
8 May 2007

Committee meets to develop new Organic Standard

Work has started on a new Australian Standard for organic products including fruit and vegetables, meat and processed foods.

The new Australian Standard may also cover organic fabrics, cosmetics and skin care products.

It will also support consumers by increasing confidence in organic products sold by retailers and restaurants.

Deputy Chief Executive from Standards Australia, Mr Colin Blair said the Australian Standard will provide a framework for the organic industry and will deal with production, processing, marketing and transportation.

“It will also provide clear definitions of what is organic and what is not,” Mr Blair said.

“This new Australian Standard will clear up the confusion once and for all,” he said.

“This will be the first Australian Standard for the domestic organic market and once complete it will have widespread industry, consumer and government support,” he said.

At the first meeting on Monday 7 May the Committee developing the new Australian Standard agreed to:

- Use the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service organic standard currently used for export as the base for the new Australian Standard for the domestic industry; and
- Reassess the balance of the committee developing the Standard to ensure that all key stakeholders are represented.

The new Australian Standard will:

- Deal specifically with unprocessed plants, animals, and other cultured organisms for human or animal use either directly or after further processing;
- Specify requirements for primary production, transport and storage, preparation and packaging and marketing of organic produce; and
- Establish definitions for specific terminology used in the industry to remove ambiguity.

According to the Organic Federation of Australia the Australian organic sector was estimated to be worth A\$500 million. Production in Australia has been increasing between 6-15 percent a year while consumption is growing at 25-40 percent a year.

The organic industry in Australia is currently self-regulated with eight organic certifying groups plus several overseas groups.

Each of these groups use a variation of an organic standard developed by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) for export.

It is expected the new Australian Standard will replace the several variations of the AQIS standard currently being used by growers.

While Standards Australia will develop the new Australian Standard it will not be involved in the certification of growers or retailers claiming to meet the Standard. That is not Standards Australia's role.

The decision to develop the new Australian Standard has been prompted by the Organic Federation of Australia and a survey of more than 30 organic grower groups, industry bodies, certifiers, associations, consumer groups, retailers and Government organisations.

The survey found majority support for a new Australian Standard with a range of organisations expressing concern at the way the industry currently operates.

The new Australian Standard will initially be voluntary but the Council of Australian Primary Industry Ministers representing state, territory and federal governments have indicated they would regulate the industry using the new Australian Standard once complete.

Concerns from industry will be taken into account during the [Standards development process](#). During the development process a draft of the Australian Standard will be released for public comment.

The new Australian Standard is expected to be finalised in 2008.

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