

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian organics recycling industry unites to drive innovation and strengthen soil resilience amid global supply disruptions

The Australian organics recycling industry came together in Melbourne in the week commencing 20 April for its annual conference, convened by the Australian Organics Recycling Association (AORA), to share ideas, challenge the status quo, foster innovation, and celebrate the sector's achievements. The event highlighted the industry's growing role in supporting national environmental targets while advancing technology, community engagement, and policy development.

Valued at over \$2.6 billion annually, Australia's organics recycling industry plays a vital role in replenishing baseline soil fertility. Healthy soils underpin national food security, farm productivity, and agricultural resilience. However, ongoing global disruptions, including geopolitical instability and supply chain constraints, have exposed Australia's reliance on imported fertilizers and fuel to sustain agricultural production.

Amid these challenges, the sector is calling attention to a reliable, domestic solution that remains underutilised: high-quality compost and soil amendment products derived from organic resources.

A key theme of the conference, "Compost for life. Saving our soils.," reflects the industry's commitment to restoring soil health. Beyond this message, the conference reinforced that organics recycling is a mature, trusted, and regionally embedded industry, ready to support Australian agriculture at scale.

Key messages from the conference include:

- The domestic compost industry is an established and accessible resource for Australian agriculture, ready now to help restore soil fertility and nutrient balance with long-term benefits.
- The industry is strategically located near key feedstock sources, enabling efficient production while maintaining broad geographic reach to serve diverse agricultural regions.
- Soil health requirements vary across farms, crops, and even within paddocks. AORA members prioritise working with farmers and agronomists to deliver tailored soil health solutions that meet specific needs.

Russell Brown, farmer, and agronomist was the AORA annual conference domestic keynote speaker, noted "It requires a shift in mindset for both farmers and agronomists. Instead of starting each season by calculating crop nutrient budgets alone, the process begins with understanding the soil health baseline. From there, the focus moves to investing in soil fertility through compost and targeted amendments, before layering in crop nutrient requirements. The result is a system built on a healthier, more resilient, and inherently fertile foundation. The current geopolitical and supply chain disruption affecting farmers daily decisions at present might just be the needed catalyst to make this domestically available and regionally available organic soil health industry become mainstream and an enduring part of our agricultural ecosystem. It's really exciting and the potential benefits are undeniable."



“Compost is not a complete replacement for all fertilizer needs in every system, but it is a proven part of the natural solution to feed our soils,” said John McKew, AORA National Executive Officer. “It helps return nutrients already present in our food and green waste back to the soil, where they can be used productively rather than lost forever in landfills or incineration and it is proven to improve the veracity of synthetic fertilizers when used in cohort with compost.”

AORA is calling on the agriculture industry, commodity groups, policymakers, and government to support increased adoption of organic soil amendments and expanding targeted incentives and policy frameworks. Encouraging the integration of compost alongside synthetic fertilizers to strengthen domestic agricultural resilience, improve soil health, and reduce dependence on volatile global supply chains. Compost use in agriculture is the epitome of the circular economy in action.

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