



Daniel Hodges

National Organic Standard Bill 2024 Submission



Executive Summary

My name is Daniel Hodges, and I have been working in the organic industry directly for 7 years and indirectly for 10. I am also an avid consumer of organic products, purchasing them for myself, my wife, and my young son. My interest in organics is deeply personal: after experiencing cancer, I was advised to avoid heavy chemicals often used in conventional agriculture. The absence of domestic regulation for organic products in Australia has created confusion and mistrust in the market, as misleading claims and greenwashing remain unaddressed.

I strongly support the National Organic Standard Bill 2024 because it would eliminate misleading labeling and provide consumers like me with the confidence that a product labeled "organic" has been grown and produced following strict organic principles. On a recent trip to the USA—an OECD country with domestic organic regulation—I saw firsthand the thriving organic industry, the wide range of products, and the trust consumers have in the organic label. Australia has the potential to replicate this success with the right regulation in place.

Background

I have been passionate about the organic industry for over a decade, having worked directly in the sector for 7 years. My work has given me insight into the significant challenges faced by producers and consumers alike due to the lack of domestic regulation. As someone who prioritizes health and well-being, I rely heavily on organic products for medical reasons following my battle with cancer. Avoiding chemicals used in conventional agriculture is critical for me and my family, as my wife and I want to ensure that our young son grows up with the healthiest, most sustainable food available.

Despite my commitment to buying organic, I frequently encounter misleading labeling and greenwashing. Products that claim to be "organic" are often far from it, forcing me to carefully search for certified organic logos on packaging. This is time-consuming, confusing, and unfair to both consumers and genuine organic producers who invest in proper certification. A strong domestic standard would make this process much simpler and help families like mine trust what we are purchasing.



Impacts

Consumer Trust and Greenwashing

As a consumer, I have directly experienced the confusion caused by misleading organic claims. For example, I have seen products labeled as "organic" that, upon closer inspection, have no certification or transparency about their growing practices. This undermines trust and forces me to conduct my own research to determine if a product is genuinely organic. A regulated standard would shift this burden away from consumers and hold producers accountable for their claims.

Greenwashing not only misleads consumers but also poses risks to individuals like me, who need to avoid chemicals for health reasons. For people with medical sensitivities, false claims can have serious consequences. Domestic regulation would ensure that products labeled as organic meet strict standards, protecting vulnerable consumers and restoring confidence in the organic label.

Comparisons to International Markets

On a recent trip to the USA, I witnessed the positive impact of domestic regulation on their organic industry. The range of certified organic products available was vast, and I felt confident in my purchases because of the clear labeling and national organic standard. Consumers in OECD countries with regulation, like the USA and Europe, benefit from higher levels of trust and access to organic goods, while Australia lags behind.

Australia has the potential to replicate this success. A regulated domestic market would ensure products meet a consistent standard, increase consumer confidence, and create opportunities for producers to grow their businesses and compete internationally.

Protecting Genuine Organic Producers

I have worked alongside organic producers who invest significant time, effort, and resources into achieving and maintaining organic certification. These producers face unfair competition from businesses that misuse the term "organic" without meeting certification standards. This not only hurts certified producers but also devalues the organic industry as a whole.

Domestic regulation would eliminate counterfeit claims, protect the integrity of the organic industry, and ensure that the hard work of genuine organic producers is recognized and rewarded.

Conclusion

The National Organic Standard Bill 2024 is essential to protect consumers like me and families across Australia who rely on organic products for health, ethical, and environmental reasons. This Bill will eliminate greenwashing, restore trust in the organic label, and ensure that products labeled as "organic" truly adhere to organic principles.

As someone who has experienced both the challenges of navigating the current market and the benefits of regulated international markets, I strongly urge Parliament to support this Bill. It is time for Australia to align with global standards, protect consumers, and allow the organic industry to thrive.

I am very happy to discuss this in further.