



# Submission in Support of the National Organic Standard Bill 2024

**Submitted by:** Santos Organics

**Date:** 18 December 2024

## Introduction

We at Santos Organics, a trusted retailer of certified organic products with 3 retail stores in Byron Bay, New South Wales, strongly support the proposed Bill to create a legal definition for the term 'organic' in consumer goods. This initiative is essential for improving consumer protection, fostering trust, and ensuring a level playing field for producers and retailers committed to genuine organic practices.

In 2024, we were awarded Retailer of the Year by Australian Organic Limited for our involvement in promoting the organic industry, certified organic foods and organic farming practices. Our Grow the Growers Project was set up in 2023 to assist local organic farmers to gain organic certification for their land and to strengthen the network of organic farmers in the Northern Rivers Region.

Given our work both as a retailer and changemaker in the organic industry, we are strong advocates for the passing of the National Organic Standard Bill 2024.

## The Importance of the National Organic Standard Bill 2024 in Australia

The National Organic Standard Bill 2024 represents a landmark step in Australia's efforts to define and protect the integrity of the organic label. Its importance cannot be overstated for both the organic industry and health-conscious consumers. If the Bill does not go through, the current greenwashing that occurs with organic products and false and misleading labeling will continue unchecked.

## Consumer Confidence in the Organic Label

Currently, Australia lacks a uniform legal standard for the term 'organic,' leaving room for misleading claims and confusion among consumers. The Bill will introduce a standardised,



legally enforceable definition, ensuring that consumers can trust the authenticity of products labeled as organic.

## Support for Ethical Producers

Genuine organic producers invest significantly in sustainable and chemical-free farming practices. This Bill protects their efforts by ensuring that only products meeting rigorous criteria can carry the organic label. It levels the playing field by preventing non-certified or misleading products from unfairly competing with certified organic goods.

## International Recognition and Trade Opportunities

Aligning with global organic standards will also enhance Australia's credibility in the International market, opening new trade opportunities for certified organic producers. The Bill positions Australia as a leader in promoting sustainable agriculture and ethical food production.

## Why this Bill is Important for Retail Health Food Stores

As a Health Food Store with a strong focus on the ethical sourcing of our products, we ensure that each of our products are checked against our Ethical Product Procurement Policy and we are committed to:

- ❖ educating consumers about the importance of certified organic product;
- ❖ ensuring that all products labeled 'organic' in our stores meet the highest standards of authenticity and certification; and
- ❖ collaborating with policymakers, certification bodies, and other stakeholders to implement and promote the new legal definition.

Retail health food stores, like ours, have a unique responsibility to provide high-quality, authentic products to consumers who prioritise health and sustainability.

The National Organic Standard Bill 2024 will have a transformative impact on our operations in the following ways:

## Enhanced Product Integrity

By ensuring all 'organic' products meet stringent criteria, the Bill guarantees that retail stores can confidently promote their organic offerings without risk of misleading customers. It reinforces consumer trust in the health food retail sector, which often serves as the primary source for organic goods.



## Simplified Product Selection

A clear, legal definition reduces ambiguity when sourcing products, making it easier for retailers to identify and stock genuine organic items. It streamlines supply chain decisions, saving time and resources spent on verifying product claims.

## Increased Consumer Loyalty

Health food stores that adhere to the new standards will stand out as trusted retailers, fostering stronger customer loyalty. Shoppers will appreciate the added assurance that their purchases align with their health and ethical values.

## Contribution to Environmental and Health Goals

By promoting genuinely organic products, health food stores play a direct role in supporting sustainable farming practices and reducing exposure to synthetic chemicals in food. This aligns with our broader mission to encourage wellness and environmental stewardship.

## Benefits of the Bill

### Improved Consumer Confidence

A clear definition ensures that consumers can trust the organic label, knowing that it represents stringent production, processing, and certification standards. Transparency in labeling empowers consumers to make informed purchasing decisions based on their values and health priorities.

### Support for Genuine Organic Producers

Certified organic farmers and producers often incur higher costs due to sustainable and eco-friendly practices. This legislation would protect their investments by preventing the dilution of the 'organic' brand by non-compliant entities.

### Environmental and Health Advantages

Genuine organic farming promotes biodiversity, improves soil health, and reduces chemical inputs such as synthetic pesticides and fertilisers. A legally defined 'organic' standard encourages more farmers to adopt environmentally sustainable practices.



## Key Recommendations for the Legal Definition

### Alignment with Existing Standards

The definition should draw from widely recognised organic standards, such as those established by IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) and existing Australian certification bodies.

### Core Criteria

The term 'organic' should be reserved for products that are:

- ❖ produced without synthetic pesticides, fertilisers, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs);
- ❖ follow sustainable farming practices that prioritise soil health and ecological balance; and
- ❖ are certified by an accredited organic certification body.

### Oversight and Enforcement:

It is recommended that stringent mechanisms are introduced to monitor compliance, including penalties for misrepresentation. We would also recommend that resources for educating producers, retailers, and consumers about the standards and requirements are also widely distributed.

## Conclusion

The establishment of a legal definition for the term 'organic' is a critical step in protecting consumers, supporting ethical producers, and promoting environmental sustainability. The National Organic Standard Bill 2024 will enhance transparency, foster trust, and ensure the integrity of the organic market in Australia. We urge lawmakers to prioritise this Bill and provide the necessary framework to safeguard the integrity of the organic label.

Santos Organics stands ready to support this initiative and collaborate with all stakeholders to ensure its successful implementation

### Contact Information:

Robert Baldwin, General Manager

Website: <https://santosorganics.com.au>