**KNOW HOW YOUR FOOD IS PRODUCED? UNWRAPPING THE LABEL LINGO**

**Keep in mind-** There is no such things as cheap food- you either pay for it now-

or pay for it later with health and environmental issues.

**MANAGED HOLISTICALLY/ NATURAL:** Holistic Management is values based with an environmental management component. It imbeds awareness of the consequences of the management tools on the soil surface and below. Herding of livestock- moving them on to new paddocks when required- based on a grazing plan for each herd. Working with nature solves most of the problems that arise. Cover cropping is an holistic process for cropping enterprises.

**Best Management**: Holistic Managers will do grazing charts to minimise overgrazing, they will do biological monitoring. Through management there are minimal input costs and vet issues for livestock. They will have an holistic context which they refer to for decisions. They will stack enterprises- cows then chooks then pigs…

**Good Questions:**

How many herds do you have? How many grazing charts do you have?

What is your biological monitoring telling you?

How do you manage holistically?

How do you manage weeds and animal sickness?

**GRASS FED:** Animals out in paddocks eating natural grasses- some might have been planted and some will have seed heads which the livestock will eat with the green leaf.

**Best Management**: Preferably- producers should be moving stock into a new paddock within 2-3 weeks, if not before, if the season is good.

**Good Questions to Ask**-

How long do your animals stay in the same paddock? How many paddocks do you have?

What grasses do you have on your farm? Do you supplement with grain when it gets dry?

**FREE RANGE**: Animals need to be outside most of the day- with continual access to the outside. Most Chooks and Pigs because they are Omnivores- they require protein as part of their diet- so they will be supplemented with grain as just natural grasses can't meet their protein requirements.

**Best Management**: Animals should have housing for roosting/egg laying and shade, they should be moved onto fresh ground,

**Good Questions to Ask :**

Do you feed conventional or organic grain? How often do you move the animals to fresh ground?

What area does each animal have? What is the total area provided for each flock of birds/ pen of pigs?

What else do the animals get fed to meet their protein requirements.

**ORGANIC**- is a certification obtained by producers with certifying bodies- there are 5 recognised in Australia-

AUS-QUAL Pty Ltd (AUSQUAL)/ Australian Certified Organic (ACO)/ Bio-Dynamic Research Institute (BDRI)

NASAA Certified Organic (NCO)/ Organic Food Chain (OFC)

**Best Management:** Producers claiming to be organic should be able to show their certification or have it on their labelling. Organic accreditation requires- organic inputs, awareness of neighbours activities, and no trace of chemicals in soil.

-Be mindful that organic certification may mean chemical free however the certification process does not require any environmental obligations. Organic can cost more due to reduced yields, and the certification costs.

**Good Questions:**

Who are you certified with? What activity do you need to do on farm to keep your organic status?

**NATURAL/CHEMICAL FREE**: Producers who are chemical free- don't use any chemical on the animal or in the paddock, they also ensure inputs are chemical free. However they are not certified and it is based on their honesty.

**Best Management**: these farms usually have an open gate policy- you be the judge. The farmer would be happy for you to visit the farm. No chemicals however there is no environmental obligation.

**Good Questions: For Organic & Chemical Free**

Can I visit your farm? How do you manage weeds/ and animal sickness?

**BIODYNAMIC**- treats animals, crops, and soil as a whole. [manures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manure) and [composts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compost) are used instead of excludes the artificial chemicals on soil and plants. Local distribution and local varieties is encouraged. Plantings are done with the calendar and biological fertilisers are applied in unique ways- such as horn burials and retrievals.

**Best Management:** Biodynamic farmers - understand the astrological calendar and will use certain brews to promote certain activity in their soils. Horns on cows promote fertility with the moons which is transferred to soil.

**Good Questions:**

Are you using any composts- what is in them? Do you do horn burials? How do you run your biodynamic farm?

What do you do to manage weeds and animal illness.