



## The Peak Body for the Australian Organic Sector

From the desk of:

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### 22 May - International Day of Biodiversity

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2010 'The Year of Biodiversity', and 22 May 'The Day of Biodiversity'

'The OFA is proud to participate in this Day of Biodiversity', Andre Leu, Chair of the Organic Federation of Australia says. 'The importance of this day and year is the focus on conserving biodiversity and on promoting innovative solutions to reduce the threats to biodiversity'.

The United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Synthesis Report raised serious questions about the sustainability of many of our current agriculture practices. *"Over the past 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history, largely to meet rapidly growing demands for food, fresh water, timber, fiber and fuel. This has resulted in a substantial and largely irreversible loss in the diversity of life on Earth."*

'Scientific studies show that organic agriculture practices support biodiversity conservation by increasing the number and variety of species found on farms' says Andre. 'This applies at all levels, including the soil, which contains the highest diversity of organisms. Organic systems also have high levels of native species due to the requirement to maintain biodiversity on farm, the absence of pesticides, and the mindset of organic farmers to work with, rather than against nature.'

'Organic growing supports off-farm biodiversity by controlling pollution, water quality and other negative off-farm effects of agriculture such as the fertiliser and pesticide runoff that are damaging the Great Barrier Reef and other eco-systems.'

'Organic production systems use less energy, produce less greenhouse gases and sequester carbon dioxide into the soil. This mitigates global warming and the threat, to many species, from rising temperatures.' Andre said.

'The Australian Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Products requires farmers to maintain biodiversity on farm and prohibits the clearing of old growth and endangered habitats. Habitat loss is now identified as the main threat to 85 - 90% of all species described by IUCN as 'threatened' or 'endangered' and is the most commonly recorded reason for species extinction during the last 20 years' Tim Marshall, OFA's deputy chair added.

'Organic agriculture is more likely to use open-pollinated species that preserve the diversity and resilience of agriculture crops and does not permit the use of uniform genetically modified crops. 75% of agricultural crop diversity has been lost in the last 100 years. Domesticated animal breeds are also declining and it is estimated that at least one breed of farm animal becomes extinct each week; with more than 25% of all livestock breeds are at risk.' OFA Director and Deputy Chair, Dr Els Wynen stated

'Organic agriculture is a proven and effective method for conserving biodiversity', Dr Wynen said.

**-ENDS-**

The Organic Federation of Australia is the peak body for the organic sector: [www.ofa.org.au](http://www.ofa.org.au).

The OFA will hold: **Trust Organic Fortnight** from **August 19 to Sept 05 2010**.

**For Interviews:**

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For information on Organic Agriculture and Biodiversity: [www.ifoam.org/partners/advocacy/Biodiversity\\_Campaign.html](http://www.ifoam.org/partners/advocacy/Biodiversity_Campaign.html)

**Andre Leu, Chairman, OFA**

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