

20-09-05

Honourable Senator, Honourable Ministers, Mr Mayor, and Fellow delegates,

It gives me great pleasure and it is a wonderful honour to be standing here today as a participant in the most important organic event in Australia's history. I would particularly like to welcome all the delegates who have travelled from over 50 countries on every continent to participate in this magnificent celebration of our diverse and sustainable form of the most important of all cultures – agriculture.

In a world that is involved in numerous crises we have common philosophy that unites us and provides an affordable, achievable and fair way to feed and improve the quality of life for all of us in this shrinking world.

I have been involved in the organic agriculture for 35 years and in this time have seen our sector emerge from obscurity to a significant movement and industry. Today when I look around I see a sector that includes farmers, consumers, retailers, manufacturers, exporters, importers, journalists, certifiers, public servants, politicians, government ministers, teachers, scientists, researchers and academics. The reality is that people from every walk of life are involved in and support the organic sector.

I would like to thank the organising committee, particularly Jan Denham and the host organisation, NASAA, for the enormous amount of work they have done to bring us all together. I would like to thank IFOAM for uniting the organic world and providing such an important forum for us. This is a magnificent opportunity for all of us to form links with our colleagues around the world.

It is a joy for me when I travel around the world and see organic products for sale in shops and markets of every country. As a farmer it a wonderful pleasure to see that organic farms are thriving in every climate in our diverse planet. It is a form of agriculture that is proven whether we farm a few hundred square metres or graze thousands of square kilometres, whether we grow grains, fruits, vegetable and animals or if we live in cool temperate, tropical or arid climates. We continue to grow at a spectacular rate because we are sustainable.

There are not too many good news stories in agriculture. It is in crisis on every continent with farmers struggling to survive. In Australia we have lost over 20,000 farmers in the last decade and it is similar in most countries. However the number of organic farmers continues to increase and we have proven that can provide the most important of commodities, healthy food. We are truly one of the good news stories, a wonderful ray of hope for our world and I invite you to celebrate this here in Adelaide.

Thank You