



Back to Basics Series #2 How can I tell if it's organic?

So what is certification?

The organic certification program was set up in the 1980s in Australia to ensure that what was claimed to be organic indeed was just that. It required an independent setting of Standards and an independent team of assessors (known as auditors or inspectors) to ensure that farmers, processors and others in the production chain were complying with rules and regulations laid down by the organic community.

Australia does not have domestic legislation for the term and is unlikely for some years yet, so the only way to ensure something is organic – unless you produce it yourself – is to seek and rely on a certification mark such as the “bud” logo to confirm that it has been independently certified to truly national and international Standards for organic production.

By reading the label it should say that the produce is certified organic or certified biodynamic. Look for the logo and name – for instance Australian Certified Organic. If it is not certified and carrying the logo you cannot be sure that the produce is organic. There should also be a unique certification number for each certified operation, along with a batch code or other traceable system such that each product can be traced back to their point of origin.

There are two levels or categories to certification for organic:

Farmers require a minimum of three years of organic management before they can carry a certification stating “Organic”. There is a transitional certificate called “In Conversion to Organic” which can be borne after the first 12 months of organic production until this three year period is complete. In both instances, foods bearing either label confirm that those products are being produced organically on farm and it is just that the “In Conversion” product has arisen from a farm that has been in the organic certification program and been producing organically for less time.

International and domestically produced products and labels

You will occasionally notice products imported from overseas. Again because of lack of domestic protection and legislation in Australia, it is essential you insist on there being a certification mark on the product. The most likely ones you will come across are from the US – which will have a USDA (US Department of Agriculture) logo on it (see logos), a European Union (EU) logo or reference to the Standard 2092/91 which refers to the European organic legislation, and lastly occasionally a JAS (or Japan Agriculture Standard) logo.

These independent logos and standards mean that the product and the producer have been assessed in accordance with international standards by a third party organisation.

What about Approved Products and Allowed Inputs carrying the Bud logo and BFA name?

BFA has a registration program for additional approved products that cannot, by their nature, be certified organic. Why not? Because certified organic means that more than 95% and ideally 100% of the product (excluding salt and water) MUST come from agricultural origin to be certified organic at all.

So BFA set up the AI (Allowed Input) program for farm and gardening inputs, and Approved Product (or AP) for cosmetics, salt and water, which cannot by their nature bear reference to being “organic” but where their more natural form (from normal conventional sources) is worthy



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of note and people leading an organic lifestyle want to be drawn to consuming or using the best that is available.

For the AIs it means that the product is cross checked with the Annexes of the Organic Standard (see www.bfa.com.au) and the criteria for products for use in organic farming systems and if they comply, they may bear reference to being an AI or Allowed Input.

For APs they are also assessed in accord with the additional criteria for non agricultural origin products in the Organic Standard – the Annexes and Section 9. They must be natural (that is most conventional cosmetics would not be able to be approved because they contain synthetic products in them), non GMO and non carcinogenic (non cancer causing), etc. In other words they must be nature's best and comply with the principles of additional products that are allowed in the Organic Standard that are not from agricultural sources. This might for instance include natural clays (listed in the Annexes but by nature not agricultural).

So when you buy products under the Bud logo relating to AI or AP status, you know you are purchasing a product that has been assessed for compliance with the strict criteria for non agricultural ingredients in the Organic Standard.

So why purchase certified organic products?

What a great investment in Australia's sustainable agricultural future – which you can play an active part in! Every time you purchase certified organic products you are investing in the future of our country, its hard working and caring farmers and their families. This is a future we can ill afford not to invest in and we have the power in our own hands every single day of our lives to make this difference. If it is one thing we actively and positively do every day of our lives it can be this simple act of asking for and purchasing certified organic products.

Of course the personal health and wellbeing benefits of organic products are there for the taking. No wonder this industry is growing now at the rate that it is. People around the world are awakening to a realisation of what they have been missing out on for decades.

Certification is maintained by organic producers and marketers by:

- Annual audits and spot (unannounced) checks are carried out to ensure full compliance with the strict Organic Standard
- All operators must maintain an OMP (Organic Management Plan) and report annually
- There must be a clearly auditable trail of all product sold by a certified operator to prevent fraud

'Organic' is legally protected

The term organic is defined by law as regulated by AQIS – the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service – under the National Organic Standard - all organic food production and processing is governed by a strict set of internationally recognised rules.

The BFA organic symbol the “Bud” is Australia's most common certification mark, appearing on the majority of organic food in Australia. The symbol tells you that produce has met and in some important areas exceeded minimum government requirements. Our standards are continually developed to raise the quality of organic food higher to protect the interests of organic consumers.



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