



MEDIA RELEASE

5 March 2014

What's this about organic fish?

We've all heard of line caught and farmed fish, but now there's a new kind of fish on the block. It's certified organic fish.

For the first time the rulebook that guides most of the organic production in Australia, the *Australian Certified Organic Standard*, includes a section on aquaculture.

Health authorities promote fish for cardiovascular health, especially because of its omega-3 content, yet some wild caught fish may have unacceptably high levels of heavy metals and other chemical residues.

Environmentalists may support aquaculture over wild catch because of its potential to relieve pressure on the oceans of the world, or they may criticise it as a source of pollution from spilt feed, for the introduction of alien species, and for the spread of fish pathogens into aquatic ecosystems.

Australian Organic spokesperson Joanne Barber says, "Global consumption of fish is now more than 150 million tonnes including 60 million from aquaculture.

"Total fisheries production is now more than beef, pork or poultry and aquaculture is becoming much more important and is predicted to soon overtake capture fishing.

"Scandinavian and European countries have articulated organic standards on aquaculture, it was time we did too so that consumers can be assured it has been caught or farmed sustainably and without synthetic chemicals."

The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) estimates certified organic aquaculture is worth over \$500 million dollars internationally producing well over 60,000 tonnes.

The organic aquaculture market is expected to grow rapidly. The strongest potential for freshwater systems is for small-scale one-farm systems growing crustaceans such as yabbies, or small-scale tank systems for finfish.

The strongest potential for sea-based operations in Australia is for mussels and oysters.

Shane Buckley from Wapengo Rocks became the first Australian Certified Organic producer of certified organic Sydney rock oysters in 2013.

He says, "Organic is the way I can see all aquaculture going in the future. We are privileged to farm in a way that respects the estuary and the environment, and when we do simple things, such as reducing our impact on the lake bed allowing the sea grasses to regrow, it is actually good for the oysters and the health of this beautiful estuary.

"Organic is not really so hard but it does involve a cultural shift. It is an established industry with certain habits and ways of doing things, but because I am a younger grower, and new to the industry, I have found it easier to adopt organic methods.

"For me, organic certification is acknowledgement for the work that we have done to produce oysters in the most sustainable way that we can."

Media: Kathy Cogo, Australian Organic, kathy.cogo@austorganic.com, 07 4771 3714 | 0466 015 183. Images available