hilarious, and irreverent alter-ego Dr Splottergrunt, a popular presenter of Landcare programs sessions with school aged children.

His introduction of the memorable 'Poo on a Plate' sessions has been a delight to many, and his 'Landcare Heroes' and 'Adopt a Farm' programs, taking kids out each month on farm visits, have been a vehicle for sharing knowledge of the importance of soil health with the next generation.

Graeme believes that the "sky is the limit" for this generation when it comes to Landcare, and he has much hope for the future.

"Still today, though, entrenched views exist, and a lot of farmers don't like to say they are organic, as still for many, it is seen as too alternative."

"We need to break down that barrier for people and continue to change the perception," he says.

"The huge interest in 'regenerative agriculture' and 'holistic farming' is exciting and may seem more palatable to some."

"However you dress it up, though, it represents a step closer to organic," he says.

# achieving an agro- ecological balance

## RANGELAND FARMING AND ORGANIC MANAGEMENT

Graeme Stevenson's concept of organic management, as preventative landcare, is greatly evidenced and applicable to Australia's pastoral rangelands.

75% of Australia is classed as Rangeland, with an estimated 6,000 pastoral enterprises covering 58% of this total land mass and contributing some \$1.8 bn in agricultural production\*.

Organic management principles are wholly compatible with the aims and objectives of pastoral natural resource management, placing the protection of the ecosystem at the heart of the farming system.

Organic management promotes practices that encourage both productivity and ecological outcomes, with measurable environmental benefits including:

### **Reduction of herbicide use**

Promoting a broader range of species and less run off.

### **Increased agrobiodiversity**

Greater variety of habitat and food on farm for non-economic species. Biodiversity areas are set aside as part of property planning.

### **Reduction in fertilisers**

Increases soil biota, and reduces toxic run off into water systems.

### **Reduction in pesticide use**

Allows for greater variety of non pest invertebrates to survive.

### **Focus on maintaining soil health**

Can lead to less erosion.

### **Sustainable grazing management**

Less pressure on vegetation, reduced soil erosion and less pressure on water resources.





Pastoralism carried out under organic management seeks to enhance biodiversity, minimise soil and nutrient loss, and ensure measured standards of animal welfare. Respect for the rights of traditional owners are also enshrined within our practices.

Converting to organic presents an opportunity, both from the perspective of promoting a more sustainable farming method and in exploiting markets, particularly overseas. We can draw on the successes of groups such as OBE in the 'Channel Country' stretching across Qld, NSW and SA; Mt Barry Station in the top end of SA, and Kanandah Station in WA, as examples of NCO certified pastoral enterprises that have embraced organic principles.

Our operators report better herd management outcomes and improved environmental results, with a better balancing of grazing pressures through seasonal conditions, optimised stocking rates, supplementary feed stocks, increased biodiversity and less pressure on water resources.

Sustainable ecological management is only possible where farm incomes are sustainable, however.

For those considering organic, alongside better environmental outcomes, we know that the price premium is undisputed, direct costs are less, and gross margins higher. Profitability is a less direct correlation with a range of variabilities coming in to play, however, several of our operators are experiencing good financial returns, and feel a greater control over their future destiny.

### Conversion to Organic

Livestock that come out of the rangelands may already be produced using largely organic techniques, with less intervention and chemical use than intensive farming. The transition, therefore, may be less onerous than perceived with organic certification simply providing transparency around the production system.

Requirements for conversion are included within organic Standards, and touch on livestock genetics and breeding, including management of grazing, weeds, water resource, feral pest control, transport, handling and general animal husbandry.

Specific Standards for Rangeland Management should be read in conjunction with General Standards for Livestock Husbandry.

## SA DRAFT PASTORAL LANDS BILL 2020 UNDER CONSIDERATION

**Future management of South Australia's pastoral rangelands is under review with public consultation on the draft SA Pastoral Lands Bill 2020 completed in October.**

The draft Bill aims to modernise current legislation to better support SA's pastoralists, reflecting a focus on:

- supporting diversification of land use,
- facilitating economic growth, and
- ensuring the land remains ecologically sustainable.

The Bill identifies a number of changes to support long term investment and income diversification. It provides further guidance on the ongoing monitoring and oversight of land use, ensuring the health of these natural environments. The Bill also outlines greater powers to penalise those in breach of conditions of lease or inappropriate land use, with provisions to better address unsuitable behaviour from those visiting or travelling through pastoral lands. The Bill also includes greater flexibility in the use of the Pastoral Lands Fund to support the new Act's administration and objectives.

The final draft Bill will be submitted to Parliament for consideration in 2021.

### Further Information

[yoursay.sa.gov.au/decisions/draft-pastoral-lands-bill/about](https://yoursay.sa.gov.au/decisions/draft-pastoral-lands-bill/about)

**Organic management promotes practices that encourage both productivity and ecological outcomes, with measurable environmental benefits**

# bushfire recovery & weed management

Tim Marshall spoke at NASAA Organic's [Regenerate and Recovery Event](#) following the 2019 bushfires. He acknowledged at the time that there is very little formal research on fire effects and regeneration for farmland. Here, Tim outlines the factors that contribute to the influx of weed species common to fire impacted soil, and the practical actions that landholders might consider in addressing the issue.

Bushfires remove plant cover and create conditions that favour weeds. Weeds and preferred vegetation are in competition for water, light, and nutrients, which are lost from existing vegetation into the atmosphere during a fire event.

The rate of nutrient loss depends upon temperatures reached and duration of burning. Higher temperatures increase loss of biomass, with Carbon, Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sulphur lost to the atmosphere. For most other nutrients, there may be some 'transformation' that temporarily affects availability - although they should 'recover by themselves'.

At greater than 200 degrees, there may be a significant loss of minerals, and destruction of the seed bank. Nitrogen and Sulphur are the first to disappear, and once gone, are gone forever. Over 500 degrees, most organic matter is lost, with Phosphorous loss at around 650 degrees. Biochar production happens at around 450-700 degrees. Severe bushfires can reach 800 – 1,500 degrees, and it is important to appreciate that the fire ground burns long after the fire front has passed.

After a 'cool' burn, seed and some perennial plants will have survived to re-establish plant cover. A hot burn may have destroyed almost all vegetation and seed, and a very hot burn can sterilise soil down to 6-8cm, therefore, weeds that grow from underground parts, or that have mechanisms to bury their seed, will be the first to recover.

## Pasture and crops

In pasture or cropland, rapid action is important, but so is observation. Conditions on the burnt ground can be quite different, depending upon the original species present, fire intensity, slope, aspect, and pre-fire fertility. Rain and wind soon after fire also increase potential for further soil and seed loss. Germinating plants after fire are also threatened by dry conditions, as surface litter will have burnt, exposing soil to sun and wind.

Grass-dominant annual pastures have little dormant seed, because most (90 per cent) germinates in the next growing season after it is produced, and grass seed remains near the soil surface. Therefore, annual pastures are very vulnerable to fire and need reseeding.

Annual weeds, such as capeweed, often have a competition strategy that includes production of huge numbers of seed, so some will survive after bushfire. Pasture containing subterranean clover, or other species that bury their seed, maintain a larger seed bank and also fare better after fire.

Perennial weeds have very deep root systems as part of their survival strategy and persist when pasture plants do not, especially if the burn was cool, but a very hot fire can still destroy perennials. Docks, sorrel and onion weed are examples of weeds that may survive because of deep root systems or buried propagules.

## Bushland

In bushland, it can be important to let the soil recover before traversing the site too much. After bushfire, soil is unprotected, fragile and subject to water and wind erosion, and very new seedlings or regrowth are vulnerable to trampling.

Hand control is most effective in bushland. Check the Weeds of National Significance website at <https://weeds.org.au/weeds-profiles> or State Government websites to see which weeds require immediate control and if biological controls are available.

## Action Plan

Organic growers have limited chemical tools for controlling weeds, but the cleared landscape after fire, provides an opportunity for close observation of germinating weeds and quick management action, to swing the balance in favour of non-weed plants.

Actions for controlling weeds and maximizing the efficiency of 'good plant' seed germination include:

- Checking vehicles and equipment for weed seed and cleaning before entering the burnt area.
- Restricting the area where livestock feeding occurs to limit impact, as weed seed may be introduced in fodder, or by replacement stock.
- Preventing soil loss from rain and overland flow is critical, particularly on sloping sites. Create barriers to capture soil, using hay bales laid across the slope, or even burnt branches and foliage. Anything that slows down the speed of water flowing over the soil surface is useful.
- If the fire was hot and regrowth pasture density is sparse, introduce annual pasture seed by direct drilling. If the burn was cool, light harrowing can expose remnant seed and hasten germination. Keep stock off pasture if possible, to allow it to recover.
- When soil and pasture have recovered enough to withstand trampling, use grazing to reduce the impact of broadleaf weeds.
- Limit stocking capacity to allow pasture to produce seed as soon as possible after fire.





Kym Green



Plamen Pareskevov



## Australian Kelp Products continued support

Once again Leo Lin, COO of NCO certified input manufacturer, Australian Kelp Products, has donated a further 5,000 litres of Southern Ocean Seaweed (SOS®) Liquid Kelp product to continue helping farmers restore soil health.

It has been distributed to a total of 14 farmers, both organic and conventional from bushfire-affected towns, some of which are listed below:

### LOBETHAL

**SA Organic Strawberries,**  
Plamen Pareskevov.  
NCO Certified

### LENSWOOD

Apple and Cherry Farmers  
**Ellimatta Orchards,**  
Kym Green  
ACO Certified

### WOODSIDE

Beef & Grazing  
**Goodwin Orchards,** Matt  
Goodwin & Gita Du Plessis  
NASAA Organic Member

### CUDLEE CREEK

Beef, grazing, sheep and  
lifestyle  
**Various farmers**

Once again, we wish to thank Leo and Australian Kelp for their generosity and support to farmers in these challenging times.

# The Seaweed Specialists.



Seaweeds have been used to improve soil condition for over 1000 years. It is a core component in biological agriculture that is an indispensable biostimulant that can provide a number of beneficial properties such as:

- Frost resistance.
- Root promotion.
- Improved flowering & fruit set.
- Bio-balancing.
- Stockfeed Supplementation
- Stress resistance.

Australian Kelp Products Pty Ltd (AKP) is a specialist seaweed product company situated in the Limestone Coast, southeast region of South Australia.

One of their products, **Southern Ocean Seaweeds – SOS Liquid Kelp** is produced from natural Australian *Durvillaea Potatorum* - Bull Kelp, which contains a rich source of natural trace elements, mineral, alginic acid (alginate), amino acid and an array of complex organic compounds, making it perfect for organic farming.

**SOS Liquid Kelp** improves and helps aerate the soil structure, which is good for plants' respiration and nutrition-absorption, as well as enhancing water retention of plants.



Australian Kelp Products



To find out more visit [auskelp.com.au](http://auskelp.com.au), email [info@auskelp.com.au](mailto:info@auskelp.com.au) or call 08 8734 4466.





**summer  
& mangoes**

...

**the  
perfect  
combo!**



**Mango smoothies, mango ice-cream, mango salad... Imagine a world surrounded by mangoes every day.**

Such is the life of agronomist Darren Hill, who has been operating his own NCO certified organic Fruit Jungle farms, producing Kensington Pride and R2E2 varieties of organic mangoes in Darwin, Northern Territory since 2015.

As well as his own farms, Darren manages those of Cheeky Farms, one of the largest mango producers in Darwin. Cheeky Farms also have a number of certified trees, and under Darren's management, even the conventional fruit is managed with very low input.

The company recently invested in building the largest multi-million-dollar packing shed in Darwin, dedicated for mangoes, with state-of-the-art grading, sorting and packing technology. The facility is certified organic, and whilst the volume of fruit packed is conventional, there are separation and wash down procedures in place for the handling of organic fruit in accordance with organic standards.

As an agronomist by trade, Darren is comfortable with the systems that he has in place for managing his farms organically.

"I've not really experienced what I would call challenges in that sense," he says.

"However, it's the marketing that I'm finding more difficult. How to manage volume of fruit production and achieving a fair price, without flooding the current certified organic domestic market," he says.

"I'm really only doing a modest amount of mango trays a season, but find that this is enough now to supply the certified organic market in our window for the domestic market"

"I was exporting also, to North Asia, Hong Kong and China, but due to COVID 19 this has ceased this year, due to high freight costs.

"Not all fruit can be sold into the certified organic market, so surplus is sold on the conventional market, unfortunately."

Access to seasonal labour has been an issue for many during COVID-19, but Darren says they've not really experienced any problems this year.

"As I move around in my work as an agronomist, I'm hearing different stories when it comes to finding workers. A lot of other people are saying they are having trouble, but this hasn't been the case for us," he says.

"We've not really had any issues in accessing the labour in the packing sheds that we needed through harvest, and many of our pickers have remained as we move into pruning," he says.

"If anything, we have noticed that workers have not been rotating through on what is a 'usual' cycle through Queensland and down South, people seem to be staying put due to COVID-19," he says.

"When we speak to the contract labour companies, however, they think that next year will be more challenging as current visas expire, and with potentially no-one coming in to replace."

For now, though, the future is looking bright, with big plans for expansion and the purchase of more land dedicated to mango production, including other certified crops.

"It's a matter of building up over time, and ensuring a sustainable operation," says Darren.

#### Further Information

Email: [info@fruitjungle.com.au](mailto:info@fruitjungle.com.au)

[www.facebook.com/MangoOrganicFruit](https://www.facebook.com/MangoOrganicFruit)

[www.instagram.com/fruitjungleorganics](https://www.instagram.com/fruitjungleorganics)

[www.facebook.com/pages/category/Agriculture/Cheeky-Farms-394463514504752](https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Agriculture/Cheeky-Farms-394463514504752)

[www.instagram.com/cheekyfarmsaustralia](https://www.instagram.com/cheekyfarmsaustralia)

/ Continued from previous page



While Darren is comfortable for now, finding seasonal workers has emerged as a major issue in many other parts of Australia, with an uneven distribution of labour across States, and even across specific agricultural crops.

Nick Hancock, Farm Manager of NCO Certified Organic mixed fruit and vegetable 'BioPark Farm' in Wistow, South Australia, agrees wholeheartedly with Darren's comments about seasonal workers now bypassing the traditional route of heading South post tropical harvest.

"That's exactly right," he says.

"Last year, we had several workers who finished up the mango season up North and came down here after to escape the humidity."

"This year, with uncertainty around border closures, people are hesitant to move around."

Nick is reliant on overseas workers to 'top up' the farm's core staff in peak periods.

"Generally, people will be on a 417 Working Holiday visa, with a

requirement to fulfil 88 days of farm work," he says.

"Normally, I receive lots of emails, phone calls, and people turning up at the farm wanting work."

"This year, there's only been a few, and they've only been available for short periods."

"Other farmers, the agencies, they are all saying the same thing."

An EY study commissioned by Hort Innovation and released in September forecasts an expected industry shortfall of 26,000 workers in horticulture for picking, harvesting, and packing. The report indicates that Cairns and Wide Bay in Queensland; North West Victoria and Shepparton; Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Murray (New South Wales); and South Australia's south eastern region will be most affected.

"It's a huge problem," says Nick.

"We are hearing media reports of farmers that are not planting this year, because they won't be able to find workers. The cost of inputs simply means it's not worth doing."

"At BioPark, we are having to do what a lot of operations are doing, scaling back our plantings, and operating from a smaller base."

"Usually, we are looking for workers that can commit for a period from now until the end of apple harvest in May."

"Now, even if people are only available for 1-2 months, we have to take them, but the cost of training and retraining is obviously high."

"We are producing 50-60 varieties of fruit and veg on farm at BioPark, which means we are busy on a rotational basis, and it's not that straightforward."

The National Farmers Federation's Horticulture Council has outlined to Government a multi-pronged 10-point roadmap to address the critical shortage, advocating mechanisms to safely restart the meaningful recruitment of foreign workers and providing incentives for domestic displaced workers.

Nick agrees that there is a definite need to incentivise local people to try farm work in the short term, pointing to programs in other States that are even offering cash payments for those willing to work on farms.

"We just need help for our farmers!" he says.

#### Further Information

[www.facebook.com/bioparkorganicfarm/](https://www.facebook.com/bioparkorganicfarm/)

[nff.org.au/media-release/farmers-submit-break-glass-plan-to-get-workers-on-farm/](https://nff.org.au/media-release/farmers-submit-break-glass-plan-to-get-workers-on-farm/)

To better quantify agriculture and horticulture's workforce shortage, the NFF is reminding farmers to detail their workforce needs for the year ahead in this short [survey](#).



# BENEFITS OF ORGANIC GAS PHASE FEEDING (OGPF)



**The benefits of atmosphere-feeding fruit and vegetables in greenhouses & cold stores have been known for more than a decade.**

Unfortunately, until now there has been no safe and practical way to achieve the dramatic production gains and improvement in produce quality that come from organic gas phase feeding (OGPF).

AiroFresh®, a proven Australian air purification technology, now includes a gas phase feeding capacity which is an allowable input for organic production - NASAA Certified Organic (NCO) Licence No 5477M.

The benefits to organic growers come from the unit's ability to process ambient atmosphere to produce essential plant nutrients without the added chemicals.

The powerful combination of

gas phase nutrients are directly absorbed by the leaves, stems and fruit of the growing plant, resulting in more than 30% uplift in plant size and produce volumes. While the fruit remains normal in size, the fruit volume is dramatically increased and the timeline to harvest is significantly reduced.

Founding Director, Jonathan Taylor is extremely pleased with this latest advance in AiroFresh technology.

'The combination of research and commercial results to date show a significant production uplift of more than 30% achieved with no added chemicals. We are thrilled to be able to offer producers a technology solution which uniquely combines these production advantages with air purification and ethylene control benefits. Being an NCO allowed input process, this new ability to "feed the plant" is especially valuable for organic and zero-residue producers.

AiroFresh's Dr Mike Woodrow can see the benefits of Organic Gas Phase Feeding (OGPF) extending through the life of the produce.

'We now know that post-harvest produce continues to absorb these gas phase nutrients in cold storage, protecting it from chilling injury, weight loss and wastage. AiroFresh units in post-harvest cold stores continue to "feed the fruit" with impressive produce quality and shelf life advantages.'

This unique NCO approved technology is generating considerable interest globally based on the benefits it offers in pre-harvest horticulture production and post-harvest produce transport and storage.

For more information please contact

Dr Mike Woodrow

[mike@airofreshintl.com](mailto:mike@airofreshintl.com)

0402 267 917

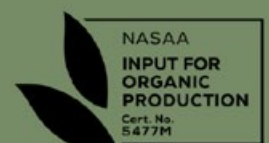
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# protecting our birds of prey

## KEEPING RAT POISON OUT OF BIRD FOOD CHAINS

We are all aware of the benefits of birds on organic farms in promoting biodiversity, and for pest control. In fact, some of our operators specifically list hawks and other birds of prey in their Organic Management Plan (OMP) for this purpose.

Many people may be unaware, however, that owls, kites and other birds of prey are dying from eating rats and mice that have ingested commonly used Second Generation rodent poisons.

These household products – including brands such as *Talon*, *Fast Action RatSak* and *The Big Cheese Fast Action* brand rat and mice bait – have been banned from general public sale in the US, Canada and EU, but are still available to purchase from supermarkets and retailers throughout Australia.

Birdlife Australia are running a campaign of awareness to keep these poisons out of bird food chains, calling for a ban of these products from supermarket shelves. The conservation group and some 4,000 bird lovers have

been lobbying the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) and retailers on this issue.

In response, the APVMA has indicated that they will be updating labelling of products, however, Birdlife Australia is calling for Australian regulations to be brought in line with European and North American standards i.e. a total ban!

You can add your name to the campaign at [www.actforbirds.org/ratpoison](http://www.actforbirds.org/ratpoison)

BirdLife Australia suggest a number of alternative choices to control rodents here. [www.actforbirds.org/ratpoison](http://www.actforbirds.org/ratpoison)



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**Established in 1980.** SWEP was founded by expert soil scientist Ted Mikhail and was one of the first soil testing laboratories in Australia. SWEP tests and recommendations are based on over 50 years of research and verified in the field on a wide variety of Australian soils.

**Balance is the key to healthy soil.** The Mikhail System™ balance concept was created in 1987 and can be compared to a balanced diet for human beings. That is, the soil and human body both rely on a stable structure, the right nutrients and some good bacteria, according to individual needs.

SWEP is 100% Australian owned and independent.

*For a limited time, SWEP is offering a 10% discount when you mention NASAA Organic Insights!*



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## THE ORGANIC CHOICE FOR FAST WEED CONTROL

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Features	Benefits
680g/L Nonanoic Acid	Highest load Nonanoic Acid on the market
Rate: 6 – 8L of product/100L of water	Lower use rates per treated hectare
Applied in 200 to 300L of water/Hectare	Rate range to give more flexibility
Fast acting with visible effects on green plant tissue	More treated hectares per spray vat
Derived from natural occurring substances sourced from Sunflowers	Less time wasted filling spray tank with water
Biodegradable	Lower rates of product per hectare
Many use patterns	Most weeds show effects within hours of applications
Extra use patterns	Derived from plants to kill weeds
Available in 1L, 5L, 20L, 200L & 1000L packs	Breaks down into carbon dioxide and water
	Orchards
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## mandy hall's summer recipe

# make fermented fruit part of your Christmas spread!

It's that time of year when entertaining and cheese platters are aplenty, and I love a gooey cheese, particularly a gooey cheese that's encased in pastry & baked until it's flaky and golden. There's nothing like that creamy goodness!

There's also nothing quite like enjoying such rich indulgence with a fresh, acidic accompaniment - sweet, savoury and a little sour. We sometimes forget about fermenting fruit, but it is a fantastic way to reduce sweetness and add other layers of flavour.

### Fermented Pear and Apples

- 3 firm organic pears and 2 apples
- 2 Tbsp of sultanas
- 1 tsp of yellow mustard seeds
- 4 cardamom pods
- Sea salt
- Filtered or Rainwater

Using sterilised equipment and a 1.5 to 2 litre fermenting jar - cut your apples and pears into chunks or cut into wedges, vertically. Remove cores.

Weigh your fruit then calculate your salt ratio, for this super short ferment we are using 1.5% salt, if your fruit weighs 500g, the required salt will be 7.5g, weigh out your salt. For this ferment we will leave out the weight of the water that we are going to add.

Dissolve salt in 250mls of water.

Place sultanas, mustard seeds and cardamom pods into your fermenting jar and then add apples and pears, fill jar with salt water mix, if there is not enough water to cover all fruit, top up with additional water leaving





at least 1 inch headroom from the top of your jar. If you have fermenting weights use them, if not, use a cut apple or pear as a weight.

Tighten lid and leave out of direct sunlight in room temperature for 2-5 days before placing in the fridge, this fermented fruit will maintain crispness for two weeks after refrigeration.

**Note:** Room temperature is around 18-22 degrees celsius – if your environment is much cooler, your fruit might take slightly longer to ferment, and if it is warmer the fruit will ferment quickly.

If you are leaving to ferment for longer than 3 days and not using an airlock, please give the the lid of your jar a gentle 1/4 turn each day, just to release any built-up gases.

Serving suggestions – on a cheese platter, tossed throughout a salad, with pork dishes, can cook slightly to make a chutney style accompaniment or simply as a tasty fruit snack.



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Organic is a word that, to me, means a whole farm ecosystem, inclusive of both commercial and non-commercial outputs. It requires a management philosophy that balances the scale and diversity of external inputs to arrive at a sustainable production dividend. In less words, Commercial Ecology – for plants, animals and humans.

Phil Rowe  
Sunny Creek Organic Berry Farm.

# winners are grinners

Well done to our following  
NCO Operators who have come  
up trumps at various recent award  
shows. *Congratulations to all.*



Flinders Island Olives



Wymah Organic Olives

## BEST OF SHOW

### Best Extra Virgin Olive Oil of Show Boutique Volume

Flinders Island Olives  
Organic Extra Virgin Olive Oil

### Best Table Olive of Show

Wymah Organic Olives  
Certified Organic Kalamata Olives

## BEST OF SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

### Best Table Olive Southern Hemisphere

Wymah Organic Olives  
Certified Organic Kalamata Olives

## BEST OF AUSTRALIAN

### Best Australian Table Olive

Wymah Organic Olives  
Certified Organic Kalamata Olives

## BEST OF STATE

### Best Tasmanian Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Flinders Island Olives  
Organic Extra Virgin Olive Oil

## CHAMPION AND RESERVE CHAMPION TABLE OLIVES BY CLASS

### Champion Table Olives

Class 14 Kalamata Olives  
Wymah Organic Olives  
Certified Organic Kalamata Olives

Flinders Island Olive Oil  
[www.flindersislandoliveoil.com](http://www.flindersislandoliveoil.com)

Wymah Organic  
[tableolive.com.au](http://tableolive.com.au)



# 2020 DELICIOUS HARVEY NORMAN PRODUCE AWARDS

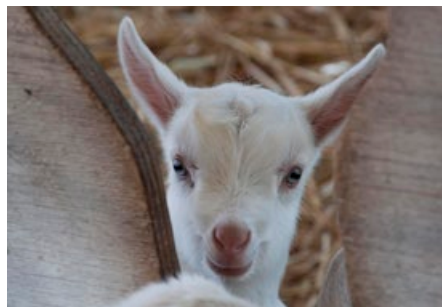
We are super proud of the following NCO operators who came up trumps at the recent 2020 Delicious Harvey Norman Produce Awards...

## GOLD MEDAL WINNERS

**Bruny Island Cheese Company**  
George – TAS  
[www.brunyislandcheese.com.au](http://www.brunyislandcheese.com.au)



**Holy Goat Cheese**  
Brigid's Well – VIC  
[www.holygoatcheese.com.au](http://www.holygoatcheese.com.au)



**Ngeringa Produce**  
Ngeringa Biodynamic Salad Greens – SA  
[www.ngeringa.com](http://www.ngeringa.com)



**Tellurian Fruit Gardens**  
Certified Organic Fruit  
(Nectarine, Pear) – VIC  
(Mt Alexander Fruit Gardens)  
[www.tfgardens.com.au](http://www.tfgardens.com.au)



**Kinkawooka Mussels**  
Kinkawooka Mussels – SA  
[www.kinkawookashellfish.com.au](http://www.kinkawookashellfish.com.au)



# NEWS WRAP UP

## CHANGES TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS IMPACT GROWER GROUPS

Proposed changes to Standards in the European Union will impact how organic farming groups are managed, and has the potential to increase the legal, certification and administrative expenses for such groups.

As a respected international certifier with recognised access to global markets, NASAA Certified Organic (NCO) have certified operators throughout the Asia-Pacific region since 1990 under the Grower Group model, including in Indonesia, PNG, East Timor, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji and Nepal.

There are currently over 10,000 individual growers under collective certification through NCO, with primary production including tea/coffee, spices and coconuts/coconut products now exported to major markets, including the US.

Currently, only the representative grower cooperative or group must be certified, and not the (hundreds, or thousands of) individual farmers who make up the group. The EU is proposing a suite of changes, however, that will have implications on the size and structure of the group, and requirements for individual farmers to be inspected.

According to IFOAM, the proposed changes to the group certification consist of the following:

- Limiting the size of each group (or cooperative) to 2,000 members, and each group must have its own legal entity.
- Each member (farmer) must have less than \$25,000 euros in annual revenue or can be no larger than 5 hectares.
- A minimum of 5% of the farmers who are part of a group need to be inspected annually by an organic certifier. The current method of a square-root approach is less costly, particularly for groups greater than 400 members.
- A minimum of 2% of the farmers from each group must have their organic products tested for pesticides and other prohibited substances. Presently, this number is much less than 2% and is dictated by risk and control bodies.

The Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS) for organic livestock products and processed foods changed on the 16th July 2020 from a voluntary standard to a mandatory standard.

The Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) conducted negotiations with Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) to reach an equivalency arrangement to recognize the Australian export regulation for products impacted by the change.

### Further Information

[organicinsider.com/newsletter/eu-group-organic-certification-may-hurt-small-farmers-developing-countries-your-weekly-organic-insider/?utm\\_source=Organic+Insider+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=f27f182ef2-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_10\\_07&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_bd03bd507f-f27f182ef2-440201786](https://organicinsider.com/newsletter/eu-group-organic-certification-may-hurt-small-farmers-developing-countries-your-weekly-organic-insider/?utm_source=Organic+Insider+Newsletter&utm_campaign=f27f182ef2-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_10_07&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_bd03bd507f-f27f182ef2-440201786)

[www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/SOEProposedRule.pdf](https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/SOEProposedRule.pdf)

[DAWE notice](#)



## 'GM FREE ZONE' SA UPDATE

**We were shocked to learn of the decision of the Minister for Primary Industries, David Basham, in November, to overturn the applications of 11 South Australian Councils to maintain a GM free status.**

In a deal with the Labour Party, the decision of whether to lift South Australia's current GM Moratorium was placed in the hands of Local Councils, who were provided the option to consult with their communities and make an application for exemption under the proposed new legislation.

Adelaide Hills, Alexandrina, Barossa, Berri Barmera Council, Onkaparinga, Playford, Yankalilla, Mount Barker, Tea Tree Gully, Gawler and City of Victor Harbor councils – all in or near major wine regions – applied to have local GM moratoriums extended.

Following the knockback, NASAA Organic has been fielding calls and enquiries from concerned residents and producers.

"After all the work that was undertaken by Councils, industry and residents, I cannot imagine how angry and disappointed they are feeling right now", said Alex Mitchell, General Manager of NASAA Organic.

"Through the extensive application process, council residents and consumers have clearly expressed their preference for GM free," she says.

Tim Marshall, Chair of NASAA Organic, says that "There are already far more certified organic hectares in South Australia than will ever be dedicated to GMO crops and organic is still growing rapidly in area and economic value, but organic growers are still not guaranteed of protection from drift of GM seed or pollen onto their land and crops."

NASAA Organic will be assisting Councils with 'alternative' strategies to underpin their wishes for GMO Free status.



## NEW BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Following our recent AGM, we welcome the appointment of Directors Tim Marshall (newly appointed Chair) and Mark Anderson to the NASAA Organic Board.



**Tim Marshall – Chair**

Tim needs little introduction for those who have had any involvement with NASAA and organic agriculture in Australia, and we welcome him back to the Board. Tim was a co-Founder, originating Chair and Board Member of NASAA until 1997, and was a past certification coordinator, and inspector for over a decade.

He has been an active member of many Australian and international standards and certification associations, organic and environmental NGOs since the 70s. He has worked continuously on organic standards and certification since 1984, for IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements), various certification bodies, and as a consultant/trainer. He is currently writing a PhD about governance of organic standards and certification.

Tim is also current Chair of the Organic Trust and Organic Consumers Association of Australia (OCAA).

Over the years and through his own consultancy, TM Organics, Tim has literally helped hundreds of operators to become certified organic and has “visited at least 5,000 certified organic operations in 33 countries.”

“I look forward to a decade of excellent growth for organic, and recognition of our contribution towards better environment and health outcomes.”

“Nearly 10% of Australian agricultural land is now organic, but our industry needs stronger and active leadership, and an emphasis on governance.”

“I strongly believe that organic producers and consumers are best served by maintaining the difference and resisting ‘conventionalisation’ of organic.”

“I have the knowledge, experience, and energetic commitment to help lead NASAA Organic and to build the profile of regenerative organic agriculture.”



**Mark Anderson**

Mark Anderson is also well known to the organic community as former NASAA Organic General Manager.

Mark has held senior roles in environmental

and agricultural organisations for 30 years, including as CEO of Greening Australia for 13 years. He is current President of the Conservation Council South Australia, Director/CEO of two social enterprises in the Disability sector, founding Director of Organic Industries Australia and Member of the SA Pastoral Board.

With his community, private and Government board appointments, and extensive experience running member-based associations, Mark is focused on delivering strategic leadership, by practicing good governance, to engage members, staff, and board, collectively and transparently, to deliver tangible benefits and progress long term outcomes.

“I want NASAA Organic to communicate better with membership, be more transparent and responsive, practice good governance, and seek broader informed input into developing strategies for success.”

“The connection between personal and planetary health is the overreaching theme of our times.”

“The opportunity for NASAA Organic and its members has never been greater, and strategic leadership is needed.”

## UPCOMING EVENTS AT HOME & AROUND THE GLOBE



### THE GREAT LOCAL LUNCH

**Date:** Sun 28 February 2021

**Location:** 1pm – 3pm (AEST) online

The Great Local Lunch is a one-of-a-kind celebration of homegrown, local and sustainably sourced food, and the whole country can participate.

Hosted by ABC's Costa Georgiadis and inspired by the concept of 'crowd-farming', which means the entire feast will be grown and harvested by the guests themselves.

[www.slf2021.org/gll](http://www.slf2021.org/gll)



### NATURALLY GOOD EXPO

**Date:** 30 – 31 May 2021

**Location:** ICC Sydney, Darling Harbour

Naturally Good is the leading business platform for natural, organic and healthy brands to meet with retail buyers, distributors and wholesalers.

NASAA Organic and NCO will be attending the Naturally Good Expo, so if you are planning on going be sure to pop in and say hello.

[naturallygood.com.au](http://naturallygood.com.au)



### NATURAL AND ORGANIC PRODUCTS EUROPE

**Date:** 18 – 19 April 2021

**Location:** ExCEL London, London UK

Europe's biggest trade show for natural & organic products, with over 700 exhibitors from around the world.

[www.naturalproducts.co.uk](http://www.naturalproducts.co.uk)



### ORGANIC WORLD CONGRESS, 2021

**Date:** 6 – 10 September 2021

**Location:** Rennes, France

The organic sector assembles every three years to host the Organic World Congress (OWC), the world's largest organic gathering, but in light of recent developments around COVID-19 this event has been postponed until 2021.



### EVOKEAG.

**Date:** 15 – 16 February 2022

**Location:** Claremont, Perth, Western Australia

evokeAG. is the Asia Pacific's premier agrifood tech event. It allows delegates to explore what's next in the agrifood tech space, covering three main themes; food – farm – future. This exclusive event is an immersive experience delivering diverse topics and cutting-edge innovation from across the region and around the world, bringing people together to connect, collaborate and evolve all things agriculture.



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## CONTACT DETAILS

PO Box 768  
Stirling SA 5152  
Phone: (08) 7231 7700

Email: [info@nasaa.com.au](mailto:info@nasaa.com.au)  
Web: [www.nasaa.com.au](http://www.nasaa.com.au)  
Facebook: [/NasaaOrganic](https://www.facebook.com/NasaaOrganic)  
Instagram: [@nasaaorganic](https://www.instagram.com/nasaaorganic)