

Growing with



GA

Organic Growers of Australia

Small Producers Program



Why Grow Organic?

“The birthright of all living things is health. This law is true for soil, plant, animal and man: the health of these four is one connected chain....”
Sir Albert Howard (1945)

It's all about health; yours, that of your crop, your soil, animals, the environment, your community, and everything in between. Going organic is an environmentally and financially sustainable means of production, and a step forward towards a healthier society. Organic standards and certification ensure organic principles are maintained right through the supply chain for the delivery of high quality and ethical products. Consumers can feel assured of the integrity of certified organic in their shopping basket, and producers benefit from a point of difference amongst unsubstantiated claims in the marketplace of “free range”, “organic”, and “natural”. Organic products are being embraced by educated, aware and environmentally conscious consumers, as well as producers who want to invest in an efficient and balanced business.

What is organic?

Organic is a whole systems or holistic approach to growing and handling food. It uses innovative land cultivation systems without synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides, animal drenches and so on. **‘Utilising a growing blend of science, creativity and ingenuity, organic farming and production is increasingly being recognised at the forefront of food and fibre technology.’** It builds on the best of centuries of agricultural expertise and simultaneously aligns the pursuit of financial, environmental and social returns in a ‘triple bottom line’ approach to the market.

Some of the main elements of an organic farming system are:

- Elimination of artificial fertilisers and pesticides
- Use of sustainable farming methods such as crop rotation, cover cropping, green manure, composting and low till farming
- Ecological design and natural control of weeds, pests and diseases
- Other forms of management for maintenance of soil fertility and build up of soil organic matter

Organic - a viable farming alternative for Australia

Australia has very few truly fertile soils relative to many overseas regions. In addition, recent dry periods and intensive farming has further deteriorated soil quality leaving our agriculture in a less than ideal state. Organic farming focuses on increasing organic matter, humus, soil nutrient and general soil health. With a stronger internal structure, the soil has improved water-retaining ability and resistance; suffers lower levels of evaporation; and produces crops high in nutrient content. Organic farmers aim to produce good food from a balanced living soil, and healthy land.

How long does it take?

It takes three years to become *A-grade certified* organic. However in the second and third years farmers can market their product as *‘in-conversion organic’* with potential price premiums over conventional produce.

Why is there a market for organic?

With increasing research and evidence to back up the benefits, more consumers and producers are turning to organic. Some benefits include:

• Organic soil captures carbon –

Organic systems promote the accumulation of humus, a natural form of carbon storage and the foundation of strong soil. Best soil management improves land resilience in extreme conditions and can help reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions.

• Organic food gives consumers a choice –

modern food additives have been linked with allergic reactions, rashes, headaches, asthma and reproductive hormone interference.

• Organic reduces chemical runoff and

residues in drinking water, waterways and coastal areas that lead to environmental ‘dead zones’.

• Organic benefits biodiversity –

Organic farming methods can improve numbers and diversity of plants, invertebrates, microbes, butterflies, birds and mammals found on a farm and its surrounds.

• **Health** – on average, organic foods contain about one third more cancer fighting antioxidants than conventional equivalents.

• Organic production protects animals –

animal welfare is a key component of organic standards.

• **Taste!** Organic food is rich in texture and flavour.

• **Organic is children friendly** – studies have found additive free produce can lower eczema, hyperactivity and neurodevelopment problems in children.

Organic Growers of Australia Small Producers Program

Why Certified Organic?

Organic certification and the OGA logo ensures the authenticity of a product is recognised at first glance. Consumers, retailers, wholesalers, processors and producers trust the intrinsic organic value behind the OGA/ BFA sunflower which indicates compliance to the BFA's benchmark *Australian Organic Standard*.



1. In-Conversion



2. A-Grade organic

Where do I find it?

You will find OGA products everywhere from your local shop to farmer's markets, to box scheme home deliveries, or a farmer's front gate.

FIRST STEPS - Save with the OGA Small Producers Program

The Small Producers Program (SPP), is designed to nurture the smaller operator. It has been developed to provide reduced certification fees to those growers who simply aren't big enough to warrant the complexity and cost of certification designed for export and large scale business. OGA certified businesses are able to make the transition to ACO certification with ease should they decide to expand or enter the export market at a later stage.

SPP is a simplified certification process. To be eligible to join this program you;

- **Must have a gross annual income of less than \$75,000* from sale of organic produce;**
- **Must not be exporting or selling product destined for export as certified organic.**

* This figure is reviewed each financial year and is subject to change without notice

What does it cost me?

The cost is one simple flat fee based on operation

- No application fee
- No levy

Pricing:

Farm application	\$470 (GST inclusive)
Livestock application	\$470 (GST inclusive)

This cost is inclusive of all costs involved in the certification process.

Where does the money go?

The \$470 (GST inclusive) annual charge is used for:

1. Quality assured annual audits by a recognised independent third party
2. Supplying your certificate of compliance and approval
3. Administration costs in the auditing, certification and reporting process

I want to be certified organic under the OGA Small Producers Program. What do I do?

Take a look at our simple self-assessment diagram on the back of this booklet to work out if you're at the right stage to qualify for this program.

Benefits of the BFA/ OGA alliance

In 2006, Organic Growers of Australia Certified Ltd. (OGA) joined the Biological Farmers of Australia Co-op Ltd. (BFA), creating a niche for small domestic organic growers within Australia's largest organic representative group. Also within the BFA Group is Australian Certified Organic Pty Ltd (ACO) which certifies operations to an internationally recognised standard for export. OGA clients can easily transfer to ACO should they want to expand or export. They are also eligible for BFA membership access to technical advice, discounted industry products, services and events, and automatic subscription to organic publications and industry information.

Where to next?

Please see the back of this booklet for the next steps to certification with OGA.

Do you qualify for the OGA Small Producers Program? Use the diagram below to find out.

Do you qualify for the OGA Small Producers Program?

Use the diagram below to assess whether your operation is best suited to certification with *OGA* or *Australian Certified Organic (ACO)*



* If you are a processor, retailer, exporter or wholesaler and primary production does not form part of your organic business, you need to join ACO.
 ** Under Cottage Industry standards, processing occurs at a facility on farm using agricultural ingredients sourced from the farm's own operations. Preserving and related aids including sugar may be sourced off-farm. For more information see the Australian Organic Standard at www.organicgrowers.org.au/standards.php

If you qualify and you are ready to join, we look forward to hearing from you and assisting you further. Please contact **Biological Farmers of Australia** to begin the OGA certification process.

If you don't qualify for this program, we would still love to hear from you. You may be eligible for ACO certification and we look forward to assisting with any information you require.

To receive your application kit today
CONTACT: Biological Farmers of Australia
 Ph: (07) 3350 5716
 Fax: (07) 3350 5996
 e-mail: oga@bfa.com.au
 Address: PO Box 530
 766 Gympie Rd
 Chermside Brisbane
 QLD 4032

or download at www.organicgrowers.org.au



OGA Certification Process:

1. Fill in an application form along with a Statutory Declaration & Organic Management Plan. Ensure you comply with the Australian Organic Standard
 (available for download www.organicgrowers.org.au)

2. YEAR ONE: Pre-certification:
 Annual audit. *Products can not be labelled or traded as organic.*

3. YEAR TWO: In Conversion (IC):
 Annual audit. *Products can be labelled and traded as In-Conversion (IC) organic.*

4. YEAR THREE: In Conversion (IC)
 Annual audit. *Products can be labelled and traded as In-Conversion (IC) organic.*

5. YEAR FOUR: ORGANIC (A)
 Annual audit. *Products can be labelled and traded as A-Grade Certified (A) organic.*

During this certification process and once fully certified as a BFA/OGA Certified Small Producer you will;

- Receive an audit of your operation every year.
- Need to comply with the BFA's *Australian Organic Standard (AOS)*. This standard outlines the practices you need to follow to remain certified. Copies are available for free download at www.organicgrowers.org.au
- Be able to carry out cottage industry processing of your own produce.
- Be eligible for ACO certification at no further application expense should you wish to expand your operation or your income from organic sales exceeds \$75,000*

* This figure is reviewed each financial year and is subject to change without notice

Common Questions and Answers:

Q: What if I am eligible but already certified with another association? Can I apply?

A: Of course. You can ring our office to talk through the benefits and organise an application.

Q: What if I export? Can I be certified with OGA?

A: No. OGA certification is for the domestic market only. However, for export market compliance you can be certified under the BFA Group with Australian Certified Organic (ACO).

Q: Do I have to let BFA/OGA know when I am no longer eligible for the Small Producer Program?

A: Yes. You will need to contact the office to advise that you need to transfer to Australian Certified Organic (ACO) and complete a new application form (there is no additional application cost).

Q: Will non-OGA processors or repackers recognise OGA certification?

A: No.

The BFA Group:



www.organicgrowers.org.au