



# Looking for the Logo of Guarantee

## AUSTRALIAN CERTIFIED ORGANIC



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The world is set for a food and farming revolution due to the lead taken by the Australian organic food and farming sector. We are moving from a reactive disease and sickness management industry to a preventative health management industry – whether in personal wellbeing, or increasingly now, in our food and agriculture sectors.

Since the 1980s, in Australia, a leading group of farmers, processors and consumers with a common aim to ensure production and consumption of safe, organically wholesome foods has been maintaining Australia's true image and integrity as a clean and green producer of foods and fibres. This group is known as the Biological Farmers of Australia Co-operative and now boasts the largest member-based grouping of interests in the organic industry. The BFA, as it is known, has a well-established nationally and internationally recognised set of standards for organic production. It has an international auditing and certification team who oversee truth in labelling of certified organic products carrying the BFA logo, as well as an active co-operative that publishes

journals and technical bulletins aimed at increasing public understanding with regard to organic farming and organic products. The BFA also responds to enquiries from farmers and consumers.

**This has been driven by:**

- Lifestyle changes among consumers and demand for new healthier and safer foods.
- Health risks associated with the consumption of unnatural food ingredients.
- Concerns about the use of hormones, steroids and antibiotics in the livestock industry.
- Concerns about the bacterial contamination in food.
- Concerns about being able to purchase a consistent, quality product.

The BFA has reacted to this through its aims of ensuring that what the consumer wants is what the farmers and food processors produce – sustainably produced foods without the use of synthetic substances and unnatural food ingredients.

**SO WHAT IS ORGANIC?**

Organic farming means farming in a way that cares for the environment, without relying upon synthetic chemicals and other unnatural interventionist approaches to farming and food production. Hence, organic food comes from organic farms utilising the best of both traditional agriculture and modern techniques.

Rather than using synthetic pesticides to kill pests, farmers prevent pests by planting a diverse range of crops, by rotations, using natural biological and environment friendly applications, and conserving natural ecosystems. This means no artificial pesticides, no herbicides, no hormones and no growth promotants that have a

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questionable place in our aim to maintain healthy bodies.

The same logic of natural and preventative health management (rather than reactive disease management) is applied to GMOs, or Genetically Modified Organisms, that the organic industry prohibits in the production of organic foods. With many safe and proven forms of farming already available, the organic farmer believes it is important to allow Mother Nature to provide us with food the way nature intended.

For organically processed foods and personal care products, only minimal processing is permitted, with a limited number of non-agricultural but natural or traditional ingredients allowed. Hence no synthetic chemicals, unnatural dyes, colourings, flavourings or other additives are permitted.

## SO WHAT IS CERTIFICATION?

The certification program was set up in the 1980s by the BFA to ensure that what was claimed to be organic was just that. It required an independent set of Standards and an independent team of assessors (known as auditors) to ensure that farmers, processors and others in the production chain were complying with the rules and regulations laid down by the organic community.

Australia does not have domestic legislation for the term “organic” and is unlikely to for some years yet, so the only way to ensure something is organic is to seek and rely on the logos of organic certifying bodies, such as that of the BFA, to confirm that it has been independently certified to truly national and international standards for organic production.

If it is not certified and carrying the logo you cannot be sure that the produce is organic.

### **There are two levels or categories to certification:**

Farmers require a minimum of three years of organic management before they can carry a certification stating “Organic”. There is a transitional certificate called “In Conversion to Organic” which can be borne after the first 12 months of organic production until the three-year period is complete. In both instances, foods bearing either label confirm that those products are being produced organically.

## SO WHO MONITORS THE MONITORS?

The BFA, via its certification arm, is strictly scrutinised both nationally and internationally by organisations such as AQIS – the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service as well as IFOAM – the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, and other international government authorities. There are no substitutes or half-measures in organic farming and production.

The BFA is a not-for-profit co-operative, owned by its members, which ensures that the true interests of the organic community are maintained and upheld.

So why purchase certified organic products?

Every time you purchase certified organic products you are investing in the future of our country, its hard-working and caring farmers and their families. This is a future we can ill afford to ignore. We have the power to make a difference. One thing we can do every day to support our sustainable agricultural future is to purchase certified organic products.

Of course the personal health and wellbeing benefits of organic products are well documented. No wonder this industry is growing at the rate it is. People around the world are awakening to a realisation of what they have been missing out on for decades.

