

28 February 2017



Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
Via email: britt.spyrou@agriculture.gov.au

Re: Accessing Premium Markets: Australian Organics

The National Farmers' Federation (NFF) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the consultation on the *Accessing Premium Markets: Australian Organics*. The NFF firmly advocates that farmers should retain the opportunity to adopt the method of production best suited to their business needs, be that conventional, organic, GM or any combination of these methods.

The NFF is the peak national body representing farmers and, more broadly, agriculture across Australia. Operating under a federated structure, individual farmers join their respective state farm organisation and/or national commodity council. These organisations collectively form the NFF.

At present, Australian organic certification is complex and confusing, with arduous export regulations and certifications which impact on the uptake of organic farming in Australia. Domestically marketed organic produce is currently certified by one of Australia's six private certifiers, leading to confusion. The NFF would advocate to align Australia's organic certification method with CODEX ALIMENTARIUS to enable both domestic uptake of organic farming and to facilitate market access by removing technical barriers to trade resulting from non-harmonised national standards.

Additionally, the NFF recommends to revise the current National Standards in organic farming and to replace zero tolerance of genetically-modified organism (GMO) presence with a more workable and scientifically grounded tolerance level. At present, this unworkable benchmark refuses to recognise the reality that organic, conventional and GM crops coexist. The recent and unfortunate case of *Marsh v Baxter* in 2014 has shown that this zero tolerance level is no longer reflective of the broader Australian agricultural system. It is crucial to encourage good will between organic and conventional farmers and to allow for effective coexistence of GM and non-GM products through the supply chain.

For further information please contact:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Mahar".

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