



Education Health Environment Community Creativity

“Organically Grown” – what does it really mean?

Source: The Green Line Brochure

The principle of “organic” agriculture is that a healthy plant grows from healthy soil. The plant is therefore more resistant to pest and diseases. There is no need to use synthetic fertilisers or chemical pesticides.

Organic growers maintain long-term fertility of soil by fostering humus through replenishing organic matter, balancing mineral levels and increasing microbial life. Organic principles and methods aim to be both regenerative and sustainable.

Why do you benefit from eating organic food?

Health and Nutrition

Organic produce has greater nutritional value and contains more protein, vitamins, minerals and enzymes. There are no harmful chemical residues in the food because synthetic pesticides and fertilisers are not used. If you are what you eat why would you want to wear anything less than real food – organic and bio-dynamic.

Taste

Better flavours results from improved availability of nutrients, selecting the right plant varieties and natural ripening.

Environment

By reducing the harmful chemical effects on our land, water and air, organic agricultural methods protect the environment and food supply of future generations.

Environmental solutions start with how you spend your shopping dollars.

Authenticity... “Is it really organic?”

This is one of the most commonly asked questions. Some understanding of how the organics industry is regulated is required to answer it. Since 1991 there has been a National Standard applied to products exported from Australia as “organic”. No comparable Standard regulates, as yet, what is sold as “organic” on the domestic market (although work is being done now to apply the same standard locally).

By supplying food minus chemicals The Green Line supports organic and bio-dynamic agricultural systems which nurture, rather than exploit, the soil. Conventional farming systems, by contrast, perpetuate a cycle of soil depletion through dependence on the input of artificial fertilisers and pesticides.

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Organic agriculture is a form of sustainable agriculture that is:

“A system of agriculture able to balance productivity with low vulnerability to problems such as pest infestation and environmental degradation, while maintaining the quality of the land for future generations.

In practice this involves a system which avoids or largely excludes the use of synthetically compounded fertilisers, pesticides, growth regulators, livestock feed additives and other harmful or potentially harmful substances, it includes the use of technologies such as crop rotations, mechanical cultivation and biological pest control; and such materials as legumes, crop residues, animal manures, green manures, compost, other organic wastes and mineral bearing rocks. The intention is to encourage natural biological systems.” (Standards for Organic Agricultural Production, NASAA, 1993.)

Bio-dynamics is a specific system of organic agriculture developed through practical applications, experience and research mainly on the basis of principles taught by Austrian scientist Rudolf Steiner. The aim of members of the Bio-dynamic Agricultural Association of Australia founded in the 1950's, is to “redeem dead soils and make farms viable without the use of water-soluble fertilisers and chemicals.” (Bio-dynamic Movement in Australia – Agriculture, Standards, Certification and Marketing.)

To differentiate produce grown organically rather than conventionally the farming system from which the produce comes must be certified and labelled accordingly.

Certification of a property and “organic” or “bio-dynamic” follows a rigorous process – including application, farm inspection(s), soil and/or plant tissue testing – to satisfy the relevant certifying organisation that methods of soil and farm management, product processing and transportation comply with its Standards.

The labels below identify the 3 main certifying organisations:

1. NASAA (National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia)
2. BFA (Biological Farmers of Australia, Bio-Farm)
3. DEMETER (BDRI, Bio-dynamic Research Institute)

Their respective certification levels are set out below:

1. NASAA – Level A = Certified Organic
Produce has been grown using appropriate land management practices without the use of artificial fertilisers, herbicides, growth regulators, antibiotics, or growth stimulants, or intensive livestock systems for at least 36 months.

Level B = Conversion:

The same as Level A except the farmer has been farming organically for between 12 and 36 months

2. BFA – Organic or Bio-dynamic Certified Level A:
Meets BIO FARM organic or bio-dynamic production standards. No artificial fertilisers or chemicals are used. A sound regenerative organic or bio-dynamic farming system is used.

Organic or Bio-dynamic Certified Level B:

Organic or bio-dynamic farming methods are being practised but as yet not to all the requirements for A classification. No artificial fertilisers or chemicals are used. The regenerative farming system is at a development stage.

3. BDRI – Bio-dynamic Grade A:

Considerable bio-dynamic development of soil and plants – with consideration of optimum development potentials as well as limitations of location presented by soil and climatic conditions prevailing in a particular geographic region. No soluble fertilisers or synthetic chemicals permitted.

Bio-dynamic Grade B: In conversion to Bio-dynamics

The Green Line supports certified growers and growers working towards certification. By pooling our regular shopping dollars through The Green Line we make a difference in ensuring a sustainable organics industry.