

■ | table of contents...

Country focus

The Australian organic industry 1

Standards & regulations

Status of national organic regulations 3

List of countries with organic regulations 4

Report on the Harmonisation Conference 7

Experiences with the Japan Agricultural Standard 11

Comment & opinion

Is there a need for a regulatory framework? 13

Update & reports

Swiss evaluation 16

Two European GMO news stories 17

Comment & opinion

Three additions to the 'dream list' 19

The Australian organic industry

Regulated for export but who is looking after the domestic scene?

The Australian National Standards for Organic and Biodynamic Production are now over ten years old and have been used as the basis of equivalence, and indeed EU third country listing, with great effect. They are now nearing the final process of a revision that will result in their third reincarnation since they were adopted. The current revised draft can be found on www.aqis.gov.au/organic.

These standards, however, only apply to exports. At present, there is no specific regulatory mechanism required for domestic organic production and labelling, or indeed, as the basis for importation of organic products. There is a widespread belief in Australia that a domestic regulation is necessary, and that these standards should be used as a basis for it.

This is not a unique situation; many principally exporting countries have developed export regulations for organic production, but have absolutely no domestic regime.

The Organic Federation of Australia (OFA), which is a body comprised of organic producers, processors, retailers certifiers and consum-

ers and represents the organic industry in Australia, has listed the acquisition of a domestic regulation as a cornerstone of its strategic plan for the organic industry. As yet, though, the Government has failed to deviate from its current course, and rather than establish a regulation has called for the establishment of a domestic code of conduct. Thus, it is calling for a situation believed by most to be exactly what currently exists, *i.e.* a voluntary system that sees producers, processors, labellers and importers using their own judgement of what is organic for all products sold on the domestic market.

Although not required to be, almost all producers and major processors and retailers are in fact certified. This is a signal of the strength of the organic industry, which has enjoyed an increasingly high profile over the past five years. However, notwithstanding the strong public support of organic agriculture, there are some significant deficiencies in the current system. The absence of a strong mechanism to apply sanctions to non-compliance in the marketplace is the most notable one. No action against

At present, there is no specific regulatory mechanism required for domestic organic production and labelling, or indeed, as the basis for importation of organic products.