

Top spot for organic farming

Australia has the world's largest land area under organic agriculture with 11.8 million hectares certified to international organic standards, according to a study by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM).

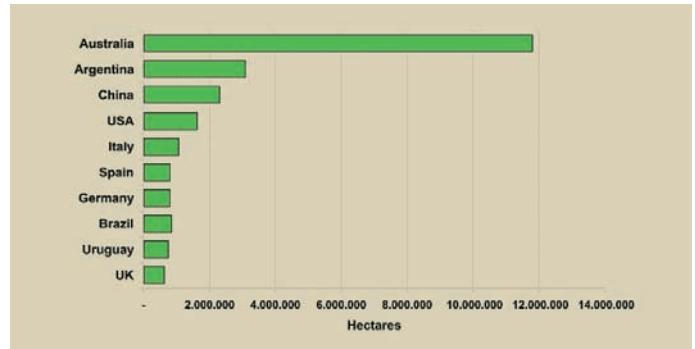
The study, *The World of Organic Agriculture: Statistics and Emerging Trends 2007*, found that nearly 31 million hectares globally are currently certified according to organic standards.

Argentina has the second largest area under cultivation

(3.1 million hectares), followed by China (2.3 million hectares) and the USA (1.6 million hectares).

Austria and Switzerland have the highest proportion of available arable land given over to organic agriculture, while 2006 saw a rapid increase in organic farmland in the USA, Italy and Poland.

The global market for organic products reached a value of more than AU\$42 billion in 2005, with most products being consumed in North America and Europe. In 2006, the value of global markets was



Australia has the largest area of land under certified organic agriculture. Source: SOEL, FiBL Survey 2007

estimated to be AU\$50 billion, with strong growth predicted for the coming years.

More information:
www.ifoam.org
www.organic-world.net

Loophole closed to keep out plant aliens

Biosecurity Australia recently completed a review of the list of plant species that can be legally brought into the country, closing a critical loophole in national quarantine law.

In the revised 'permitted seeds list', Biosecurity Australia

species, including 4000 weeds not yet in Australia, could have been legally imported with no risk assessment because of this quarantine law loophole,' says Glanznig.

'This meant, for example, that close relatives of Australia's

'The next wave of weeds is already sitting in our gardens, ready to jump the back fence given the right conditions.'

has replaced almost 3000 genus-level listings with more detailed species-level listings, a change called for earlier by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), which views weeds as a major threat to Australia's biodiversity.

Invasive plants cost agriculture \$4 billion a year in control and lost production costs. One escaped garden plant, lantana, is known to be responsible for degradation of over 4 million hectares.

The review has been welcomed by the WWF's Andreas Glanznig. 'Before this review, any of 125 000 plant

worst weeds such as the blackberry could have been imported without a risk assessment.'

The revised list provides a basis for the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) to carry out assessments of individual plant species proposed for importation to determine whether the species poses a risk to the agricultural industry or the environment.

Glanznig says the next step in weed-proofing Australia is better control of the pathways by which weeds move around the country, which will require states and



Boneseed is classified as a Weed of National Significance (WONS) – the worst weeds in Australia because of their invasiveness, potential for spread, and economic and environmental impacts. CSIRO

territories to agree on a more coherent and consistent cross-border management framework.

'At the moment, the main pathway for the spread of invasive plants is the legal movement of garden plants. Escaped invasive garden plants are the biggest source of Australia's weed problems.

'These naturalised invasive garden plants now make up about 70 per cent of Australia's

environmental and agricultural weeds.

'Australia has 28 000 introduced plant species, including a potential reservoir of 4600 known invasive plants that have the potential to naturalise here, 3700 of which are introduced garden plant species.

'The next wave of weeds is already sitting in our gardens, ready to jump the back fence given the right conditions.'