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A History of the Organic Agriculture Movement in Australia

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Summary

Australia's involvement in the organic movement is dated from 1928 in this account. There have been four 'waves' of organic advocacy in Australia. The First Wave (1920s & 1930s) follows Rudolf Steiner's 1924 call at Koberwitz (now Kobierzyce, Poland) for a differentiated agriculture. Australian anthroposophists, beginning with Ernesto Genoni, responded to this call by joining Steiner's Agricultural Experimental Circle (AEC) of Anthroposophical Farmers and Gardeners which was coordinated from Dornach, Switzerland by Dr Ehrenfried Pfeiffer. Bob Williams presented the first public lecture on biodynamics at the home of Walter Burley and Marion Mahoney Griffin at Castlecrag (Sydney) in 1938. The Second Wave of organic agriculture in Australia (1940s & 1950s) is anchored by the coining of the term 'organic farming' in 1940 in England. In this Second Wave the first associations in Australia dedicated to the advocacy of organics were founded. This began with the Australian Organic Farming and Gardening Society (AOFGS) founded in 1944 in Sydney, and it culminates with the year-long tour of Australia in 1959 by Eve Balfour, the founder of the UK's Soil Association. The Third Wave (1960s & 1970s) is anchored by the publication of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* in 1962 which breathed new life into the organics movement worldwide. A plethora of new associations and periodicals for the promotion, advocacy and exploration of organics appeared in Australia in the two decades that followed Carson. This included the publication of Australia's first popular and widely distributed book devoted to organics, and there were fledgling moves to develop organic

standards, labelling and certification. The Fourth Wave (1980s to present) is anchored by the Chernobyl nuclear accident in Ukraine on 26 April 1986. This event dramatically refocused the world's attention on the safety of its food supply. This Fourth Wave of the organics movement witnesses the maturing of organics thinking in Australia and the development of the apparatus of organics governance. The first organics certifiers were established along with the establishment of standards, logos, labelling and product differentiation. The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) brought the fifteenth Organic Congress to Adelaide in 2005, Australia's first academic journal devoted to organic agriculture, the Journal of Organic Systems, was established in 2006, and a national organic standard was implemented in 2009. In this Fourth Wave organics advocacy has become monetised and corporatised and Australia now leads the world with its tally of certified organic agricultural hectares.

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