

THE RESEARCH

FORUM

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Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service

**Organics Clients
2005 Satisfaction Survey
Research Report**

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ORGANICS CLIENTS - 2005 SATISFACTION SURVEY FINDINGS

SURVEY SAMPLE

Three (3) AQIS Organics clients participated in the Customer Satisfaction Survey in 2005 when contacted by telephone. A further two (2) Organics clients were away for the duration of the survey while another two (2) were not available to be interviewed until after the interviewing completion date (9 September 2005). Given the very small size of this sample, the results will be reported in qualitative form with general counts rather than as percentages.

This is the third time this client area has been surveyed. The first and second survey of this client group occurred in the 2001/02 and 2003/04 financial years. No quantitative comparisons are made to the past survey findings considering the very small sample size.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Length of time dealing with AQIS

A fair spread of length of time dealing with AQIS was found among the three client participants:

- 1 client has dealt with AQIS for less than 12 months,
- 1 for 3 to 5 years, and
- 1 for 10 years or more.

Quality Assurance system/s

Clients were asked if they have an AQIS Co-regulation quality assurance arrangement or an end-product inspection system in place. One participant said they had an AQIS QA system in place (an Approved Certifying Organisation arrangement). The other two participants reported having an End-product system or neither.

Regular AQIS contact office

Canberra is the main AQIS office with which these clients liaise.

OVERALL SATISFACTION

Respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the service provided by AQIS on a scale of 1 to 10 – 1 being 'extremely dissatisfied', and 10 being 'extremely satisfied'.

The findings were:

- 2 of the 3 Organics clients were satisfied with the service provided to them by AQIS and gave it a rating of 7 out of 10; and
- ❖ The remaining client rated AQIS just below the mid-point (at 5/10).

Organics clients' overall satisfaction with AQIS service was therefore moderately positive in 2005. Readers should interpret the satisfaction presentation with caution considering the extremely small sample size.

Consistency in satisfaction across AQIS offices

All three clients reported that they usually deal with only one AQIS office (i.e. Canberra).

Changes in overall satisfaction over the last two years

When asked if the level of satisfaction with AQIS has improved, stayed the same or deteriorated over the last two years:

- 1 said satisfaction had improved,
- 1 said it had stayed the same, and
- 1 said it had deteriorated.

Main factors contributing to improvement in overall satisfaction

The one client whose overall satisfaction had improved attributed this improvement to **staff providing more contact and personal service.**

Main factors contributing to deterioration in overall satisfaction

The one client whose overall satisfaction had deteriorated said this was due to AQIS's failure to facilitate national standards in the field of organics.

Changes that AQIS could make to improve levels of service

Respondents were asked (an open-ended question) about improvements that could be made to AQIS services. Each survey participant provided at least one suggestion for improvement. The suggestions provided were:

- Improve consistency of rule interpretation (one client);
- Improve understanding of business/my business (one client);
- Have closer consultation with industry (one client); and
- Adopt a team approach/work with us (one client).

SATISFACTION WITH AND IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC AQIS SERVICE ATTRIBUTES

Respondents were asked to rate (i) the importance of, and (ii) their satisfaction with nine attributes of AQIS service on a 1-10 scale (1 being 'not at all important/extremely dissatisfied', and 10 being 'extremely important/extremely satisfied').

Asking clients to rate how important they perceive particular attributes of AQIS service to be enables AQIS to identify the needs of each client group, and to improve services to these groups. It is, in effect, developing a *client values framework* for each client group. By measuring client satisfaction against these values, AQIS can identify areas of service that are fulfilling clients' needs, or areas of service that need to be improved.

According to the three surveyed Organics clients, the four most important attributes of AQIS service (with importance ratings of 9 or higher out of 10) are:

- Staff professionalism;
- AQIS staff providing timely and accurate invoices;
- AQIS making its expectations clear; and
- Staff technical competence.

While respondents thought these attributes were very important, satisfaction ratings were positive yet lagged behind— average satisfaction ratings ranged from 6.0 to 7.0. This shows that **AQIS is generally meeting the needs of this client group re the attributes considered most important. However, there remains considerable room for improvement in client satisfaction.**

All of the other attributes of service were also rated relatively important (i.e., rated 7 or more out of 10) by this client group. While average satisfaction ratings were in positive territory for the majority of attributes (8 of 9 attribute ratings were above 5.5 out of 10), satisfaction ratings lagged behind importance ratings by 2.0 points (or more) for eight of the nine attributes. (See table overleaf.) **AQIS Organics Client Services Division should attempt to reduce the discrepancy**

between client's satisfaction and importance ratings by improving client satisfaction levels.

The two weakest performing items with regards to satisfaction are 'value for money' and 'flexibility' – scoring 5 and 5.6 out of 10 respectively (importance ratings were 8.3 for each). Considering the discrepancy between the satisfaction and importance ratings, in addition to the relative position of each score on the rating scale, **client satisfaction with perception of 'flexibility', 'value for money', and 'staff professionalism' are in particular need of improvement.**

Attribute of AQIS service	Average rating - Satisfaction	Average rating - Importance	Average rating - Satisfaction X Importance
Timely & accurate invoices	6.6	9.3	61
Staff professionalism	6.0	9.3	56
Expectations are clear	7.0	9.0	63
Staff technical competence	6.6	9.0	59
Responsive to needs	6.3	8.3	52
Understand needs of business	6.3	8.3	52
Value for money	5.0	8.3	42
Flexible	5.6	8.3	46
Adopting team approach	6.3	7.3	46

The last column in the table above provides a 'product' of columns 2 and 3 – that is, average satisfaction multiplied by average importance. Scores in this last column can potentially range from:

- ◇ 1 (extremely dissatisfied with an attribute that is not at all important) to
- ◇ 100 (extremely satisfied with an attribute that is extremely important).

For the Organics clients, the final 'satisfaction x importance' scores ranged from 42 for 'value for money' to 63 for 'clear expectations'. Three attributes have scores below 50. As noted earlier, the two with the largest discrepancy between importance and satisfaction ratings ('value for money' and 'flexibility') should be addressed by AQIS.

ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE AGAINST AQIS VALUES

Respondents were asked to rate 25 attributes of AQIS service provision, which represent five key values that underlie AQIS service standards. These values are as follows:

1. Professionalism of staff (6 attributes)	Doing the best job we can, serving out clients in a practical, diligent, rigorous and outcomes-focused way;
2. Integrity of staff (3 attributes)	Behaving ethically, acting with honesty, loyalty and courage;
3. Openness of staff & the organisation (7 attributes)	Building trust, being frank, open to ideas, and accessible to staff and clients
4. Fairness of staff (7 attributes)	Ensuring that people get a fair go, that all are treated equitably and justly;
5. Respect of staff (2 attributes)	Respecting each other, our families, our clients, those with different ideas and those from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

Clients were presented with 25 statements about the attributes, and were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with each statement.

Below, the number of Organics clients who **agreed** with each of the statements (from the three clients surveyed) is presented in bold.

Professionalism

Results are moderate:

- ❖ All **3** agreed that AQIS has adequately explained the QA/CA/Co-regulation options – a positive result;
- ❖ **2** agreed that AQIS staff are very professional in the conduct of their duties;
- ❖ **1** agreed that AQIS staff are well trained for the tasks they perform;
- ❖ **2** agreed that AQIS staff help them find solutions to their problems;

Response to the professionalism items noted above show a spread in opinion - from all three being satisfied with AQIS explanations concerning the QA/CA/Co-regulation options to only one from three agreeing that AQIS staff are well trained.

With regards to professionalism items concerning value for money:

- ❖ **No clients** agreed that the principal aim of AQIS is to raise revenue; however
- ❖ **2** actually **disagreed** that the tasks AQIS performs are value for money.

Value for money appears to be a problem. None of the clients agreed that the tasks AQIS performs represent value for money. This findings is consistent with the relatively low satisfaction with 'value for money' reported earlier.

Integrity

The findings on integrity were mixed:

- ❖ **No clients** agreed that AQIS staff interpret rules and regulations in a consistent manner and one of the three clients disagreed;
- ❖ **3 disagreed** that AQIS do too many inspections, and
- ❖ **2 disagreed** that AQIS staff takes too long to conduct inspections.

Organics clients' perceptions concerning the 'number of' and 'length of time to conduct' inspections is satisfactory. However, perceptions concerning staff consistency in interpreting rules and regulations appear to require improvement.

Openness

The findings on openness were also mixed:

- ❖ **3** agreed that AQIS makes it very clear what they expect from them;
- ❖ **2** agreed that AQIS responds promptly to requests for assistance;
- ❖ **3** said that AQIS hours of operation reflect the needs of their industry;
- ❖ **2** agreed that they can contact AQIS when they need them;
- ❖ **Only 1** agreed that AQIS listens;
- ❖ **1** disagreed that AQIS are very open about how they operate; and
- ❖ **2** disagreed that AQIS consults enough with industry.

Organics clients feel they can easily reach AQIS and believe AQIS makes it clear about what they expect from them. However, clients have mixed views when considering whether AQIS listens to them and with regards to AQIS being open about how they operate. Further, Organic clients feel there is room for *more* consultation with their industry.

Fairness

The findings on fairness were average and again mixed. Positive results include:

- ❖ **2** felt that AQIS responds promptly to their requests for information;
- ❖ **2** felt that AQIS makes a positive contribution to the success of their business;
- ❖ **2 disagreed** AQIS should devote more time to providing assistance and support to business and less to policing and regulating (i.e. 2 from 3 are satisfied with the current balance); and
- ❖ **2 disagreed** that staff apply rules and regulations too strictly.

Negative results:

- ❖ **None** agreed that that AQIS takes the needs of business into account (and 1 disagreed);
- ❖ **2** agreed that charge rates are too high
- ❖ **3 disagreed** that industry should meet *all* of AQIS's costs of operation.

While performing satisfactorily across most of the seven fairness items, there is again room to improve perceptions of value for money and industry consultations (i.e. understand business and take the needs of business into account).

Respect

One of the three Organics survey participants felt that AQIS treats its clients in an arrogant way (one of the three disagreed) and two of the three Organics clients said that AQIS is keen to develop a team approach with their industry (while one disagreed). These are again moderate mixed results.

BROAD AQIS ISSUES

Primary role and function of AQIS

Respondents were asked what they perceived to be the primary role and function of AQIS:

- One felt that AQIS's main role is to facilitate/administer exports;
- One felt that it was to monitor the quality of exports; and
- One noted that it was to ensure compliance.

Value of AQIS Label

Respondents were asked, *"If you are involved in export in any way, how much value if any do you see in having an AQIS label on or AQIS clearance of your products when it comes to accessing overseas markets?"*. Two of the three Organics clients were involved in exports:

- One of the two involved in exports believes the AQIS label adds 'high' value; while
- The other believes the AQIS label adds 'no value at all'.

FEES/CHARGES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

Rating value for money of AQIS services

Respondents were asked to rate the value for money of AQIS services on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 = *very poor value for money*, and 10 = *very good value for money*).

Consistent with the previous results in this report concerning relatively low ratings concerning value for money and fee related aspects, two of the three Organics clients gave AQIS service value for money a rating of 5 or lower out of 10 (i.e. in negative territory ; one gave a '5' and the other gave a '4'). The third Organics client rated value for money in positive territory (7 out of 10).

This is a midrange rating of value for money among Organics clients and there remains considerable room for improvement in this regard.

Changes to AQIS charges over the last 12 months

When asked if AQIS charges had changed over the last 12 months, two Organics clients reported charges had remained the same while the third reported charges had increased.

Acceptance of increased costs for improved AQIS service

Organics clients were also asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement '*I would be prepared to pay more for improved AQIS service*'. As expected, two of the three clients **disagreed** with this idea (one agreed).

While the 2003/04 and current reports are based on very small samples, taking into account a number of findings throughout each report, the findings suggest the lower ratings involving 'value for money' are continuing since last year's results.

AQIS SERVICE CHARTER

Respondents were asked whether or not they were aware that AQIS has a Service Charter. One of the three Organics clients was aware of the AQIS service charter. While aware of the AQIS service charter this sole 'charter-aware' client was unaware of the actual Standards therein.

How often Service Standards are met

All clients were read out three of the service standards contained within the Service Charter and asked to state to what extent AQIS had met each standard over the last 12 months.

In 2005:

- **All 3** Organics clients said that the standard for answering telephone calls/returning messages promptly during normal business hours was met 'always' or 'often',
- **All 3** Organics clients said that the standard for replying to correspondence within 20 days etc. was met 'always' or 'often', and
- **2 of the 3** Organics clients said that the standard for responding to requests for printed information within 5 working days of receipt was met 'always' while the third reported this standard as 'never' being met.

In summary, the relevant service standards are being met most of the time for most Organics clients – a positive result.

INDUSTRY CONSULTATION

Peak Organisations that consult with AQIS

All three Organics clients surveyed said they were aware of Peak Industry Organisations that consult with AQIS to represent their interests. All three were also current members of these Peak Industry Organisations.

AQIS INFORMATION PRODUCTS

AQIS Bulletin

All three Organics clients surveyed reported that they receive the AQIS bulletin.

- *Readership* - two of the three Organics clients read every edition (the third reads every few editions);
- *Extent of reading* - one respondent reads the entire bulletin, another reads about a quarter, and the third noted that they were unsure how much of each edition they read; and
- *Usefulness* - two Organics clients rated the Bulletin as 'somewhat useful' and another as 'of little use.

Website Visitation

Only one of the three Organics clients has visited the AQIS website. This client visits the AQIS website approximately monthly however rates the usefulness of the website as 'of little use'. This client has visited the website area concerning 'Exporting organic and bio-dynamic products'.

SPECIAL INTEREST ISSUES

Satisfaction with AQIS Approved Co-regulation/Quality Assurance/ Compliance Agreement systems

As reported earlier in 'sample characteristics', only one of the three Organics clients said they had an AQIS approved Quality Assurance systems in place.

This client neither agreed nor disagreed that AQIS was very helpful in the development of, or very knowledgeable about QA or Compliance Agreement or Co-regulation systems. At the time of the survey this client did NOT believe the system was working well.

AQIS was reported to be the auditor of this client's QA system. The client reported being satisfied with the audit service they received from AQIS.

Finally, when asked what improvements, if any they could suggest to the Co-regulation, Quality Assurance or Compliance Agreement System, the sole client with such a system answered 'greater facilitation of the national standards for organic and bio organic'.