## AN ORGANIC INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

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Halfway back last century the German chemist Justus von Liebig discovered that plants can take in essential elements only when in water soluble form i.e., not directly from the rock. Quickly, ways were developed to make insoluble elements soluble, and the artificial fertiliser industry began.

After some decades artificial fertilisers were more consistently used, mainly on large, often sandy-based east German estates. Whilst close to Earth, owner-operator small peasants, on better soils, initially felt uneasy with agricultural quick results coming with "bags". They were used to hard hand-labour, stable manure and urine results, forking straw-manure several times daily from under stabled animals and then from dung-heap onto wagon and hand-fork-spreading onto paddocks. In very few areas, following early Roman customs, minute rock dust, lime or sulphur applications occurred.

These peasants were not conscious of being natural farmers. Everybody worked this way. By custom, there was sense for caring soil cultivation with a hand held mouldboard plough and there was no soil compacting heavy machinery. In many areas (including Australia) artificial fertilisers were not used by farmers till the nineteen-twenties

After years of artificial fertiliser results in east German areas some discerning land holders noticed, that the newly achieved bumper crop potatoes, grains and vegetables lacked in taste and that animals were succumbing to health problems formerly not noticed. In 1920 some of these men began requesting Rudolf Steiner for an answer to the new agricultural problems, but being very busy, he did not attend until Count Keyseringk sent a burly nephew to, literally, sit on Steiner's doorstep until a date would be set.

The agricultural foundation lectures for Bio-Dynamics took place at the Keyserlingk estate in 1924.

Old, natural peasant farming ended with artificial fertilisers. As a result, a new need for new agricultural methods arose. Bio-Dynamics stood at the beginning of this. Pioneers where Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, Lilly Kolisko and others.

In England, due to a similar fertiliser stress, somewhat later, actual "organic" farming was awakend by pioneers such as Howard and Eve Balfour. In the US it was Rhodale and others.

I knew many of these early pioneers and can testify to their utter commitment to organic and bio-dynamic developments in the sense of training farmers, converting soils to well structured biological activity capable of producing healthy plants not requiring chemical treatment and thus providing healthy food. The organic/bio-dynamic industry in all its striving, meetings, instructions was synonymous with agricultural work.

Developments in Australia were similar. Bio-Dynamics spread widely from the early nineteen-fifties. The main organisation is the Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association of Australia, an advisory body. The organic soil associations and similar organisations, likewise, pursued ideals of agricultural developments.

To us all "organic" or "bio-dynamic" meant AGRI-C U L T U R E and there was mutual respect in the moral responsibility to the future of Earth and to those inhabiting it.

In recent years, a fundamental change has occurred, which requires careful assessment.

Today when the "Organic Industry" meets, the emphasis is on "Standards" and "Certification". A totally new bureaucracy has arisen from Government sides, but even more so, as private certification businesses.

Due to the now obvious pollution, the consumer is worried and demands organic/bio-dynamic food. In a time of international unemployment, a lucrative and self-perpetuating new certification industry has arisen.

In the earlier days of committed organic/bio-dynamic producers – happy to find appreciative consumers; happy with the health of their production and the consequent income; honest, truly organically conversant producers – certification was not called for.

Increased consumer demand, 'promotion', 'extra money', new 'wholesaler' profit chances, producers – not necessarily as committed or well instructed – government bureaucrats sensing a new "kill", 'regulations'...'safety of consumers'...

Yes: *simple* Standards, readily understood by farmers and consumers have become a necessity, and, that there be an E N D to it. Not for the "creativity" in constant additions, conferences and waste of time and money.

However, as money is to be made, as well as power to be exerted, we have Standards galore and ever increasing inspection "developments", mainly on paper, but: "justifying" extra costs, extra additional inspections etc., etc. 95%on paper and undertaken by people who do not really understand a farm, and of which a virtue is made by claiming detachment and pointing a finger at originators of organic farming as too involved to be suitable certifiers.

Organic farm inspection is not an easy end-product inspection akin to a motor car duco inspection. It is a difficult farm-soil-plant growth-animal production inspection. However proud a computer bureaucracy inspection system might be to be able to catch all in figures: it can, principally, not be done in this case.

The fact is that a farm production certification is primarily based on the commitment and expertise of the farmer to being morally concerned for his soil and production and on the certifier to be able to trust accordingly. These are values that can not be assessed bureaucratically.

The Bio-Dynamic Research Institute inc. administers the right to the DEMETER trademark in Australia (registered since 1967). We would not conceive to register a farmer on a first visit, even if his soil tests show no chemical residues and he signs an affidavit to not having

used artificial fertilisers or synthetic chemicals for two years. A definition of "organic" as "no fertilisers or chemicals" for two years in no way says that the farmer knows anything about organic-biological farming, neither that he is committed. Often it says no more than that he could not afford fertilisers and chemicals.

When a farmer first approaches us, he is offered appropriate introductory agricultural reading and videos. Should he decide to convert, he can become a member of the Bio-Dynamic Agricultural Association of Australia. The wide ranging advisory service of experienced farmers and scientists becomes available to him. A nearby experienced bio-dynamic farmer mentors him. Within a few years there will be soil structure, plant and animal development. Due to savings in costs of fertilisers, chemicals, vet fees etc. the net income rises. The new bio-dynamic farmer is happy and learns as much as possible about bio-dynamic agriculture.

During this process DEMETER certification has not arisen. But once there is the essential and appropriate soil structure and humus development, this becomes the initial, and very discernible, base for certification. I have not experienced a farmer who by then has not become committed.

I fear for our industry pushed by money and over promotion and more and more controlled by private certifiers, who make money out of dreaming up increasing certification requirements and who travel to conferences etc. like business tycoons.

Australia is one of the first countries to have National Standards enabling Government to Government accreditation of Certification Organisations as required for International marketing.

Costs must be kept down. Competing conventional "clean and green" agricultural producers – using chemicals (!) – pay no certification costs.

There are EU, IFOAM, Codex, International Demeter Standards, those of individual countries and certifying organisations. They vary just enough to be confusing to a farmer who is to follow them, but all the more do they

become "life" and "justification" to a bureaucrat. All Standards of private organisations are subject to the appropriate National Standards, yet they repeat, slightly differently worded, what is contained in the National Standards. 'Confusing' – and every time there is an alteration to the National Standard, a costly alteration has to be effected to private Standards.

To save confusion, unnecessary study, costs of alteration etc. the Bio-Dynamic Research Institute's DEMETER Standard states it is 'subject to the National Standard' and beyond this contains only the specific biodynamic requirements not contained in the National Standard.

FARMERS: Beware of the purpose of certification. Attend the AGM of your certification organisation. Do not be hood-winked. Insist on simplicity. Resist unnecessary bureaucracy.

The pioneers of organic and bio-dynamic agriculture would abhor what has become of their efforts as present day "organic agriculture".