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Australia

Organic Products

Draft Organic Standard Released for Comment 2008

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Report Highlights:

Standards Australia has released the draft Australian Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Products for public comment. Once finalized, the Australian Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Products will establish one uniform standard to address industry and government needs and consumer uncertainty around marketing and labeling claims on organic products. Comments are requested by September 22, 2008.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Annual Report
Canberra [AS1]
[AS]

Standards Australia has released the draft Australian Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Products for public comment. Interested parties are encouraged to review the documents and provide feedback to Standards Australia by September 22, 2008. To obtain a copy of the draft Standard, visit the Standards Australia website at www.standards.org.au and click on Drafts for Public Comment in the left hand menu.

Standards Australia is recognized through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commonwealth Government as the peak non-government standards development body in Australia. It coordinates standardization activities, develops internationally aligned Australian Standards of public benefit and national interest and accredits other Standards Development Organizations. Standards Australia is an independent organization and their standards are not legal documents. However, because of their convenience and the willingness of all parties to adopt them, many of the documents are called up in Federal or State legislation, with the result that they may become mandatory.

There are currently no laws regulating agricultural practices and management of domestically-sold organic products or the use of marketing claims on organic products in Australia. There is a National Organic Standard administered by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, however, this standard is only mandated for products being exported from Australia – it is entirely voluntary for products which are consumed domestically to comply with the standard.

Once finalized, the Australian Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Products will establish one uniform standard to address industry and government needs and consumer uncertainty around marketing and labeling claims on organic products.

Developed by a broadly based committee of key stakeholders, the draft Australian Standard stipulates requirements for the production, preparation, transportation, marketing and labeling of organic and biodynamic products. It places particular emphasis on farming and management practices which promote the use of renewable resources and conservation of soil, water and energy resources.

Unprocessed products from plants, animals and fungi such as fruit, vegetables, meat, poultry, mushroom and fibers, as well as processed products such as processed food, cosmetics and skincare products which are labeled 'organic' are covered in the draft Standard.

Mr. Colin Blair, Deputy CEO of Standards Australia said the draft standard establishes minimum requirements to be met by growers and manufacturers for products that can be labeled 'organic' or 'biodynamic', creating a level playing field for growers, retailers and consumers.

"At the moment, consumers looking to buy organic products have no uniform guarantee of quality and integrity. At the same time, legitimate organic farmers have no protection against the minority of growers misinterpreting or falsely claiming to follow organic agricultural practices," Mr. Blair said.

"By establishing an agreed set of criteria for the way foods and other items labeled as 'organic' or 'biodynamic' are grown, produced, distributed and marketed, once published this new Australian Standard will clear up confusion for everyone.

"Growers and certifiers already adhering to the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service National Standard will not need to make major changes to their practices if they wish to

comply with the voluntary Standard as the AQIS Standard forms the basis of the draft Australian Standard," Mr. Blair said.

The draft Australian Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Products:

- Provides a national, consistent framework for the organic industry from the farm to point of sale;
- Sets out minimum requirements for growing products which can be labeled as 'organic', 'biodynamic' or 'in-conversion';
- Provides clear definitions about what is organic and what is not;
- Protects consumers against unsubstantiated claims and misleading labeling;
- Protects growers against misinterpretation and misleading use of organic agricultural practices and the term 'organic';
- Provides a guide for farmers considering conversion to organic farming.

The Committee has also developed supporting reference material outlining the certification procedures for growers of organic and biodynamic products.

Standards Australia is working towards publishing the Australian Standard by December 2008.

Recent Reports from FAS/Canberra

The reports listed below can all be downloaded from the FAS website at:
<http://www.fas.usda.gov/scriptsw/AttacheRep/default.asp>.

Report Number	Title of Report	Date
AS8033	Grain and Feed Quarterly Update	07/08/08
AS8032	Wheat Reform Legislation Passes in Parliament	06/25/08
AS8031	Country Strategy Statement	06/20/08
AS8030	Grain and Feed Situation Update	06/13/08
AS8029	Response to the "Safeguards Inquiry Into The Imports of Pigmeat"	06/06/08
AS8028	New Wheat Marketing Legislation Progresses Through Parliament	06/05/08
AS8027	Biofuels Annual	06/04/08
AS8026	Aust Govt Expresses Disappointment Over Farm Bill	05/27/08
AS8024	US Farm Bill: Lost Opportunity – Minister for Trade	05/19/08
AS8023	Dairy Semi-Annual	05/19/08
AS8022	ABARE Report indicates GM crops will provide economic benefits to Australian regions	05/15/08
AS8020	Cotton Annual	05/01/08
AS8019	Draft IRA for Stone Fruit from the US Released for Comment	04/29/08
AS8017	Stone Fruit Annual	04/11/08
AS8016	Pork Safeguard: Productivity Commission Final Report	04/07/08
AS8015	Sugar Annual	04/08/08
AS8014	Grain & Feed Annual	03/28/08
AS8012	Livestock Semi-Annual	03/20/08
AS8011	Commencement of IRA for U.S. Apples Announced	03/19/08
AS8010	Wheat Industry Export Group Discussion Paper Released	03/18/08
AS8009	Call for Comments on Quarantine & Biosecurity Review	03/17/08
AS8008	Commencement of IRA for Stone Fruit Announced	03/14/08
AS8006	Draft Wheat Export Marketing Bill Released	03/06/08
AS8005	Wine Annual	02/26/08