

PRESS RELEASE

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Precertification Fast Track to Supercharge Organic Industry Growth

Australia's first and most respected organic certification organisation has welcomed the announcement by the Organic Industry Standards Consultative Committee (OISCC) to formally remove the 12 month Pre Certification period for organic primary producers as of 1st February 2015.

The National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia (NASAA) says streamlining access to organic certification is critical for the industry if it is to attract and retain new operators.

"This is a great move by the Department of Agriculture and we acknowledge the work done by the Organic Industry Standards Consultative Committee (OISCC) and all certification bodies in tackling one of the main impediments to the growth of organic farming in Australia." NASAA General Manager Ben Copeman said.

According to Mr Copeman, lengthy certification conversion times and the amount of paperwork required to achieve certification was a barrier to entry for many organic producers. "This announcement will go a long way to address this barrier."

Organic certification from a farming system reliant on chemically derived inputs and applications was previously achieved in three stages - a year of 'pre certification' and two years of 'in conversion' with full certification confirmed after 36 months.

"The new process will drop the Pre Certification period as a requirement of the Department of Agriculture, so if an applicant can demonstrate compliance with organic standards for 36 months, the time to achieve full certification from the application date may be reduced from three years to 12 months for eligible operators."

"By acknowledging those producers and operators who have been voluntarily following organic management practices, we're not only cutting down the required timeframe for full certification but also significantly reducing the cost.

"Many producers have been following organic practices for years but under the current system these producers were unable to be recognised for this. With the removal of pre certification, many are able to apply for certification knowing the In Conversion period has been greatly reduced.

"It makes sense for those producers who have been doing the right thing to make it practical, streamlined, and cost efficient to achieve full organic certification," he said.

Mr Copeman said the proposed changes would not compromise the integrity of organic certification as operators are still required to demonstrate the compliance with organic standard for 36 months, which is in line with other international organic standards. Furthermore it would add to the fully transparent gate to plate supply chain agreements NASAA has created over the previous 12 months.

"Further reducing the time for producers to gain organic certification is in line with NASAA's push to improve organic supply chain efficiencies and therefore improve the margins for our operators. These initiatives will only enhance the organic industry which is the fastest growing sector of the Global Food Industry.

- ENDS

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About NASAA:

The National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia (NASAA) was formed in 1986 and supports the education of industry and consumers on organic, biodynamic and sustainable agricultural practices. NASAA was Australia's first organic certifier. Today, its certification arm, NASAA Certified Organic (NCO), provides certification and inspection services to assist Certified Organic operators access every organic market in the World. NCO certifies more than 1,000 operators in 13 countries, certifying some 5.5m ha of agricultural land worldwide.



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